

The death of a moth



The Purgative Tone and Stream-of-consciousness technique Virginia Woolf uses in her short essay, helps her take a deeper look into an insignificant event such as the death of a moth. Her essay narrates a moth's submission to death through the eyes of a human being. Although the moth is just an insect, Woolf is able to create a sense of tragedy when the moth loses its life at the end of the essay. The style of writing that Woolf uses makes the story of the moth intimate and emotional for the reader.

Some of the aspects in Woolf's style are metaphoric language, the personification of the moth, symbolism, and the imagery of nature. These elements work together to make the insignificant little moth's life seem vastly important. The most widely used of these techniques is the symbolism. Throughout the essay, Woolf uses the moth as a symbol for herself. Virginia Woolf had battled mental illness all her life, and used the struggles of the moth a metaphor for her own. Metaphors compare to improbable situations and make them into one.

By doing this, Woolf connects the moth's life to that of a human. She compares the struggle of the moth like a "tiny bead of pure life... so stiff and so awkward". Aligning the moth to a frail image provides an alternative way of seeing the fragile insect. A further addition to the language components of Virginia Woolf's essay, her sentence structure and writing style are also has an effect on the tone created Woolf uses loose sentence structure. By placing her main point at the beginning of sentences and following them with related topics, she creates a conversational tone.

Her writing style is almost journal-entry like. Her style is very similar to a journal entry. Her thoughts seem irregular, and it is as if Woolf never intended to publish her essay. The Conversational Tone is again rhetorically significant because of the relatable nature of the essay. Her description of the moth is detailed and intricate, showing her unmistakable emotion towards it. Along with loose sentence structure, Virginia Woolf used a mass amount of commas in her writing. Multiple commas in a sentence break up phrases, creating pauses.

Instead of starting a new sentence, she just added another comma, flowing her train of thought, continuing the conversation. This is how the reader connects to such a seemingly distant creature such as a moth. The elements of a loose sentence structure, descriptive and conversational tone, and multiple commas all work together to isolate Virginia Woolf's style and highlight the emotional impact of the essay. The analysis of Woolf's style shows why her essay is appealing and in fact moving to her audience.

The failure of the moth helps the reader understand what the moth went through. Human ambition, displayed by a " insignificant" inset, inspires readers. As the essay comes to its conclusion Woolf writes, " The struggle was over" making it more upsetting and dramatic for the reader. By this time, the reader wants the moth to receive more credit than it does. Virginia Woolf's essay is a perfect example on how a writer can use emotional appeal to influence the readers' thoughts on something so " insignificant".