

Love, life, and a  
wedding: an analysis  
of alice oswald's  
"wedding" essay  
sample



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## **Love, Life, and a Wedding: An Analysis of Alice Oswald’s “Wedding” Essay Sample**

The *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* defines a wedding in three ways: (1) “ A marriage ceremony usually with accompanying festivities,” (2) “ An act, process, or instance of joining in close association,” and (3) ‘ A wedding anniversary or its celebration’ (1418). Amongst these definitions of the concept ‘ wedding,’ one may assume that the concept may be generally made to refer to a ‘ celebratory ceremony which involves the act, process, or instance of joining in close association two or more individuals or entities.’ Alice Oswald, in her poem entitled “ Wedding” uses this conception of a ‘ wedding’ as means of portraying the tumultuous and ever changing experiences of entities, more specifically individuals, who place themselves in a position of love and hence, in most cases, later on marriage. By providing the poem the title “ Wedding,” Oswald was able to recreate, through the use of language, imagery, and tone, the tumultuous experiences of individuals who find themselves participating within the ceremony of weddings. The wedding ceremony, as it is portrayed in Oswald’s text, leads to the comparison of a wedding to life itself and life itself to a wedding.

As the poem uses the first person perspective, the persona within the text, makes various associations in his comparison of a person’s experience of both life and love to a wedding. Composed of thirteen lines, the persona specifies these associations in such a way that it leaves the reader gasping for breath as a result of her use of free fall association within the text. The use of free fall association is evident, for example, in the following lines,

From time to time our love is like a sail/ and when the sail begins to alternate/ from tack to tack, it's like a swallowtail/ and when the swallow flies it's like a coat; / and if the coat is yours, it has a tear/ like a wide mouth and when the mouth begins/ to draw the wind, it's like a trumpeter/ and when the trumpet blows, it blows like millions . . . (Oswald 1)

Free fall association, in this sense, refers to the continuous comparison and association of a concept with another concept without the use of specific rules and a specific trend in the comparison and association of a concept with another concept. Consider for example that within Oswald's text, love which was initially compared to a sail was later on compared to a swallowtail. The lack of use of specific rules and a specific trend thereby makes the poem a free verse which uses free fall association. By creating such a poem that uses free verse and free fall association, the poem's structure adds to the general feeling of manic happiness and tumultuousness within the text.

This feeling of manic happiness and tumultuousness is further expressed by the poem's persona through the images portrayed within the text. One is initially bombarded with the images of an 'alternating sail,' a swallowtail, 'a coat that flies like a swallowtail,' a 'wide mouth that belongs to a trumpeter,' as well other images. Through the continuous association of love to different objects, the reader is thereby presented with the image of love taking different forms.

This image ought to be understood within the context of the following lines in the poem which states, "And this, my love, when millions come and go/ beyond the need of us, is like a trick" (Oswald 1). The reason for this is

apparent if one considers that this image leads the reader to a conception of love as a feeling that leads to the recreation of different objects in one's surroundings. The language of the poem thereby adds to the manic happiness and tumultuousness of the persona as it leads the reader to the assumption that the experience of love leads to the experience of magic in one's surroundings, the manifestation of which can be seen in how it transforms one's reality into a tumultuous yet exciting reality.

This experience is further heightened by the persona as his tone is characterized by the general feeling of happiness and excitement within the poem. In the last few line of the poem, the person states, “ And when the trick begins, it's like a toe/ tip-toeing on a rope, which is like luck; / and when the luck begins, it's like a wedding, / which is like love, which is like everything” (Oswald 1).

It is interesting to note how the general tone of exuberance which is initiated by the initial comparison of love to a sail is smoothed by the persona as he compares love to everything. The poem ends with the following lines, “ And when the trick begins, it's like a toe/ tip-toeing on a rope, which is like luck; / and when the luck begins, it's like a wedding, / which is like love, which is like everything” (Oswald 1). By comparing love to everything at the end of poem, the persona achieves closure as he was able to show that the experience of love leads an individual to the recognition that all is ‘ closely associated’ in the world and hence life in itself is comparable to a wedding since life is a wedding in itself.

As can be seen in the discussion above, Alice Oswald's " Wedding" expresses the general tumultuousness of life as a result of love and the wedding or union of all entities and experiences in existence, as a result of love, through the use of language, imagery, and tone within her poem. Hopefully, this discussion will lead one to realize the association of all things as it has been portrayed in Oswald's text.

#### Works Cited

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