

# Columbine high school littleton, co



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Imaginative writing is an art that expresses ideas and thoughts in an imaginative way. This art involves universal laws of human nature, and both time and place. Without connecting the reader through these principles, the author's work is somewhat meaningless. In order for the author to gain something through his/her work, the author must be able to manipulate the perceptions of the reader. This can be done by successfully incorporating the five elements of craft found in literature. These elements function to focus the reader towards a specific end, and the five elements include: image, voice, character, setting and story.

It is imperative that the author utilizes these elements to create a piece that stimulates emotions in the reader. Albert Goldbarth does a great job of effectively using each of the five elements of craft in his poem, " Columbine High School/Littleton, CO. " The poem is only 23 lines long, but after comprehensively analyzing the piece, the analyzer can see that Goldbarth intricately and effectively weaves together the elements of craft and delivers a story with several different layers of a deeper underlying meaning that what appears at first glance. Throughout the poem, there are separate images that appear to the reader.

The first actual images revealed in this poem are the 15 crosses that represent the deaths of the high school students. Instantly the image of the crosses shifts to the photograph. In the picture is a woman, perhaps a mother of one of the murdered students, though this fact is left vague. It is left vague purposefully. It could be any of the mothers of the victims of this crime. The vagueness is meaningful in the sense that any of these women would be feeling the same amount of stress and sorrow that the woman in

this photograph is feeling, and the author reveals the pain that the woman is feeling.

We are able to see what is flowing from her brain into the wood she is leaning on; the grief that is too vast for her to handle. It is as if Goldbarth is not only letting grief flow upon the woman, but also the reader. There are other images revealed later in this poem. There is a pure transition from the woman to the cup that she is holding. Similar to the woman, the cup is left just as vague. The vagueness presented is also intentional. We are shown the intricacies of the cup, however.

We see the plastic lid, the straw, and the droplets formed on the side of the cup from condensation due to the negative reaction between the icy cold cup and the summer heat waves. The cup remains the focus for the duration of the poem. Goldham accurately, which is sometimes a challenge to do, incorporates personification in this poem. The wood in line 8 and 9 is personified, as Goldham implies that the wood can literally hold the grief of the woman. The cup can also represent a synecdoche in this poem. This cup stands for everybody.

Anyone, at anytime, might hold this drink, might experience a tragedy at some point in our lives. All of the images in this poem are fundamental in the sense that the images evoke the senses of the reader, allowing the images to enhance the tone and meaning of the poem. In this poem, the voice of the narrator is the author of the poem. The voice of the author influences the overall interpretation of the poem, and the words chosen, syntax, and

sentence structure of this piece culminates to an overall effective and meaningful diction.

The first seven lines of the piece are written in 3rd person objective, meaning the author is describing to the reader what can be seen in the particular images represented. Some may make an argument that lines 8 and 9 are also 3rd person objective, but the author is describing an image that cannot actually be seen, therefore these two lines are told from the limited omniscient perspective. The author then continues to stay in 3rd person from line 10, until a sudden change is present. The author begins using words such as “ we” and “ us,” which takes the piece back to the first person point of view.

In line 15 the poem shifts to a 2nd person point of view, which enables the reader to become conscious of the fact that the narrator is aware of his presence. The last four lines of the poem also follow the same principles as the perspective in lines 10-13, and key words which make this perspective first person point of view are the use of the words “ us” and “ our. ” Moving to a less sophisticated and more recognizable element of writing, the craft of character will be discussed. There is one single character presented in this poem, and that is the woman in the photograph who is leaning against the beam.

She is portrayed directly; mainly through the image of the photograph the reader is given. The woman is also represented through action and thoughts as well. In this poem, the reader is told that the woman’s grief is heavy, and that her sorrow is pouring out into the wood. This connection of the woman’s

thoughts to the wood signifies the elements of action and thoughts. Although the woman is the only single character in the poem, she takes the role of a flat character in this piece, in the sense that she represents a single idea. The idea the woman possesses in this piece is that of sorrow.

