

# Parrot deaths: rite of passage by john kinsella essay sample



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The poem 'Parrot Deaths: Rite of Passage' written by John Kinsella highlights the internal struggle the speaker is experiencing through the death of the parrots. Although the action is happening physically, the struggles the parrots face are parallel to the speaker's own mental purgatory. Colour is intensely used to convey atmosphere and character to both the parrots and the speaker. The use of first person narration, gives the poem a personal tone.

Colour and physical appearance are dominant aspects of this poem. In the first stanza, the parrots are described as possessing orange hearts, which gives the impression of success and a sense of fascination with the parrots. However the 'sultry weather' changes the colour of the parrots and 'dampen[s]' them to a dark orange, which is associated with deceit and distrust. This gives the parrots character and creates an atmosphere around them. The 'impending' rain and the way the clouds 'scuttle' the sun support the uncertainty and constraint that surround the parrots. Jumping forward to the final stanza, the parrot's hearts are described as 'orange, golden, and emerald' all colours that denote prestige and possession and shows the richness of the creature. Contrasting to this, the sky is described as being full of 'blue clouds', which contradicts the impression of the parrots.

In the second stanza, the 'golden grain' initially paints a picture of a unique road only to be destroyed by the way it has been 'cull[ed]'. In the third stanza the 'wood smoke' creates a grim and ghostly atmosphere to again contradict the polychromatic appearance of the 'Rosellas'. By comparing the juxtaposing the opposite colours, Kinsella enables the reader to fully acknowledge the damage and death of the parrots. Up until now the birds

have been painted in a joyous and carefree way, but the final parrot whose 'eyes of silver nitrate' charge at the semi, convey a different personality. The 'tarnished and stained' eyes of the parrot show the despair the 'regent' parrot feels. The deaths of its peers has left the parrot 'shadow black', hollow and lifeless as it departs with dignity and its own 'rite of passage'.

Just like the parrot feels muted, as does the speaker of the poem, who expresses their inner anguish through the portrayal of the birds and the surroundings. The speaker is detached from the physical action in the poem but is connected quite strongly with the gloom that the deaths of the parrots bring. The onomatopoeia of how the sun 'fizzes and winces' creates this discomfort and uneasiness within the environment, which is directly comparative to how the speaker feels about the situation.

The speaker's feelings are personified through both the magpie lark and crow, which both experience a state of physical or mental inactivity whilst watching in awe at the 'litter' of parrots on the road. The crow 'hangs low' and stays out of sight much like the speaker who tries to 'deflect' what he sees. The eyes are described as 'silver nitrate' insinuating some sort of scarring or mark left behind on the character, as the chemical itself has that effect. This could be making a reference to the speaker's past and how the deaths 'stain' his conscience. The more the speaker tries to distance himself or herself, the more emotionally involved and caught up in nostalgia they become.

Following on from the speaker's mind, the use of caesura in the entire poem creates this stop and start flow of words and thoughts. There is symmetry

between the structure of the sentences and the speaker's mind, how the conscience of the speaker is intermittent and constantly stopping and starting to make sense of it all. Likewise, the use of enjambment in the fourth to the fifth stanza creates a flow of ideas and highlights the overwhelming thoughts of the speaker. Like the sentence 'plunges' into the next stanza, so does the speaker's emotions, 'slowly' overtaking him or her.

The poem 'Parrot Deaths: Rite of Passage' by John Kinsella translates the inner distress of the speaker through the horrible deaths of the parrots. Through the use of colour and detail within the structure of the poem, Kinsella was able to represent both parrot and speaker and how the physical action was united with the mental aspect of the poem.