

Song: stop all the
clocks and remember
essay



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Both “ Song: Stop All the Clocks” and “ Remember” both portray a familiar theme, death. On the other hand, the two poems are very similar but they show a different kind of mood and atmosphere. The poet in “ remember” conveys the dead person in an optimistic and constructive way, Rossetti, the poet refuses to be sad.

Auden’s poem however, expresses the poet’s sadness at his friend’s passing and is sorrowful throughout.” Remember” has a structure that consists of fourteen lines written in a form of a sonnet, composed in a single stanza, furthermore there is a strong but irregular rhyme scheme. “ song” clearly tries to build a sense of song in a straightforward, easily remembered structure or shape. This can be shown by the four regular rhyming quatrains (aabb).

Auden’s poem conveys the strength of the speaker’s loss: he feels deep grief. He wants all of us to share this with him; the tone of voice is of someone close, therefore commanding the world to stop. He even wants time and all sounds to cease because, for him, his “ world” has ended:” Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone”. The language in this poem is written simply, more directly and is less complicated. Everyday sounds like dogs barking, pianos playing or funeral drums intrude on his grief, he wants to announce to the world that he has lost someone deeply loved.

In the third stanza he makes his sadness powerfully obvious. The poet expresses his loved one is a moving, geographical image:” he was my North, my south, my East and West”. The poet then refers to the “ song” of the title, revealing how death has taught him a cruel lesson:” I thought that love

would last forever, I was wrong." The last three words are heavy with meaning.

The opening line indicates a clear difference from "song". The poet speaks in first person, looking forward to her own death. She tries not focussing on grief, but asking us and those she loves to recall her in addressing someone very close, a lover or husband perhaps: "you tell me of our future that you planned" significantly the word "Remember" is mentioned five times; unlike in song "song". Rossetti's world does not stop with a death. Rossetti wants to love on in her lover's happy memories. A further meaning underlines this however.

The poet tells us that at the same point in the relationship, she (the speaker) had almost left her lover. There is a slight tone of guilt in this and we sense that she wants her lover to shut this from his memory. This is a major contrast with Auden's poem where he wanted the world to stop and not to remember the grief he has experienced." Remember" has a less direct approach but is more complex than "Stop All The Clocks" by way using archaic sentence structure (e. g nor I half turn.

..) its message is perhaps more ambivalent than Auden's, largely because it is about both death and, possibly the speaker's conscience. The poems end on different notes.

Rossetti wants no sadness after her death while W. H Auden is deeply dejected and pessimistic: "For nothing now can ever come to any good", suggesting that the poet's world can never be happy again. Loss is

everything. Rossetti, by contrast, wants to bury or hide all grief and ugly memory.

The language of Auden's poem creates images which is easy to identify. Rossetti's poem expresses only a few, rather vague metaphors such as the euphemistic " silent land" and " the darkness and corruption", as if she is trying to cover up direct thoughts of death and decay. Auden, however, uses forceful images of everyday reality which we can identify with. Even in the first stanza, we recognise his anger in commands to " cut off the telephone" and " silence the pianos". We can almost see the " aeroplanes circle moaning overhead" and the verb, " moaning" combines the sound of aircraft engines with the poet's pain at his friend's death.

In both poems, though they differ in structure, the poets use a combination of enjambment, punctuation and end - stopped lines very effectively to accentuate a thought or to break it up, or to allow it to flow. In " Remember", for instance, the enjambment fifth and sixth lines set out the complete wish of the poet, reinforced by the seventh line which ends with a strong punctuation mid-point in the line:" Remember me when no more day by day you tell me of our future that you planned: only remember me..." Auden also uses enjambment frequently as in:" silence the pianos and with muffled drum bring out the coffin, let the mourners come, " which captures the outpouring flow of his anger and grief. However, he also varies this with heavily punctuated lines in stanza three:" he was my North, my South, my East and West.

." Or the strong commands of the first line of stanza four:" the stars are not wanted now: put out everyone;" The whole of this stanza suggests a mood and tone of finality, of all life to an end. Rhyme and rhythm play an important part in both poems, within their different structures. Rosetti's sonnet is mainly build upon an abba rhyme pattern with an unrhymed couplet to close and emphasises its final note of advice." Better by far you should forget and smile than that you should remember and be sad".

" Stop All The Clocks" contrast with the regular iambic pentameter rhyme scheme, each quatrain made up of two rhyming couplets. These heavy rhymes give powerful emphasis to Auden's view of death, as in:" Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood. For nothing now can ever come to any good." The irregular numbers syllables still convey the rhythmic power of the poet's thoughts and feelings.

Of the two poems " Remember" is for me the less direct. It has a gentle, more romantic tone, suggesting that it is a kind of love poem, though that love ws not always smooth. " Stop All The Clocks", by contrast, seems to be based on anger that a person has been taken away, overall, I find " Song: Stop All The Clocks" the more effective, mainly because it is more immediate poem in impact which I find easier to understand and to identify, reinforced by a strong rhythm.