

To a daughter leaving home essay



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In this paper I'm going to compare and contrast the poems "To a Daughter Leaving Home" by Linda Pastan and "At the San Francisco Airport" by Yvor Winters. Linda Pastan is one of the most notable contemporary poets and a winner of numerous literary awards. Yvor Winters is among the most influential poets of the mid-twentieth century, and his contribution is associated with the transition from Romanticism to modernism and artistic rationalism.

Both "To a Daughter Leaving Home" and "At the San Francisco Airport" have much in common and address the same theme, but I would like to concentrate on numerous contrasts between the two poems. First of all the difference exists in the form of the two poems. Winters uses closed form; the rhyme scheme for "At the San Francisco Airport" is ABABA. Let me illustrate my thesis with an example from the text: "And you are here beside me, small. Contained and fragile, and intent/On things that I but half recall-/Yet going whither you are bent. /I am the past, and that is all." As for "To a Daughter Leaving Home", it is a beautifully written example of blank verse, and no particular rhyme pattern or meter is evident: "When I taught you/at eight to ride/a bicycle, loping along/beside you/as you wobbled away/on two round wheels..." The choice of the opened form makes the reader feel that the author is contemplating about her feelings and memories.

I can't help noticing the "stream of consciousness" technique, skilfully used by Linda Pastan in this verse to reproduce the atmosphere of reminiscence. The second step I would like to take in contrasting the poems by Winters and Pastan is to analyze the imagery and poetical devices used by each author. As for the figurative language of Pastan, she uses numerous poetical devices

in her poem. The first notable device is repetition: "...pumping, pumping/for your life, screaming/with laughter..." The usage of symbols is also present.

The handkerchief vividly communicates the notion of a farewell: "handkerchief waving/goodbye." Another literary device used by Pastan is apostrophe. This literary figure is used when the author needs to address somebody absent or illusive. In this case, the daughter isn't by Linda's side still the verse is addressed to her. And now it's high time to explore literary devices used by Yvor Winters. The poem is noticed for its explicit symbolism.

Here, the airport symbolizes farewell: "Great planes are waiting in the yard/They are already in the night." The very fact that the planes are "great" clearly indicates that great accomplishments are waiting for the girl. Another important symbol is light as contrasted to darkness. The author writes: "And I remain in light and stare/In light, and nothing else, awake." Maybe, this is the light of wisdom; maybe, this is the light of love, care and commitment. The symbol that unites both poets is the symbol of the journey central in their poems.

Their kids are embarking on their most important journey to adult life. And now I would like to proceed to the final and most essential part of my comparative analysis. I would like to assess the tone and message of each verse. Both poems are marked with the deep feeling of nostalgia, but the parents admit that children always become mature and leave. I would say that the feeling of nostalgia is more typical of Pastan's poem; the author may sometimes feel lonely and left.

Author's thoughts stay in the past only: " When I taught you/at eight to ride/a bicycle..." Still, there are few optimistic images in the verse: " screaming/with laughter,/the hair flapping/behind you..." Winters' focus is directed towards the future of his daughter; the major motif of the verse is the hope for the happy and peaceful future of the girl: " This is the terminal, the break. /Beyond this point, on lines of air,/You take the way that you must take..." Certainly, the father is haunted by the feeling of bitterness: " I am the past, and that is all. Both authors want to perceive their kids as small, fragile and unprotected beings for the ample reason that this simple fact empathizes parents' significance and helpfulness. Pastan writes: "...while you grew/smaller, more breakable/with distance..." Winters writes: " And you are here beside me, small. /Contained and fragile..." Pastan's feelings are very typical of a mother; she is constantly afraid anxious about her daughter: " I kept waiting/for the thud/of your crash as I/sprinted to catch up..." In the Winter' " At the San Francisco Airport" the stress is a bit shifted.

We see that the father is very proud of his daughter; the author focuses on similar and honorable features they both share. We can definitely call them soul-mates: " But you and I in part are one:/The frightened brain, the nervous will,/The knowledge of what must be done,/The passion to acquire the skill/To face that which you dare not shun. " The father tries to hold back his emotions, and Linda Pascal speaks explicitly about her inner feelings. We see that Winters' daughter is great successor of her father in his desire to be intelligent and honest. The theme of unity and continuity is central in the last stanzas.

Pascal states that distance keeps her away from her daughter, so the theme of separation is central in her verse. So we can make a conclusion that both authors experience melancholy as their daughters grow up and start their journey to the world of adulthood. But the difference in form, tone, mood, message, imagery, and symbolism makes the perception of the two poems quite different. "To a Daughter Leaving Home" is the reminiscence about past years marked by the feelings of loneliness, separation and distance. The central theme of "At the San Francisco Airport" is acceptance, proud and hope, feeling of unity and continuity.