

Imagery in wheatleys poems essay



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Imagery in Phillis Wheatley's Poems Phillis Wheatley was a black slave born in Africa and brought to America, in particular Boston in 1761. Wheatley was purchased by John Wheatley, a wealthy tailor as a gift for his wife, Susannah. Wheatley was quite fortunate in her surroundings due to the sympathy Susannah had towards her. Susannah saw Wheatley as a frail and intelligent child. Wheatley lived from 1753-1784 and in this time period most white women did not even receive an education. Fortunately for Wheatley she was taught to read and write, as well as learning to read Latin works.

She became familiar with Christianity and was familiar with the Bible. She also became familiar with the works of three English poets; Gray, Milton, and Pope. These particular poets influenced Wheatley's writings. Phillis Wheatley wrote many poems over her lifespan and utilizes the use of imagery to evoke an emotional response from her audience. Her use of imagery adds depth and understanding to her work. In a poem written to Samson Occom, she says, " Should you, my lord, while you puruse my song, Wonder from whence my love of Freedom Sprung, Whence flow these wishes for the common good" (752).

Wheatley uses several adjectives to evoke an image for Occom to think about. She is saying that slavery cannot be reconciled with a " principle" that God has implanted in every person, " Love of Freedom. " A couple of lines down, she writes, " Was snatched from Afric's fancied happy seat. " Her choice of the word snatched created imagery for the reader, we picture somebody being taken from her home or the place she is most happy. This particular sentence allows the reader to imagine themselves being taken away from their home and relate to herself.