

The ruined maid essay sample

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



The “ Ruined Maid” was written by Thomas Hardy in 1866. This poem has six stanzas, which consists of four quatrains each. In the beginning of each stanza the farm girl speaks, and ‘ Melia, the “ ruined girl” speaks just for the last line; however for the last stanza ‘ Melia begins to respond to the farm girl from the second to last line. This paper will break down each stanza of the “ Ruined Maid” for readers unfamiliar with this poem. Further, this summary will give information on the Rhythm and Meter, Sound Effects, Imagery, Figures of Speech; Speaker and Tone, and Diction and Syntax of the poem. “ The rhyme of this poem is AABB and the rhymes of the third and fourth lines are identical throughout the poem” (Allen, 2011, para. 10). The poem is repetitive and creates a mood that can be seen as lighthearted and friendly. Based on the rhyme and meter the poem is seen as more musical and happy. According to Spirko (2014), “ This lilting, playful tone, which relies so heavily on the rhyme scheme for its effect, provides much of the poem’s satirical intent, commenting upon limited opportunities for women in Victorian society and hypocrisy about female sexuality” (para. 2).

The author uses alliteration to express the way ‘ Melia has changed to include her speech and her appearance. The poem is also filled with symbolism. When Hardy describes ‘ Melia as “ ruined”, she is not necessarily ruined, but in the context of her reputation she is. Further, when the farm girl describes ‘ Melia as having paws symbolism is shown. The speaker, who is identified as the farm girl has an attitude of curiosity and surprise toward the subject, ‘ Melia. It is as if the farm girl sees ‘ Melia as someone to aspire to be, a role model. Her diction, as well as ‘ Melia’s diction, reveals that they had upbringing from a lower status. Throughout, the poem the main

speakers conversation is filled with many emotions to include surprise, esteem, some jealousy, daydream, and even some resentment. ‘ Melia, the second speaker, has her limited response that seems to be filled with an attitude of condescension and boastfulness (Carawan, n. d).

The author of this poem understands the term “ ruined” because he was reared in the days where many women who were “ ruined”, (women who prostituted or had sex before marriage), out of their need to either provide for their families or receive a higher stature. At the start of the poem stanza one begins with the farm girl being surprised that she has seen ‘ Melia in town, the farm girl is surprised not only because of seeing ‘ Melia but also because of ‘ Melia’s new look. She no longer looks like the girl on the farm but she now has a look of stature. Further, in the last line of this stanza ‘ Melia answers the farm girl with a line “ O didn’t you know I’d been ruined?” This line could be seen as almost a sarcastic remark to a person who wants to know too much. When a reader looks at this the first thought is why would she be ruined looking all new and refined in her new garments as the farm girl described; however, as one looks further into the word “ ruined” a clearer understanding of that line begins to form.

According to Merriam Webster (2014), the word ruined means “ A state of complete destruction: the remaining pieces of something that was destroyed; the state of having lost money, status, etc” (sec. 1) In the 19th century when a lady was said to be ruined she was considered a female who prostituted her body or lost her virginity outside of marriage and because of her prostitution she was doomed in ever finding a husband to

marry. In stanza two, the farm girl further reminds ‘ Melia of where she came from and how she used to look and dress. The farm girl then compares her old look to her new look. She describes ‘ Melia as having had left the farm without shoes and wearing rags. ‘ Having heard enough, ‘ Melia informs the farm girl that the clothing she now wears in all its glamour is the clothing worn in her new life as “ ruined”. In stanza three a deeper analysis of ‘ Melia is conducted through the eyes of the farm girl. The farm girl begins to mimic how ‘ Melia previously spoke with her deep accent.

