

Comparison or
contrast between two
of the poems listed
below in the
instructions

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



English 22 April Comparison and Contrast between “ Mother and Son” by Langston Hughes and “ Because I Could Not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson

Theme:

In the poem “ Mother and Son,” Langston Hughes talks about the knowledge that a mother imparts to her son. The mother having lived her life until now and having experienced a lot along the way is one of the best teachers that a child can have. The mother in this poem explains to her son that life is not a simple and easy journey. This is seen in her words “ Well, son, Ill tell you:/ life aint been no crystal stair” (Hughes). Though the stairs had splinters and were devoid of a carpet, the mother does not give up and keeps climbing them. Whereas, in the poem “ Because I Could Not Stop for Death,” Emily Dickinson describes the journey to the afterlife. She personifies death as a gentleman, who has come to pick her up from her busy life “ He kindly stopped for me” (Dickinson). On her way she sees the school children playing, the fields of gazing grain, and the sun setting, which refer to her childhood, youth and elderly stages of life respectively. She wants the readers to understand that life is short and should be lived to its fullest as death waits for no one. It can be seen that both the poems want the readers to live their life in the best possible way, by facing all the challenges and not taking life for granted at any moment.

Form:

The poem “ Mother to Son” is created in free verse, thus it has no perfect form, rhyme or meter. Whereas “ Because I Could Not Stop for Death” contains iambic tetrameter in the first and third lines as they contain four

feet and eight syllables in them, whereas the second and fourth lines consist of iambic trimeter. Thus, this poem has a fixed pattern and follows it throughout. Though the former is free verse, there are few places where rhymes have been used, such as “stair” and “bare,” and slant rhymes like “landin’s” and “climbin.” The latter has the last word of its second and fourth line rhyming such as “me” “Immortality,” “chill” “tulle,” “ground” and “mound” etc.

Tone:

Hughes employs common language used in the black culture to emphasize the message in his poem. It is often perceived that educated people lack practicality so that must be the reason why he has portrayed the woman as one who “is not well educated, but is street smart and wise,” (Metaphor Analysis in Mother to Son) to pass on his message of not giving up and facing the difficulties in life with boldness and courage. The mother’s tone here is bold and straightforward. Emily Dickinson uses formal English and the poem contains archaic usage such as “tis” instead of “it is.” She uses a tone that creates a calm and quiet atmosphere using the words “slowly” and “no haste.” She capitalizes “death” and “immortality” to emphasize their importance. This poem shows the change from a known state to an unknown state. The poet has known all things up until now and she describes them with concrete imagery. But towards the end of the poem, she does not know exactly where they are going and, thus, she (“surmised”) that they are heading for eternity.” (Emily Dickinson- - Death).

Works Cited

Dickinson, Emily. Because I could not stop for Death (712). Poets. org. 1998.

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