

the images of full fathom five essay sample

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In the world of seafaring men, William Shakespeare may not be particularly celebrated. It can't, however, be said that he didn't try his hand at a dirge for such sailors in his poem, " Full Fathom Five." In this poem, the use of concrete images and onomatopoeia brings to life the poem, bringing the reader closer to the bottom of the sea where the poem is set.

On the seafloor, we are told, a corpse of " thy father" (Imogene) lies (l. 1). The poem instantly then begins to paint the setting of his watery grave with images that the reader is then almost able to see. " Of his bones are corals made;/Those are pearls that were his eyes" (ll. 2-3) presents two images in quick succession, as our minds latch on to the idea of vibrantly colored coral and milky pearl. We begin, through these carefully selected images, to see the situation the corpse rests in.

"...doth suffer a sea change/into something rich and strange." (ll. 5-6) is a more subtle image, calling on the associations that the reader holds in his or her mind. The word " sea" brings to mind varied input from impressions of the sea- usually above it. This makes the reader think of the tossing waves and changes of the sea, which are then reinforced (in the context below the waves) by the combination with the word " change" directly afterwards, and the explanation that the changes are " rich and strange." This makes us think of almost supernaturally strange changes, but in a warmer context because of their " rich" ness.

Once we have these images in mind, we are presented with the concept of the sea nymphs ringing bells for the deceased- " hourly ring his knell:/Ding-dong." (ll. 7-8) How do they ring the bells? With the sound " ding-dong," the

onomatopoeic qualities of which help bring the reader over the shifting waves to the sound of the bell. “ Hark! now I hear them-Ding-dong, bell.” Because the poet states that he can “ hear them,” he brings us to that other sense beyond images- a world of auditory perception. We are brought again to the sound of the bell, immersed in the image of the sea maidens ringing it for him.

These techniques help to build a concrete and complete mental picture to the mind of the reader. It is the use of these various consciously picked phrases and sounds that makes this an enduring poem and reaffirms Shakespeare to be the skilled poet we otherwise knew him to be.