

Compare nothing's
changed with
blessing essay
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In this essay, I shall be exploring what the poems " Blessing" and " Nothing's Changed" suggest about people and places.

Imtiaz Dharker is a British-Pakistani poet who wrote ' Blessing'. Dharker writes about the issues she has faced being a Pakistani in Scotland and also the guilt she feels when she sees the suffering of people in her homeland. In ' Nothing's Changed' she explores the issue of water deficiency within a village just outside of Bombay.

The other poem I shall be exploring is ' Nothing's Changed' wrote by South African poet Tatamkhula Afrika. Afrika lived in South Africa which followed a policy of apartheid; black and white people were segregated on the belief that blacks were inferior. Afrika later in his life re-identified himself as African. " Nothing's Changed" was wrote shortly after apartheid. The poem maintains throughout a high sense of bitterness and anger from Afrika.

In both poems there is a degree of setting and tone, established in the immediate sentences. ' Nothing's Changed' presents a wasteland like setting. Special attention is placed on the inequalities of the floor, such as the ' hard stones' and the ' cans, trodden on'. Through the use of punctuation, especially commas, and also elongated language with words such as ' bearded seeds' and ' amiable weeds' a sense of slow, trudging rhythm is established and gives the reader the impression that the first person narrative does not want to be there.

' Blessing' similarly begins with description of the ground; ' the skin cracks like a pod'. This imagery allows the reader to straight away be placed in a setting which is so dry that the ground is cracking. Dharker however, unlike <https://assignbuster.com/compare-nothings-changed-with-blessing-essay-sample/>

Afrika, is more transparent in her emotion and therefore tells the audience directly that 'there never is enough water'. The especial stress is on the word 'is', immediately establishing the main theme of water deficiency for the rest of the poem. As it is in the third person, the reader is given the sense the poet is observing the situation.

Whilst 'Blessing' establishes tone and setting in a likewise way to 'Nothing's Changed', the rhythm and pace of the two poems contrast due to their structures. 'Nothing's Changed' uses a stable structure to the stanzas which gives a sense of control, perhaps symbolising the control the whites have over the country. 'Blessing' on the other hand varies the length and pattern of its verses for dramatic effect such as having short verses for essential powerful lines.

It is now established that "Nothing's Changed" is a political poem in the present tense, looking from the first person, using symbolic poem structure to show his emotion. "Blessing" is a third person poem using irregular stanzas to highlight key themes and issues. What we now need to ask is what does each poem say about places and people?

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In Blessing, the places are implied through description. Key words such as 'huts' and 'municipal pipe' hint at a run-down setting. The word 'hut' effectively brings the audience to think of a run down area as it implies the houses are makeshift and therefore reveals that the people cannot afford to purchase professionally made homes.

Afrika uses place and setting greater than Dharker and even uses it to reveal his views on society to the reader. For example, he shows a contrast of dining outlets for white people and black people. He describes the grand nature of the whites restaurant, yet we are given the impression he feels that the design is distasteful.

When describing the 'white's inn' he uses eloquent language such as 'haute cuisine' and 'linen falls' giving the reader the impression of an expensive, extravagant restaurant. He gives clear imagery of what it looks like through words such as 'linen falls', 'ice white glass' and 'the single rose' giving the reader an image of a pure white decorated room with tables covered in white silk and a single rose.

This theme is continued with Afrika revealing that there are 'incipient port Jackson trees'. This shows that a lot of expense has been put into the place as Australian trees have been imported especially for this restaurant.

Afrika's belief that the 'white inn' is distasteful is made clear in line 17, as he says that the restaurant is 'brash with glass'. This line gives imagery of a modern, western design. The word 'brash' is used powerfully to show the poet's dislike of western buildings such as the one he described. This message is brought to the reader as the word brash means to lack sensitivity. The reader therefore is drawn to the conclusion that the poet feels that imposing their buildings, which may be followed by their culture, on the indigenous population is insensitive and unfair, allowing the reader to share in the poet's anger.

To make this point clear, Afrika uses a clever simile ' name flaring like a flag'. The flag refers to the white people and their culture that they impose on South Africa. The word flaring means to burn brightly, therefore implicating that the white people make a point of showing who they are. The fact that they flare like a ' flag' also brings the reader to think of people who conquer countries and then place there flag there; Afrika may feel South Africa has been conquered by the White people.

