

Icarus poetry analysis flashcard

Profession, Poet



People's eyes are never focused on what is in front of them. Instead, their eyes are forever astray, looking at their other desires. Yet an irony exists. Even when they obtain their desires, they are never content. Never satisfied with what they have. Always grasping with their greedy claws. In the poem "Icarus" by Edward Field, Field displays this human fault perfectly. The story of Icarus has been told in uncountable number of ways. Most are about the love a father has for his son and the grief he experiences after a crippling loss. Most are about the effects of disobedience.

Yet none focuses on the aftermath of the boy's "death" and human nature. Writing about Icarus, the boy who fell out of the sky after he escaped from the dreaded Minotaur, Field deftly maneuvers his poem to hint at such a fault. Transporting Icarus into the modern age, Field uses irony, symbols, and style to transmit the fact that people are always greedy and insatiable. The setting of "Icarus" by Field transmits the ultimate irony in this poem – the fact that such a mundane modern world is mixed with the glorious splendor and adventure of the past. A past that Icarus cannot forget and desires.

Field makes the poem take place in a place where Icarus "rented a house and tended the garden." He goes on commuter train and wears gray suits. The portrayal is that of absolute commonness – no sense of identity, no sense of being special. Yet in this down-to-earth world is Icarus, a person who came from the glorious Greece, who escaped the fearful Minotaur, who had taken a tour of the sky...and who had crashed down and survived. One would think he is thankful to be alive, right? When he was in the maze with the Minotaur, all he wanted was to get out and live a peaceful life.

Yet when he received just that, a peaceful life in a mundane world, he yearns for the past. The past “heroic” life. Such irony delicately crafted by Fields shows that people have insatiable desires. In “Icarus,” Fields also includes many hidden symbols to convey the human fault of greed. The first notable symbol is the “feathers.” These feathers represent the past life of Icarus – the life of adventure, of disobedience, or suspense. Yet the mere fact that these feathers are still present is a blessing from God: Icarus is still alive even after his past life of falling out of the sky.

One would think he would be content to be living, right? But no, he wants more. He does not want the name of “Mr. Hicks” – a commonplace name with absolutely no uniqueness. He does not want the “commuter train” and “committees”. Such things are symbols of ordinary people, of ordinary life, of sheep in a crowd, things that are too ordinary for him to bear. He wants a sense of power and a sense of supremacy as shown by the fact that he tries to fly to the “light fixture”, a symbol of the sun and of omnipotence.

These actions show that Icarus is not satisfied with merely life even after a near-death experience. After he obtains life, he becomes greedy and wants to be praised as a hero and someone different. In all, Fields uses symbols such as the “feathers” and the “light fixture” to convey people’s never-ending dissatisfaction. Lastly, the overall style employed by Fields conveys the purpose of his poem – to show people their own fault of greed and insatiable desires. First, Fields chooses to write in a narrative voice.

Readers have a chance to look into the thoughts of everyone present, most notably, Icarus. His thoughts like “can a genius of the hero fall to the

middling stature of the merely talented? ” and the fact that “ he wishes he had drowned” gives readers a first-hand look into his never-ending desires and greed. When Icarus was falling after his wings were melted, all he wanted was to live. Yet when he gained that, he sought for uniqueness. Power. A high-class profile. He even wants death more than the mundane life he was leading!

Furthermore, readers also see into the minds of members of the mundane society. When the police saw the feathers, they assumed it was a mere drowning and “ preferred to ignore the confusing aspects of the case. ” This refusal to believe and see displays the failures of the modern world but within lays a deeper meaning. Essentially, the policemen’ thoughts show that they do not care about Icarus. They do not care that he flew in the sky. He does not matter in the grand scheme of things which makes his insatiable desire for an unseen “ hero status” even more pitiful.