

Critical analysis

[Experience](#), [Meaning of Life](#)



Critical Analysis of “ The Ideal” and “ Mistakes of Past” From learning to ride your first bike or to going to the movies with your old friends, memories of the past are special things that are both everlasting and very important. A theme of James Fenton’s poem “ The Ideal” is to live by your past because it cannot be changed, erased, or forgotten; it makes you who you are. One of the major literary devices used in this poem is rhyme. There are three rhymes in total and he rhymes the second and fourth lines of each stanza. The two rhyming words that he uses include way and say. To help demonstrate the theme of the poem, Fenton writes, “ This is where I come from/ I passed this way”. This suggests that a person’s past shapes what they are today. People take different paths in life, and with that comes different experiences. These various journeys cannot be changed because they have already taken place, and they can potentially alter a person’s life. Also, James Fenton writes “ A self is a self/ It is not a screen”. This suggests that one should not hide behind something they are not. It is hard to admit where you come from and who you are, but you should not lie about the person inside of you. Finally the poet writes, “ This is my past/which I shall not discard”. This explains that people tend to reflect all the negative energy and experiences in their life. They do not want to recall all the depressing memories in their past, so they choose to forget. But at the end of the day, they learn that the past cannot be forgotten or erased because it made them who they are. Therefore, “ The Ideal” helps portray that the past cannot be altered and it helps bring out your inner self. A theme of Keli Mims’s poem “ Mistakes of Past” is that you should live by your past because it cannot be changed, erased, or forgotten; it makes you who you are. A literary device

used in this poem is rhyme. The poet rhymes every two lines like past and last. To help illustrate the theme, the poet writes “ Mistakes of the past/fade but always last”. This suggests that people try to forget their mistake in the past, but are always haunted by them like a ghost. After a long period of time, the memories may start to fade, but they will never be forgotten. Mims writes “ of my soul I sold”. This implies that an individual sold their soul to the devil. This saying means to do a horrible or selfish act in order to live the moment; to give up your morals to feel pleasure. She also writes “ lost in a world so mad/the devil comes to mind”. This explains that although this person is moving on in life, he constantly revisits his sins from the past. He feels isolated and scared, in what he would refer to as a “ crazy” world. In result of this, he ends up dwelling upon his past, and sees evil in everything. All in all, “ Mistakes of Past”, helps imply the message that the past is permanent and makes you who you are. Both James Fenton’s poem, “ The Ideal”, and Keli Mims’s poem, “ Mistakes of Past” share the same theme; to live by your past because it cannot be changed, erased, or forgotten; it makes you who you are. One similarity between the poems is that both writers use rhyme as their literary device. This gives both poems a poetic feel, capturing the reader’s attention to every line. The rhymes used in this poem also help emphasize the poet’s main message. For example, Mims rhymes the lines “ lost in a world so mad/ the devil comes to mind” and Fenton rhymes the lines “ I passed this way/ or hard to say”. The second similarity of the poems is that they both talk about an individual’s mistakes in the past, and how they forever lurk in one’s head. For example, the writer of “ The Ideal” writes, “ This is my past/which I shall not discard”. This

suggests that the past is something that cannot be easily thrown away and that all the negative experiences will constantly be carried with you, throughout your journey in life. Likewise, the writer of " Mistakes of Past" writes, " Mistakes of Past/ fade but always last". This also demonstrates that over time the memories may be faint, but they will never disappear. The final similarity between these poems is that they both talk about the past as ghastly and in an unappealing sense. For example, Fenton writes " This is ideal/this is hard". This explains that the past is not always the easiest thing to think about. It can make you depressed and miserable because it is the truth. Similarly, Mims writes " a soul ever so sad". This individual can only think of himself as unhappy throughout his life because he has not experienced as much pleasure and happiness as he wants too. Therefore, " The Ideal" and " Mistakes of Past" both similarly illustrate the theme of past experiences. Although " The Ideal" and " Mistakes of Past" have many similarities, they also have a number of differences. For example, Fenton writes " This should not be shameful/ or hard to say". It is implied that an individual has difficulty expressing who he really is, and where he came from, whereas in " Mistakes of Past" the poet does not refer to the past as difficult to express. Another example is when Mims says " so the story's told/ that's how it ends/ just like it begins". This means that this person feels like his life is not getting any better than it was before. When he feels like he is moving on from his past faults, he gets hit hard by something else in life, therefore he feels that he is living a continuous cycle of feeling depressed and then happy. While, In James Fenton's poem, the individual later on recovers from his sins in the past and does not live a cycle. The final

difference between the poems is that in " Mistakes of Past" the poet uses the devil when describing the person's mistake. For example he writes " of my soul I sold". He is saying that he sold his soul to the devil because he did something selfish. In the second poem , the writer does not refer to the mistake as someones soul being sold to the devil. For these reasons, " The Ideal" and " Mistakes of Past" both represent the past in different ways.

Poems The Ideal By James Fenton This is where I came from. I passed this way. This should not be shameful Or hard to say. A self is a self. It is not a screen. A person should respect What he has been. This is my past Which I shall not discard. This is the ideal. This is hard. Mistakes of Past Mistakes of Past, Fade but always last, Of my soul I sold, So the storys told, that's how it ends, just like it begins, a soul ever so sad, lost in a world so mad, the devil comes to mind, see