

# "the workbox" by thomas hardy essay sample

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## **“ The Workbox” by Thomas Hardy Essay Sample**

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) wrote many novels, short stories and poems in his life. In my opinion “ The Workbox” was one of the darkest poems written by Hardy. The meaning of the poem is ambiguous and the poet leaves much to the imagination of the reader. The poem details a brief conversation between a husband and a wife. Each reader will interpret the conversation according to his own outlook on love, life, death and relationships.

The conversation begins when the husband, a coffin maker, brings home a “ sewing box” made of polished oak for his wife. The wife accepts the present graciously. However, she loses her cool when she finds out where the present actually came from. The husband informs her that the sewing box was made from the same polished oak of John Wayward’s coffin. He points out almost too innocently that Wayward “ died of they knew not what”. The husband inquires if the wife knew Wayward because she belonged to the same background.

At this point I was brought to two conclusions. The wife had an affair with John Wayward and the husband found out and killed him. The box was a reminder of the power he held over her and the damage he could do to her heartlessly. When he reminds her that the “ shingled pattern” on Wayward’s coffin continues in her little sewing box, it seemed like a threat. Almost as if saying that if he wanted he could send her down in a coffin the same way.

The other conclusion that can be drawn is that the wife out of her own circumstances killed John Wayward. As a twist of fate her husband brings back remains of his coffin reminding her of the murder she had committed.

However, the poet doesn't leave the reader pondering for long. The poem continues yet again and the husband pensively describes how short and elusive life really is. He gives the example of a man who could be eating and drinking merrily at one point and die the next. The wife becomes more agitated and uncomfortable at this moment. Her husband notices her edginess and condescendingly implies that she should not despise his intellect. In a way implying that he is much smarter than she thinks. This patronizing tone can be seen throughout the poem. He had previously also mentioned that he is different than her because he belongs to "village life" while she was belonged to mere "borough folk".

At this point Hardy closes the poem. The end is deliberately more disturbing than the start. The wife's expressions and emotions start depicting that this was only a beginning to an end. Her lie or deception was caught. She not only knew John Wayward but knew exactly how he died. She was scared what her husband was going to say or do next. The worst part was that she knew exactly what the man was capable of.

The poem deals with love, jealousy, hatred and even murder in a crafty way. Hardy makes brilliant use of satire and irony throughout the poem to bring these themes forward to the readers. This particular poem had the greatest impact on me compared to all his other works.

WORKS CITED:

Hardy, Thomas. The Workbox. Old Poetry. Retrieved on April 19, 2007 from:

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