

Lament and the flower-fed buffaloes essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The poem "Lament" written by Gillian Clarke, and "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes" by Vachel Lindsay are two very similar poems which both illustrate the problems that affect nature. The poem "Lament" portrays ideas to do with ecological disasters and that of conflict and war. On the other hand, "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes" illustrates how modernisation leads to the destruction of the natural world. The underpinning theme in "Lament" and "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes" is mankind's failure to protect the natural resources of our planet.

The purposes of both poems are both very similar; they both want to express their pain about the way nature and animals have been treated. In "Lament" it mentions how turtles with their 'pulsing burden' search for a breeding-ground and in "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes" it mentions how the 'buffaloes of the spring' have left due to civilisation. Both poems express their sorrow about how the animals lose their habitats due to human causes. The tones of both the poems are quite different however. In "Lament" the tone of the poem is sad and melancholy as the title suggests however there is also a slight tone of deep anger.

The sad and melancholic tone is apparent in the line "For her eggs laid in their nest of sickness" In this line Gillian Clarke expresses her sorrow on how the eggs of the turtles are not laid in sanitary conditions because their habitats were destroyed. The tone of deep anger can be felt in the line, "For vengeance, and the ashes of language." This line shows her anger about how conflict and war goes on in the present world because of vengeance and "... the ashes of language" implicates that it is the end of civilisation.

This line also intensifies the tone by the imagery of fire. "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes" on the other hand develops a real tone of nostalgia for the past. The first few lines which introduce the poem create this nostalgic tone, "In the days of long ago... The tossing, blooming, perfumed grass, Is swept away by the wheat," From these lines we can tell that the speaker has a bittersweet yearning for the things in the past as she describes them so gently and calmly. The structures of both poems are very different to each other.

In the poem "Lament" there are seven stanzas with three lines each; each stanza represented a different idea in the poem regarding the ecological disasters in the world. The simple stanza structure makes the poem's message more powerful and easily digested by the reader. In the poem "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes" there is only one stanza because the writer only expresses one idea throughout the whole poem. This shows the contrast between the attitudes of the writers towards nature; Gillian Clarke laments all aspects of ecological disasters at the present time whereas Vachel Lindsay talks about disasters in the past.

She talks about the loss of buffaloes and how the Indians lie low because of the industrialisation in their area. This is a metaphor for the past. The techniques used within the language choices contained in both poems are very effective and impact strongly to the reader. Both writers use personification in different contexts. For example, in "Lament", Gillian Clarke uses personification to describe the ocean, "For the ocean's lap with its mortal stain," There are two examples of figurative language used here.

The word 'lap' here means (of small waves) to wash against (the shore of a boat) with light splashing sounds (onomatopoeia) although it can be personified as the front area from the waist to the knees of a seated person. The words 'mortal stain' mean a discoloured or soiled spot or smudge however it could be personified as a blemish on one's moral character or reputation. This line is very effective because it gives two very different meanings; one meaning is describing the ocean with oil in it and the other meaning is how it is a human fault that there is oil in the ocean.

In the poem "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes", there is only one use of personification, "Ranged where the locomotives sing" The words "locomotives sing" is the personification as they describe the sound of a locomotive (most likely a train) as singing. This is effective as locomotives are usually loud and not pleasant to hear which is contrasting to the effects of singing. There are many more techniques used in Gillian Clarke's "Lament" than in Vachel Lindsay's "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes". One of the best techniques that Gillian Clarke uses in her poem are 'oxymorons'.

An example of an oxymoron she uses is, "... in their nest of sickness" In this line, the oxymoron is from the words 'nest of sickness'. A nest is a structure in which animals give birth or lay their eggs in; it is commonly thought to be a clean and sanitary place however Gillian Clarke adds the word 'sickness' at the end which makes it an oxymoron because 'nest' and 'sickness' are quite the opposite. This is very effective as it makes the reader think about the conditions of the turtle's habitat even more.

Gillian Clarke also uses a very effective pun in her poem. "the boy fusilier who joined for the company," In this line the word 'company' is a pun because it could be that the boy joined for the company of his friends or the army company instead. Another technique used frequently in "Lament" are metaphors. An example of a metaphor in "Lament" is "the shadow on the sea". The quote has a negative connotation basically portraying an image in the readers mind about an oil spill (shadow) in the sea through a metaphor.

