

# Peoms that convey death essay



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The language used in ' On my first Sonne' has the father talking about how he " will lament the state he should envie" which shows that he would rather be dead and escape the misery of getting older. He also uses euphemism to by saying " rest in soft peace" which makes death sound comforting which gives the reader the feeling that death is a good thing.

Likewise, ' The Affliction of Margaret' shows how Margaret thinks that death is good as she says " Heaven have wings" whilst " Chains ties up down by land and sea" which shows that there is freedom to fly in Heaven whilst being alive on earth is very restricting. She also implies, like in ' On my first Sonne' that she would rather be dead by saying " that I may rest" which can be taken literally and sleep, but also rest in the grave. Similarly, in ' Cold Knap Lake' by Gillian Clarke, she refers to the seaweed that pulled the girl down under the water as " long green silk" and which makes it seem that death was better for the child. She includes the metaphor for the water as " troubled surface" which could show that not only the child is affected from the almost death but also the nature is affected by the near death which shows that possible the child may have been better off dead because she was " thrashed for almost drowning".

However, in " At a Potato Digging" it has negative language for death such as " live skulls" and " higgledy skeletons" to show his emotions about death. He also uses the metaphor of the " beaks of famine snipped at guts" which symbolises the hunger that people feel due to the potato blight. There is religious imagery in ' On my first Sonne' which represents Jesus being " lent" to the humans like the son was " lent" to the father. This shows that the father feels pain of his son's death but thinks that it is good for the son as he

does not have to go through the pain of growing up. Equally, “ The Affliction of Margaret” has positive images of “ heaven” having “ wings” whilst her thoughts of him being alive are being “ maimed” and “ mangled” which shows that she would rather her son be dead because she does not want her son to be in that state and that death would be better for him. In comparison, there is a juxtaposition in ‘ Cold Knap Lake’ of the drowning girl being “ blue-lipped” and “ green silk” against the “ red head” and “ rosy”.

Blue and green can symbolise peacefulness and calm whilst red is the symbol for danger showing that death would be better off for the child. In contrast to ‘ Cold Knap Lake’, ‘ At a Potato Digging’ has images of death to symbolise death such as “ crows attacking crow-black fields” this symbolises that crows are eating at a dead field. Heaney also gives imagery of “ mouths tightened in” and “ eyes died hard” which shows the pain of death whilst in the ‘ On my first Sonne’, ‘ The Affliction of Margaret’ and ‘ Cold Knap Lake’ suggests that death is better for someone. The structure in ‘ On my first Sonne’ is written like an epitaph for the father’s son. This shows that the father has a lot of feeling for his son and would like to be with his son because of the euphemism he uses within the poem of “ rest in soft peace”.

Also, the poem has an iambic pentameter which glorifies death by making the poem feel smooth. Similarly, ‘ The Affliction of Margaret’ is written like a nursery rhyme using simple language to make death feel simple and the easy way forward through life. In addition, it has seven lines in each stanza which could show life as being repetitive and boring all the way through. Conversely, ‘ Cold Knap Lake’ was written in free verse of Clarke’s memory of the drowning.

However, she is not sure about her memory as she says “ was I there? and the “ cloudiness” that all she remembers. Also, there is an iambic meter which makes the poem run smoothly showing the peacefulness of drowning. In contrast, ‘ At a Potato Digging’ has four sections in the poem which show change in time and the change in events. It also shows the cyclic nature of the events from when the worshipped the land as a pagan ritual to worshipping the land at the end of the poem in fear that the humans will be punished for not giving Mother Nature sacrifices. In ‘ On my first Sonne’, the father envies dead and is sad because he has to stay on earth and live through the pain of growing old. This can be shown because he says “ and, if no other miserie, yet age? ” which shows that there is more misery in life that dying also he says “ I loose all father” which can be read as he lost all there is to life, but also has lost faith in God.

On the other hand, in ‘ The Affliction of Margaret’, Margaret is desperate to find out where his son is what ever condition he is in. Also, her thoughts about her son being dead are more positive than him being alive. She thinks of her son as a “ ghost” and “ I look for ghosts” because she thinks that he is dead and is more positive about that whereas if he were alive, she would think that her son would be “ maimed” and “ mangled”. In contrast to ‘ The Affliction of Margaret’ but similar to ‘ On my first Sonne’, there is grief and sadness to the almost loss of the child who almost drowned because she was taken back home to the “ poor house” and “ thrashed for almost drowning”.

Clarke feels that the child would have been better of dead than having to suffer the pain of drowning and then being thrashed for it. Clarke is also sad about the death of part of the child before she almost drowned because “ all

the lost things lie under closing water in that lake with the poor man's daughter" which shows us that part of the child is still there. Conversely, there is a tone of fear in ' At a Potato Digging' as the people call the ground the " faithless ground" and are scared that an event like the potato blight would happen again. However, it is quite hard to get a tone from Heaney's poems as they tell more narration within the poems such as this one, which tells the story of the potato blight.

In conclusion, all four poems show emotion about death but in different ways. ' On my first Sonne' shows that death is a good thing and that it is something that one should envy; ' The Affliction of Margaret' is similar in that fact that she refers to heaven having " wings" and something that we should look forward to; ' Cold Knap Lake' shows death as being a peaceful thing and something that is better for some people; ' At a Potato Digging' shows that death is a scary process when there is something like the potato blight that occurs.