

"catrin" and "baby-sitting" by gillian clarke essay sample

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



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

' Catrin' and ' Baby-sitting' are both written by the poet Gillian Clarke. ' Catrin' is a poem with a much softer tone, represented in the long sentences and the calm atmosphere it creates when reflecting back in the past. In contrast ' Baby-sitting is a poem with a much more emotional feel to it, containing more than one topic: for example in ' Catrin' it was looking at her daughter in the past as a infant and then in the present as an older less needy child, however in ' Babysitting it is not only looking at her anxiety of the baby-sitting caring for a unknown baby but also from the perspective of the baby being left with no familiar figures surrounding it.

' Catrin' is a poem concerning the contrast between a baby's (daughter ' Catrin') dependency on her mother (poet, Gillian Clarke) with the independence and defiance felt by an older child.

On the other hand ' Baby-sitting', instead of talking about the natural and instinctive love from a mother to her own child it discusses the anxiety she feels for another's child, whom she does not know, strangers.

These poems both convey a wide variety of images to emphasise Clarke's feelings. The most powerful phrase I found was the one in ' Baby-sitting' in which she describes the dead body lying in the hospital as ' the bleached bone in the terminal ward' to describe how, even this, cannot compare to the abandonment and loneliness felt by the baby in contrast to the feelings of an older women suffering from the loss of a loved one, as she (the baby) has not yet learned how to cope with such feelings.

This image is less personal than the ones found in 'Catrin', but I feel that the images put across to us in 'Catrin', although still captivating, such as the one describing her need to write graffiti on the walls - an outlet for all the turmoil and emotion she felt while giving birth, or the 'tight, red rope of love' used to describe the bond between mother and child relating to an umbilical cord, 'Baby-sitting' gives a more developed and cultivated perception. The fact that alliteration is used in this particular phrase makes it 'roll of the tongue' easier as well. The first time I read this I found it difficult to understand what it was explaining 'the bleached bone in the terminal ward' as it was not at first evident, however this phrase impresses clearly on the reader just how much anxiety the baby is filled with, even though it is rather cadaverous, haunted feeling displayed. It helps you to visualise the experience and share in the emotion felt.

In both 'Baby-sitting' and 'Catrin' Clarke uses alliteration, for example 'Red Rope' and 'Absolute Abandonment', this gives both force and power to the sentence and really marks out the importance of the sentence.

There are different techniques used in the two poems, for example in 'Baby-sitting' there are much fewer metaphors than in 'Catrin' and Clarke uses repetition of the phrase 'It will not come' in 'Baby-sitting' to give the effect at the end of the poem but does not apply the same technique in any place of the poem 'Catrin'.

In comparison though, both poems have similar punctuation and sometimes finish sentences on the next line, this technique worked well on the phrase '

Absolute Abandonment' in particular as by starting a new line after absolute it did give that feeling of abandonment and then ending with a full stop after the first word. It was also cleverly used it in the phrase ' taking turn' as it sounds and looks as though the sentence is turning by putting the turn on the next line.

Neither of the poems ' Catrin' or ' Baby-sitting' rhyme which means the reader can concentrate more on the meaning of the context in the poem.

In ' Catrin' the poem is divided into 2 sections which represent the time shift from the past to the present, the first part is represented by heat and the second uses colder images.

In ' Baby-sitting there is no metrical form but does appear to the reader's sense of hearing (shouting and sobbing) and of smell (" perfume" of breath). The use of longer in contrast to the shorter sentences creates no consistency between the poem giving it an uneasy feeling, which suits the mood of the poem. The poem moves from the immediate situation, informing you what is going to happen in the first stanza to expanding on the ideas and a more general look at life in the second which is anticipating other hardships that the future will bring, but none, the author believes will be as hard for the baby as the parent's absence now.

At the start of the poem ' Catrin', the mother is in a city hospital (city because of the traffic outside when looking out of the window) and during labour (the room is " hot" and " white" and " disinfected"). The second section tells what happened. Neither has " won nor lost the struggle" but it "

has changed us both". The poet is still fighting off her daughter who can tug at her feelings by pulling "that old rope". It suggests that mother and child are connected in a way that isolates them from the world. 'Baby-sitting' again talks about the connection between mother and child but this time about how a bond or connection between them cannot be forced.

Although both poems are written by Gillian Clarke and on the surface appear to cover the same field they both take different directions, the interpretation differs. 'Babysitting' is dealing with a more original idea using strong imagery and possibly written after 'Catrin'. One thing that could identify them is, however, her use of language techniques such as dropping the last word in a sentence on to the next line.

In the poems we look for similarities when they are next to each other, these are few and hard to see and, when I compared the two poems my interpretations did not change.

In my opinion I think that 'Catrin' is more restricted with simpler language and has fewer interpretations that can be made whereas in 'Baby-sitting' is doing the opposite, it is projecting forwards how people feel in other situations, such as grieving for someone special, while still talking about baby sitting.

I also like the title 'Baby-sitting' because it is simple but gives completely the opposite meaning, because you would consider a title like that to be a simple story about a baby-sitter possibly on her first time baby-sitting but this contrary to the poem's true content, which is much deeper.