

# What's that smell in the kitchen essay samples

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



The twentieth century was a background for developing various movements. A splash of feministic ideas happened in 1970s that gave rise to feministic literature.

Marge Piercy is one of the most vivid representatives of the approach. Being a social activist she could not but highlighted a theme of inequality between men and women. Unhappy marriage and hardships of her adult life found their place in novels and poetry. 'What's that smell in the kitchen' is one of the brightest examples of the challenge Piercy posed to the traditional way of American life.

Life of middle-class families, being the most numerous in America, stuck to a certain set of rules where the role of the wife and caring mother was the best a woman could have – simple, traditional life without any hint for change and development. Piercy's poem is a call for urgent necessity of not just the way of life to be altered, but of the shift in society consciousness. What is more, in the first line we see how large-scale the author wants these changes to be: 'All over America women are burning dinners' (1 line). She introduces her idea in general making further specifications in the next four lines. In other words, she calls every woman dissatisfied by her position, to fight against routine.

The main literary device used in the poem is imagery. Piercy conveys her idea mainly through smells and images to make a picture clearer. Such words as 'burning, barbecue, grill, dead' together with smells they denote arouse association with fire and war – the war of rebellions who are discontented with the present position. If throughout the whole poem the usage of 'smell' words and some military terms as 'missiles', 'ticking bomb'

(lines 10, 16) make an implication to the upcoming burst, the last line explicitly proves it.

The poem is written in an angry, raging and resentful mode revealing the feelings of all those deprived women bound to spend the rest of their lives at cooking stoves. ' If she wants to grill anything, / it's her husband over a slow fire' (lines 13-14). The metaphor ' slow fire' is used to portray a woman who slowly but surely stands her ground and achieves the desirable. An allusion to ' Tupperware' where leftover are all the woman can have (line 19) helps to draw the parallel with life where the woman is deliberately left on the sideline of life, having no opportunity to experience it in full swing. As a result, a delayed-action bomb explodes with declaration of ruthless war. Marge Piercy created her poem in a free style – there is no rhyme here. Such choice of writing technique extends the idea given in the text. Women declared war for equal rights and independence, and as a result of the successful outcome they would get freedom of choice. Being free to choose their own direction without the necessity to follow traditional rules and limitations is the ultimate aim of ' not incompetence but war' (line 21). Thus, Marge Piercy expressed her thoughts and state of mind about the position of women in 1976 in 21 lines only. Bright metaphors and imagery conveyed her appeal to face the urgency to turn the customary way of life upside-down.

## References

Literature for composition. (2014). 10th edition. Eds. Barnet, Bur to, and Cain. Pearson/Longman.