

# Literature review on poem analysis snowy egret by bruce weigl

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In the poem “ Snowy Egret” by Bruce Weigl, a man comforts his neighbor’s son, who has just killed an egret with a shotgun and is filled with regret. The poem itself is a wonderfully written piece that plays with the notions of childhood innocence, our culpability for our actions, self-deception, and more. The use of an egret for the bird that the boy kills is very apt, as it reminds the reader already of the word “ regret”; it becomes a symbol for that regret the boy has in killing it and disobeying his father. The poem also plays with themes of death – the death of the egret brings about the fear of death in the child: “ He says through tears he has to bury it, he says his father will kill him” (Weigl). There is a cycle of violence depicted in the characters’ world; birds die, fathers beat their children, etc. In a way, the egret and the boy are connected by this violence; the narrator feels deeply for the boy, whose innocence is now lost by this act of destruction that makes him more like his father: “ What a time we share, that can make a good boy steal away” (Weigl).

The use of alliteration and assonance adds to the wondrous sense of rhythm the poem has. Phrases like, “ from the shallows it stalked for small fish,” “ gleaming in the flashlight beam” and “ Shake the lies loose from his lips” add to the sense of innocence the egret and the boy both share, and the gloomy midnight that drowns out the boy’s innocence. The poem itself combines all these elements terrifically to depict a moment of loss – a life has been destroyed, and a boy’s innocence lost.

### **Poem Analysis – The Trains by William Heyen**

In “ The Trains” by William Heyen, a correspondence to a Nazi commandant slyly satirizes the cold, clinical precision with which the Holocaust was

conducted. The repeating motif of the subject's full name and rank, " Franz Paul Stangl, Commandant," as well as the clinical, numbers-based content (lists of cargo, etc.) shows the ruthless efficiency of the Nazis, as well as their tendency to dehumanize people (Heyen). The people these things belonged to are barely mentioned; instead, they are broken down into the things they carried and that can be made use of (hair, watches). By only considering people insofar as what you can take from them, Heyen establishes the monstrosity of the Holocaust; he also implicates the reader by noting they themselves might have profited from this atrocity.

Treblinka itself is a repeated, alliterative refrain – " the trains from Treblinka," " transmittal from Treblinka," and more are used to create a sense of repetition and continuity (Heyen). This contributes to the notion both that the Holocaust saw repeated shipments of men and women sent to concentration camps to be killed, as well as creates a visceral connection to the sounds of train wheels clacking. The last stanza of the poem notes the everlasting, enduring legacy of Treblinka's horrors – " the camp's three syllables still sound like freight cars straining round a curve" (Heyen). The list of the things left behind are likened to Treblinka itself, as relics that remind us of one of the most horrific events in human history.