

An ancient gesture essay sample

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There are many differences and similarities between the poem "An Ancient Gesture" by Edna St. Vincent Millay and "The Sirens" by Donald Finkel. The poets use the legend of Ulysses as the background of the poems. The rhyming schemes are very obvious in the poems and they create fluent to the reader. The poets use allusions and style differently but they use the style to reveal the theme.

Although "An Ancient Gesture" and "The Sirens" allude to the story of Ulysses, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Donald Finkel use allusion differently. "An Ancient Gesture" was alluding to the story between Penelope and Ulysses. The poet compared herself to Penelope. "I thought, as I wiped my eyes on the corner of my apron I did this too". The repetitions in the poem emphasized the pain between Penelope, Ulysses and the poet herself. Ulysses cried to show his sadness, and Penelope cried to show her pain during weaving. Millay wants the reader to realize that Penelope was the one who suffered the most. On the other hand, "The Sirens" alludes to the story between Ulysses and the sirens indirectly. The poem was written from the point of view of the sirens seeing Ulysses crossing the sea.

In addition, the two poets use different style to write the poems. In "An Ancient Gesture", the Millay wants the reader to feel sorry for Penelope. She expressed the poem in a very calm tone, just like telling a story. Also, the rhyme of the poem was easily located. The rhyming words were linked to emphasize the tone of the poem. "Night-tight", "year-tear", and "simplified-cried" were used to stress the depressing feeling of the characters.

Alternatively, in "The Sirens", Finkel uses enjambment in the poem because it alludes to the sirens who sang songs. Also, Finkel emphasized the allusion

by using many personifications. Sea turn in his bed” and “The wind took it, and he heard”. He personified sea and wind because they are related to the sirens that were sea creatures. In the last stanza, “Now in a sea of wheat he rows” was a form of metaphor. It created imagery for the reader to address the allusion of the sirens.

Furthermore, the two poets use the style and language to bring out the theme of the poems. In “Ancient Gesture”, the poet expresses a sadness atmosphere to the reader. She comments that Ulysses’ sadness is dishonest because “Ulysses did this too but only as a gesture”. However, the poet emphasizes that Penelope’s feeling is true and deep, “Penelope, who really cried”. On the other hand, in “The Sirens”, the poet compares Ulysses and the sirens. From the sirens point of view, they think that they win over Ulysses. No matter how strong and powerful Ulysses is, he is helpless and danger in the sea. Conversely, Ulysses thinks that he is the winner who conquers all battle in the land. From the two poems, they poets want the reader to realize that same story told by different people could have different meaning and interpretations.