

Critical analysis on 'the identification' by roger mcgough

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The poem 'The Identification' by Roger McGough has a tone of disbelief from the father for his son. The title of the poem gives me an idea that the poem is related to the identity of a person. The poem is searching for someone and hence also gives the description of that person. This poem about a boy called Stephen died in an explosion and his father has been called for the identification of his son.

However, his father keeps finding excuses to not believe that it was Stephen. This poem gives an extremely sad feeling to me as the father sees his in a highly bad condition and also shows the depression, misery and how the air of melancholy surrounded him. The excuses that the father can clearly be seen when he finds cigarettes in Stephen's pockets, 'Oh this can't be Stephen. I don't allow him to smoke you see. He wouldn't disobey me.' These lines make me feel that the pain Stephen's was going through cannot be described. He was completely shattered.

The main topic or the theme of the poem is shows the pain and sorrow of a parent towards his child. I think this poem is written when the father goes to a police station for the identification of the body. These lines,

'So you think its Stephen?

Then I'd best make sure

Be on the safe side as it were.

Ah, theres been a mistake. The hair

you see, its black, now Stephens fair.'

undeniably shows that the father was questioning the officers whether they think it was Stephen. Then he says that he must be sure but is trying to convey that he is not convinced about the fact that the body was of Stephen and that he was checking the body for the sake of the officers and to confirm that it was not Stephen.

After seeing the body, he starts making excuses that the dead person was not Stephen. In my opinion, this is a persona poem which is also known as a dramatic monologue because there is a speaker who is describing about a person, in this case it's Stephen. Like, in these lines,

*' The sweater, where intact, looks
in fact all too familiar.
But one must be sure.'*

As the father is identifying his son, he inadvertently describes the aspects of Stephen in a particular situation.

In the poem the father sees the dead body and he gets multiple evidence that shows that the body was of Stephen but again as mentioned above, he still does not accept the truth. Like, in the lines,

*' The scoutbelt. Yes thats his.
I recognise the studs he hammered in
not a week ago'
' Its almost*

*certainly Stephen. But one must
be sure.'*

The father says that the belt and the studs are of Stephen but he still says that he must be sure about everything. The line 'It's almost certainly Stephen' shows that in his heart he is aware that the dead person is Stephen but he is trying to explain himself that the person cannot be Stephen.

It is extremely sorrowful when I read this poem because a father has lost his child and that pain cannot be described as I said before also. The whole poem just has his father and the author has shown that the person who is most affected is Stephen's father. As the evidences mount up the father is forced to believe that his son was dead. The last few lines,

'Yes thats it.

Thats him.

Thats our Stephen.'

make me feel that they are the most important lines as the father finally accepts and it shows his pain of separation from his son forever. His suffering is wordless. His agony is inarticulate. This last lines is the final confirmation from his father that he accepts and these lines are the one that hurt me the most.

I feel that this poem also has a message or idea behind it that it shows the pain and the suffering of a parent for his child. It shows that there so many parents, like in this poem, who have lost their children in such explosions or

wars. The poem shows that every parent immensely love their child and that they can never think anything bad for them. When parents lose their child, they are the one who are affected the most than any other relative or friends.

The author have also used metaphors, different types rhymes as well as enjambment which makes the reader more excited and curious to read what's going to happen in the poem. Example of a metaphor is:

' that mask of charred wood'

' Pull out every splinter of hope.'

The first is used to describe the face of the dead body which is unrecognizable and the second metaphor is used when the father is convincing himself the dead is not of Stephen. The author has also used end rhymes, internal rhymes and slant rhymes.

For example:

Ah, theres been a mistake. The hair

you see, its black, now Stephens fair... - End rhyme

that mask of charred wood

blistered scarred could - Internal rhyme

Then I'd best make sure

Be on the safe side as it were. - Slant rhyme

The author has not used proper punctuation which shows that Stephen's father was extremely panicked and hence whatever he spoke wasn't

punctuated correctly. This was a very effective technique that the author had used. Also, the author had used many questions that also make the reader think at once what could have happened in the poem. I had to read this again and again because it's a heart touching poem. So no matter how many times you read it you are never satisfied. All the techniques used by the author were very effective.