

Les murray critical advanced

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



Some say that every text has a use by date and whereas some believe that every text is dateless. The idea that every text has its use by date is incorrect, and in this essay, we will argue against this idea. If a text is written from a long period of time ago it does not mean that it still won't be interesting today, as the events and themes used in the text can still be relevant to today's time. And these texts are what we can call universal.

A universal text allows us to compare, contrast and also reflect on the themes and context of the past to the current time. Hence, these texts provide us an understanding about a particular time by the themes, context or events mentioned in the text and we can therefore use these concepts as a reflection to the current time. Les Murray's "An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow" and "The Mitchells" are examples of texts that do not need a use by date. These two poems highlight major themes and are considered to be of relevance to today's time.

Les Murray himself has embraced Catholicism and his religious perceptions have had a deep influence on much of his poetry. In his poem "An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow", it is evident that Les Murray's religious insights have been mentioned significantly throughout the poem itself. The theme of religious awareness in the poem shows a division between the city and the rural people. In the first stanza of the poem in the lines of "... at Tattersalls, men look up from sheets of numbers, the Stock Exchange scribblers forget the chalk in their hands.

And men with bread in their pockets leave the Greek Club... " describe the city people to be consumed with money. The setting of the poem is set in the

city and this allows the reader to create some sort of city image in their mind. Through Murray's use of descriptive words of the city people, furthermore creates the images of the busy day-to-day lives of urban society. If we were to use this insight and compare it to today's time, we will see a similar representation between Murray's time and the current time.

In today's society, there is still the same existence that had existed in Murray's time, where the city is a place of busy working people and that everyone is self absorbed in their own worlds. The city is still considered to be a busy place where each individual have their own business to mind and their separate lives to live. One of the highlights of this poem, in reference to the argument that every text does not have a use by date, is that the poem has the relevant concept that society today still have, having said this, the way Murray describes the city people is true and we can relate his insight to our time.

The poem trails a clear division between the urban and rural life, Murray condemns the ways of the city life and through contrast with the country; he highlights the corruption of the city by being part of the contemporary lifestyle, advancements of technologies and their lack of spirituality. Hence, his insight of the city life is still evident in today's time. The city people are still consumed with consumerism, modernisation and the introductions to new technology.

Similarly to Murray's insight of the rural life, the country people today are still living in simplicity and they are not much involved with the modernisation that city people have. The major theme in the poem is religion

and Murray explores the numinous. This poem is an example that shows a demonstration of Murray's access to explore the supernatural within the ordinary through the weeping man. The tone in the first stanza is humorous though as further in the poem, the tone is shifted to create awareness about how the city people lack emotion and spirituality.

As the crowds begin to increase, the event becomes a crisis of freedom as the weeping man has stepped outside the bounds of the city people's normality. In his 'pentagram of sorrow' it suggests that his weeping is not understood, as the society lacks emotion and spirituality and do not understand why he is crying. This also shows that the society is distorted and they are not in touch with their emotions. In referring to today's society, this existence is still evident and we can see a similarity between Murray's insight and the society today.

They are still the same, the city life is still busy with working people and not much communication or emotions are being shared amongst one another. "Only the smallest children and such as look out of Paradise come near him and sit at his feet, with dogs and dusty pigeons". In this line of the poem, it suggests that the weeping man is a prophet and the 'smallest children' are his disciples, furthermore suggests that the weeping man is Jesus Christ. The 'smallest children' represent innocence and that they are not corrupted by the world.

The use of mentioning the 'smallest children' also gives an indication that they have emotions and spirituality and in contrast to the older people, they still look out at the rainbow. As a rainbow is symbolic of religion, spirituality,

emotions and is considered to be something 'magical'. Throughout most of the poem, it is evident that, Murray's key to this dark side of human existence is through spiritual enlightenment and this is clear in the line "... and I see a woman, shining, stretch her hand and shake as she receives the gift of weeping... Here in this line suggests that the woman is reaching out for salvation and through the suffering of the weeping man, people are getting redemption.

This line also is an allusion to how Jesus Christ had sacrificed himself to save mankind by suffering. The theme of religion, its relevance have an existence to today's time, as people still believe in Christianity and Jesus Christ. People today follow the religion of Catholicism and from this poem; we are able to see the allusions Murray has given and link it to what we believe in. ... He promotes republicanism, patronage, Gaelic bardic poetry, warrior virtue, mysticism, and Aboriginal models, and attacks modernism and feminism". This quote from a literary critic, Lawrence Bourke, presents some of the themes used in Les Murray's poem, "The Mitchells". "The Mitchells" is a poem about two men having a lunch and the discussion between them is satirical but at the same time 'ritual'. The setting of the poem is set in the country and the environment described from Murray's words is romantic and peaceful.

Murray's description of the country life highlights the vernacular culture to be pure and shows a true sense of what rural life should be and he portrays this in a positive way. "The men eat big meat sandwiches out of a Styrofoam box..." in correlation to the critic's quote, this line in the poem shows the

occurrences of today's society and how society is living in modernism. The use of the word " Styrofoam box" enables us to reflect on the modern living of today's society. We no longer need the old technology from the past as we are adapting to new equipments and technology in our lives.

Murray's insight to modernism is relevant to today as we are now in the stage where technology is advancing more than ever. "... drought that year. Yes. Like trying to farm the road" this line in the poem shows a representation of how hard life is in the country and highlights the adversities country people have to face. In contrast to the urban life, people are more consumed with money and their lives are more sophisticated and modernised than the country. Droughts in the country could impact on the lives of farmers and overall the country people, as they need to grow crops and survive.

Urban people are somewhat different as their accesses to resources are much dependant on money. Through the authorial voice in the poem, indicates a sense of belonging in the line of " The first man, if asked, would say I'm one of the Mitchells". It suggests that the rural life is linked with families, friends and communities and everyone is part of something. This can be of relevance to today, as the country is much together and united compare to the city. The country is to some extent smaller compare to the city and the country people can communicate easily amongst one another.

The urban society on the other hand, is distant, their communication is limited and the people are much more self absorbed with the contemporary lifestyles. In this poem, Murray also explores the supernatural, " Nearly

everything they say is ritual. Sometimes the scene is an avenue". Murray's use of the term ' ritual' gives us the indication that whatever the men say or do, they understood each other. As more is understood when not much is being said. Throughout the poem, the words are simple and not sophisticated and this highlights the vernacular culture sharing an understanding.

Between the two men, even though one is silent, the other one understands him as they share the unspoken understanding that both are part of the Mitchells family. Murray focuses on the Australian culture with the setting of two men eating lunch together, and this shows a deeper meaning to that of a respected family, belonging and companionship. Murray use of the word ' avenue' is symbolic of urban life and indicates that the conversations between these two men are a repetition. In conclusion, every text does not have a use by date.

It is evident in the two poems of Les Murray's " An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow" and " The Mitchell's" that the themes and language used in these two texts can still be of relevance to today. Through Murray's insights and his descriptive language about the division between the urban and the rural life, we are able to comprehend the themes mentioned in the two poems and reflect it to the current time. The themes that were used in both poems enable us to see a similarity from the past and today's time. This therefore concludes that the themes used in Murray's two poems do not have a use by date.