

Compare presents
from my aunts in
pakistan by moniza
alvi



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In 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' the speaker is a girl who has one English parent and one parent from Pakistan. As a result she feels torn between the two very different cultures. She does not feel at home in either England or Pakistan. She shows this by saying "I longed for denim and corduroy" When trying on the Saris and Salwar Kameezes. She feels English in Pakistan and Pakistani in England "I could not rise out of its fire half-English" This quote means that she can rise up out of the Pakistani clothes because she is not fully Pakistani or English.

Another quote that shows this is "I tried on each satin-silken top- as alien in the sitting room" This means that wearing the Pakistani clothes made her feel out of place in the English sitting room. She feels similar to Tatanhulu Afrika in 'Nothings Changed' because he is also stuck between two cultures the 'blacks' and 'whites'. This is shown by "Whites only inn" This quote demonstrates the metaphorical barrier between the two cultures. The speaker in 'Nothings Changed' is a black man who returns to district six.

In this poem the conflict between the two cultures is caused by the decades of apartheid government in South Africa trying to separate the 'blacks' and 'whites'. Guard at the gatepost, Whites only inn" This shows the segregation as although apartheid has officially finished guards stand at the doors of many of the restaurants to prevent 'blacks' entering. The poem is set in district six. This was an area of Capetown at the foot of Table Mountain. It was home to many different cultures and peoples from all over the world. But by 1966 the apartheid government classified district six as a 'whites only' area. Between 1966 and 1980 60, 000 people were forcibly removed and their houses burned to the ground.

This injustice and the separation that still remains makes the poet feel very angry at the situation that he finds himself in. "hands burn for a stone a bomb to shiver down the glass" This shows his anger as his hands are metaphorically burning with rage. He is so angry he wants to have a bomb to blow up the 'whites only inn' to shatter the glass that is separating the 'blacks' and 'whites'. He feels a great sense of injustice at the way that the whites are so much better off than the blacks, he shows this by juxtaposing the "up market haute cuisine" From the "whites only inn"

With the "bunny chows" From the "working mans cafe" This shows the split as the whites receive the nice haute cuisine from a posh restaurant, while the blacks are eating bunny chows on a plastic tabletop. The poets have chosen different objects and events to represent the different cultures and show the clash or conflict between them. In 'Presents from my aunts in Pakistan' the poet describes how she is opening her gifts from her Pakistani relatives like "a salwar kameez peacock blue" and juxtaposing them with "...cardigans from marks and Spencer" and "...denim and corduroy"

This shows up the difference between the two cultures as the salwar kameez is brightly coloured and highly decorated while the denim and corduroy are less glamorous but more practical. Many things represent the cultures in 'Nothings Changed'. He used the differences in the foods of the two cultures as I showed earlier in the essay. Another piece of imagery that the poet uses is in the third stanza when the "grass and weeds" Could be used to describe the blacks as they are considered common and continually being trodden down and removed. Whereas he says that the whites as the "Incipient Port Jackson trees"

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Which are trees that have been imported from overseas. They are bigger and more beautiful than the surrounding vegetation and so can symbolise the whites that have come from abroad and dominated the native black populations. The two poems have a very different structure. In 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' the poet uses a clever structure because it makes you feel that she is writing the poem as she is opening the presents. She does this by going through each gift in turn describing them as they are opened. She then moves on to later in the day when she is showing her new presents to one of her school friends.

Also things such as "a salwar kameez peacock blue and another" This adds to the reader's perception that she is writing the poem as the presents are opened because the 'and another' makes it sound like she is moving between the presents. The way that the spacing of the words is set out is designed to make the poem look deliberately muddled. I believe that this is to show how the poet is feeling undecided and confused about her nationality. The poet creates emphasis on certain words and phrases by separating the lines of the poem. There is a different, more emotional structure to 'Nothing's Changed'.

As the poet's rage builds and becomes more involved in the poem, the structure of the poem becomes less defined. For example in the first stanza there is a regular structure but in the final stanza the number of words and syllables changes in each line in no obvious pattern. The fourth stanza is probably the most important stanza in the whole poem. The poet shows this by making it just three lines long "no sign says it is: but we know where we belong" It is so important as it sums up the whole message of the poem. It <https://assignbuster.com/compare-presents-from-my-aunts-in-pakistan-by-moniza-alvi/>

says that although the apartheid government has left power ' no sign says it is'.

