

Use of imagery in an occurrence at owl creek bridge

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The short story, “ An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” by Ambrose Bierce is a clear example of suspenseful writing. Bierce’s use of imagery such as how the Hangman plans to escape; explicit detail, such as how the rope snaps and the Hangman evades death; and Figurative language, such as how the Hangman finally dies, intensifies the work and leaves the reader filled with anticipation. Though all of those elements effect how the story flows, it mostly influences how the reader sees the story. The Author’s use of Imagery, explicit detail, and figurative language in the short story “ An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” leaves the reader with a vivid sense of realism and anticipation.

While reading “ An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” the reader experiences many different emotions (as it should be with any well written piece of literature), but the most prominent emotion is suspense. The author uses imagery most often, but not obsessively. For example, “ He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. ‘ If I could free my hands,’ he thought. ‘ I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods, and get away home” (400). Though the example above is short, it is blatantly obvious that the use of imagery magnifies and heightens the reader’s suspense level. However, Imagery is not the only literary tool that aids to the suspensefulness of Bierce’s writing.

Details are often what make a story stronger or weaker and “ An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” is no exception to that statement, in fact it rings true to it. Often time’s authors struggle with too much implicit detail or too much

explicit detail, but Bierce knew when enough was enough and it really shows in his story. The author's use of details can be seen in the following excerpt:

“ As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge, he lost consciousness and was as one already dead . . . the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen Poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through every fiber of his body and limbs” (401). Bierce's use of explicit detail creates a grotesque scenario and heightens the realistic qualities of the story, especially since its used alongside imagery and figurative language.

In every piece of literature, ever written, there is some type of figurative language used. Bierce, in this short story, tends to favor similes. A simile is a comparison using like or as, and when used in the context of this story heighten many different emotions. As can be seen here: “ As he is about to clasp her, he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him, with a sound like the shock of a cannon . . . Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge” (405). The simile above signified Peyton's neck finally breaking and the end of his oxygen deprived dream, thus the conclusion and end of suspense. Bierce, though frustrating, kept the reader on the edge of his/her seat until the very end.

In conclusion, Ambrose Bierce's enticingly dark story “ An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” not only leaves the reader on the edge of their seat, it allows the reader to read a truly amazing piece of literature. Bierce's use of imagery, explicit detail, and foreshadowing heightens the feelings of both his

characters and his readers, and also creates a very realistic story. The death of Peyton Farquhar, though noble, was unexpected and possibly the most triumphant moment in the short story. Suspense is a difficult emotion to evoke in a piece of literature, but Bierce was obviously no novice to keeping a reader on edge.