In contrast, Afrika's description when describing the ' working man's cafe' is direct. The comparison between the white's inn and the working man's cafe demonstrates this contrast. He describes the working man's cafe with it's ' plastic table tops' against the ' linen falls' of the whites inn. He further shows this contrast when describing how the ' haute cuisine' has become ' bunny chow'. These contrasts show that the ' working man's cafe' or in other words, the restaurant of the working class, the average man, is much less expensive and grand. Afrika says that they ' spit a little on the floor'.

To most readers this might seem unhygienic and rude, therefore slightly discomforting them. Afrika however does this purposely for dramatic effect, which becomes clear when he says ' it's in the bone'. In this, he is revealing the nature of the

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black people. What he is saying is that though the reader, and the other whites feel that their way of life is not right, that is the way they have lived for so long that it is inside them to behave that way, and the whites are in no position to change that.

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From 'Nothing's Changed' we therefore gather the sense that the white people are trying to impose their western culture on the blacks, who simply do not want it.

Afrika has revealed the nature of the people and his own attitude through the two contrasting dining outlets. Dharker in 'Blessing' on the other hand reveals the desperation for water of the people through their actions when they receive a 'Blessing'. When the 'municipal pipe' bursts, Dharker describes the scene- 'silver crashes to the ground'. Dharker uses the word 'silver' to maximise the impact as it is a word used for a precious metal, therefore revealing that the water is precious to the people. The word 'silver' is also continuing the theme of riches, as in the previous line she described 'the sudden rush of fortune'. 'Fortune' can be used to describe wealth, as well as good luck. The message to the audience that water is extremely important to the people is heightened as Dharker creates a hustling and bustling atmosphere of people.

She creates a sense of mayhem on the streets through a clever use of grammar. After every description she uses a comma, colon or full stop to make that stage of the poem feel like a list, giving the impression that there is too much going on just to focus on one particular sight. An example of her use of the comma is seen when she says 'a roar of tongues. From the huts, a congregation: every man woman and child, butts in, with pots.' The word 'congregation' especially helps the audience to grasp the mass of people and also continues the idea of water being a religion, it is worshiped. The imagery of water being idolised, is seen when Dharker says that the drip of water is like a 'kindly god', emphasising the need of water for the people.

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As the list of buckets and actions of the people comes to an end, Dharker summarises the actions of the people as 'frantic', perfectly reflecting the desperation to get some of the water as it makes the audience feel as if the people are working hard and quickly to get some of it.

Dharker shows that the people are desperate to get water. Though I also believe that Dharker's poem was making a statement about the naivety of the people in charge of the slums. The fact that it was the 'municipal pipe' that burst, which is of course a pipe which belongs to the council, reflects that the government could give them the water they need from those pipes, however choose not to. The opening wasteland description also suggests that the people who live in the place are forgotten and not looked after. Words such as 'the skin crack like a pod' show that the land has not been looked after as well as revealing the water shortage.

'Nothings Changed' uses the contrast between the 'Whites Inn' and the 'Working man's cafe' to show the realism of race divide in South Africa. Describing the 'White's Inn' as extremely eloquent and extravagant with 'linen falls' and 'haute cuisine' in contrast to the 'working man's cafe' in which people 'spit a little on the floor'. The contrast in these two places is not used to show how better off the white people are but that the white people in South Africa use their wealth to impose their

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culture on the indigenous population. Afrika personally expresses his anger to the audience, suggesting that the black population are angry at the way the white people enforce their culture.

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The poem Blessing, through using key words such as 'hut' and 'skin cracks like a pod' suggest that the setting is neglected. Describing the 'municipal' pipe as bursting suggests that it is the people in charge which try and forget their suffering, leaving them to decay. Dharker creates a sense of atmosphere of community and also desperation through the words 'congregation' and 'frantic'. The atmosphere is also created when the people all work to collect water from the burst municipal pipe.

From the two poems, I preferred 'Nothing's Changed'. I enjoyed the contrast between the two cafes as it challenged you to think of the emotions of the indigenous population. I also thought that the poem being in the first person allowed the reader to become much more involved in the poem as all the senses could be used. The perspective of the first person also allowed for the reader to really feel his anger and other emotions as he realised that nothing had changed.