

The dress and the stereotyping essay example

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



The focus of Kim Addonizio's poem "What Do Women Want" is the difficulty women experienced through stereotyping. Addonizio cleverly compares a cheap, red dress to women who are bold and self-assured. This comparison demonstrates the stereotypes of what women experience when they are bold and self-assured. However, the stereotypes are not what women want. Addonizio uses the literary device of metaphor to demonstrate what women truly want is genuine understanding. The author's style of writing the poem is bold and harsh but it effectively reflects the burden of breaking free from the false impressions of stereotyping and putting these wrong connotations to their proper

The dress in the poem is not just a garment but also a reflection of what the author is attempting to say. The red dress represents how women are viewed by society, and she uses this metaphor as the epitome of her (literary) disgust. On the surface, readers may think that it is focusing on women's relationship with clothes, but as the poem progresses, it is clear that what the writer is attempting to do is to highlight the struggles women have to face because of stereotypes. For example, when the author writes, "I want a red dress. / I want it flimsy and cheap, / I want it too tight, I want to wear it until someone tears it off of me" (1-4), she seems to be describing a literal dress, a dress that a woman might wear when she is actively looking for companionship. The description continues: "I want it sleeveless and backless, / this dress, so no one has to guess / what's underneath" (5-7). There is not much to Addonizio's dress just like there is not much to the stereotypes our culture has of women. In these lines, the author is saying that some women flaunt their bodies on purpose, and they show that they

are comfortable and confident in themselves. Instead of receiving a good impression because of their confidence, women would usually receive degrading comments such as “cheap” or “easy” or even “light,” much like the author describes the red dress.

In conclusion, what the poem addresses are the standards set by society that restrict women from expressing who they are. Women, society warns, cannot be too assertive or confident because people will not understand and will judge them as cheap, easy women. The author concludes her poem about the dress, she writes, “I’ll wear it like bones, like skin, / it’ll be the goddamned / dress they bury me in” (25-27), she writes that women will do and say whatever they wish, from birth to death. The author, using powerful and provocative words, wants readers to recognize the turmoil women experience because of the restrictions society has imposed on them. Maybe what women really want is not a good dress but acceptance from society.

Work Cited

Addonizio, Kim. “What Do Women Want?”