

Similar Distinction

What kind of poetry do you like? “My Papa’s Waltz” is a poem by Theodore Roethke; it describes the author struggling with his drunken father’s beatings. “Fifteen” is about the author recalling when he was fifteen and seeing a motor-vehicular accident. Upon closer examination, we may see that these poems have much in common yet also differences. “My Papa’s Waltz” and “Fifteen” by William Stafford use similar approximate rhymes, onomatopoeia's, and tone, but they use different kinds of imagery.

First of all the approximate rhymes in these poems reflect each other. William Stafford writes, “companion, ready and friendly. I was fifteen” (10), and this half-rhyme depicts a relationship between the boy and his motorcycle. Theodore Roethke also writes, “The whiskey on your breath / Could make a small boy dizzy; / But I hung on like death. / Such waltzing was not easy” (3-5); this quote illustrates how the boy struggles with his father being drunken. Both of these approximate rhymes show a relationship.

Another element these poems have in common is onomatopoeia. The poems both use onomatopoeia's in the fact that they both have words that represent the sounds they make. In “My Papa’s Waltz” we read “My ear scraped a buckle” (12). This onomatopoeia describes how the boy is beaten with a belt. And in “Fifteen” it says “as it lay on its side, ticking over” (4) which describes a fallen motorcycle. Here we can see that both poems use onomatopoeia’s to illustrate noisy situations.

Additionally these poems are alike in the fact that they both look back into their past, as we can see in their tones. Roethke writes “could make a small boy dizzy” (2). In this we can see that he is looking back and remembering when he was a little boy. Then in “Fifteen” we read, “I was fifteen” (5); in fact the author repeats this line several times throughout the poem. The two

poems have a tone of the author connecting to his past.

However “Fifteen” and “My Papa’s Waltz” use different topics in their imagery. Like as in “Waltz” it says “The whiskey on your breath” (1), and we can almost smell this distasteful stench. “Fifteen” reads, “I admired all that pulsing gleam” (6), so this sample of imagery offers a distinct visual picture of illumination. We see that these poems use different types of imagery to display what taking place.

These poems have similar elements of onomatopoeia, approximate rhymes and tone. Yet different kinds of imagery. Their approximate rhymes are both relational and their tones have similar themes of reminiscence. Additionally “Fifteen” and “Waltz” use an onomatopoeia. However the imagery in these poems address different topics and senses. So we can see that these poems which use so many similar elements also use different imagery to display themselves. So if you enjoyed reading this, then you should definitely read these poems!

Works Cited

Roethke, Theodore. "My Papa's Waltz." *Elements of Literature: sThird Course*. Ed.

Kathleen Daniel. Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2003.

Stafford, William. "Fifteen." *Elements of Literature: sThird Course*. Ed. Kathleen Daniel.

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