

Poetry analysis: barbie doll poem

Life



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Society often saddles women with limiting and unrealistic expectations concerning beauty. This results in a sense of physical inadequacy and a low self-image for those women who do not uphold those features identified as aesthetically attractive. As the poem entitled " Barbie Doll," by Marge Piercy shows through its word choice and tone, the results can often be devastating. There is a pointed and troubling contrast in the 2nd stanza, which describes a female subject of markedly admirable qualities.

Indeed, it is almost implied that these qualities are somehow male in their nature. Her health, intelligence and strength are praised, as are her sex drive and physical abilities. We might therefore deduce that the subject being describes is an inherently attractive figure with qualities suitable for affection and mating. And yet, the resolution of this stanza is the juxtaposition which tells of a woman who is apologetic for those features divergent from female idealization.

And were it simply a low self-esteem at the root of this apologetic nature, it might be deduced that the subject is also Piercy's object of criticism. However, the 3rd stanza makes quite clear that the woman is at the mercy of that which is expected of her by others. Society's pressures, implied by the sarcastic tone in the first stanza concerning female targeted toys which influence early the ideal role and identity of the woman, are reinforced in a more damning fashion by the 3rd stanza, which notes that ' she was advised' to craft herself according to how others expected her to be.

Those unique and admirable qualities amounted to nothing as she was impressed upon to be thinner and more concurrent with the ideal of beauty. As Piercy tells, first she surrenders those qualities of her persona which

made her appreciable and, consequently, she surrenders her life. She becomes the ' Barbie Doll' which invokes the standard image of beauty in our culture, as attractive, plastic and inanimate as a child's play thing.