

"tony went to the bodega but didn't buy anything" by martin espada essay sample

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In Greek comedy, the eiron was the sly underdog who, by dissembling inferiority, outwitted his opponent. As Aristotle puts it, irony is a sharp incongruity between our expectations of things and what actually occurs, as if the universe were mocking us. An amazing talented song writer, Kurt Cobain lead singer of Nirvana committed suicide on March 5, 1994. Kurt Cobain was enriched with money, fame, and a loving family. The irony of Cobain's death, is why would such a successful person be so unhappy? In the poem “ Tony went to the Bodega but didn't buy anything,” Martin Espada illustrates being successful comes from happiness and self-actualization.

In “ Tony went to the Bodega..” Espada shows readers to find happiness you must experience life. For example, Tony's father left the family, leaving a nine year old purtorriqueno boy who had to find work. Years later Tony left the projects too, but with a scholarship for law school. This shows that there was an ultimate goal Tony had set for himself. Working at the Bodega was not what Tony had wanted to do for the rest of his life so he set a goal to educate himself to be successful. Although when Tony went into the cold spring at university in Boston he became home sick. In addition, Tony walked without a map through the city.

This also shows that he went without any guidance and he was trying to find something but wasn't concerned with the results. Espada closes the poem saying “ today Tony lives on Tremont Street, above the Bodega.” This illustration shows readers that Tony could not find happiness in the life style

of the rich and the famous and was content and happy to be back in his culture. From beginning to the end Tony ventured from the Bodega to find what he was meant for in life and through that experience Espada shows readers that happiness is beyond wealth and qualifications, you find it from self acceptance.

In the poem, Espada uses a fictional persona who is from a cultural background, who is looking for a change. Tony, is a fatherless mongrel-skinny puertorriqueno who grew up in the Long Island city projects. This shows readers that this boy grew up struggling trying to support himself and probably had to help the family with finances since he had to find work. Espada includes the information about Tony's father to present the conflicts he faced throughout his life. In addition, Tony leaves for school and is cursed with the cold spring in Boston that there is no smells from the cooking and no one speaks Spanish. This shows that Tony was attached to his culture and felt alone and discomfort from being away from his background. Espada uses a invulnerable character who is attached to his Spanish atmosphere which portrays the character to find a success from separating himself from the poor upbringing to a better adulthood.

In the poem " Tony goes to the Bodega.." that conflict presented is clearly human versus self. For example Espada writes " So Tony walked without a map through the city.." This shows that Tony was fighting with himself where to go, what to do. He was searching without a destination. Because why would go walking around a unfamiliar town with a sense of direction? The conflict rose at the beginning of the poem when Tony's father left and he

needed a job. When he was working in the Bodega stanza two illustrates how the job was like and from the description Tony wasn't happy with the work. The peak of the conflict is when Tony leaves the projects and find out that Boston wasn't what he wanted. When Tony couldn't remember the smells of the food coming from the neighbors or when no one even the radio didn't speak in the Spanish language, it if that though Tony wanted to travel back to the Bodega. The conflicts resolves when Tony went to the Bodega, and he " sat by the doorway satisfied to watch la gente, crowd in and out hablando espanol thought: this is beautiful.." This shows that his found satisfaction within the Bodega, the conflict between himself was finished and Tony was comfortable with the Bodega.

The words in the poem that Espada uses creates a memory that Tony was feeling. Espada translated words into Spanish for example Bodega (translated to grocery/liquor store), abuelas, primavera, la gente, and hablando espanol. By using Spanish words mixed in with English words it gives readers an idea that Tony is missing the Spanish culture. Espada also always uses Tony's name in each stanza. This shows that Espada was relating to Tony in name then by saying he or one person. By using the Spanish words repeatedly Tony found self-actualization within himself thought Spanish.

The tone that Espada used in " Tony went to the Bodega..." was a searching attitude. The author wrote " this is a rice and beans success story.." Within the Spanish culture rice and beans are normal food items eaten with a meal. This shows readers that this a normal success that a person faces through

life. Finding self happiness otherwise the author could have chosen to use the words this is a rags to riches success story. The author uses Tony a regular human to portray each of us by illustrating Tony leaves to find happiness doesn't find it and realizes happiness is within ourselves and where our hearts are.

If the reader looks deeper within the poem someone can realize that the Bodega is a metaphor in a lot of different way. Espada uses many poetic figures in the poem. The Bodega could be a metaphor for a college degree and Tony might have dropped out of law school because he wasn't satisfied. The " bodega grin" mentioned frequently can be a metaphor for happiness. The poem says " Tony practiced the grin on customers, he'd seen Makengo grin with his bad yellow teeth.." Later again Espada says " he thought: this is beautiful and grinned his bodega grin." This " grin" is a metaphor for happiness. This shows readers at first he was trying to find it because he saw his boss Makengo and he didn't grin like that until he came back to the Bodega and he finally " grinned that Bodega grin." In addition in stanza two the author uses the music metaphor, " banging on the cash register like piano percussion in the spotlight of Machito's orchestra.." This shows that he was entertained by the Bodega. Why would you be in a work environment and feel so positive if you didn't enjoy it? The metaphors in " Tony went to the Bodega but didn't buy anything" create a larger in depth meaning to the story which Espada is creating an representation that success is within ourselves.

In the poem " Tony went to the Bodega but didn't buy anything" Martin Espada illustrates being successful comes from happiness and self-actualization. A lesson that each of us has been taught from when we were children through the Bible with the Prodigal's son and throughout literature. Martin Espada tells a significant story that being successful in life doesn't come from fame or fortune but from within and what makes you happy from within.