

# The history teacher by billie collins

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

All this happens because the adults pathetically fail to convey a deeper meaning of the historical facts to them. Hence, all the social efforts aimed at isolating and insulating the tender minds by resorting to a diluted and faulty presentation of history do ensure that history gets repeated time and again. Any such efforts strikingly miss the true aim of education, which is to sensitize the young minds by conveying to them the real relevance and true importance of the historical facts and incidents. Hence, the objective of the poem is to ridicule the absurd notions about 'the protection of innocence' through a distorted and concocted rendition of the harsh realities of life.

The speaker in the poem stands to be the poet himself. In a broader context, the speaker represents the concern of the intelligentsia and the serious sections of the adult world, which stand for a holistic and broad-based system of education and instruction. Contrary to the belief of many readers, Collins is not the 'history teacher' alluded to in the poem. The true grasp over the humor inherent in the poem calls for a thorough understanding of the contrast existing between the teacher's soft and sugar-coated euphemisms and the brutality and roughness of the playground. The teacher's vain attempts to insulate children from the bitter realities of life are totally nullified and obliterated by the harshness rampant in the real world. Hence, it is much better and pragmatic that the children are rendered an authentic version of the social and historical facts and realities.

The explanations extended by the teacher though being comical are not merely a distortion of reality, but blatantly farcical (Wilbur and Collins). The humor inherent in the poem ensues from its content rather than its structure (Wilbur and Collins). This accentuates the sense of irony implicit in the speaker's description (Wilbur and Collins). The incongruence of the stanzas

and the rhyme scheme imbue the poem with a " choppy feel", thereby accentuating the malice inherent in it (Wilber and Collins).