

Sherwin bitsui an important american indian poet book review example

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Poems:](#) \n \t
2. [River](#) \n \t
3. [The Skyline of the Missing Tooth](#) \n \t
4. [They Inherit a Packet of Earth](#) \n \t
5. [Works cited:](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Sherwin Bitsui comes from Arizona and is part of the Navajo clan. Currently residing in Tucson, Arizona, he has won several awards and is very much noted for his postmodern style which deals with various questions including the isolation of Indians from mainstream American society. He is also the recipient of several grants which have recognised his style of writing and which have earned him a solid reputation as a poet.

Bitsui has published several poems in a number of publications such as The Iowa Review apart from featuring in anthologies on contemporary American poets. Sherwin Bitsui has published two books, Shapeshift which came out in 2003 and Floodsong which appeared in 2009. The latter book explores some of the well-travelled Indian themes such as landscapes while feature animals such as wrens, the combination of desert winds and high rise buildings as well as the modern pollution problems which plague the city of Tucson. The conflict between urban culture and Indian culture is also a favourite theme of Bitsui who delves deep into the hopelessness that affects the Indians as well

as the violence and deviance which is never far from any Indian community or reservation.

Poems:

ANWR

This is a classic poem which deals with the phenomenon of the outback and being caught without gas in the middle of nowhere. The line ' a headache haloes the roof' demonstrates the sense of loneliness and loss created by being stranded. And the cursing of those who ' have a full tank'. This is a weird poem in the sense that it creates a sense of envy and hate for those who have the luxury of having a full tank. Then the poem turns to discuss juice wrung out of shoelaces and the beauty of the Southern Cross as well as a comparison with the caribou's snout. Bisui's creative narrative also creates a false sense of security and hopelessness when he describes the twin brothers dancing in the back room with cigarettes. The final line is also poignant in its reference to bone faces and a grieving century. This is probably one of Sherwin Bitsui's finest poetry efforts.

River

' River' is another of Sherwin Bitsui's best efforts as it demonstrates the powers of violence together with a reflection on a dead corpse. The line ' blood fills cracks in bullet shells' makes one imagine a bullet ridden body drying up in the heat of the Arizona sun. The river is an allegorical allusion of a broken back with the blood spurting all over the body as flies attack it with gusto. This is obviously a very violent poem depicting a man who can even be alive, suffering in the midst of all the wild nature of the Arizona desert.

This is probably the most powerful poem of them all with an intense focus on the massacres and killings of Indians. The author regales us with terrible description of rotting corpses which are infested with maggots and this almost makes one reel away from the words in shock. The power of such poetry leaves one in a state of suspended animation such is the intensity of proceedings. The terrible indictment of leaving someone wounded to die, are laid bare in this magnificent poem.

Some lines are also quite intriguing such as 'clenched like a tight fist in the arroyo under shattered glass' which seems to demonstrate a feeling of pain and restlessness. The 'drenched coat of flies collecting outside the jaw' is also very bizarre and shows Bitsui's understanding of the pain barrier.

The Skyline of the Missing Tooth

This is again a very powerful poem using lots of violent and descriptive language. Bitsui is observant and very powerful in the first lines where he describes 'a raven's rib ripped from the electric socket heats the palm'. Themes such as incest and brutality are explored with consummate style and one is made to feel the insignificance of man amongst such large landscapes as the Arctic or the Milky Way Galaxy. The poem then goes on to describe the hunt for a whale with the harpoon and the unfortunate creature suffering a violent death, Bitsui seems very much preoccupied with the theme of blood as it features very prominently in his works but particularly so in this poem. The allusions to hard surfaces such as concrete and ice are also major preoccupations for Bitsui who delves into the mystical world of trapping time and time again. We also have the description of a storm and

two twins kissing – here the theme seems to be very muddled and without much consequence, a typical feature of Bitsui's poetry. The engine and motor oil are other features of the poem which seems to take on multiple facets although violence and the forces of nature are the ones which continue to reign supreme.

They Inherit a Packet of Earth

This is another powerful poem albeit shorter than previous efforts by Sherwin Bitsui. In his second book, 'Flood' he is again preoccupied with the element of blood which recurs several times in his poetry and in 'They inherit a packet of earth' we are led to some bed where a butcher has been working. The allusion to the thinning strands of hair seems to imply that there is decay all around us without much hope of salvation. We are made to question the value of money accordingly as the concept of blood and duck feathers moves to the top of the fray. This is typical Sherwin Bitsui – as soon as you believe that you have understood what is going on, he takes you the other way and you feel totally lost with recurrent themes coming back to haunt you. The line 'They climb the staircase clenching branches of pens filled with duck's blood' is a case in point.

What land have you cast from the blotted-out region of your face? This is a great poem which demonstrates the full force of Sherwin Bitsui's writing. It is a tour de force of creative writing and is one of the poems which show his love for Indian traditions although one also senses longing and foreboding in the lines. The poem is constructed into a series of multiple questions, almost like a self-critical examination. Some of the lines in the poem deal with

Indian characteristics such as beads and smoke so here we are on home ground for Bitsui. The emphasis on the word ' what' is also crucial for the poem's development as it emphasises the questions being asked by many Indians on their future. The allusions to built up areas such as concrete sweat and cement cracks also show the power with which construction has invaded the daily lives of Indians. This dilemma which is faced on a daily basis by the Indian in the United States is very much the heart and soul of Bitsui's poetry and in this one in particular.

Bitsui's poetry is very much steeped in Native American culture, history and most of all, mythology. The poems chosen here all have a similar leitmotif, that of the constant and never ending clash between contemporary urban culture and Native American traditions which are constantly being eroded as development continues to occur. However Bitsui also inserts postmodern styles into his writing which are extremely powerful and at times verge upon the disturbing. His poetry also tends to focus on the intensity of life with a particular focus on materialism. The lines ' Let them keep their skyscrapers' show that this is an ode to the excesses of construction which destroys the landscape and leaves it to rack and ruin. There are also several allusions to bulldozers and other hydraulic problems which are associated with the big business of development. The author seems to be indicting the development lobby for ruining nature with some scathing attacks on those businessmen who follow this maxim of development at all costs. This obviously affects the Native American negatively and Bitsui also focuses on the constantly declining status of the American Indian in his homeland.

Works cited:

Sherwin Bitsui, Shapeshift. Copyright © 2003 by Sherwin Bitsui. University of Arizona Press.