

A description of a city shower essay samples

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



The aim of this essay is to present you with an analysis of the poem 'A Description of a City Shower' which was written by Jonathan Swift in 1710. The essay will analyze and try to explicate the poem, highlighting its main thematic core and the way it is put across to its readers through its literary devices such as its symbolism and icons, its form, genre, verse, metre and figures of speech. The essay will emphasize on the interpretation of the poem and its symbolism, by shedding light to the way that Jonathan Swift uses the description of an everyday event, a sudden rain in the streets of the city of London in order to express indirectly his true beliefs as far as the human nature is concerned and the social structure of his era.

The poem consists of four stanzas and is written in iambic pentameter couplets. The iambic pentameter has always been considered to be the verse, rhyme and form of the so-called heroic poetry but this poem is a lot but a heroic one. Therefore, the reader gets prepared from the beginning of the poem and its first verses - due to their style and form as well as their words which sound too heavy and serious - to read about heroic actions and events. On the contrary, the reader reads about a sudden rain, a shower which is a physical phenomenon standing a lot way away from a heroic action. What is that supposed to mean? It is somehow like that, that the contrast between what is expected and what is finally read dresses the poem in the mysterious air of the unexpected.

Jonathan Swift draws the attention of his readers from the very beginning and starts unfolding his real reason for writing this poem. The sudden rain turns into the means which Jonathan Swift has decided to use in order to address his readers with serious questions on the attitude of the human

nature and the construction of the human societies of his era.

The poem begins with the description of the people in London, of the Londoners who suddenly find themselves face to face with a sudden rain. But the rain turns out not to be so sudden after all. The Londoners had been prepared for the rain since there were the fortune tellers, the ones who had the power to foretell this physical phenomenon. ' Careful observers may foretell the hour / (By sure prognostics) when to dread a shower: While rain depends, the pensive cat gives o'er / Her frolics, and pursues her tail no more.' (lines 1-4). Swift tells his readers what they already know. It is not difficult to foretell a rain. The weather prognostics can provide everyone with a kind of certainty on what the weather is going to be like. But despite this alleged certainty, Londoners seem to have been caught by surprise.

This could very well be considered to be the first sheet of irony laid upon the atmosphere of the poem. Swift mocks the prognostics, mocks the citizen of the so-called civilized big city and he does certainly mock the iambic style of poems created by poets like Dryden who had recently translated the Georgics by Virgil. The iambic pentameter is used by Swift in his poem so that he can satirize the modern city life. The city people seem to be terrified at the view of a rain like the warriors are afraid of their enemies in the battle field. What is that supposed to mean? Could Swift simply want to emphasize on the fact that citizens have nothing in common with the dwellers of the rural areas? Could he simply want to highlight how people in the city of London in the 18th century have been so carried away by their effort to be fully adjusted to the city-like life that they have ended up to forget what nature is like? It could be that, but it is mainly the fact that Swift wants to

succeed in drawing his readers' attention to two basic aspects of people's lives in his era.

The first thing that Swift wishes to highlight is the difference and giant gap between the life style of cities and of the one in the rural areas. There seems to be such an alteration of people in the cities that they seem to forget where they come from and that they are all children of mother-earth. People seem to be so well-established and comfortable in the materialistic world that they have built, that they cannot easily get rid of all these comforts. They are afraid of the rain as if they are to melt under the water.

The second aspect on which Swift seems to wish to highlight is the irony hidden behind the established differences of classes imposed by the status social quo of his era. Although people of his era were brought up in such a way so as to be brainwashed regarding their rights and titles according to their social status, there comes a rain which proves that all people are finally equal. They all react in the same way in front of the event of the sudden rain.

So, the readers wonder where the social differences are. They are not anywhere. ' Returning home at night, you'll find the sink / Strike your offended sense with double stink. / If you be wise, then go not far to dine; / You'll spend in coach hire more than save in wine.' (lines 5-8). No matter who one is, or where he / she comes from, they all should stay home because even the rich ones will have trouble facing the ' stink', the bad smell. There is no way to escape the physical phenomenon or its effects even if you are considered to be superior according to the status quo of your era when compared to the others. This is what is mainly evident in these

verses and the verses to follow. They should all stay indoors since they are not familiar with the effects of a sudden rain.

In lines 31 and 32 there are two words used by Swift to describe the sudden rain. He uses the word ' Flood' in line 31 and the word ' Deluge' in line 32.

These two words similar in meaning are used also on purpose. Swift wants to put emphasis on the rain and its intensity. He uses these words along with the word ' Flood' so as to refer to the biblical flood which has been witnessed by the Christian tradition to have flooded the earth and covered everything. Swift seems to wish to use this rain metaphorically so as to refer to the fact that this rain reminds of the biblical flood which seemed to be without an ending. So the indirect question rises as far as this rain is concerned. Could it be better if this sudden rain also went on forever? Could it be better if everything in the city of London in the 18th century was covered in rain and vanished?

There is an allegorical meaning lying in this poem and this meaning is the quality of life in the city of London in the 18th century. Swift wonders on how much does this life worth it. Because the life that the eyes of Swift, a sensitive creator, witness is a life full of hypocrisy, of imposed barriers and limitations of personal freedom, of the destruction of equality. This is the life that the poet witnesses. A life far away from the beauty of nature is the one that people seem to live. People live in no harmony with nature, so how could they live in harmony with themselves and between them?

This is the main question hanging up in air that the readers of this poem breathe. It is probably time people realized that they are all equal under the eyes of God. This is how a simple rain is used on behalf of Swift in order to

criticize the social and intellectual character of his city and its dwellers in his era.

Works cited

Swift, Jonathan (1710) ' A Description of a City Shower' derived from <http://britlitwiki.wikispaces.com/A+Description+of+a+City+Shower>