

The universal appeal of bruce dawe's poems essay sample

[Family](#), [Abortion](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The universal appeal of Bruce Dawe's poems lie in the poet's passion in speaking for those who have no means of speaking. In "The Wholly Innocent" Dawe challenges his readers through a wilful determination to terminate the pregnancy of a healthy fetus. And in Homecoming Dawe questions the validity of war as he speaks of the untimely death of several adolescent boys who are brought home as dead soldiers. Through the use of persona in a dramatic monologue, vivid imagery, onomatopoeia, deliberate repetition and other poetic techniques Dawe reaches the moral conscience of his readers to the wrongness of terminating life prematurely whatever the reason for it may be.

The penetrating imagery of a womb that could become a tomb if abortion is carried out in "The Wholly Innocent" will unnerve any reader contemplating terminating a pregnancy or any institution that is pro-abortion. The fact that the unborn fetus is ashamed to feel that he is a part of the "doomed race whose death cell was the womb" evokes untold pity for the defenceless life trapped in his own mother's womb. The persona also highlights that all he wants is to experience the simple things in life like to "rejoice at sun or star". Most readers would believe that it is a universal right for all individuals to see these basic components of nature that we usually take for granted. He also claims through powerful imagery that he never experienced parental love in the line, "I never...knew the sovereign touch of care." Moreover, the persona uses a simile that he will die "anonymous as mud" if nobody protects him.

The foetus also uses a biblical allusion comparing himself to a defenceless lamb which certainly evokes untold feelings of pity and sympathy in the reader. Dawe's main aim in publishing this poem was to persuade an extensive part of the public to consider abortion as being a criminal act as they are terminating a foetus's life prematurely. Dawe believed the strongest way he could address this widely debated topic was to illustrate to his readers the views of an unborn foetus that would normally have "no means of speaking".

Through the construction of a persona as the unborn foetus in *Wholly Innocent*, Dawe makes a deliberate appeal from the foetus to save his own life. The lines "For I was part of that doomed race whose death-cell was the womb," and "Oh you with god-like power it lies to so decide," explain to the reader that Dawe is using a child who is about to be terminated to speak for all aborted foetuses. Furthermore, Dawe is directing this poem at all parents who are contemplating abortion. The foetus has been created to have strong emotions and beliefs like any other living human being which further evokes the reader's pity for the persona. He argues that his parents are being undemocratic towards him because he "never chose, nor gave assent, nor voted on my {his} fate." Thus, he is appealing to his parents that he like any other living human being deserves the right to live a full life. The persona, a feeble foetus, also, reaches out to the abortionist, "whose god like power" gives him the right and ability to terminate him. Therefore, the persona tries to get hold of anyone who he thinks can save him from a premature death. Dawe uses the personal appeal of the unborn foetus to

voice his support for the full life of all fetuses that would normally have no means of speaking.

The repetitive use of words and phrases in Homecoming reiterates the “ machine-like processing of human bodies. This is a ghastly reality common to all conflicts that use innocent soldiers as cannon fodder. These soldiers will never have an opportunity to voice their protests or their sense of loss; hence Dawe offers a shocking expose of the futility of war and is able to voice his concerns of those who cannot articulate their views.*” This repetition is outlined throughout this poem to describe the process of the various stages in the return of the colossal number of dead soldiers brought back to their homes in Australia and America “ too late” yet “ too early” from the Vietnam War. The repetition of the word “ day” in the first line, “ All day, day after day,” enables the reader to visualise just how often the process of identifying the substantial mass of adolescent dead soldiers occurs. On numerous occasions the word “ them” is used to describe the anonymous dead soldiers. Therefore, each individual soldier is dehumanised as he is basically classified as the same as all the other dead young men. Hence, repetition is used effectively by Dawe to allow the reader to establish that none of these young men have been given the chance to satisfy the universal right to live a full life.

Dawe's use of ringing onomatopoeic words and phrases, and dramatic imagery in Homecoming echo the savagery of war blighting life prematurely. The detailed procedure employed in bringing the dead soldiers home rings in the mind of the reader through the poets choice of onomatopoeic words such

as “ bringing”, “ zipping”, “ tagging”, and “ rolling”. The reader is made to visualise this horrible scene where soldier after soldier is lowered onto the tarmac in “ green plastic” body bags; no longer people but mere statistics recognised by the counting of heads – “ curly heads, kinky hairs, crew cuts and balding non coms.”

The imagery of the “ telegrams tremble[ing] like leaves from a wintering tree” describe the enormous grief that family and friends have to endure when they receive the news of a dead loved one. The simile comparing the number of telegrams being sent out to the families to the number of leaves falling off a tree again enables the reader to visualise the mammoth number of unnecessary casualties. The irony of Dawe’s “ too late, too early” is entrenched in the mind of the reader through the poet’s use of such imagery. Dawe’s unscathing criticism of war and its outcome becomes a voice with a loud microphone for the untimely dead youth.

Bruce Dawe has earned a name as a poet of much repute throughout the world because his poems speak for those who are unable to voice their opinions. The persona of an unborn foetus in *The Wholly Innocent* is sympathised with by the reader because he is begging for someone to help save his life. The thorough imagery used by Dawe to describe what could occur if the pregnancy is terminated enables the reader to feel disapprovingly towards all people and institutions that are pro-abortion. Repetition is used throughout *Homecoming* to describe the constant flow of young dead soldier’s bodies being brought to the tarmac in Vietnam to be brought back home to their friends and family. Dawe uses both sound and

visual techniques to enable the reader to construct the savagery of war blighting life prematurely. Consequently, in *The Wholly Innocent* and *Homecoming*, Dawe carefully manipulates his audience to feel sympathy towards the unborn foetus and the dead young soldiers. Therefore, through these poems Dawe reflects his views towards war and abortion which are both universal issues hence, gaining him universal appeal. In doing this, Dawe has become famous as he “ speaks for those who have no means of speaking.”