Free connotation and denotation essay sample

Literature, Poem

Introduction

Connotation and denotation are two major methods used to describe the meanings of words. Connotations refer to the wide variety of negative and positive relationships that words can carry with them naturally. It is the imaginative and emotional association that the word carries. Denotation is the exact or literal meaning or definition of a given word that can be found in an English dictionary. Connotation in simple terms is a representation of the various cultural implications, social overtones, , and emotional meanings carried by a sign. Some things differently invoke associations in a person's mind. If different people are subjected to the same sign, it will lead to different ways of understanding it.

Chosen Item of Analysis:

" A slumber did my spirit seal" by William Wordsworth (1880)

A slumber did my spirit seal;

I had no human fears—

She seemed a thing that could not feel

The touch of earthly years

No motion has she now, no force;

She neither hears nor sees;

Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course

With rocks, and stones, and trees

In the poem, Wordsworth depends partly on the connotative of the last line in order to create a contrast between the alive, airy in the first stanza with

the in active, dead girl in the second stanza. The denotative meanings of the words " rocks, and stones, and trees," are clear and their literal meanings are available from the dictionary. However, in this context as used by Wordsworth, the hidden or the connotative meaning is unpleasant. Although trees are usually viewed to be pleasant and beautiful, in this poem, the association of trees with rocks and stones brings a different picture. A picture of dirt, tree roots and the girl's burial.

The analysis and understanding of the themes depend on one's wisdom and understanding. Critical analysis by different people may surprisingly lead to different directions. Interpreters can understand literal meanings of the words used in the poem equally, but the hidden meaning that evokes the emotion in a person might be interpreted differently, depending on one's level of understanding.

It is the eighth line of the poem that talks about death. Although death is always associated with a negative light in poems and others articles, William Wordsworth in this poem describes death in a positive light. The narrator of this poem, although saddened by the death of the girl, looks at the positive side of the loss. The speaker considers the world as a beautiful place, but in a beautiful world, bad things happen- a young woman died.

The line " She seemed a thing that could not feel / the touch of earthly years" is ambiguous because the author does not establish who is being referred as " she." What is being described in the poem is a mystery. Who is she? The word " she" used in the poem can be anything. The persona falls into some state of trance and from time, she experiences a sense of liberation. This is shown in the line, " could not feel / the touch of earthly

years," when she unites with the inert nature. This consequently emerges as a timeless moment. The perception of the persona about the external world is lost when the poet states, " She neither hears nor sees" as there is no sense of urgency or movement as he goes on, " No motion has she now, no force." There is passive acceptance to this course, rather than a conscious will. In the line, " Rolled round in earth's diurnal course," the word " Diurnal" comforts and disturbs at the same time. The fears not present in the second line of the second stanza are that of the " human" nature. This poem mimics historical past of the first stanza into the present timelessness of the second stanza.

The poem is listed as one of the Wordsworth's " Lucy" poems, which is a cluster of elegies that talk about the death of a young girl. This is a belief that the girl is Lucy, but in reality she can be any anything that can be referred to as " she." The poem is consequently very gloomy and strange, in addition to being indicative on the finality of death. The social, cultural environment settings of the poem developed by the author bring in a beautiful physical world surrounding the mystery of death of a young girl.

The choice of words, syntactic inversion and the sound patterning brings one to the realm of poetic language. In the line " A slumber did my spirit seal; / I had no human fears," the author use " slumber" instead of " sleep" in his choice of words, as well as, " my spirit seal" rather than " seal my spirit" to show syntactic inversion of words. The readers are left wondering if " she" qualifies to have fear and yet " she" does not have a human nature.

The poem reflects the death of an unknown girl, but her identity cannot be identified. The participant is just referred as " she." The poem generates

multiple conclusions, either " she" can be associated with " my spirit" but will not fit for a male poem, thus making one conclude that " my spirit" was gendered conventionally a female. If in case we replace " she" with " it," the poem will expand the span of the thinking in that the spirit will no longer be based on gender.

The poem's mechanisms of occurrence are nature based. In the second stanza of the poem, the poet fully acknowledges that dead will in the long run return to the natural universe, that is why he does not show any bitterness concerning the death of the girl. From the poem, the importance of the nature is appreciated because the girl is not fearful; rather she is comforted because she is beyond the touch of time.

Conclusion

The poem " A slumber did my spirit seal" is both a haunting and enigmatic short poem. While the word " she" used sparingly in the poem can almost refer to anything, the striking sense in the poem is the sense of loss, when a beloved one dies. The poem is nostalgic, tragic and has no provision of answers on who is the " she." The meaning and the beauty of the poem depends on the reader's perceptions, deductions and attitude. In terms of denotation, every word in the poem can be interpreted literally. In the case of connotation, different meanings and readings can arise from the literal words. How the message affects individual interpreters can be positively or negatively oriented.