The black peoples of South Africa are aware that the problem of racism still stands in their way ' we know where we belong'. This is the theme of the whole poem and those three lines sum it up really well. The poet in ' Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' uses many poetic devices to make the poem more effective. She uses nature to describe many of the clothes in the poem such as " Peacock blue," "... an orange split open" and " apple-green" She does this so that the reader can picture the colours of the garments easily because they can associate the colours with items that they see around them.

The poet uses the repetition of the word ' I' to emphasise the fact that it is her opening the presents and her memories of Pakistan. This is effective because the poem would not be as powerful if the poet was writing in the third-person because being written from Moniza Alvis' point of view makes it easier for the reader to put themselves in her shoes. Another effective poetic device is when the poet juxtaposes Pakistani and English clothes she lavishly describes the ornate nature of the Pakistani clothes such as " glistening like an orange split open" hile when she describes British things they are either made to sound boring or are not described at all.

This helps to see the two different cultures, we see the bright colours and clothes of Pakistan and duller clothing of the modern western culture. There are also many effective poetic devices in ' Nothings Changed'. One example of this is the repetition of ' and' in the second stanza. This is effective as it

helps to give that part of the poem a regular rhythm. It also helps to emphasise the fact that all parts of his body are angered at the state of District Six. The poet does not use any rhyme in the poem.

I think that this is because using rhyme would lower the tone of the poem losing the important message that the poet is trying to get across. There is quite a lot of onomatopoeic language in the poem. Words like flaring, bomb and crunch help to keep the highly emotional nature of the poem. The poet uses lots of commas in the poem. This is so that he can control the speed and rhythm of the poem. The poet uses the glass window of the 'whites only inn' to symbolise the metaphorical barrier between the blacks and whites. This is because you can see through it but you can't walk through it, also all of the blacks want to shatter it.

But probably the best piece of poetic language in the poem is the very last line "Nothings changed" This is so powerful as it sums up the situation saying that nothing has changed as the barriers still remain although the government that put them in place has left power. The use of language by the poet also influences the poems mood. In 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' her mood is one of confusion over her nationality and where she belongs this is shown by "half English" and "and I was there- of no fixed nationality," There is also a slight sense of frustration in the poem of her dual nationality "was alien in the sitting room"

This shows how she feels alienated from both cultures and how she longs to be either English or Pakistani but not both. But in 'Nothings Changed' there is a very different mood. The main mood is one of anger and injustice at the

fact that nothing has changed and apartheid lives on in District Six as in much of South Africa. "hands burn for a stone, a bomb" This shows his anger because his hands are burning with desire to pick up a stone or a bomb to throw at someone, he is burning with rage at the reality that racism is still alive in South Africa, His anger has built up so much that he wants to attack the barriers dividing the races.

Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' shows how it is hard for children of mixed nationality growing up in Britain. Trying to fit in with " jeans and corduroy", while also trying to please her family. It shows us how these children have to put up with the ignorance of their culture, like her school friend who wanted to see her " weekend clothes" When shown the ornate Salwar Kameez. Families such as Moniza Alvi have to struggle to reach England and when they arrive they are met with the huge culture clash between the English and Pakistani traditions and ways of life. Nothings Changed' shows us the harsh realities of racism in South Africa even after apartheid.

It teaches us how the decades of apartheid have left a lasting impression on the white and black populations of South Africa. The whites have got used to the advantages to them of apartheid while the black population has become used to being persecuted and segregated just because of their skin colour. ' Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' have taught me that it is very hard for people of mixed-nationality living in our society and how we have to be considerate of their difficulties in living in two different cultures at the same time.

It has taught me how we have to learn more about the Pakistani and other cultures instead of living in ignorance. I believe that this is one reason that we study R. E. in school, to increase our knowledge of other people's religions and cultures. 'Nothings Changed' has shown me that if people have lived with something like racism for decades it will take a lot of hard work to change peoples actions and beliefs after the law or barriers have been removed. It shows the anger and resentment that black people feel towards whites in an apartheid regime.

It shows the reader how much of a struggle it is for blacks to receive equal rights in South Africa from the white population. In conclusion 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' and 'Nothings changed' are similar in the way that they show the problems that can arise when two conflicting cultures meet. The two poems show the problems in different ways. 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' shows this indirectly in the form of a girl opening gifts from her Pakistani relatives. While the poet in 'Nothings Changed' uses a more emotional direct approach to the issue.