

Critical appreciation of diary of a church mouse essay sample

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



John Betjeman, an English poet, broadcaster and writer on architecture was born on 6th April 1906. One is tempted to say of Betjeman that he is an 'architect masquerading as a poet by accident', for architecture has always been his chief preoccupation. He wrote many poems to do with Christianity. His poems were often humorous and this unusual quality was accepted and eventually became popular. One characteristic of Betjeman's poems was satire. With his use of satire, Betjeman communicates his views on themes such as hypocrisy and egotism in society.

The title 'Diary of a Church Mouse' is simple, concise and satirical. It defines the persona of a church mouse. The word Diary indicates that it is a personal experience. It is the recording of feelings and events in the life of the mouse in the church. In the 'Diary of a Church Mouse', Betjeman highlights the hypocrisy of certain types of people and their desire to be seen as high-class and virtuous while selfish and inconsiderate. This poem takes the form of a narrative and is seen in the eyes of a church mouse. The mouse in the poem represents the type of people Betjeman is denouncing. It is not concerned with the religious and ritualistic aspects of the church but more with its status within the church and as seen through the eyes of other people.

The poem is an undivided unit as there are no verses used to separate ideas. All the lines of the poem are of the same length and are organized into rhyming couplets. It is a narrative piece as the mouse is talking about himself. The rhyming couplets give the poem a rhythmical flow. This is used to provide a rhythmical flow to the poem and keep the reader engrossed in the poem.

The poem describes the life in an English church, seen from an unusual angle. 'It is a satire of man's hypocrisy'; this is the finest way of elucidating the poem. The poet is criticizing the double standards of man, who falsely pretends to be virtuous, in a humorous manner. The church is left in a state of neglect. There is no sign of solicitude being shown towards the church. The Church of England is the one of the most important churches in the world. The church mouse lives undisturbed in the 'dark forgotten room' in which the cleaners never goes. This shows that the church is unkempt and forgotten for most of the year. The mouse lives 'lean and alone' eating 'sawdust mixed with straw and polish for the floor'. The poem traces the progression of the writer's thoughts on the theme and tells us how selfish and insatiable people can be. This is symbolic in the sense that it helps convey the poet's ideas to the readers.

Christmas, Easter and Whitsun are really important festivals for Christians. But for lonely mouse, they are non-existent. This is because nobody comes to the church and brings food. People are busy celebrating and have forgotten the importance of offering a prayer to God on these occasions. The mouse is left hungry. The only time the mouse 'feasts' is during Harvest Festival. It is a time for celebration at the otherwise isolated church. This is the point of time in the year in which the mouse enjoys good food and drink. However, the Church Mouse cannot feast alone in peace as different mice come from outside the Church and invade its privacy. Not only does the mouse deride, but also with his wit, skillfully narrates the story of the rodents who visit the church.

From this point onward, the poet brings out the true meaning of writing this poem. He personifies man's hypocrisy. The mice in the poem represent the different types of people that Betjeman is denouncing. First are the mice with 'pagan minds' meaning that they do not follow a World Religion due to their own beliefs. They do not follow the rules of the church but are still found wandering in the church. Then come the two field mice who know God exists but want to be baptized. They are still found in the church, as they want to have significant positions in the church. Then the Atheist mouse appears who does not believe in Religion. These kinds of people are selfish people who visit the church only during Harvest to enjoy benefits that are not theirs.

There are 'prosperous' mice who come to the Church too. These mice are here to enjoy the organ and music that is played during Harvest. They are not here to pray or thank God. A Low Church mouse insults the church mouse for being too traditional and saint like. The Low Church mouse criticizes but continues to do wrong like the rest and greedily quench their hunger. The mouse is miserable at the thought of sharing his food for he had lingered patiently all year long. He is critical of intruders who deprive him of what is rightfully his.

There is a caesura as a more serious point is being made. As you examine the poem for the abstruse meaning, the poet's language becomes moralistic and tells you in reality the religiousness of people. The poet agrees that the people believe in God and follow all the rules. But Betjeman's poem shows us that the world of the mice is parallel to the world of the Humans. The

humans follow their religion but only thank God for their own needs. The humans are therefore selfish. The climax of the poem evince the entire theme of the poem, that people would rather stop by the church to assuage their voracity than to worship god. This brings the poet's sentiments to a satirical end.

The poet uses a profusion of simple and evocative words, which are expertly, weaved to narrate the story vividly. This helps to create vivid images of the situation. The lines are indented at the end, so that it does not disturb the movement of the poem. The poem merges one incident into another and produces work of authentic quality. Use of symbolism is seen throughout, which makes the simple language of the poem difficult to comprehend. The mood of them poem is reflective. The mouse having to share his Harvest meals with the other mice shows a hint of jealousy. The tone of them poem is somber and satirical.

The poem deals with the double standards of society and evokes feelings of disgust inside me. Although the poet uses the mouse symbolically to make the reader aware of the contrastive people, it applies to mankind in general. I really liked this poem as it is teaching us humans a lesson. It is an inspiration to the readers not to be selfish and to make this world a better place to live in.