

Literature review on birds of america by lorrie moore

[Family](#), [Father](#)



Reaction Paper

The short story by Lorrie Moore named "Birds of America" is written in English but at times the use of language makes reading the story difficult. The subtitle of the story, for example, is "People like that are the only people here: Canonical babbling in Peed Onk." Peed Onk is short for Pediatric Oncology Department. (224) When the Mother and Father talk to each other they can seem to be speaking in a shared secret language. On the other hand the way the author uses words to balance the tragedy with lightness made a big impression on me.

The adjectives chosen to describe two parents facing the devastating reality of their baby's cancer makes the story interesting and enjoyable to read. In the first paragraph the Mother describes the blood clot found in the baby's diaper as "a tiny mouse heart packed in white snow" (212). The metaphors she uses are often outrageous but at the same time perfectly represent what they describe. The caregivers in the examining room "are all drawing their mouths in bluish and tight - morning glories sensing noon" (213). This made me pause to think about how blue morning glories look when closing their petals and how that would match a person's mouth who was wearing a serious, professional expression. At one point she explains that "an hour is thick as fudge" (135). The father describes the irony of his healthy checkup compared to his child's "the doctor declared me in perfect health: the prostrate of a 20 year old, the heart of a 10 year old and the mind of an insect" (220). The father's words give the reader a sense of the disorientation the parent's feel in Peed Onk, their sleep deprivation and the shock of their baby having cancer.

Without the imaginative imagery and the use of wordplay to represent the parent's disorientation this story would have been too sad and dreary to read with pleasure. Characters say strange things that may be almost unintelligible and funny but not laugh out loud funny. The tone of the story is light enough that the tragic story of so many little boys suffering from cancer is engaging.

Reference

Moore, L. " Birds of America" in *Imagine What It's Like*, Ruth Nadelhaft (ed.), (2008). Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press. pp. 210-250.