

# A critical analysis of stealing by carol ann duffy essay



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The first thing I noticed about Stealing was the question on the first line, this immediately tells us that he/she is talking to someone (or is perhaps being interviewed), however, because the poem is a monologue, we never know who. Neither are we told the gender or age of the thief, which I think all adds to the air of mystery the poem has. The thief doesn't give a particular reason for stealing but gives ambiguous comments which I have interpreted in a few different ways. Firstly the thief tells us of several things he/she has stolen, the strangest of which is a snowman.

Many of these, we are told by the thief are 'things which I don't need,' which is why we can question what exactly the thief is trying to steal and why. After all what exactly is the thief trying to achieve by stealing a snowman? We are told that 'part of the thrill was knowing that children would cry in the morning', so perhaps metaphorically the thief sees the snowman as someone's happiness and is in fact trying to steal someone else's happiness for himself. I think this is very possible as the thief makes it clear that he/she is unhappy with life by making remarks such as 'life's tough' and 'sick of the world'. He/she also tries to reassemble the snowman in his/her yard, to me it seems the thief is doing this to try and make it (the snowman/ the happiness) his own and is angered when someone else's snowman/happiness can mean nothing to him/her. Maybe because he/she finds life so 'tough' he/she may just want to take it out on someone and make them suffer like he/she is.

Another reason for stealing the snowman could be simply because the thief wanted him. The thief tells us that you're 'better of dead than giving in, not taking what you want' which is very selfish and cold hearted. The reason I

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think the thief wants the snowman is because he can almost relate to it - ' a mate with a mind as cold as the slice of ice within my own brain'. - I think this quote tells us that the thief knows he is cold (as you'd have to be to steal). The phrase ' slice of ice' seems very cold and heartless in itself, using it to describe a part of someone's brain seems to me to be a very negative personality trait. The last reason would be boredom as it plays a big part in the closing verse.

The thief says that ' mostly I am so bored I could eat myself' and perhaps sees stealing as a form of entertainment. The thief stole a guitar once intending to learn how to play -perhaps to make him/herself less bored. And the fact that he/she would just break into a house ' just to have a look' and ' joy ride cars to nowhere', seems a rather low and desperate act to get entertainment (or perhaps attention). Because the poem can be interpreted in several ways, the plot can be quite confusing.

However I think this is intended as the last line asks us whether we understand a word of the poem, and quite honestly I feel that it doesn't really make sense until you read it a few times. Carol Ann Duffy made it a confusing poem in many ways, firstly the whole idea of stealing a snowman is quite strange anyway and secondly the poem is written in an odd way. The first 2 paragraphs are about the snowman and are very matter of fact yet the third doesn't mention it at all and is more of a glamorised view of how the thief sees him/herself. ' I am a mucky ghost' he/she sees him/herself to be mysterious, unnoticed and feared and the image of a ' gloved hand twisting a door knob' is almost like a scene from a horror movie. After this verse we move back to the snowman, but we don't really now this until the snow is

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mentioned. The scene changes very quickly, one minute we're in a stranger's bedroom and the next minute we're back in the snow - I found this quite confusing.

Overall I found this sort of confusion quite affective, I imagine the thief is quite confused as he/she goes over his/her past and this is reflected in the way the poem is told. The poem is full of metaphors (' I'm a mucky ghost' & ' sick of the world' are just 2). I think they help us to understand the thief a bit more. For example just by the phrase ' I'm a mucky ghost' we can understand that the thief sees him/herself as fearsome, unseen, mysterious and misunderstood (as ghosts are seen) and really only goes into houses to ' leave a mess'. Some of the language is colloquial which makes it seem more like a monologue, words such as ' nicked' and ' flogged' give it a more of an interview feel than a poem. The tone of the poem is quite matter of fact, the thief seems to feel absolutely no remorse for his/her actions.

However he/she does mention that ' it seems daft now' which could mean that the thief was confused at the time. But then looking at the 3rd verse the thief seems pretty aware of what harm he/she is causing. It is evident from the sigh ' Aah' that he/she has no regrets. The sigh is almost sarcastic, in which case the thief is a very unscrupulous character. The atmosphere created when the snowman is stolen is quite daunting. ' the winter moon' at ' midnight' create a very creepy atmosphere.

The same goes for the atmosphere in ' a strangers bedroom'. This all helps to create a picture in the reader's mind. My overall opinion of the poem is very good. I think it's quite a challenging poem which you have to think

about to understand, and even then you can't be sure whether your interpretation is correct.

There are many questions about the thief's identity which you can only guess. The end question is quite an odd way to end a poem and is not the sort of ending which I expected. It leaves you wondering who the thief is questioning. I think because it's quite confusing, some readers would be put off by it, as you have to think about what's going on. I was slightly disappointed by the vague ending, I was expecting some sort of consequence to the thief's actions.

When I read the title I was expecting something a lot simpler but it's more than relevant to the poem. It's a very clever poem about the way a thief thinks and why they steal, the slice of ice in the brain seems very psychological and is a clever way to describe the coldness or selfishness in someone's mind. I therefore think that Carol Ann Duffy's idea of a thief is quite accurate and realistic and the reason we don't fully understand the poem is because we'll never fully understand why thieves steal.