

# "catch" and "minefield" essay



In the poems " Catch" and " Minefield", the poets, George Bilgere and Diane Thiel both reveal how the difficult relationships that they experienced with their fathers have shaped both their pasts, the present and their futures. Both poets have started their poems by relating what they believed were the causes of their father's behaviour towards themselves and their families.

In Diane Thiel's poem, " Minefield", she explains how her fathers past has had an effect on her childhood and parts of her adult life. The title " Minefield" has so many different meanings; it could mean that her life is like a minefield, or that the minefield was the significant event that shaped the lives of her father, herself and their family. It could be referring to the minefield that she sees in her future, or that her father is like an unexploded mine ready to go off at any time if or when someone makes a simple mistake or puts a foot out of line like his young friend did all those years ago. She starts the poem by writing about her father's worst childhood memory. The first verse is made effective because Thiel does not actually state what happened to her father; rather she describes what happened to his friend.

She also makes use of the facts that they were hungry but were crossing a field of lettuce. Comparisons are also entered by using a reference to a wild animal that would eat the lettuce. The reference to his friend's body being " scattered across the field" is a stark contrast to the rural scene conjured up in the previous lines; its inclusion encourages the reader to imagine the terrible scene without it being described graphically. The two lines separated from the first and second verse, " My father told us this, one night, and then continued eating dinner"; tell us how the father feels about his past.

Again the contrast between calm of eating a family meal and the horror of what he told us is highlighted in her use of words. He had dropped his past on his family just like the death of his friend was dropped on him. He tells them about his past one night and then carried on eating his dinner, this might show how he wanted his family to understand how he has let the past affect his life as an adult and as a parent. The second verse of the poem opens with " he brought them with him, the minefields". This line shows that what happened to Thiel's father when he was a child, has affected the way in which he has lived his life because he has carried his past experiences with him, and by that he is sub-consciously punishing himself for surviving and in doing so is also punishing his children. Towards the end of the second verse, Thiel still expects her father to explode like the mine that killed his friend all those years ago, if she makes one simple mistake or does anything wrong even though it is " years later and continents away," she is still frightened about what could happen.

She is now " continents away" which could suggest that she is too scared to be near her father although she probably still sees him occasionally. Thiel uses words to help the reader visualise her own personal minefield, which the relationship with her father has evoked. She is looking towards her future and wondering if her own personal experience of growing with a difficult father will shape her ability to be a good parent or will, once again, the past rise through another generation to carry on causing suffering again. Thiel says that she " would have to run on alone" this means that she is still running from her fathers past as well as her own, and is she using his past as a justification for her actions as her father uses the past as an excuse for his

own actions and as a reason for the type of man he has become. George Bilgere doesn't write about his father's past, but about his father's obsession/hobby that did not affect his father's past but his, George Bilgere, own past, present and future.

Bilgere didn't care for his father's hobby but only paid attention to see if his father could live up to Bilgere's childhood aspirations/dreams as to what his father was, is or could be. Bilgere does not try to soften the blow in the same manner as Thiel does, because Bilgere has faced up to the fact that his father is not the man he thought and hoped he would be, but Thiel understands why her father is like he is, although they are both afraid of what might happen with their fathers in the future. Although both poems are free verse "Catch" by George Bilgere is written in one long verse whereas Diane Thiel wrote "Minefield" in one verse based in the past, two lines bringing it to the present and the final verse is written about her own past and possible future. George Bilgere starts the poem "Catch" by relaying his feelings about his father's obsession/hobby.

He doesn't feel that it is the most important thing in his, Bilgere, life, as he has since forgotten, but he tries to make the effort as he thinks his father may still aspire to his, Bilgere's, childhood dreams. He then develops a realistic view of his father's capabilities concerning the obsession/hobby of which is baseball. His father "tried to fire it at his son", this suggests that Bilgere has become disappointed because his father only tried, but could not complete the task that he set out to do. Although Bilgere has been disappointed and embarrassed by his father's actions, he now has to live with the disappointment and humiliation for the rest of his life and hope that

he never puts his children through what he went through during his own childhood.

Bilgere's father bases his parenting skills around his obsession for baseball by only allowing his son stay up and watch TV when there was a programme, documentary about baseball or a baseball game that featured his father's favourite team or player. Baseball was always the favoured topic of discussion at dinnertime, it was nothing else but baseball. The fights that he was allowed to watch became like nightmares that unfolded in a way that made he think that he would have to live with his fathers obsession all through his life. Although his father was a massive man who could lift his son high in the air, he would never live up to the standards that his son hoped for because Bilgere realised that his father was a person who " threw like a girl" In a way George Bilgere would have to face up to the embarrassment that he felt his father would cause him by carrying on with the unrealistic dream that would never become a reality in George Bilgeres eyes.

The fathers throw was like a " raw confession", it was never rough around the edges or covered up to soften the blow of what his father was capable of doing. His throw was " helpless in the failing light" in which Bilgere can still feel " the balls soft kiss". " Thirty years later" makes it seem like he, Bilgere, can never escape the embarrassment which his father subjected him to as a child, always trying, but never achieving in what Bilgeres father thought he knew everything about. Although Bilgere is older and has faced up to the reality of what his father put him through he is still " afraid to throw it back" because he still doesn't want to face the humiliation that his father subjected him to, but still might think that some of his aspirations/dreams about his

father may still come true. Minefield" by Diane Thiel and " Catch" by George Bilgere are both based on difficult relationships between father and child, Thiel and Bilgere approach the subject in completely different ways.

Thiel relates all her experiences to her fathers past, while Bilgere concentrates on his own feelings whilst ignoring how his father may have felt. Thiel shows some compassion for her father while Bilgere seems to be more selfish in his appraisal of his father's behaviour. Both poets express themselves as worrying that their fathers have taken over their lives, rather than allowing them to shape their own futures, while offering gentle guidance.