

Meaning in "the panther" by rainier maria rilke essay



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Meaning in " The Panther" by Rainier Maria Rilke In the poem " The Panther"

Rainier Maria Rilke writes about a caged panther that paces inside its cage.

He walks around in circles bored out of his mind. He is weary from his life of being in the same cage all day every day. She uses the panther to create a theme of captivity and entrapment. Rilke describes the panther with his " powerful soft strides" (6) walking in circles, his heart hoping to be free.

His pacing is " like a ritual dance around a center in which a mighty will stands paralyzed" (7, 8). This is essential to the poem in that the panther is held captive but he is still a powerful wild animal with all the same drives and wildness as panthers in the wild. His strong instincts are still there, the urge to hunt and be free but yet he is " paralyzed" in the cage and can do nothing about it. For a split second the spirit of life enters in his eyes and the " curtain of the pupils lifts" (9). Something catches his eye and breaks the monotony.

Just as quickly as the image enters in and awakens his attention it " plunges into the heart and is gone" (12). Its as if his heart is empty and just a black hole. There's no life to him. His heart is just an organ and nothing else. Rilke describes emotions of confinement. This could relate to many different situations of people.

For example a prisoner that once had freedom is now locked up. It could also relate to someone that's in a situation they do not like but don't see a way out. Mothers with children could feel this way because once they were free to do what they pleased and now they are obligated to take care of children.

They may miss their old life and sometimes wish they could go back to those
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days. They are trapped by diapers, snotty noses and always being responsible for someone totally dependant.

This could also be true for someone whose parents are now old and need to be taken care of. Rilke does a good job describing the situation and makes you get a feel for how trapped and desperate the panther feels. It is a really good poem that captures the spirit of confinement at any level. A lot of people can get something out of this poem.

The way that he ends the poem really makes an impact. He ends the poem with the part where the image awakens the panther but quickly " plunges into the heart and is gone" (12). It leaves you with the feeling of emptiness and despair that the panther feels.