

'looking equation' by
brian patten and 'long
distance' essay



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'The Sick Equation' is about a boy whose parents are constantly arguing with each other.

Because of this, the boy began to believe that love did not really exist, as he had grown up around people who never loved each other. He thought that even if his parents did stay together, someone, maybe even him, would get hurt.'For by becoming two, one at least would suffer so'I think the poet would rather his mum and dad be separated, because all they do when they are together is argue, and it just causes more pain, not just between the two of them, but for him also. He preferred to stay at school, away from the fighting because the pain he suffered at school was worse than that of going to school.'All that household's anger and its painStung more than any teachers cane'I think he found school as a refuge, as it was a place he could get away from all the fighting and arguing that went on at home.

'In school I learned that one and one made two,'I think the poet opens the poem with this statement because it is a fact that cannot be argued with. It is definite. However, when it comes to real life, it is not that straight forward.'I learned that one and one stayed one and one.'At home, his parents were the one and one, and because they did not love each other, they stayed one and one, whereas in a perfect world they would become two. The poet begins to push people who care about him away, and does not let himself fall in love with anybody.

'Believing this I threw away so many gifts-I never let love stay long enough to root,'He refuses to stay too long with one person, in case they get too close and fall in love, because he is afraid what happened to his parents will

happen to him. The poet uses enjambment in 'The Sick Equation.' This shows that the poet is thinking, and recalling memories of his childhood. 'I grew-or did not grow-' I think this means that the poet grew up physically, but inside he stayed vulnerable, like a little boy still afraid of ending up how his parents did. The enjambment reflects him working through his memories. Instead of using a comma or brackets, he uses hyphens.

This shows that the poem is not organised, as it is not a straightforward subject. It is very complicated and so cannot be organised. On the other hand, he may be showing that he is very mixed up inside, and confused and so this is reflected in his poetry. The last two stanzas are set out as a sonnet. Both stanzas have seven lines. Shakespearean sonnets are usually set out in two stanzas with eight lines in one and seven in the other.

I think the last two stanzas have 7 lines in each to represent equality between two people and two show one and one becoming two, as together, the two stanzas make one sonnet. I think the poet puts a sonnet at the end of the poem to show that in the end, to show that he did fall in love in the end, as he realised that he could not let what happened to his parents, happen to him. 'Looking For Dad' is another poem by Brian Patten. This is also a poem about his parents arguing with each other, and because of this, his dad leaves. Like 'The Sick Equation,' 'Looking For Dad' also has a lack of punctuation.

As the poem is written from a child's point of view, this adds to the affect, as the poet feels that writing about his feelings are much more important than punctuation. On the other hand, he may have not used a lot of punctuation

so that when the poem is read aloud, it does not flow, and so it sounds like a child is reading it. The boy in the poem is upset because his parents are always fighting. His parents do not show him very much love or attention, and so they buy him gifts and toys to make up for it.'That night I dreamtDad was hiddenBeneath the thingsI'd been given'When his father leaves, he is upset and wants him back.

He would rather have his dad than all the toys and presents they had given him. He would choose love over material possessions.'In my dreamI was in despairAnd flung aboutMy underwearBut could not findHim anywhere'He is looking under all his things to try to find his dad. The boy gets desperate and is very upset.

' I looked for himLots and lotsBeneath crumpled sheetsAnd old robots'The poet uses ' and' a lot in this quotation. This makes the reader read a lot quicker, as ' and' is used in place of punctuation. This is effective, as it makes the poet sound as if he is panicking, because he cannot find his dad. In addition, reading the poem quicker reflects a child's voice, which adds to the effect of it being written from a child's perspective.

Another poem about losing a loved one is ' Long Distance.' This is a poem about a Husband trying to come to terms with losing his wife. The couples' son writes it. The poem opens with'Though my mother was already two years dead'This is a fact. The poet makes a statement that his mother has been dead for two years.

' Dad kept her slippers warming by the gas,'His father knows that she is dead, but he still keeps everything the same as it was when she was still
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alive. He keeps himself going, by keeping all of her possessions around him to remind himself of her. If he did not do this, the grief would become too much for him, and he would not be able to cope. There are no complicated words or long complex sentences in any of the three poems. This is because they are all about important subjects, death, divorce, love.

None of these subjects need to be hyped up, as they are all dramatic enough on their own. All three poems are about family relationships, love, death and divorce, and the effect they have on the rest of the families. They are all ordinary events that happen to families every day. The mood of each of the poems is quite a sad and sullen one. In 'The Sick Equation,' the poet is bitter towards his parents for making him believe that love did not really exist. 'I was wrong of course, just as those who brought me up were wrong.

'In the poem, he uses juxtaposition.' One among the many whose dreams of flight weighed down the soul, 'I think this means that the poet dreams of being in love, but this gets him down, as he thinks that it will end up like his parents did.' Because to the flightless the dream of flight's an anguish.' The poet sees other people in love, and so he keeps his head down, and tries not to see them. He does this, because seeing people in love makes him realise that love really does exist, but there is still doubt in his mind, because of his parents' divorce. 'And I took small comfort in believing that, to some degree they too still harboured dreams of flying free.

'I think the poet tries to convince himself that even though people are getting married, they do not really want to. I think he does this because he is

bitter and resentful towards everyone that falls in love.'Long Distance' is a poem about death. Because of this, it is a very straightforward poem.

It uses no long or complicated words, or complex sentences. There is no need to, as death is such a dramatic and important subject, it is not need to be over dramatised. In the final stanza, I think that the poet's father dies.'You haven't both gone shopping; just the same,'In the last stanza, the first line is'I believe life ends with death, and that is all.

' This is the opinion of the poet. He believes that once somebody is dead, they are dead, and that is the end of it, but he then goes on to contradict himself.'In my new black leather phone book there's still your nameAnd your disconnected number I still call'I think that he finds it hard to accept that his parents have both gone, and starts to understand how his father felt, and why he kept things the same. He realises how hard it is to accept that they have died and so to try to cope, he still rings the disconnected number. Even though he knows that they are dead, this is a way of him not having to accept it.

It is a way of him still trying to keep a part of them alive. I think that ' Long Distance' is most effective in portraying family relationships, as it portrays how different people grieve in different ways. The poem is about how people cope with death, something that almost everyone will experience at some point in their life. The poem is set out in iambic pentameter. I think this makes the poem seem more real, as it sounds as though the poet is telling someone about the death of his mother.

All three poems are about family relationships, although each one differs in actual content. 'The Sick Equation' is about a boy whose parents divorce, and this leads him to believe that he will end up getting divorced also. 'Looking For Dad' is about a boy whose parents by him presents to make up for the fact that they do not show him any love for affection. However, the boy would much rather have love than material possessions, and when his father leaves, the boy believes that it is because all of these possessions have made his room a mess, and his dad left because of this. 'Long Distance' is about a man whose father cannot cope with the grief of losing his wife, and so keeps all of her things around him. The poet does not understand why his father does this, until his father dies, and he then realises how hard it is to cope with losing someone you love so much. Overall, I think that all three poems are very effective at portraying family relationships, but I think that 'Long Distance' does this most successfully.