

Those winter Sundays
and when all the
others



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Both of these poems are sonnets.

A sonnet is a poem that consists of fourteen lines. Each line is an iambic pentameter, this means there are ten syllables, five of which are stressed and the other five are unstressed. Generally there is a very strict rhyme scheme. There are usually very regular breaks in a sonnet, the most common- and the one used in this case- is after the eighth line. The first eight lines are called the octave; this is where the idea is stated.

In both of these poems the octave is a statement about an incident in the relationship. The six lines at the end of a sonnet is called a sestet, which is where the idea is developed. The poets reflect on the events in the sestet. The events in both poems take place in the morning. It is also likely that they both took place on a Sunday.

In "When all the others" it states that the others are away a mass, so this could have been a Sunday morning. "Those Winter Sundays" obviously takes place on a Sunday. One of these poems describes the mother, while the other is about the father. In "Those Winter Sundays" the poet seems to have a cold and insecure relationship with his father. The tone of the poem is bleak and hostile. There are some hard words used in this poem such as 'cracked' 'chronic' and 'blaze' Whereas in "When all the others" the poet has an emotionally secure relationship with his mother.

There is a pleasant and calm atmosphere in this poem. There are pleasant words used in this poem such as 'comfort' and 'gleaming' which shows a good relationship between mother and child. In "Those Winter Sundays" the poet opens with a statement that 'his father got up early' despite the fact

that it was Sunday, proves the fathers love towards his son. His father got up ' in the blue black cold' every Sunday with ' hands that ached' from working in the week. This shows the devotion the father had towards his son, even though he had been working all week, he would still do this every Sunday.

He would sacrifice his body for his son by exposing it to the icy cold. The father did a thankless job, by getting up early; lighting a fire; polishing his shoes on a weekly basis but ' no one ever thanked him'. This shows the father's devotion to his family. The poet uses a few adjectives to describe the cold such as ' blue black' or ' splintering' this shows how cold the temperature was, but also could signify how cold the relationship was between them.

' Cracked' and ' ached' are hard, onomatopoeic words that the poet uses to show the tension and anger between them. If his father didn't make the ' banked fire blaze' then the house would be cold when everyone got up. So he exposes himself to the cold just so the rest of the household can be warm. When the son wakes he hears ' the cold splintering breaking' which is the splitting of sticks burning on the fire. The father would call him ' when the rooms were warm', and the writer would only get up when the father did so, and not before.

When the poet says ' slowly I would rise and dress' this shows that he would wait as long as he could to get up as he was ' fearing the chronic angers of that house' and had fear in encountering his father. This is the only mention of anger in the poem. The poet writes ' that house' which suggests fear, and it shows that he doesn't feel comfortable enough in the house to refer to it

as his own. The poet describes the way he spoke to his father as indifferent, which means he didn't really care. The writer is very dramatic when he uses the metaphor that his father had 'driven out the cold' which exaggerates his father lighting a fire every morning.

This compares the cold and dark to warm and light. The father 'polished his shoes as well' which shows he tried to be considerate. The poet uses repetition to emphasise the point, 'what did I know, what did I know of love's austere and lonely offices? The word 'offices' suggests a job or duties he had to do. The question is rhetorical, and the poet shows remorse when using it.

He feels regret as he no longer has the chance to make amends with his father, and has lost the chance to say thank you for everything his father did for him. In "When all the others" the writer shows the closeness between him and his mother when he says 'I was all hers'. The fact that they 'peeled potatoes' shows that they spent quality time together, unlike the first poem, where the writer tries to avoid his parent. The potatoes 'broke the silence' which proves it was quiet when they peeled the potatoes showing that there's no tension between them. The writer describes the falling of the potatoes with a simile, 'like solder weeping off a soldering iron' which suggests how silent the room was except for the occasional sound of the potato hitting the water. 'Cold comforts set between us' could mean that peeling potatoes is comforting and familiar to them both, and it could also signify that their relationship is silent but secure.

The potatoes are 'gleaming in a bucket of clean water,' the word 'gleaming' shows how dazzling the poet finds these potatoes, but also suggests the pleasantries of this hard task. The boy seems to be happy doing this job as he describes the splashes as being 'pleasant' which shows he is comfortable with the sound of these splashes and doesn't dislike them. In the octave, the poet describes the routine of him and his mother peeling potatoes when he was young, and describes the appearance of the potatoes. In the sestet, we are whisked forwards to a time when the room is full with 'others'. The poet describes what happened about forty years later, when his mother is on her death bed.

We can tell that the poet's mother is extremely ill when we find out that 'the parish priest is at her bedside' which shows she is on the death bed. The poet describes the prayers for the dead as he 'went at hammer and tongs' which means the prayers were being said at great speed, and that the priest was babbling, as this is what often happens in these situations. 'Some were responding' to these prayers 'and some were crying' away from the rest. The poet had an emotional last moment with his parent as he remembers 'her head bent toward my head, her breath in mine.

'Whereas in the first poem, the poet wished he had the opportunity to thank his father, but it was too late. Heaney states that they 'were never closer the whole rest of our lives,' which shows that she didn't live long after that. I think that both of the poems are well written, and use a variety of writing techniques, and a wide selection of words and phrases which are perfect for the setting of the mood. With this in mind, I prefer the first poem, "Those Winter Sundays" written by Robert Hayden. I prefer this poem because I can <https://assignbuster.com/those-winter-sundays-and-when-all-the-others/>

relate to it more. I know what it is like to feel remorseful, like the poet described, and when it is too late to apologise to someone or to talk about an unhappy incident.

I like the had words used in this poem such as ' chronic' and ' ache', I think they set the atmosphere of the poem really well. I also find this poem easier to understand and identify with.