

Billy collins' introduction to poetry

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Billy Collins' poem, "Introduction to Poetry", offers an interesting take on the perception and nature of poetry. Rather than viewing poetry as a locked safe containing valuable insight to be obtained through relentless scrutiny, the author articulates that poetry should instead be treated as a living specimen to be experienced, not just studied. This message is conveyed by means of multiple literary devices, the most notable being repetition and metaphor. Collins skillfully entreats his audiences to look beyond the moral to be gleaned and appreciate poetry for its artistic qualities. The use of repetition throughout the poem is effective in conveying the author's message due to the abrupt contrast of the first five stanzas with the last two stanzas. The phrases "I ask...", "I say..." and "I want..." create a tone of increasingly earnest despair as the author's pleas go unheeded.

Standing in stark contrast with the phrase, "but all they want...", the repeated phrases of the first five stanzas enforce the author's assertion that poems are meant to be experienced and appreciated for more than simple content. The imagery and details presented within these stanzas also mirror the dichotomy between what the author wants and what the general public finds interest in. While the audience is initially engulfed in gentle verbs like "press", "probe" and "feel", these pleasant details suddenly takes a violent turn when the author's methods are ignored and the poems are "tie[d]", "torture[d]" and "beat[en]". The correlation between the repetition of beginning phrases, diction and selection of detail reiterate Collins' urgent appeal to appreciate the artistic qualities of poetry as opposed to searching for its message alone. Collins also makes use of extended metaphor throughout his poem to emphasize his position towards the nature of poetry

and how it should be properly analyzed. By comparing poetry to living organisms or tangible objects, he demonstrates the manner in which his audiences should perceive poetry, as a delicate, engaging piece of art.

Poetry is first related to a specimen being meticulously examined against a color slide, an unorthodox method of approaching a poem, but one that involves a deeper level of engagement than traditional analysis. This comparison is particularly effective due to the fact that the general public is accustomed to associating scientific or mathematical studies with things like color slides and yet Collins urges his readers to analyze and view poetry in the same way. Poetry is further likened to a maze and a dark room to be explored and understood utilizing all of our senses; the audience is prompted to “press [its] ear” against the “hive” of a poem and to “feel the walls” of a poem’s “room”. In both cases, the poem appeals to senses other than sight, reinforcing Collins’ assertion that poetry is more than a moral concealed in indirect language but a work of art to be appreciated in the various aspects of its presentation and delivery. The use of metaphor throughout the poem serves to punctuate Collins’ message by presenting poetry as an interactive and engaging entity which the reader can understand only through careful assessment of the poem’s various details.

Thus is the argument presented in Billy Collins’ “Introduction to Poetry”. Poetry is not meant to simply relay information from author to audience, Collins affirms, but intended to be a vessel of communication in the way it is created as well as the message it contains. Collins himself demonstrates this lost form of appreciation by employing literary devices including repetition and metaphor to convey that poetry is an artistic and interactive experience

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that cannot be summed up as a one-line moral. Poetry is meant to bring sensory engagement and mental stimulation, and without this perspective we fail to grasp the true meaning of a work of art.