

Mirror, by sylvia plath



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mirror, by Sylvia Plath is one of the best examples to show how valid, vanity is in a woman's life.

I think this is one of, if not the oldest poem from all of which we have read. For a start her name, being Sylvia is quite old-fashioned and not often heard of now, but the most obvious clue to the date, which I can pick out is her use of language and how serious and deep the poem is. It is not so much formal or informal, but just very descriptive with words that I wouldn't expect in a more recent poem. The whole poem seems very serious, meaningful and quite personal to her.

She is able to describe the situations very precisely using great metaphors throughout. The first stanza describes a mirror using personification. This makes it seem like the mirror is talking and giving its appearance and opinions of itself, but actually these are Sylvia Plath's own thoughts brought into the poem. This is what she thinks a mirror is like. The first three lines are cleverly imposed with 's' sounds repetitively, called sibilance. These 's' words seem to represent watery sounds.

It is a pleasant sound, which makes you associate a watery mirror with a reflective glassy lake, where they seem to both be the same object. This also inter-links with an alliteration of 's' in the second line, where she writes, "Whatever I see I swallow immediately". This line shows examples of three techniques I have written about, personification of the mirror, sibilance and alliteration of 's'. There are no rhyme schemes, but there are a few places in the poem where you can find internal rhyming. This is shown again, in the third line, with, "I see I swallow immediately" And also with, "A part of my

heart”” Her face that replaces” Where this is used it seems to just give a bigger effect on the words, to make you think about what has been written and therefore, not many other techniques are needed in the line. For example where she writes,” A part of my heart.

“ She has an internal rhyme followed by a full stop halfway through the line. This also happens to be a metaphor, which is unusually deep and meaningful, so when all of these are put together the line gives a big impact and makes you think about its meaning. The punctuation also plays an important role in the poem. It is used quite a lot, making the sentences short and powerful. You could say this is like a mirror in the way that it is bold, sharp and blunt etc.

She often uses the punctuation, not only for regular pauses, but to make you stop and think about what has been written. The best example of this is in the fourth line where she says,” I am not cruel, only truthful – “ She has used a hyphen, which leaves a long pause leading you to think about how a mirror is not mean, but just honest, when it reflects back an image, whether it is a good one or not. There are a few places where punctuation at the end of a line has been replaced with enjambment. The last stanza is based on the metaphor of a mirror, this being a lake. There are so many different ways to describe a mirror but this one matches perfectly, because like a mirror, lakes can reflect your image truthfully. This is where the poem becomes quite sad, as she explains that,” A woman bends over me, Searching my reaches for what she really is.

“ This woman, being Plath, is searching for something she wants to be but is not. She does not want to believe and admit, that she is ageing. The next line tells, how she,” Turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.” Because they show her in a ‘ better light.’The lake then goes on to explain how it never lies. It all ends with the solemn lines of,” In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old womanRises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

“ There is where she seems to have finally ‘ admitted defeat’ of getting old. I think this is all describing, how Sylvia Plath is worrying about ageing, losing her youth. It shows how vanity plays such a big roll in a woman’s life, and we can therefore identify with the poem. This makes it an interesting, yet personal poem to read. It does seem to be quite depressing though. It describes how the mirror reflects her image, but not the way she would like it to.

She uses the expression,” Like a terrible fish.” Which is an extended metaphor of the lake, showing how de-grading it is to her, as she starts to believe the real truth of her appearance.