

Bad blood



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the passage 'Bad Blood', Lorna Sage writes about her painful childhood memories and school life. It consists of three paragraphs. First paragraph touches upon the narrator's past experience with school. The second paragraph explores the relationship between narrator and Gail. The last paragraph focuses mainly on Gail. Lorna starts off the passage with an effective opening, as the first sentence "So the playground was hell". The conjunction used to start off the sentence is a technique used by Lorna to grab the reader's attention instantly and leads one directly to the situation.

Lorna has also used a metaphor to refer to the playground as "hell", putting emphasis on it being a very unfriendly and fearful place. This is rather ironic and contradictory as playground is commonly seen as something innocent and playful. We can therefore already from the beginning suspect a fairly gloomy and miserable text. This feeling is ensured even more by the diction that follows "Chinese burns, pinches, slaps and kick, and horrible games". Listing here is especially significant as it is very direct, which reflects the pace of the aggression itself.

These are not pleasant things, thus backing up the miserable feeling. The passage also tells us about an anxious little girl who goes to school for the first time. "Small people's purgatory" and "the sheer ineptitude" clearly describes the experience of childhood and initiation in school as something horrible and negative. The words used such as purgatory, which is a place for suffering, and ineptitude, which means hopeless, enhances this negative mood. Purgatory is also always linked with hell, which suggests how unwelcoming school is.

Lorna also used both repetition and comparison to put emphasis on how horrible school was when she compared the “ pain of childbirth” to the “ pain of being a child at school for the first time”. The word “ pain” has been repeated, and the comparison here is particularly useful, as the pain of childbirth is commonly known to be indescribable which suggests to readers how awful it is. The relationship between the narrator and Gail is one of a typical young girl’s relationships with another girl, however it is developed throughout the passage in an interesting way, from hate to love.

As the narrator mentions, “ now she was my sworn enemy”, it clearly tells us how the narrator felt about Gail. The words “ sworn enemy” used to describe Gail puts emphasis on the amount of hatred she has for Gail. Lorna starts out by presenting Gail as superior. “ Physically confident, in charge of her body” clearly shows how Gail is in control and can be intimidating to others. It also suggests how she is very confident and is very comfortable in her own skin. It is also seen how she is very strong both physically and mentally.

The use of listing later on in the passage, “ face-pulling, hair-pulling, pinching, scratching...”, can back up the point her being physically strong and that she can also be seen as a bully and is very violent. “ She was simply better... than I was”, the quote shows how the narrator is comparing herself to Gail and that she is being portrayed as the weaker and less confident one. This also emphasizes on how intimidating Gail can be. Later on in the passage, the narrator goes on to say how she feels “ like an unstrung puppet”.

Lorna has used a simile to present the narrator’s character. This quote is very significant as it shows how the narrator is powerless. She is being

controlled just like a puppet. Gail's ascendancy is further demonstrated at the beginning of the third paragraph, " Once she'd thoroughly trounced me in public, Gail ignored me and held court in her own corner every playtime". This also represents Gail's physical advantages and her independence of holding court in her " own corner". This also suggests to us how Gail is the leader and has " followers".

Yet this has all changed later on in the passage. " I was convinced at the start that...", the words " at the start" foreshadow and warn us that Gail's current superior position is going to change. This is exactly what happened when Gail no longer is described in superior way but rather in a pitiful manner. " But she was not allowed out to play... and everybody knew that she had to sit for hours ever night while her grandmother twisted her hair in rags". This is significant as it shows a different side to Gail.

Here she is portrayed as a softer character, whereas before she was portrayed as a more powerful one. In the last paragraph, we read that the narrator and Gail are both " set apart", the narrator living in a vicarage and Gail having a divorced mother. This also shows how Gail is very different as she is portrayed as an outcast. Instead of comparing them, Lorna is stating their similarities. Another example of relating Gail to the narrator is that Gail " even had a funny name, like me". These elements of similarities suggest the reasons for their eventual friendship.

Lorna Sage's style of narration is fairly colloquial, almost chatty, which can be seen in " Was she already going to dancing lessons? I don't remember", where the persona discussing with herself. This style of narration gives the passage an informal but also agitated mood, which goes well the content.

Lorna also uses a variety of stylistic figures in order to portray the narrator's life as a child and evoke her childhood memories. One example that is particularly evident is when recalling "the noise of the thick wet skipping rope slapping the ground".

Here she uses personification and onomatopoeic descriptions to capture the essence of the event, which effectively brings the reader into her text more intimately. Words sharing the same meaning are usually stacked and repeated in a sentence to emphasize what they are trying to get across, "not only better at face-pulling, hair-pulling, pinching, scratching and every sort of violence". Here she is trying to persuade the reader how much better Gail is than the narrator at all types of violence.

Sage also uses some metaphors and similes to induce her thoughts and feelings in an efficient way to the reader, "She'd have won our war in any case". To it all sum up, Lorna Sage's main concern here is to capture and convey the feeling of anxiety and ineptitude that comes with the school life. Through her use of "painful" diction and the frequent use contradictory images help Lorna creates a suitable miserable atmosphere. Also her colloquial style of narration contributes to this mood and all these techniques together craft a cunning passage.