

How do we forgive our fathers: textual analysis essay



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As human beings we are often reluctant to let go of our anger and unwilling to forgive others. This becomes especially true in the case of loved ones or family members. The poem, " How Do We Forgive Our Fathers? ," written by Dick Lourie, addresses the different dilemmas associated with a child forgiving his/her father.

In his six-stanza poem, the poet discusses how a child should forgive their father for traumatic events imposed on the child. This includes reasons for forgiveness, appropriate time to forgive, and whether or not to even forgive at all. Detailed through the different stanzas, the poem suggests that until one learns how to appropriately forgive another for wrongful behavior, they will never be able to let go of resentment and find inner peace. In the first stanza, the poet approaches the idea of a child forgiving their father for wrongdoing. The first line states, " How do we forgive our Fathers? " This line, being the same as the title, introduces the topic of the poem to the reader.

In doing so, it suggests a father has traumatized his child through horrific events and the child does not know how to come to terms with it and find forgiveness in their heart. The poet continues the thought in the second line, which states, " Maybe in a dream. " These words imply that the child does not want to forgive their father since a dream is far from reality. Also, the child, not wanting to forgive his/her father, displays some of the anger he/she has toward their father.

The third line states, " Do we forgive our Fathers for leaving us too often or forever. Here, the child is hinting that one of the traumatic events he/she has

endured is abandonment. The fourth line states, " when we were little? " This line simply adds details of the father's absence and suggests that at an early adolescent age the child's father abandoned him. The full stanza portrays a child filled with resentment and unsure of forgiving his/her father for disappearing from the child's life at a young age. The second stanza in the poem paints a more detailed picture of cruel events the child was subjected to by his/her father in early years of life. The fifth line says, " maybe for scaring us with unexpected rage.

" This implies the father may have had a drinking problem since alcoholics tend to display violent behavior unexpectedly while under the influence. The poet extends the idea of a hot-tempered alcoholic in lines six and seven which state, " or making us nervous (6) because there never seemed to be any rage there at all (7). " This is say that the violent outbursts occurred on a regular basis and even though the father was not violent at certain moments the child knew it was the calm before the storm. The idea that this happened regularly further emphasizes that the father had an addiction to alcohol and his rage was the outcome of it; all of which, portray horrendous events a child lived through in their youth as a result of an unfit father. The poet addresses issues of the child observing an unhealthy and abusive relationship between his/her father and mother in the third stanza. The eighth line states, " Do we forgive our Fathers for marrying or not marrying our Mothers? " These words insinuate that the father treated the child's mother badly or was abusive to her and that she deserved better.

This is so considering the only reason to forgive someone for marrying another implies they treated that person improperly. Likewise, having to <https://assignbuster.com/how-do-we-forgive-our-fathers-textual-analysis-essay/>

forgive someone for not marrying another simply displays how the other person never received what he or she deserved in the course of the relationship. Additionally, since the father was violent, it is correct in assuming he was physically as well as emotionally abusive towards the mother. The poet further emphasizes the above statement in line nine, which states, " For Divorcing or not divorcing our Mothers? With the same reasoning, this line uses the contrasting view of divorce to solidify the fact that the father was abusive to the mother and she deserves better.

Reiterating the same idea further implies the seriousness and magnitude of the abusive relationship. In the fourth stanza of the poem, the poet depicts the true personality of the father and displays additional traumatic events the child tolerated as a youth. In the tenth line it states, " And shall we forgive them for their excesses of warmth or coldness? The fact that he is a cold man who shows an excess of warmth at times leans towards the idea that he recognized his faults and tried to correct them in a false manner. In doing so, it becomes apparent that the father was not a loving and caring man and over exaggerated his affection in a clever attempt to disguise his emotionless state towards his family.

Line eleven says, " Shall we forgive them for pushing or leaning. " The term pushing may refer to the father being overly aggressive and pushing the child to be or do something he/she does not want to. Leaning may refer to the father's preference in wanting his child to be something their not; both of which, imply that the father was a bully and never fully accepted the child for who he/she was. Lines twelve and thirteen state, " for shutting doors

(12), for speaking through walls (13). " Shutting doors and speaking through walls refer to the father's violence and abusiveness.

This implies that the father would yell loud enough for his voice to be heard from room to room and in his rage would leave and slam the doors shut. Lines fourteen and fifteen say, " or never speaking (14), or never being silent (15). " These words emphasize the resentment and anger the child has towards his/her father. It hints that no matter what the father said or didn't say it would never be good enough for the child, namely, he would always be wrong and any type of apology or attempt to make things right would be a wasted effort. This stanza sums up the horrible personality and abuse the father put his child through, which ultimately dug his grave in the child's eyes.

In the fifth stanza, the poet touches on forgiveness as a way of dealing with the resentment and anger the father has bestowed upon the child. The sixteenth lines states, " Do we forgive our Fathers in our age or in theirs. " This suggests a question of whether or not the child should forgive the father when he/she is ready or in the father's time of need. The poet further emphasizes this thought in line seventeen which states, " or their deaths. " This clearly indicates the resentment and anger the child has for his/her father.

By waiting until the father's death the child forces the father to live a remorseful and shameful life as means of retaliation for the pain the father has caused the child. The poet stresses the anger and resentment in line eighteen which states, " saying it to them or not saying it. " By not informing

the father of his/her forgiveness, the child sees this as a way of releasing his resentment and making the father pay for his actions. Moreover, the child displays his/her anger, as he is not sure the father deserves a face-to-face apology. In the sixth and final stanza, the poet addresses the issue of letting go and coming to terms with the past. The nineteenth line states, " If we forgive our Fathers what is left? " This line suggests the outcome of forgiveness.

The words what is left described the release of resentment and anger. In turn, there are no hard feelings left to harbor over in the child and the child is able to find inner peace and happiness within his/her self. Furthermore, the child is allowed to continue forward with his/her now unsuspected life. The six stanza, 19 line poem, " how do we forgive our Fathers," is an illustration of the effects and difficulties associated with a child forgiving his/her father for a hurtful upbringing.

The poem addresses issues of resentment, anger, and how to deal with it through means of forgiveness. Through different harmful events a father has placed upon his child, the poet is able to show that confronting and accepting your past through forgiveness is the solution to freedom and peace of mind.