

The victims by sharon olds essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



In a society where divorce is common, some family members find it hard to cope with. In the first half of "The Victims," it sounds like a young child is telling the experience regarding her parents' divorce. "The Victims," by Sharon Olds, demonstrates the differences of tears, anger, and other emotions. By using different aspects of interpretation, mainly the use of language, tone, speaker, and some imagery was used in the poem to help the readers have an understanding of the sadness, anger, hope and despair suggested in the poem so that it could be observed through the usage of words.

The speaker in Sharon Olds's poem "The Victims" did not really designate who the speaker was; however since Sharon Olds wrote it maybe the speaker was she telling of her own life experiences. In several places within my essay I will refer to the speaker as "her" or "she" because I feel Sharon Olds telling this story in a poem. The speaker expresses much hate and anger towards her father. The speaker is describing to the reader what she saw and heard with her own ears and eyes. The young girl in the beginning of the poem has the reader feel sorry for her siblings and their mother.

She then talks about how she is feeling and how sorry she begins to feel for her father after he has lost everything and making him out to be the victim of the whole poem. In my opinion the child neither understands who exactly the victims of the poem are. So being that the speaker is still a child and is underestimated the poem shows how the speaker sees her sentiments from the inside and transported into the poem by her feelings and emotions. The speaker expresses their tone of anger toward the father.

“ When mother divorced you, we were glad. (Line 1) The “ we” is probably several children and their mother. It appears they all experienced an unpleasant life with their father. The mother “ took it and took it, in silence” (lines 1 and 2) and the children were also to endure the abuse. What was it that mother had to take? From the reading it appears there was some type of abuse, the abuse could have been physical, but was most likely verbal-and then again it could have been total silence. The father could have been a workaholic and never spent any time with them. This type of neglect really hurts, as there is no togetherness or closeness.

The child was so angry that when Olds expressed “ kicked you out, suddenly, and her kids loved it. Then you were fired, and we grinned inside” (lines 3 and 4) is as if he has finally gotten what he deserved after all the time he hurt them and their mother. There was also a tone of bitterness toward the father in which was cold, so much so, that when he was fired, “ we grinned inside. “(Lines 4 and 5) The speaker wanted some relief for the years of hurt, so laughing what happened to their father was an emotional outpouring of how the speaker wanted to get back at him.

The language use of the poem that Olds uses with the simile between the father and Nixon may be an analogy to how the “ father” of the country and the father of a family, head of a nation and head of a household both have to leave due to infidelity – one being unfaithful to millions, the other to his wife and children. The speaker compares the incident with the father getting fired to “ when Nixon’s helicopter lifted... the last time. ” The feeling here was that of remorse, yet the country knew Nixon had to leave.

That same feeling of remorse is what the speaker felt when the father was kicked out and lost his job that same feeling is depicted in this statement. The speaker also expresses happiness about the fact that those things of material value their father were taken away. She is concerned over whether they would take away his suits. To her this is the only symbol of her father's identity that she remembers, and if they took the suits away, it would be an end to the years of silence. Maybe the speaker felt that if the suits were taken away, then maybe her father would seek another type of job and not be so distant.

The mother "taught us to take it, to hate you" (line 15) until there were no thoughts of their father around them. They could remember nothing as the mother was out to destroy their father and turn them against him. I understand the childish glee at seeing revenge in life taken out on someone who has hurt us. Knowing, like Olds must have known later on, that mother was teaching her children something namely hatred that she really should not but cannot help, I felt a sort of sadness. These are just a few emotions that raked my mind as I read and reread "The Victims."

The speaker goes from past tense in the first half of the poem to the present tense for the remainder of the poem. In the present tense the speaker compares her father to the bums on the streets as the bums were nothing and no one cared about them. "Now I pass the bums in doorways," (lines 17 and 18) Here in the poem it appears to me to be a metaphor. The father has lost everything. In the author's mind, and my own, that everything consists

of the things in life that cannot be bought – love, happiness, security, and other such feelings.

He is also compared to a “ ship gone down. ” (Line 22) In other words, his presence with his family existed no more and because of the years of silence it was going to be hard as an adult to ever reach him. Even though Olds begins the poem with a strong sense of hurt and the speaker feeling they were victims, it ends with her wondering who really was the victim. Poems do many things for a person. The words in a certain poem can have many different affects on many different people. They can incite laughter or tears, anger or serenity, fear or reassurance, hope or despair.

These feelings are unable to be helped or coached. They happen naturally and without thought. The responses that each reader gives, however, is quite different. These are thought about long and hard. They are the “ whys” of a poem’s affect on us. Why do they give us whatever feeling it is they give us? Why do we cry at one poem and laugh at another? Why and how do we, as the reader, get into the poem? That’s exactly what this poem did for me as I read it. The intonation and feeling of the poem caught my attention and reflected on my life as well.

That is why I chose this poem because I can relate to the feelings. The sense of language, tone, and speaker that Sharon Olds displayed in her poem “ The Victims” are very strong in order for we as the reader to interpret the poem and have a better understanding of it. Olds helps the reader come to a conclusion, and the unconscious feelings one receives from a poem, whether

they be physical, emotional, or otherwise. As a reader we can never help how we feel about a poem nor can we help how a poem has touched us.