

# Poetry makes me aware of painful realities essay sample

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The well-known Australian poet, Bruce Dawe, was one of the most inspirational and sincere poets of our time. Basing his poetry on recollections of world events and issues around him, he allows his readers to become aware of painful realities facing humanity in everyday life. This was apparent as he clearly expresses his opinion of abortion, in the poem *The Wholly Innocent*. He also indicates to his readers the painful process mankind faces when they are losing a loved family member, in the poem *Katrina*.

*A Victorian Hangman Tells His Love* shows the pain from an executioner. The poem *Homecoming* retells the agonising existence of the end of war and the poem *Life-cycle* shows the religiously followed football in Victoria. It was through these various poems that the reader was able to grasp an insight of Bruce Dawe's world and the tormenting physical existence he has put before us. The eight-verse poem, *The Wholly Innocent*, was a poem narrated by an infant. The poem tells of an unborn infant who was unable to walk, see the sky or smell fresh air.

The unborn child also tells of how it unable to decide on their extermination, hence was unknown to everyone. The unmanured baby stresses the fact that the person who destroyed them has caused genocide. The baby tells of how it never will have a name and will never be able to cry aloud. The unborn infant narrates that by having an abortion, they have killed their child hence, the anonymous baby will never be able to revel at the stars or sun. The title, *The Wholly Innocent*, means the completely blameless; thus the child was entirely faultless and never had a chance.

The meaning of this poem was that having an abortion was preposterous as they were giving someone life and then taking it away taking before it have a chance and because of this, they have become annihilators. Dawe used many techniques throughout the poem *The Wholly Innocent*. Frequently, all through the poem, repetition was evident, such as I never walked abroad in air, I never saw the sky. The fact that I never was repeated caused the mood to change, as the reader was instantly aware that the poem was spoken from the infants' point of view.

The poem flowed using an A B A B rhyming scheme. A paradox was evident in the line too early and too late as it contradicts itself. Dawe used a simile, when he stated defenceless as a lamb, which compares the infants, who was unable to protect itself, to a lamb, who also are unable to protect themselves from being slaughtered. Not only does the poem *The Wholly Innocent* indicate a distressing aspect in life, the poem *Katrina* also expresses this. This poem was told from a father's point of view, and has composed this for his daughter Katrina.

Katrina was about a 2-month-old twin, who was pendent in hospital, feeding off tubes of glucose. Her parents were unsure of her progress towards better heath and had done all they could to save her life. They were dreading a phone call from the nurse, who would tell them wether their daughter Katrina had made it or not. Her parents also grieve over her sickness as her body continues to waste. As Katrina continued to battle on, they were still unsure if she was going to survive.

The poem Katrina was based on an experience Dawe had, hence, Katrina was his daughter and he was telling the poem from his point of view. The meaning of this poem was that if your time on earth is up, then there is nothing you can do about it, but let fate take over. There were various techniques present in the poem Katrina. Is your life opening again or closing finally? Was a rhetorical question that was directed at Katrina, asking whether she was going to make it or not. A simile was used when it stated your life shines like a jewel.

This showed that Katrina's life was exceedingly unique and appeared bright. This poem was written as one stanza and consisted of 22 lines. The poem A Victorian Hangman Tells His Love was unlike Katrina as it told the story of a national event, rather than a personal aspect. This poem was based on Ronald Ryan, who was the last person to be hanged in Australia. The poem was told from the hangman's point of view, also known as the murderer. The poem tells of a hangman who wants to be forgiven for having to hang the accused.

The hangman was wearing welder's goggles, a two-piece tracksuit and a green cap. He told that even if he weren't the hangman, he still would of come, dressed in a suit, just like all the other viewers. He then asks the accused if he was able to tie his hands to the side of his body. He told the accused that he knows what he's feeling and tied the rope around his neck. The hangman adjusted the canvas hood and the media were prepared to take photos. With the pull of the hangman's lever the trap door opened and the accused left this world and move on.

The hangman then states, that the accused would be the evening's headlines. The title A Victorian Hangman Tells His Love unmistakably means a Victorian hangman, who told his love, in this case he meant the accused, concerning how much he disliked murdering innocents, yet only continued to do so as it was his job. The meaning of this poem was that if you commit a crime, you must pay for your actions, However in this case, Dawe made it clear that murdering someone was indecorous as you only receive once chance at life.

