

# Old man asleep



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

This essay aims to show how three poems are similar in some ways but yet different in some circumstances. Two of them are written by the same poet and so should share some characteristics, which she uses throughout her writing.

Elizabeth Jennings wrote " Old Man Asleep", which is about a lonely old man who has no one, but due to his anger and pride seeks companionship but rejects it when offered; and because of this he cannot wait to die. Elizabeth Jennings also expresses this feeling of wanting to die in " Eighty One Years Old" also. The old woman in this poem wants to be left alone, but she won't be and so the only time she is happy is when she is by herself.

" Warning" by Jenny Joseph is also about old age but it expresses different views, such as the lady in this poem cannot wait to be old so she can enjoy it.

A similarity shared by all three of the poems is that they deal with old age. Elizabeth Jennings talks about the house ridden, helpless old aged person, whilst Jenny Joseph talks about the mobile pensioner who roams around.

" Old Man Asleep" has no rhyming pattern, this is a point shared by Jenny Josephs " Warning". " Old Man Asleep" has a four-stanza structure and this is a similarity, which is shared by the other poems.

" Old Man Asleep" has a morbid tone. It is dark as it talks about death, it provides a vague image of an old man because it does not use adjectives and the reader cannot picture what the scene looks like. This morbid tone is shared by " Eighty One Years Old". The same poet writes these poems and

Elizabeth Jennings could intentionally do this, there is nothing, which can be used metaphorically to compare the morbid ness of death. This is completely different to the imagery used in " Warning", it is bright and uses warm colours even though it is dealing with a painful subject. The reason for this is that she is welcoming old age,

" When I am old I shall wear purple".

" Old Man Asleep" is written in the first person narrative, which is the same method used in " Eighty-One years old" this makes it an autobiographical piece. The difference between " Old Man Asleep and the other poems is its structure. Every fifth line is indented, and does not need a full stop to finish a line. The content is also different. It talks about a man loathed by those around him and ignores the help given to him. There is only one person who loves him his wife who is blinded by love so she does not see his cold exterior.

" All are afraid, except his wife who must Have kept the image of Him being gentle, does not see he's changed."

This old man could have once being superior and has found it hard that he has nothing left so he treats life and those around him bitterly.

" Eighty-One years old" is similar to Old Man asleep each line starts with a capital letter, but it has a difference as it rhymes irregularly to the pattern of (ABBACC), it is the only poem which rhymes. The content is also different. It talks about a woman who is cared for, but she does not care she wants to be left to wither and die. This is similar to " Old Man Asleep" as it also written in

the first person narrative. It also deals with death and the way the elderly depend on others. The people in both these poems are the same, they feel wasted and want these patients to die, but they hide their feelings as they are at work.

" And guilty thoughts, no doubt, will come  
To nurses who had wished her  
dead..."

The setting for this poem is a hospice, that is why Elizabeth Jennings mentions " peace" as that is the purpose of a hospice to offer not a cure but spiritual peace for the patient.

" Even the priest who brings the Host  
Cannot provide the peace but stays  
To join in mumbled words of praise."

This point is further proved as people are always around a patient in a hospice so when they die they know they were not alone.

" And that is what she longs for most-  
To be alone, when no one stands  
With filled but with unhelping hands."

In " Warning" by Jenny Joseph, the title suggests and sums up the poem. It is optimistic, she is warning those around her she is changing and the difference between this and the others is that she shows a positive attitude to ageing gracefully and wants to enjoy it whilst the other characters in the other poems cannot wait to die.

" And make up for the sobriety of my youth." (" Warning" By Jenny Joseph)

" She wants to die and all of us Agree although we do not say;" (" Eighty-One years old" by Elizabeth Jennings)

" He hates, yet wants, our pity, Having so little time To find compassion for his own near death" (" Old Man Asleep" by Elizabeth Jennings).

Another difference is the tone it is lively, whilst the others are metaphorically dark. This poem, which has a different narrative style for each stanza.

" When I am Old" is when she starts to daydream of what life will be like for her. " You can wear" this is a conversation with someone. She assertively suggests what she is going to do.

" I shall go out in my slippers in the rain".

A difference to the other poems is that it is written child like. A child uses long sentences and regularly repeats itself to get its point across. This is shown in the poem as there is a lot of repetition of " And" and " shall".

" And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves..."

I enjoyed reading all three poems as it gave a insight into the life of an elderly person, the poets deal with the same topic but they have a different view towards it. Elizabeth Jennings poems have more similarities, than differences compared to Jenny Josephs. This is because even though they are different poems they are written by the same poet and so will share some attributes.

I believe these are good poems as they share the same theme old age, I have shown similarities and difference, which show the likeness of these poems, but how they are different especially with their views.