

# Compare and contrast – a daughter leaving home

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Compare & Contrast Essay The poem, " To a Daughter Leaving Home", by Linda Pastan, depicts the scene of a mother teaching her little girl to ride a bike at the age of eight and watching her master it. Yvor Winter's " At the San Francisco Airport" is about a father reminiscing about the memory of his daughter growing up and leaving him at the airport. Both these poems speak of the much dreaded time in a parent's life where their daughter's grow up and leave their homes. Although the poems appear to be similar because they address the same theme, they differ in form, tone, and imagery.

The poems are different in form. In " To a Daughter Leaving Home", Linda Pastan uses open form, with no identifiable rhyme pattern or meter. Maybe there's no identifiable pattern because these are just the mother's random thoughts. On the other hand " At the San Francisco Airport", Yvor Winters uses a closed form that is very distinctive. There are five stanzas and each stanza has five lines. All the lines rhyme; three have one rhyming ending and the other two also have a rhyming ending.

For example: " This is the terminal: the light/Gives perfect vision, false and hard;/The metal glitters, deep and bright. /Great planes are waiting in the yard-/They are already in the night". Light, bright and night rhyme, as well as hard and yard. Maybe the author chose the closed form because of its structure, controlled and intact, just like he wanted to keep feelings. The tone of " To a Daughter Leaving Home" differs from the tone in " At the San Francisco Airport". The tone of " To A Daughter Leaving Home" is one of sadness, anxiety and nostalgia.

Pastan's poem is of a mother fondly remembering an earlier time when her daughter took a brief departure from her, when she was taught to ride her  
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bike at eight years old. The mother wasn't quite ready to let the daughter go, as was suggested when she said, " I kept waiting for the thud of your crash as I sprinted to catch up, while you grew smaller, more breakable in the distance". This tells us she was anxious even then about her daughter growing up and being able to do things on her own. In contrast, the tone in " At the San Francisco Airport" is very gloomy, less emotional, but still nervous and scared.

The father still looks at his daughter as his little girl even though he knows she isn't and that this is the right time to let her go. He refers to her as " small, contained and fragile". The lines: " But you and I in part are one: The frightened brain, the nervous will, the knowledge of what must be done," demonstrates that they are both having similar thoughts and feelings but they are willing to accept this challenge. Though the father is trying to be strong, he confessed that he was momentarily devastated when he said " the rain of matter upon sense destroys me momentarily".

The imagery of " To A Daughter Leaving Home" also differs from the imagery of " At the San Francisco Airport". All the images in " To a Daughter leaving Home" help us to see how the mother is feeling during this time, even though this poem is of an earlier time, foreshadowing what is to come in later years. As her daughter " wobbled away" on her bike, the mother ran right beside her, telling us the kind of mother she was, very supportive. She waited " for the thud" and " sprinted to catch up" to her daughter. She wanted to always be there to protect her daughter, even as she's all grown up.

Her daughter growing “ smaller, more breakable” is her moving further and further away from her mother, getting older, more mature and able to take care of herself, eventually moving out and on with her life as an adult. On the other hand, the images in " At the San Francisco Airport" didn't show the father as anxious, just reluctant and apprehensive. The father mentioning the “ terminal” means he looks at the airport terminal as a turning point in their lives, a place where he breaks off from his daughter, staying behind as she moves on with her life.

He references planes that “ are already in the night”, telling the reader that they are either taking off or already in the air, further emphasizing her leaving him behind. These images reinforce his “ frightened brain” and “ nervous will” even though he knows this “ must be done”. Though both poems speak about their daughters leaving home, the mother speaks in the past, as if her daughter is still a little girl, but the father acknowledges that though he still views her as a “ small...fragile” girl and this “ destroys” him, “ there comes what will come”.

On the surface, the works of Linda Pastan and Yvor Winters can be interpreted as similar poems about parents losing their daughters to adulthood. When contrasting the poems, the reader comes to a much different understanding. " To a Daughter Leaving Home" presents an open form and tone that uses specific images and tone to present this mother's sadness and anxiety towards the situation. Winters' " At the San Francisco Airport” is a closed form poem that uses images and tone to convey the attempt of this father to keep his composure as he sees his daughter off to live her life and become an adult.