

Speech on sylvia plath and "poppies in july" essay sample

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Normalcy is boring. Walking past a storefront, if a person sees out of the corner of their eye something they've seen in the past four stores, they won't take a second glance. On the other hand if they saw something detailed and abstract, it stands out and piques their interest. The same thing can be applied when talking about a reader and literature. A work like Sylvia Plath's "Poppies In July" has the ability to capture an audience's attention from the first line, as it could be argued to be almost abstract. The poem opens by amiably describing flowers. However, the ending of the first line foreshadows something more sinister or dangerous, by referring to the poppies as "little hell flames". The irony seems odd, considering flowers are generally used to convey a light and cheerful mood, but in this case are being used adversely. A reader knowing information about the author could add to the appeal of a work. Plath was said to be "crazy" in some people's eyes, so people have the opportunity to delve into her mind by reading her poems.

Plath's fragile emotional state is thought to be the root of her passionate, yet somewhat depressing works. Her mental and emotional suffering began at a young age. Plath was raised a Unitarian Christian, but the death of her father at the age of eight caused a huge loss of faith, along with a loss of hope for Plath. For the rest of her years, she was ambivalent towards religion. She married a man named Ted Hughes, with whom she had spent months exchanging sappy love poems. Moving to London, Plath gave birth to a girl. Her next pregnancy, however, ended in a miscarriage, which although tragic,

gave her pain which bolstered her writing. To add to Plath's despondency, her husband fell in love, almost at first sight, with a woman they rented their house to. In June of 1962, Plath was in car accident, which she described as only one of an abundance of suicide attempts. In July, Plath discovered her husband had been having an affair, hence the name "Poppies in July".

"Poppies in July" was written after and inspired by the heartbreak of the infidelity of her husband. Plath utilizes the poetic device of theme, showing a theme of apathy towards the situation of her husband cheating on her. In line 4, she writes "I put my hands among the flames. Nothing burns." This shows that even though her marriage is per say "going up in flames" and should be hurting her, she doesn't feel anything. It's almost as if she doesn't care. Although Plath tries to convey that she does not feel pain, the bitterness blatantly shown betrays this façade of numbness. There is an underlying theme of depression, presented when Plath mentions opiates. Poppies have been known to cause the same effects as some other drugs. Opium is a narcotic which is obtained from the unripe seed pods of the opium poppy. In lines 10 through 11, Plath writes, "Where are your opiates, your nauseous capsules? If I could bleed, or sleep!" Plath could be hinting that she wants to use the poppies for drugs, because she feels pain from the heartbreak, and does not want to. She is in denial of the situation around her, and people with depression suffer the same feeling of trying to push the pain away.

Although many readers enjoy a writer's use of assonance in poetry, it can be argued that Plath's lack of use of vowel rhyme adds to the dreary and almost

monotone feeling of the poem. Instead of using the accustomed method of keeping the emotion the same throughout, Plath takes us on a roller coaster of emotions, probably much like what she was feeling during that time. Her usage of the question mark in line two reveals her fascination with the poppies. In line nine, she is repulsed. In line eleven, we feel desperation, and finally an intense longing in lines twelve and thirteen. At the age of thirty, Plath was found dead of carbon monoxide poisoning in the kitchen, with her head in the oven. She had sealed the rooms between herself and her children who were asleep with wet towels and cloths. The fact that Plath committed suicide foster's the assumption that she was depressed. She poured her heart out into her writing, her raw feelings touching the readers who explored her writing. Plath was successful in creating an emotion in her work. Although she, and her work, may be considered recondite and odd, it is arguably what made her an exceptional writer.