

# Close analysis of a fable for tomorrow



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Close Analysis of " A Fable for Tomorrow" " A Fable for Tomorrow" is a short but rich piece of writing. In the matter of six paragraphs the language shifts from fairytale-like to eerie to intellectual. While the writing plays on a variety of emotions through the use of word choice and sentence structure, the narration itself remains detached until the final two paragraphs when Carson's purpose becomes clear.

The piece begins with a line reminiscent of many traditional fairy tales. Carson uses the introduction 'There was once a town' in the same manner as 'Once upon a time', to indicate that the story has a distant and probably fictional quality to it. In contrast, she immediately provides a specific and real setting—a farming town in the American countryside. Once Carson establishes the setting, she proceeds to vividly describe the colors and plant and animal life.

For the first two paragraphs, the sentences are complex, and the writing is lyrical. Commas allow for smooth transitions and maintain the length of the sentences while creating a poetic sound. Words such as harmony, prosperous, delighted, and beauty highlight the positive nature of these paragraphs as well. The colorful description takes a turn in the third paragraph. As the story turns ugly, Carson turns the actual prose ugly. Sentences shorten and become more limited in their content. Colons, semicolons, and dashes reduce the lyrical quality found in at the beginning of the fable. Even the description, so vibrant and beautiful at the outset, disappears.

Carson relies on a new set of words to set the tone for this portion of the fable. Blight, evil, and illness all help to characterise the change to a negative mood. As the fable continues and the tone becomes dark and

disturbing, sentences adopt a droning quality. Carson begins to use alliteration, which actually adds an element of style to the choppy sentences. Mysterious maladies, stricken suddenly, and strange stillness emphasise the horror of her words and make them stick in the mind.

By the end of the fourth paragraph, it is as though the essay itself is in despair. At this point, Carson inserts the line, 'The birds, for example-where had they gone' This question demonstrates the confusion that accompanies the despair in this section of text. Throughout this paragraph, repeated references are made to the lack of sound and lack of activity. Carson even lists the many varieties of birds that no longer contribute to the natural music of the town. This serves to exaggerate the silence because most readers can imagine the sound of at least one of these specific birds singing in the morning. Her sentence, 'It was a spring without voices' is simple, but given that spring symbolizes a time of birth and renewal, it is also quite sinister.

The fable is told in third-person until paragraph five, when it switches to first person. The narrative voice seems like an omnipotent presence until then. It describes each scene-positive and negative-without emotion. It knows the small details of the environment as well as the questions of the townspeople. And it withholds judgment or opinion.

The tone changes significantly as the author explains that 'This town does not actually exist.' Carson takes this opportunity to insert herself and her knowledge and opinions. The sentence 'This book is an attempt to explain' gives her writing an academic or sermon-like quality and conveys to the reader that she has a bigger agenda than writing a fable. Both word choice

and sentence structure effectively denote the many changes in mood and meaning throughout the text.