

Example 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft of Explication Essay for Modeling Feedback

**MAY MILLER**  
**The Scream**

I am a woman controlled,  
Remember this; I never scream.  
Yet I stood a form apart  
Watching my other frenzied self  
Beaten by words and wounds  
Make in silence a mighty scream—  
A scream that the wind took up  
And thrust through the bars of night  
Beyond all reason's final rim.  
Out where the sea's last murmur dies  
And the gull's cry has no sound,  
Out where city voices fade,  
Stilled in a lyric sleep  
Where silence is its own design.  
My scream hovered a ghost denied  
Wanting the shape of lips.

[1975]

This poem dramatizes the conflict between a woman suppressing her terrorizing frustrations and emotions until death, in the mid 1970's. The speaker wants to let them out, yet is afraid of what may happen if she does express the way she is feeling. Afraid if they are released that she may be unable to control herself, or what might take place. So by May Miller saying "Yet I stood a form apart" (line 3), this may be referring that she must leave society. And what better way to be "a form apart" then by leaving this realm with death. Possibly death is her only answer to control this rage deep within her. She may not have sought professional help because her pride was immensely greater than the universe itself. And perhaps thinking society is all the same and no one could help her. Maybe she vowed to keep her emotions hidden within herself because of the lessons she was learned as a child. Never show your true emotions, for others will see you as weak. However, because she did not release all her agony, anger, and frustrations brought on by the world, it haunts her even in death. Which is illustrated at the ending of her poem. I believe this speaker was venting on paper before things got out of hand. Possibly her motivation for this poem was to convey that death may not be the answer to a temporary problem. Hoping that others might take that into consideration before doing something drastic they may regret.

In the first two lines in which the poet states, "I am a woman controlled./ Remember this; I never scream", I gather that she is relaying this message not only to the reader but to herself as well. Reminding herself that her ego is in control and that she never screams. The diction used by the poet clearly makes her point across that she wants badly to scream yet will not, due to fear of unleashing some kind of violent tendency. In which she emphasizes, "Watching my other frenzied self"(4). However, with the metaphor used "Beaten by words and wounds/ Make in silence a mighty scream-"(lines 5-6), could only mean that she restrains her feelings by lashing out inwardly on herself so that she may stay in control.

In the next stanza, which is figure of speech, I came to an assumption that when the speaker declares, "A scream that the wind took up"(7) was referencing the powerful pride, which took over her life that shut her down from any outward emotions. And as she was so closed in by the darkness of her rage she had to lock it all away, in which she emphasizes, "And thrust through the bars of night"(8). Therefore leads her to the edge of reasoning with living in which she articulates, "Beyond all reason's final rim."(9). Also meaning she had no more reason to continue on with the rest of the world.

In lines eleven and twelve, the poet also uses symbols to describe death or transferring into the next realm by relating "And the gull's cry has no sound./Out where city voices fade," If you think about it have you ever heard a quiet gull? And I don't think she was voicing that she was out in the country when she refers to city voices fading. Considering the definition of lyric; to express intense personal emotion. Which would be impossible to do while asleep. Death comes into play when May Miller stresses, "Stilled in a lyric sleep/ Where silence is its own design"(13-14). Nevertheless, even in death she is tormented for she will never be able to scream presented by, "My scream hovered a ghost denied/ Wanting the shape of lips."(15-16). Or as to say, her soul was denied relief

and she was having regrets in not venting her passionate feelings of madness upon the world.

The connection I felt reading this poem was remarkable, for the fact that I struggle with concealing what I feel are negative emotions. When awakened they tend to come out not so pretty. Yet accepting what my theory is on "The Scream" I felt very fortunate to have the ability to have emotions, the only thing that separates us from beasts. As well as being able to make choices on whether or not we want to live or die. After all, being a sentient being may have its ups and downs, but it is what we make of it that will lead us to a life with no regrets and satisfaction.

762 words (needs to be 1000 words for final version)

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## Peer Response Questions: [feedback in blue](#)

1) Explication "Checklist" (answer yes/no):

A--Does the Explication open with the writer expressing their interpretation of the poem's larger meaning and the conflict(s) involved? (yes/no) **YES**

B--Does the writer begin explicating right away?(yes/no) **NO**

C--Does the write work the majority of the time to interpret beyond the literal level of meaning in the poem (make explicit what is implicit)? (yes/no) **YES**

D--Does the writer identify relevant elements of poetry in their analysis and explanation of the poem and how these elements help to communicate the poem's meaning? (yes/no) **NO**

2) SAY BACK what you hear is the most important or central meaning the writer is saying the poem communicates. [I hear this essay saying this poem is about a woman so suppressed that she wants to die.](#)

3) POINT to a place in his or her essay where you thought they made the most sense or expressed well some important insight in terms of explaining how the poem expresses this meaning. [I thought the conclusion was the most sensible part of the essay.](#)

4) If an explication attempts to make EXPLICIT (obvious) what is IMPLICIT (hidden or unclear), SUGGEST two places in the poem where the writer could think more deeply about a line or image or what something might mean figuratively or symbolically. [I think the writer needs to explore the meanings of the lines "Yes I stood a form a part/ Watching my other frenzied self/ Beaten by words and wounds." What literally is happening here? What about the figurative image of being "beaten by words?" What is this? Verbal abuse? Accounting for this psychological displacement depicted here in the poem is central to the overall meaning of the poem. Another key place to try to make the meaning of the poem more explicit, I think, is around the metaphor of the "ghost denied." I don't think it is a literal ghost](#)

5) If this were your paper, identify TWO things you would work on to improve it. (Please don't suggest grammatical items that editing will take care of.)

[--rethink the poem and your interpretation in terms of my feedback in question 4](#)

[--do more analysis of poetic elements and how these elements help to create meaning in the poem. For instance, any mention of "diction" should be followed by a close discussion of key words and how they are being used in the poem. Also, any discussion of metaphor should discuss the concrete elements of the "vehicle" and how the qualities of the literal image/object carry over to the "tenor."](#)