

Admiration in carol
anne duffy's ' before
you were mine' and
seamus heaney's
'fol...



Both ' Before you were mine' by Carol Anne Duffy and ' Follower' by Seamus Heaney present the theme of admiration through their poems. As they both capture the parent-child relationship through the child's perspective showcasing how they each viewed their parent as a role model whilst growing up.

Both poems express the admiration they have for their parent through the use of idolizing and complementing their appearance. In ' Before you were mine' Duffy describe her mother's clothing as she wore a " polka dot dress" which " blows round your legs. Marilyn." Here Duffy is admiring her mother's youth through her glamorous way of dressing and calls her " Marilyn." Which is not her mother's name yet the name of the famous Marilyn Monroe who was well known for her scandalous and eventful lifestyle, therefore Duffy purposely uses " Marilyn" as a metaphor for her own mother's amusing life. " Marilyn" was also purposely used due to the fact that she was admired by millions of people globally this is a representation of to what extent Duffy admires her mother, making it clear to the reader the exceeding and unconditional love she has for her. Alternatively, some readers may argue that this wasn't Duffy's purpose as even though Marilyn did live a great life the tragic figure also committed suicide, this devastating loss could be a representation of the devastation that happens later on in Duffy's life as her mother which she once greatly admired due to her " bold" character is no longer like this. Whilst, in " follower" Heaney describes his father as having " shoulders globed like a full sail strung" this simile emphasizes the nautical imagery which references a " sail" guiding a boat. Perhaps this may mean his father is guiding him in the right direction in life and that is why Heaney

has so much gratitude towards him. On the other hand, some may believe that because Heaney wrote this poem when he was older, he wasn't that close with his parents, therefore the " sail" may refer to him being pulled back by his father. Alternatively, the " sail" harnesses the wind therefore that could be a representation of his father harnessing the horse which he uses to plough with, this may suggest that the speaker is complimenting his father's strengths exposing the admiration he has for his physical attributes.

Both poems are structured in a way to showcase the progression of the admiration and the love they have for their parent. In ' Before you were mine' Duffy uses a controlled structure with 4 verse and 5 lines within each verse, the controlling nature of the structure could resemble the controlling nature of Duffy towards her mum. This is reiterated through the use of the cyclical structure, as the poem is called ' before you were mine' and the last line of the poem also repeats that, the repetitive use of this phrase makes her controlling behavior apparent. This is also due to the use of the possessive pronoun " mine" which implicates the possession she feels that she has over her mother. This may seem quite odd to the average reader as it is bizarre that a child would have more power over the parent as she also uses words like " sweetheart" when referring to her mother, which a parent would conventionally say to the child not the other way around., however in context to the poem it is made clear that Duffy feels overprotective of her mother. This could be why she uses possessive pronouns constantly throughout the poem as she admires her mother's lifestyle so much that she wants the best for her. In contrast Heaney doesn't seem to be controlling over his father however the admiration he feels towards him makes it clear

that he wants to make him proud. In ' follower' Heaney constantly refers to his dad as ' father' the fact that he addresses his dad in such a formal way could show how he admires his father and his work therefore feels the need to call him in a respectful manner. On the other hand, it could present the distance that Heaney feels from his father as when he was younger he would admire his work on the farm but as the poem and his life progresses his change in career plan means that he can no longer admire his father in the way that he used to. The fact that the first 3 stanzas are about his " father" only could also imply that he puts his father before himself to portray the recognition he feels that his father deserves. Also in ' follower' Heaney uses half rhymes such as " plough" and " follow" which may be suggest that he hasn't fulfilled the desire to follow in his father's footsteps on the farm which he once admired to do. It is also quite ironic as Heaney believed in preserving traditions however him not working on the farm is a big contradiction to that.

Towards the end of both poems the admiration they have for their parents is quite ambiguous, as the exciting nature they felt when looking up to their parent when they were younger turns quite uncertain when they grow up. By the end of ' Before you were mine' Duffy feels that all the admiring features her mother once had are gone as they all happened " before [she] I was born." The use of caesura exposes how Duffy had to pause and acknowledge the fact that it was her fault that her mother doesn't live an amazing lifestyle anymore. In some way you could say that Duffy idolizes her mother too much that she feels as if it's her fault that her mother's lifestyle isn't like it used to be rather than realizing this is the normality of becoming a parent

and growing up. Her childlike nature is reinforced in the last line where she lists that her glamour lasts as she “ sparkles and waltz and laugh” Duffy purposely uses the rule of three to emphasize all the positive attributes her mother has, this is also made apparent due to the repetition of “ and” as it conveys that Duffy has too many kind qualities to list exposing the length of admiration Duffy has for her mother. However, in ‘ Follower’ Heaney moves the tense to present in the last line where he says “ but today” the unexpected turning of tense could resemble the unexpected turning of their relationship. Heaney also identifies a role reversal as he repeats the word “ stumbling” but this time it’s about his father not himself. The role reversal could imply that the son has reached maturity therefore there has been a change in role as Heaney doesn’t admire his father as much as he used to. The last line of the poem states that he “ will not go away” this could be interpreted both in a negative or positive manner as the tone of the poem cannot be identified. Which means some reader may interpret that he feels frustrated and annoyed that his father keeps following him, whilst others may feel that he is glad that his father has stuck by his side and that all those years that Heaney admired his father’s work can now be reversed as his father can now be proud of his work and admire him.

Overall, both poems make it clear that as a child is growing they admire their parents and their lifestyle however it is more uncertain when it comes to being an adult. As Duffy admired her mother when she was younger but as she grew older she didn’t as much and Heaney perhaps felt more distant from his father who was once his role model by the end of the poem.