

Poetry analysis

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Desolation of Winter; the Anticipation of Spring The darkness of winter has passed, but it left behind a sinister sexual repression that the speaker of the poem struggles to fight. Her heart aches for the passion once felt, a passion possibly reincarnated by the coming of spring. But as February lingers, so too does the restricting confines of a cold bed tainted by lonely nights. With that said, a close explication of Margaret Atwood's "February" will be taken to illustrate how Atwood applies thematic language, imagery, and an unconventional rhyme scheme to develop and reinforce the poem's message.

To begin with, the speaker of the poem utilizes the extended metaphor of associating the twilight month of February—a time of quiet and darkness before spring—with the dissociative and unendurable oppression imposed by the sexual repression of winter. The longing the speaker holds for sexual activity stands out in stark contrast to the daily morning reminders that the warmth of lovemaking has been replaced by the "black fur sausage" (Atwood line 3) of her increasingly needy cat.

She notes that "it's his / way of telling whether or not I'm dead" (line 5-6) but adds to her level of depression because he, "breathing his breath / of burped-up meat and musty sofas, / [is] purring [on her chest] like a washboard" (9-11), while her lover maintains a frigid distance. She has come to the realization that "it's all about sex and territory, / which are what will finish us off / in the long run" (13-15). The crushing weight of winter has brought with it an almost self-imposed sexual repression, where "famine / crouches in the bed sheets.../and the wind chill factor hits / thirty below, and pollution pours / out of our chimneys to keep us warm" (20-24). An almost greater betrayal cannot be made. The only passion left to keep them warm

<https://assignbuster.com/poetry-analysis-essay-samples-2/>

at night is the brazen heat of the fires in her hearth, a fire more amorous and sultry than any heat that may be left in her relationship.

February, the month of romance and emotional expression has become the “month of despair / with a skewered heart in the centre” (25-26). It’s a slap in the face, that spring is about to near and the winter of her heart is as dark as the winter almost passed. In many ways, it is the unconventional rhyme scheme that serves to highlight the jarring and stagnant manner of the speaker of the poem. Desperately searching for love and comfort, but only gaining such from the housecat. She is rhyme-incapable, there is no passion left from which to form a melody pleasant enough to flow in conventional form. Atwood is clever, here, utilizing the unconventional rhyme scheme to portray the discordance the speaker feels at the depression tainting her life. As the speaker shoves the purring cat from her face, she makes a final demand for “ a little optimism / [to] get rid of death. Celebrate increase. [And] make it be spring” (33-34). Despite her current lot in a cold and desolate life, she still has hope that she can make a change. That, perhaps, once the weather outside turns to spring, she too can reinstate the passion in her reality and feel as alive as the blossoming flowers.

Overall, Margaret Atwood’s “ February” weaves an intricate tale of depression, one brought on by the cold confines of a dark and desolate winter while maintaining discordant imagery and an unconventional rhyme scheme to serve as an external reinforcement to the reader of the speaker’s inner turmoil.

Works Cited.

Atwood, Margaret. “ February.”