Other metaphors used in the poem include, "...niform of fire" and "...missile's thunder". Gillian Clarke also uses techniques such as onomatopoeia, semantic fields of language and enjambment in her poem. In the poem, "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes", Vachel Lindsay uses little techniques in the language. She uses symbolism in her poem, "Wheels and wheels and wheels spin by" This line indicates symbolism of time which is effective because she uses wheels instead of a clock and it brings out the significant idea of time in the poem.

Vachel Lindsay also uses sibilance in her poem; "...pring that's still is sweet" The constant use of 's' sounds in this line slows down the reader and emphasises the 'sweetness' and can also create an sibilant effect. The imagery in both poems is like chalk and cheese compared to each other but it is strong and easy to imagine. In the poem "Lament", there are many strong images that the writer creates. One of them is, "For the cormorant in his funeral silk", in this image, the harsh word 'funeral' emphasises that the oil the cormorant wears means death. However the word 'silk' softens it as an image of a seabird covered in black crude oil.

She uses many ways to describe the image of oil such as, ' funeral silk, veil of iridescence, shadow on the sea and mortal stain'. All of these images are descriptive and beautiful but also include a menacing undertone. In the poem " The Flower-Fed Buffaloes", there are very few images conveyed by the writer. From the lines " The tossing, blooming, perfumed grass, is swept away by the wheat" the reader can imagine the image of a field full of wheat with some grass too. The imagery in " The Flower-Fed Buffaloes" is not as effective as the ones in " Lament" though.

This is because the writer in " Lament" uses stronger metaphors such as ' funeral silk' instead of giving the actual reader the image (black crude oil). As for the movement in both of the poems, once again, they are both very contrasting. There is no rhyming structure in " Lament" which confirms that the writer is very solid on her motive to make the reader aware of the ecological disasters and not get captured in the rhymes. However the writer does use a lot of enjambment. The poem is more staid. It is also relevant to the tone of the poem, sad and melancholy, to not rhyme as rhyming develops a more joyful tune/mood.

Also, " Lament" is a song which is why it is so staid and does not rhyme that much. In contrast, the poem " The Flower-Fed Buffaloes" is structured by " alternate rhyming" meaning the lines alternate between two rhyming words. The effect created is that of an echo or a return to the rhyme in a pattern that makes the ear expect the rhyme without being as repetitious as a string of couplets. It creates a specific tone which in this case is ' nostalgia'. There are many sensory images in both the poems. In " Lament", Gillian Clarke incorporates many sensory images.

One of them is, “ the farmer’s sons, in it for the music” The last part of that line represents the sensory image of sound (music). It also brings out the theme of unthoughtful humans. In “ The Flower-Fed Buffaloes”, Vachel Lindsay also creates a sensory image of sound in the line, “ They gore no more, they bellow no more” This is very effective as ‘ gore’ and ‘ bellow’ are both strong sounds that buffaloes make. Other sensory images in “ Lament” include smell in the line, “... stink of anger”, and sight, “ in search of the breeding-ground”. Sensory images in “ The Flower-Fed Buffaloes” include voice, “... ocomotives sing” and taste, “... spring that is sill sweet” The sensory images in both poems are very apparent.

In conclusion, both of the poems contain the same theme which is the problems that affect nature. However they do not focus on the same aspect. The poem “ Lament” portrays ideas to do with ecological disasters and that of conflict and war and “ The Flower-Fed Buffaloes” illustrates how modernisation leads to the destruction of the natural world. There is also a big contrast in the literary features between the two poems such as personification, structure, figurative language and the imagery.

Both writers use these techniques in different ways which differentiates their views. In my opinion, I feel that “ Lament” was a better poem. I felt that “ Lament” gave a stronger impact towards my feelings on the problems in the modern world. The way Gillian Clarke used metaphors, oxymorons and puns made me think about the problems in the gulf and it was very effective to me as a reader. The different topics such as oil spills, war and turtles appealed to e greatly as well. “ The Flower-Fed Buffaloes” on the other hand

was a very simple poem to me. There were no metaphors or puns and the imagery was very simple compared to “ Lament”