

Anecdote of a jar essay



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Wallace Stevens wrote *Anecdote of a Jar* in 1919 when Modernism was in its early stages. In this movement, individuals were encouraged to explore change. Since there was so much change going on in the world, people were concerned with the relationship between society and all of its new innovations and the natural world. This is the major point or theme to *Anecdote of a Jar*. In the poem, the jar, which symbolizes man or the man made items that are necessary to modern society.

The jar is one of the most understated and yet useful items of any household. Some are beautifully shaped and decorated, but there are just as many that are plain. The jar in the poem is plain and symbolizes the average member of society and his/her place in this new modern world of new music, dance, technology, and moral values. Like the jay, the average citizen is useful to society, yet rarely gets noticed.

There are actually two ways of looking at the theme in the context of Modernism in the poem *Anecdote of a Jar*. First the jar can be seen as the rural individual, who before modernism worked with the elements of nature to produce a living for his/her family. In 1919, WWI, the first modern war, had just ended and many rural citizens had moved to the urban areas to work in factories to make the necessary equipment for the war.

The natural surroundings around the jar could symbolize the modern world that was quickly encompassing these rural people. The second idea of theme could be the contemplation of theme is that no matter how much man is becoming modern with all the new urban ideas, nature is still stronger.

Stevens could be conveying the message that no matter how technologically

advanced society becomes, nature is still a necessary element in the lives of people. No matter how modern, a city will go back to nature if left uninhabited.