

Basking shark essay sample

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



The basking shark is a poem talking about the encounter a man had with a certain species of shark - the basking shark. The encounter is filled with vivid detail, with imagery and diction that helps in setting the attitude of the poem, the tone, the human condition and the strengthening brought out to the poem, based on the imagery and structure. The poet presents the shark in a very subdued manner, not hinting at the shark directly. Instead, he first describes the shark as a 'roomsized monster', and that gives the impression to the reader that the poet is afraid of the shark, and looks at the shark as a creature that is not to be messed with, as it is definitely not friendly.

However, while he fears the shark, he also insults the shark, by hitting at his intelligence, claiming that the shark only has a brain the size of a 'matchbox' implying that the shark is indeed stupid, as huge, scary creature (implied earlier with the word monster) as that, has a very small brain, and that can in turn affect the shark's judgement.

The diction used is used to imply that the shark does not belong, and is in fact the 'ugly duckling'. This is brought out by this example: "...this decadent townie, shook on a wrong branch of his family tree". This example portrays the fact that the poet is talking about a basking shark, and based on the prior knowledge he has, it is a harmless shark, but due to the immense size it can grow, it can terrorize innocent people, hence the reference to 'monster'. However, the writer feels that due to its huge size, it does not belong to the species of basking sharks, but instead belongs to another species, one that would be more appropriate to fit its size. This, in turn, creates a tone of exclusion. When the poet also uses the word decadent, it just strengthens the tone he is trying to create, as due to the exclusion of

the basking shark, it is declining in numbers! This also has a connection with the mood in the poem, as the declining numbers can lead to the readers feeling sad about the shark, and can make the readers feel pity for the sharks.

When the poet mentions 'so, who's the monster', he is trying to convey the human condition after the encounter with the shark. In this he is playing with the words, a pun of sorts, as he sees the shark as a monster, and hence his fear increases. So in this he is talking about the emotion, as a part of the human condition, depicting that humans are easily scared. However, these words can have a dual meaning, as he could be referring to the human having a sense of superiority over the shark, claiming that the human is the monster. This is brought out in the first stanza: "to stub an oar where none should be...once (too often) to me". This stanza describes the human condition as one that is intrusive, as the man is intruding into the space of the shark, as though trying to convey the message of, "look who's the boss", which in the terms of the text can be "so, who's the monster".

The imagery and structure strengthen the meaning of the poem by presenting human tasks, or, even emotions, with one of them being repetition, "for twenty seconds, sail after sail", in which the word 'sail' is repeated, implying that the poet is in a rush to get away from the shark, and would repeatedly sail, in order to get away from the shark. The poem on the whole is very short, just five stanzas with three lines each, all of them rhyming, with the structure of aaa, bbb, aaa, bbb, ccc. This rhyming

structure quickens the pace of the poem, rushing through the poem, depicting that this encounter happened very quickly.