“ At home in the barton you said ‘ thee’ and ‘ thou,’ And ‘ thik oon,’ and ‘ theäs oon,’ and ‘ t’other’; but now Your talking quite fits ‘ ee for high company!” (Kennedy and Gioia, 2013, p. 727), Oddly, in the last line of the stanza ‘ Melia as called by the farm girl, talks about her refinement after being “ ruined”. How can one be refined and ruined; however, it seems that because of ‘ Melia’s new life she has learned many things, things that a more refined person would know. Stanza four begins with the farm girl describing ‘ Melia’s hands and face. According to the farm girl while at the farm ‘ Melia’s hands were like paws, probably because of the hard labor that she had to constantly do on a farm, but now she no longer had paws and her hands were now covered with sleek white gloves. This symbolizes that her hands are no longer rough and paw-like because of the hard labor but were now slim and probably manicured so that they could fit in the gloves with finesse. ‘ Melia again emphasizes to the farm girl that she had no need to go back to the hard work or labor that caused her hand to look how it previously did because as a “ ruined” person that type of work was not necessary.

In stanza five of the poem the farm girl reminds ‘ Melia of how she used to complain. She states “ You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream, and you’d sigh, and you’d sock” (Kennedy and Gioia, 2013, p. 727). The farm girl notices that there is a change and ‘ Melia no longer seems to complain but is happier and more comfortable. ‘ Melia responds by letting the farm girl know that with her new profession she may be “ ruined” but her spirit is more vibrant. In the final stanza, stanza six, the farm girl young and naïve, probably does not understand the magnitude of ‘ Melia’s new profession shows envy of ‘ Melia. She wishes she had feathers, a pretty gown, and a prettier face so that she could walk around town with her head held high.

‘ Melia takes up the last two lines and responds to the farm girl as if they were not friends. She separates their friendship and status by addressing her as a “ raw country girl” (Kennedy and Gioia, p. 727). Ironically, ‘ Melia reverts to her old self and for that moment put’s aside her new lingo to speak as if she was still on the farm by using ain’t in her last statement. Ultimately, the author reminds the readers that ‘ Melia may have gone into the city, but she had not escaped her origins of also being a country farm girl. Further, she may be in a worst state than that of her friend because in her “ ruined” state she probably would not find a husband. Nonetheless, the farm girl still had a chance, even being from the country to find a husband.

Notes: Poem

“ The Ruined Maid”

O ‘ Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!

Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?

<https://assignbuster.com/the-ruined-maid-essay-sample/>

And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?”

“ O didn’t you know I’d been ruined?” said she.

“ You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,

Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;

And now you’ve gay bracelets and bright feathers three!” “ Yes: that’s how we dress when we’re ruined,” said she.

-“ At home in the barton you said ‘ thee’ and ‘ thou,’

And ‘ thik oon,’ and ‘ theäs oon,’ and ‘ t’other’; but now

Your talking quite fits ‘ ee for high compa-ny!”

“ Some polish is gained with one’s ruin,” said she.

“ Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and bleak

But now I’m bewitched by your delicate cheek,

And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!”

“ We never do work when we’re ruined,” said she.

“ You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,

And you’d sigh, and you’d sock; but at present you seem

To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!”

“ True. One’s pretty lively when ruined,” said she.

“ I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,

And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!”

“ My dear a raw country girl, such as you be,

Cannot quite expect that. You ain’t ruined,” said she.

References

- Allen, Liz. "A Close Look at Thomas Hardy's poem The Ruined Maid." 14 Feb 2011. Retrieved September 28, 2014 from <http://www.humanities360.com/index.php/a-close-look-at-thomas-hardys-poem-the-ruined-maid-14784/>
- Carawan, Sandy. "The Ruined Maid": An Examination of the Words." (N. D.). Retrieved September 28, 2014 from <http://www.ecu.edu/english/tcr/21-6/Carawanlink.htm>
- Kennedy, X. J. and Gioia, Dana. "The Ruined Maid." Literature. 12th ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2013. 727. Print
- Merriam Webster. "Ruin." 2014. Retrieved September 30, 2014 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ruin>
- Spirko, Jennifer. "What Is the Rhyme Scheme of the Poem "The Ruined Maid?" (2014). Retrieved September 28, 2014 from <http://classroom.synonym.com/rhyme-scheme-poem-the-ruined-maid-1674.html>