The narrator of the story is the protagonist in this poem. The narrator is not a part of the tragic even that occurred in this poem, but rather a spectator whose goal in this poem is to assess and make sense of the situation. First the narrator glances at the photograph, and then deeply focuses in on the cup that the woman is holding. The narrator is attempting to connect with the reader, and the narrators' upmost important desire is to understand the pain and misery that the woman in the photograph is going experiencing. The setting in this poem reveals the overall mood and tone of the story.

The title of the piece, " Columbine High School/Littleton, CO," is the setting for the beginning of the poem. The time period of this poem is the year 1999, and it outlines the shootings that occurred at Columbine High School. The initial setting of this story is the burial site, where fifteen crosses lie, 13 for the high school students who were murdered, and two for the murderers. This setting only remains for four lines of the poem, and the reader is instantly taken to a photograph which remains the setting for the remainder of the poem.

At first glance, the theme of this second setting seems rather optimistic – in the sense that the woman is resting upon a beam and there is a summer advertisement on the cup. Interestingly enough, the author was able to take such a sad and sometimes seemingly hopeless situation, and craft within it

an optimistic theme. This symbolic theme that the author incorporates shows that there are ways to deal with painful incident that occurred. The author gives hope in the sense that there is a way to mend the sorrow. There author finds support in the beam, comfort in the wood, and brightness in the cup.

In this poem, parallel to the setting, there are two separate stories that take place. The first story is that of the burial site in which the students were buried. A major disconnection occurs initially in the poem; the students are killed, and are the most separated from their loved ones that they have ever been. The author then creates connection in the burial site, where the perished students are reconnected. Next the author takes the reader to the rising action of the poem, which is the initial glance at the photograph of the woman. This action the author created serves as a connection.

This connection is soon followed by a disconnection, in the sense that the woman and her thoughts are being separated. The woman's thoughts, metaphorically speaking, are falling onto the beam that is supporting her. Immediately, the disconnection deepens; the picture is partly incomprehensible and the grief is too dominant to control. Or is it? In what seems like a sorrowful and tragic poem, a key connection soon takes place, which serves as the falling action for the poem. The resolution, a pleasant and optimistic one, is the ending of the poem.

In spite of the sorrow and grief the woman is holding, the narrator is able to connect with the woman's cup. The symbolic theme is that pain is universal, grief and tragedy are able to be overcome, and this serves as the final connection in the poem. This work is, however, much more dense than it

appears. Like an iceberg, most of the matter is underlying, hidden, but ready to be found. The underlying message to this story deals with religion, and the Christian faith that allows death to be looked upon in light and optimism.

The allusion throughout the story is of communion and the cup from which Jesus drank from before his crucifixion on a cross. Christians believe that the cup symbolized the wrath of sinners and grief of death. It was for this purpose that Jesus drank from the cup, so that those that followed him would not have to drink from it. Practicing Christians often take part in communion, in which they drink wine from a cup in remembrance of Jesus and the idea that he took the world's sin and grief away. This communion cup is meant as a "new covenant," or time of peace and restoration after a trial and judgment, for those who drink from it.

It is this peace, and the absence of sin that allows the narrator to finally find solace in the atrocities committed. The author weaves this message into the poem with key choices of words. In line 4, there is a specific mention of the crosses used at the memorial; the cross being the contemporary iconic symbol of Christianity. The beam the woman is resting on, which could easily be made of metal and most likely would be in this industrialized age, is specifically made of wood, a synecdoche, again, referring to the cross.

Finally, the word "commune" found in line 19, speaking of the heat and ice meeting at the cup holds a Christian denotation of the communion ceremony. Though the Christian faith is used quite frequently in literary works across centuries and the globe, this poem delivers a contemporary taste that is refreshingly subtle. It is linked with an event that is quite close

to the hearts of many people today. Goldbarth's use of the five crafts is expertly utilized to create a poem that has a real story, real meaning and great depth.