

# The poems the trees by phillip larkin and the trees are down by charlotte mew ess...

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



The poems *The Trees* by Philip Larkin and *The Trees are Down* by Charlotte Mew are works that share a number of similarities and differences. While the seemingly positive and negative approaches to the subject are conflicting, there is more value to be found by comparing and contrasting the two pieces on a deeper level. In *The Trees*, Larkin uses metaphor and in *The Trees are Down*, Mew uses tone and allusion, but both poets utilize symbolism, format, meter and repetition to evoke contrasting messages; Larkin's being that the cycle of life is set and cannot be changed while Mew's emphasizes the message that the destruction of nature can be prevented.

In the poem *The Trees*, Larkin uses metaphor to help express a deeper meaning behind the use of trees as his subject. He metaphorically uses the trees in order to represent people and the cycle of life. The process of growing up, who you are, the reputation you create for yourself and the lasting memory of it when one reaches death. Larkin uses the trees as a metaphor for people, because they, too, have a reputation, though its not like peoples. For trees their "reputation" or merely their appearance is renewed every spring by "Their yearly trick of looking new" (7). Though the appearance of the trees may have changed, their "past" or age is still visible in their trunk since it "Is written down in rings of grain" (8). This relates to people because, like trees, the outward look can change, but there will always be an internal resistance and past that one can never change.

In the poem *The Trees are Down*, Mew uses tone and allusion to support with her argument and protest against the persecution of the trees. Her tone in this poem is defensive and sorrowful. When she writes, "It is going now, and

my heart has been struck with the hearts of the planes" (26) it expresses her deep sadness for the loss of the trees. The source of her frustration being the men who "... are cutting down the great plane-trees..." (1) Mew talks about "the small creeping creatures in the earth where they were lying" (33), meaning the animals that had been living in the trees before they were cut down and how that when the trees were cut they, too, feel great sadness by the loss of the trees. Before the poem, Mew took an excerpt from the Bible, which reads "-and he cried with a loud voice: Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees -(Revelation)" in order to support her argument that cutting down the trees is morally wrong. Mew is trying to defend and protect the life of the trees; the purpose of this allusion is to help this objective. It also relates back to the defensive tone of the poem.

Both poets use symbolism as well as repetition in the relation to springtime. In *The Trees*, Larkin discusses the springtime as a time of new life, where everything is at its fullest and most beautiful, but also a time to leave the past behind and begin "afresh" (8). Just as the trees shed their leaves in the fall, they're leaving behind the old and welcoming the new. With the arrival of spring, the new leaves come and everything is fresh. Larkin reinforces the spring with emphasis on the word "afresh"(8) in the last line of the last stanza "Begin afresh, afresh, afresh" (8). What Larkin is referring to is the time of year where life is new and the start of the cycle of life is at its peak with new life taking form again. Larkin repeats the word "afresh" is to create a lasting thought, being at the end of the poem, it ends the poem with the

feeling of vibrancy and positivity, like there will always be a chance to begin your life afresh.

Mew uses symbolism in *The Trees are Down* further defends her argument and message as well as to display her appreciation of the spring. Mew argues that the cutting of the trees defies the purpose of springtime, that spring is a time of rebirth and renewal. Mew symbolizes a dead rat to emphasize her message that spring is a time of new life, stating, " But at least, in May, even a rat should be alive" (11). Mew believes that it's very unnatural for anything to be dead in the spring. It " unmakes the spring" (19) by cutting the trees, it's an unnatural thing to do and it breaks the cycle of life. In Mew's mind, this process can be prevented, and in doing so we will be maintaining life's natural cycles. Mew also uses repetition in her poem of the word spring, which, again is to draw attention to the fact that spring is a time of renewal and that should not be disrupted. The poets' use of symbolism in relation to the springtime helps the reader understand the poets' appreciation for the springtime and the new life it brings.

Both poets Larkin and Mew use different structure and meter to enhance their poems message. *The Trees* has a set meter of iambic tetrameter and a set rhyme scheme of ABBA, which repeats itself in each stanza. These set restrictions to the format of the poem follow Larkin's theme of the cycle of life. That like the format, its set and cannot be changed. *The Trees are Down* follows a different format. She uses a free verse form and structure. This format reinforces Mew's protest that the trees should be left alone to live freely. It also represents the unpredictability of nature and how even though

we can try and stop death and whatever comes in one's way, there's no stopping the future.

Larkin and Mew both utilize similar tools to display different topics and different outlooks on the cycle of life. It is clear by understanding both of the poems that the poets appreciate nature for its natural beauty. Larkin uses metaphor and Mew uses tone, but both poets utilize symbolism, repetition, format and meter to stress the importance of the overall message of their poems, though they may contrast. For Larkin his belief is that what happens to nature and in life shall happen as it's supposed to happen. Whereas, Mew believes that the cycle of life should not be disrupted and if it's being threatened, harm can be prevented.