

To women in the  
following essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Although all three poems tell very different stories, they share a very similar message about how women can be trapped in their feelings and other people's expectations of them. Mirror: Sylvia Plath wrote the poem ' Mirror' in the mid-twentieth century. It is a very clever poem, which describes the internal and external problems a woman such as Sylvia Plath may have faced.

As Sylvia suffered from severe depression throughout her life, when she wrote ' Mirror' the mood was expressed as depressed and miserable. Plath was also lonely from the separation from her husband so the theme is depression and loneliness. In the first verse of the poem, it begins as a riddle, ' I am silver and exact.' More simply, it is explaining what it looks like. It, referring to Sylvia Plath because Plath has given the mirror human qualities (anthropomorphism). A mirror is truthful to look in, ' I am not cruel, only truthful-' this seems to be fair in the first verse, but as we read on, we learn that possibly it is cruel as it causes so much hurt and discomfort, whether it is ' truthful' or not.

The second verse, Sylvia is still talking but is now comparing herself to a lake, ' Now I am a lake.' Something else, which people may look into, to see their reflection. ' A woman bends over me, Searching my reaches for what she really is.' When the woman tries to find what she really is, all Plath does is reflect back her image. ' She rewards me with tears and agitation of hands.' The woman seems to not like her reflection, but her reflection is ' important to her.

' As ' She comes and goes.' ' Each morning...' she does not seem to want to believe her reflection so ' she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.

' Still she returns each morning and in the lake she has ' drowned a young girl,' this tells the reader that ever since the woman was little she has looked at her reflection, and the young girl she once was is no more. This story is very similar to the story about a Greek God named Narcissus who was so obsessed by his own reflection that in the end he couldn't leave the river and pined away. Now she is a woman and she ages a day older each time she looks at her reflection. ' an old woman rises towards her day after day, like a terrible fish.' As the woman is not as beautiful or young as she was when she was younger, Sylvia Plath uses ' a terrible fish' to help describe how the woman sees herself now as a woman. The woman seems to have spent most of her life hoping for her younger face to meet her gaze in the river but as the mirror has ' no preconceptions' all the mirror can do is show what it can see.

I believe the woman does know the truth of her reflection, but she is trapped by hope. Not only, in my view, is the woman trapped, but also the mirror. All it does, day after day, is ' meditate on the opposite wall.' And reflects honestly what images it sees. The woman and mirror are both trapped; they both need each other in a very complex way.

The woman needs the mirror because she is trapped by hope and vanity, and the mirror is lonely. Yet they cause each other equal amount of pain. The woman does not like her reflection. The mirror does not like to be left

over and over again. Afternoons: Moving on to ‘ Afternoons’ which was written by Philip Larkin, in the mid-twentieth century.

Throughout the poem a miserable tone helps to describe the unhappiness of the mothers. He describes the lives of trapped mothers who lead very depressing and unfulfilled lives. He carefully describes the role of a housewife who has many jobs and important standards to set. Women with children need to deal with their demanding children, and are ‘ trapped’ until they have grown up and can be ‘ set free’. Trapped in motherhood.

The mother in the poem ‘ Afternoons’ seems to be falling out of love with her husband because ‘ their courting-places’ are being ruined, and the woman believes that ‘ the lovers are all in school.’ Their husbands were once the main focus and interest in their lives, but now it is the children who occupy their thoughts. Some have no husband at all to provide support at all: ‘ Behind them, at intervals, Stand husbands in skilled trades,’. These abandoned women, above all others, are entirely trapped in the drudgery of caring and providing for their children. The title of the poem- ‘ Afternoons’ - suggests the point in their lives, not morning (the beginning) but also not the evening (the end).

Whilst studying the poem, many ending and fading images are noticed: falling leaves, their beauty, ruined courting-places, end of summer, end of the day. The metaphor of the wedding album lying by the television demonstrates how their lives have changed – their wedding day a distant symbolic event in their lives now discarded and unimportant, replaced by mindless hours trapped in their living rooms, watching television. Change in

the poem is very gradual, the verbs ending in 'ing' indicates this. It gives the effect of change creeping over them.

My Grandmother: Elizabeth Jennings wrote the poem ' My Grandmother' which reflects the difficult experiences of her life. The poem is based on her own mental breakdown. The poem ' My Grandmother' deals with the theme loneliness in a very sensitive way. It describes how the granddaughter is trapped by the guilt that she had, and still possibly has about refusing to take her Grandmother out. As there is nothing the granddaughter can do to correct the guilt she feels, she is trapped in her guilt forever. The lines in the poem are quite long with detailed vocabulary, which helps to describe the imagery in the poem.

' Among Apostle spoons and Bristol glass, the faded silks, the heavy furniture.' Detailed words are used in this poem but also simple words which creatively continue to keep the meaningful message throughout the poem. The continuous mention of her precious items cover a large portion of the poem to show that these items were a big part of the Grandmothers life. This is used to help understand how much the Grandmother valued her items.

The poem is divided into four stanzas, each of them tells a different part of the Grandmothers life.'She kept an antiques shop- or it kept her.' The first line of the poem sets the scene for the rest of the poem. It helps explain to what extent she liked her antiques, '-or it kept her.' Suggests that her items were her only real reason for living. Instead of real people, the Grandmother seems to live with her own reflections as real people instead.

She also worked hard to put the fact that she had no love in her life out of her mind; it helped her to ignore the truth, because the truth hurt so much. 'That she was hurt, I still could feel the guilt' the second stanza explains the Grandmother's relationship with her granddaughter, and the guilt the granddaughter still feels about refusing to go out with her. 'Later, too frail to keep a shop,' In the third stanza, it describes the slow ageing of the Grandmother and how she is too old to keep a shop and has to take them into 'one long, narrow room.' So she can always be with them. The fourth stanza is the death of the Grandmother 'And when she died I felt no grief at all,' and describes exactly how the granddaughter felt about the death. 'Only the guilt of what I once refused.'

'I also think she felt guilty because she 'felt no grief at all,' The structure of the poem is told like a story of the Grandmother's life, which is effective as it draws the reader in and they almost feel involved in what is happening. A miserable atmosphere is created throughout the poem because the rhyming scheme is not very strict. Metaphors are used by Jennings to create images in the reader's mind. 'All her best things in one long, narrow room.' This should create an image of a coffin in the reader's mind, as the shape of the room fits the description of a coffin.

Also some people like to be surrounded by their special belongings inside their coffins so that their priceless objects are buried with them. Although the objects, which the Grandmother loves so much, seem old and 'faded' to the reader, to the Grandmother the antiques have great importance - 'needed' but never 'used'. The Grandmother seems to prefer them to human

company or love, as this is the case, the Grandmother cannot leave the room of antiques so she is trapped.