

# Anne sexton's cinderella essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

With many variations of fantasies, "Happily ever after" is reoccurring in every fairy tale. "Cinderella" by Anne Sexton is a different variation of the classic tale. The author sets up her version of Cinderella with four anecdotes sharing how others can go from poverty to riches or gritty reality to fantasy. Sexton changes her happily ever after ending by satirizing the message the story gives. By doing so, Sexton would like the reader to know the difference between a fairy tale and reality. Anne Sexton deconstructs the ending of her retold fairy tale by using sarcasm to change the reader's expectations of the story and myth.

Setting up the poem with little anecdotes of unexpected reality, Sexton's sarcastic tone foreshadows the outcome of the poem. In the first anecdote, Sexton writes, "You always read about it: the plumber with twelve children who wins the Irish sweepstakes. From toilets to riches. That story" (S1). Sexton uses a sarcastic tone by implying the situational irony in each story. The reader may find it hard to believe the story because each anecdote is so far fetched. The fantasy is brought back into gritty reality, however, the luck the man has to be in a poverty stricken situation to win the Irish sweepstakes. Sexton brings fantasy into the fairy tale so the readers can pick up on it and relate the new fantasy with Cinderella's tale. Sexton implies that the happily ever after story happens by pure chance and luck, not experienced by everyone.

Sexton's uses sarcasm in the refrain to influence the reader's predictions of the fairy tale by using the previous knowledge of the story Cinderella. "That Story" (L 5, 10, 21, 109) is used as the refrain in the poem. "That story" is a clue for the reader to rethink the previous told stories of Cinderella and other

fairy tales that go along the same lines of living happily ever after. The reader can sense the ridicule that sexton portrays in the refrain because she is simple and to the point. The anecdotes are radically drastic and Sexton refers to them as "That story" implying the repetition of the heard fairy tales. Sexton uses the refrain to influence the reader's predictions of Cinderella with referring themselves back to "that story".

Sexton uses ironic imagery through her sarcasm in the poem to change the reader's viewpoint of the classic story. Sexton explains Cinderella appearance as, "She slept on the sooty hearth each night and walked around looking like Al Jolson" (L32-33). In the twenties and thirties, Al Jolson was a white singer who dressed up as a black man because he thought he would have a funnier act that way. Sexton makes reference to Al Jolson and Cinderella being artificially black. However, in Cinderella's case the grease and soot were not her choice. This may be funny to the reader because of the reference to popular culture.

Another example of ironic imagery is when Cinderella's stepsister cuts off her toes to fit in the prince's prized shoe, Sexton states, "The prince rode away with her until the white dove told him to look at the blood pouring forth. That is the way with amputations. They don't just heal up like a wish" (L 84-87). Sexton is trying to convey the message that people go to great lengths to be accepted but a wish will not make those peoples be approved in their status. Sexton's sarcastic tone helps the reader notice the ironic situation of the stepsister amputating her toes just to find a prince and live happily ever after.

The readers expectations after reading this poem are changed through her sarcasm because Sexton satirizes the happily ever after theme. After Cinderella and the prince find each other and live happily ever after, “[they are] never bothered by diapers or dust”(L103) with “ their darling smiles pasted on for eternity. Regular Bobbsey twins”(L107-108). Sexton makes another reference to pop culture. The Bobbsey twins were perfect and nothing ever harmed them. Sexton is implying the same message with Cinderella and her prince. In essence, Sexton is turning her fairy tale into a myth; Cinderella and her prince are basically portraits hung on a wall. Apparently, Cinderella and her prince are not living at all.

Through her sarcasm she is making fun of the happily ever after theme by showing the reader that the idea is artificial. The reader understands the moral message that a fairy tale can send a small child. Marriage would not be a solution to Cinderella's problem, but may be the beginning of a disaster. Running out and getting married is nothing like a fairy tale or a couple's portraits hung on a wall and the couple may not even live happily ever after. The reader's expectations are changed through Sexton's interpretation of living perfectly, happily ever after because the reader can sense that a perfect marriage is not reality.

Through Sexton's sarcasm she uses anecdotes to foreshadow the ending of the poem, create ironic imagery, and change the reader's expectations of Cinderella and fairy tales all together. Sexton wants to prove her theory on fairy tales so she uses sarcasm and ridicule to prove the happily ever after ending does not exist in reality. She wants the readers to understand the message that is going out from these fairy tales and how the fantasies direct

the wrong message to the readers. Through her sarcasm the reader too feels like they are making fun of the theme of happily ever after. Sexton portrays the meaning of her poem by changing the expectations of the reader in reference to the traditional story of Cinderella. Sexton wants her readers to live in reality and not wait for prince charming.