

James I rosenberg essay



**ASSIGN
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In the Wasps' Nest, there are two wasps that have come to the poet's mailbox to build their home. We know that this is the poet's mailbox when he says "... my mailbox's metal hold" in line 5. These two wasps are busily building their nest with paper and mud. Even with the " displeasure of the US mail" (line 11) and " all my threats and warnings" (line 12), the wasps won't leave. The poet considers that the wasps know that he is their enemy and that he could kill them and destroy the nest easily.

Yet, the poet doesn't kill them, rather in the last 6 lines; he turns the topic away from the wasp and begins to ponder about his relation to the wasps that are building their nests. This poem starts off talking about " Two aerial tigers/ striped in ebony and gold" he uses the word tigers to describe the wasp physically and characteristically. Wasps have yellow and black stripes on their body, similar to a tiger. Characteristically, wasps have an untamed and fierce nature just like tigers. " Striped in ebony and gold" describe the wasps' physical appearance.

Ebony and gold are two materials that nature gives us. These are natural items. Just like the wasps. They are a part of Creation. " Have lately come/ to my mailbox's metal hold/ and thought/ with paper and mud/ to build their insubstantial and only home. " A metal hold would be strong and safe, while this contrasts with the wasps' weak and flimsy home built with weak materials such as paper and mud.

A home is supposed to give us a sense of love and more importantly security. But, with a weak home, the feeling of security is replaced with the feeling of insecurity. " Neither the sore displeasure/ of the U. S. Mail/ nor my

threats and warnings/ will avail/ to turn them from their hummed devotions.

“(Line 10 to 14) This is telling us how stubborn the wasps are. They are committed to this home and they will not be turning away from it. They are already so absorbed in this work and nothing seems to change their mind.

They have devoted themselves to this work and the establishing of their own home. This shows a struggle for the wasps and the poet. The wasps are trying to build their nest, hopefully before winter sets in; their struggle is for life and death, showing how fragile life is for them. What does this have to do with the poet?? His struggle is whether to kill them or not, the struggle between right and wrong. In lines 16 to 18, “ And I think/ They know my strength, / can gauge/ the danger of their work”, the wasps’ know that the poet has the ability to destroy them and their hard work.

Further proven in line 19 and 20 when the poem says, “ One blow could crush them /and their nest; and I am not their friend. ” In this line, the poet uses alliteration with “ could crush”, this is important because it is telling us he has the power to crush them. Not that the poet should crush them and not that the poet will crush them, once again, supporting the idea of the fragility of life. Also, emphasis is used when we read line 20 “ And their nest”. Not only can the poet kill the wasps but also their home and the hard work that the wasps’ have committed themselves to.

Yet, lines 21 to 23 “ and yet they seem/too deeply and too fiercely/ to bother to attend” tells us that they are too committed to their work to actually acknowledge that death is already so imminent to them. This is significant to the meaning of this poem because the wasps’ are fighting a constant battle,

a constant struggle for life and death. Yet, the only danger they realize is winter and they do not see the poet as a threat to them. The most significant part of this poem is in the last 8 lines. The author will not attack the wasps anymore, as said in line 24 and 25 when he says " Perhaps they sense/ I'll never deal the blow. Yet rather, he takes to thought about the wasps' situation and how that relates to him now in line 26 and 27 " For, thought I am not in nor of them,/ Still I think I know. "

Right now we see that the poet has started to gain empathy for the wasps. This can relate back to the line 2 where he begins with " Striped in ebony and gold". Ebony and gold are both expensive when acquired. The poet uses these materials in respect to the wasps. " What it is like to live/ in an alien and gigantic universe, a stranger," (line 28 and 29) the poet feels respect and empathy towards these wasps relating them back to ebony and gold being respected by people.

A stranger" to describe how the wasps have come to an entirely new environment and starts building their goals, how their journey has just begun. In line 30, he uses the word " fragile citadels" as an oxymoron. Citadels are know as fortresses and are strong. By putting fragile before citadels, the poet is trying to give us an idea that do we look sturdy, but are actually weak on the inside like a fortress that looks strong until it crumbles after one hit?? The struggle for life and death is present as Rosenberg contrasts with this oxymoron. One hit from the outside and the citadel will crumble.

Just like death, once it hits, there is no turning back. "On the edge of danger" confirms that thought. Throughout this poem, James L Rosenberg uses many military terms such as aerial, savagely, threats and warnings and blow. This contributes to the tone of the poem because it causes readers to feel aggressive and anger. In this poem, there is no particular rhyme scheme or rhythm pattern. Yet, there are a couple of lines that rhyme in the beginning (line 2 3 4 5) and the rhyme is cut in the middle of the poem and restarted again close to the end.

This is a significant contribution to the poem because at the beginning, the poet doesn't mind the wasps there. As the poem progresses, so does the poet's anger for them. When the poem comes to a close, the anger felt toward the wasps have dissipated and rather the poet feels empathy toward them, where the rhyme picks up again. Also, in this poem, there is some onomatopoeia used throughout the poem with words such as resonantly, hummed, and a-hum. Throughout this poem, there is also a constant comparison between strength and weakness in this poem, showing the struggle within.

With the strength of the poet and the weakness and helplessness of the wasps, the strength of the mailbox's metal hold and the weakness of their insubstantial home built with paper and mud and fragile citadels, once again emphasizing the constant struggle between life and death. The poet wants to tell us not about the fragility of life. We are so prone to danger. Like the wasps, it is a constant struggle between life and death. We might think that we are only striving to a goal that we block out everything else. Also, he is

trying to tell us that people isolate you and alienate you in a place where you are of no use.