Dawe used many techniques during this poem. Similes were recurrently used, for example, in the line, two-piece track-suit, welder's goggles and a green cloth cap like some gross bee, here he compared himself to a abhorrent bee. The poems Homecoming and Life-cycle were two completely different poems with different meanings. The poem Homecoming was relating to the Vietnam War. It told the true story of the soldiers who were finding the other injured and wasted soldiers and were loading them into trucks, convoys and piling them onto Grants. They were zipping up their green plastic bags, giving their names and heading home.

They flew back, crossed the Pacific and over to Australia, there home. As they exited from the plane those who were left behind in Australia cheered them on. The poem Life-cycle on the other hand tells of how Victorians were influenced by football. It also shows how football has become a religion and was apart of the general cycle of life of a Victorian resident. The poem tells that from birth children were encouraged to barrack for their favourite

football team. The word “homecoming” generally implies a celebration for a great accomplishment, with a return to family.

It would further conjure a sense of anticipation for the return of a loved one whom has a real identity and a place in the hearts of those awaiting his arrival. However, the title operates ironically because the “homecoming” described in the poem was related to death, mourning and loss and the arrival of a nameless body was quite different from the sincere joy extended to a loved one. The meaning of the poem Homecoming was that in the end, some soldiers were capable to arrive back to their home in Australia in one piece, hence Dawe was against war and believes it's pointless as you lose lives and return home discouraged.

The title Life-cycle invokes a continuous event. The meaning of the poem Life-cycle was that football to Victorians was a religious routine, which they follow, however it shouldn't be regarded as the same importance as the bible. A technique used in Homecoming was repetition. By using repetition of the suffix -ing in bringing, zipping, picking, tagging and grieving described the actions of the soldiers, establishing irony. The verbs also implied life and vitality. Repetition was used effectively to highlight the shocking brutality that has been displayed in all wars throughout history.

Dawe also uses vivid visual imagery to emphasise the emotional damage caused to friends a family through the loss of a loved one, a deep discomfort that was often left unrecorded in the history records. Telegrams tremble like leaves from a wintering tree and the spider swings in his bitter geometry,

illustrated the arbitrary grief that affects those who receive notices.

Personification of the telegrams shows them as trembling. The alliance of telegrams to leaves falling from a wintering tree was an effectual image used, providing the reader with some idea of the tremendous number of dead soldiers.

The final line of the poem creates the idea of paradox, further confirming the assumption of insensible life loss, a general theme. They're bringing them home now, too late because the chance to save their lives has now past. However, it is also too early since all these soldiers are too young, leaving behind an unfulfilled life. By using the technique of paradox, Dawe makes a final attempt at clarifying international misunderstanding of war as favourable. In the poem *Life-cycle* on the other hand, Dawe used the language of football thoroughly: barracking...

Carn ... streamers... scarfed ... Demons... Saints... ladder... final term... three-quarter-time... boundary fences. Dawe's tone I was infrequently mocking. He respected the strength of football's occupied life and the life-sustaining characteristics it offered. He knew it is a life-giving religion offering an initiation, a journey, a wedding, a honeymoon and salvation. He does not deny its worth nor does he fully side with its rituals. He respects the fact that League football is a perpetually renewing mythology and although the dancers change, the dance goes on.

Dawe purposefully made the last word of the poem salvation. This word generally associated with heaven and the fact that living a good, Christian

life will lead to our salvation and we will go to heaven, not hell. But it was not from God that these people gain their salvation – they see salvation in the strong football player who has come to play for their team and could bring the team victory. In conclusion, it was quite evident that the talented Bruce Dawe basis his poetry on memories of world events and the issues that mankind confront during their everyday routines.

It was through the poems *The Wholly Innocent*, *Katrina*, *A Victorian Hangman Tells His Love*, *Homecoming* and *Life-cycle* that opened the public's eyes to the misfortunes of society. Dawe challenges society, pointing out all of the unfairness and hardships that ordinary people face every day. He shows us how we can become selfish and materialistic, and how we can become so involved in something that we no longer recognise the beauties of life and nature. He makes these morals accessible to all people through his poetry, communicating his ideas and ethics accurately.