

Example Think Pieces

#1

“Sympathy” by Paul Laurence Dunbar

This poem is about someone describing how they understand and sympathize with a caged bird’s seemingly futile, yet never-ending attempts at escaping to freedom. A key question that I have about this poem is as to why the person sympathizing with the caged bird at all. To be more specific, what exactly is it that causes the individual to sympathize in such detail with a caged bird that is trying to escape no matter how extensive the self-inflicted damage might be?

nic summary

nic part IV + III

Very good part IV

There are a couple of possible readings of this poem, one reading being that of sympathy from compassion for animals or sympathy stemming from personal experience. In the reading of compassion for the caged bird, the author makes references to nature and spring by saying things such as “sun is bright on the upland slopes” “wind stirs soft through the springing grass” and “when the first bird sings and the first bud opes”. He also describes the birds instinct and longing for where it belongs in the line “When he fain would be on the bough a-swing”. The next reading, sympathy from personal experience, can be seen when the author writes in each stanza “I know why the caged bird sings” and “...beats his wing”. By saying “I know why...” he seems to be stating something factual in regard to sympathy and understanding. I suppose that both of these readings are possible however, it seems more probable that this is sympathy from a personal experience. The implication of longing for something that someone is drawn to by instinct is, yet is out of reach from, is heavy throughout the poem and suggests a feeling for something possibly already being known about no longer being “caged”.

good

this reading could get more strong in the text

ok summary
but try to get it shorter

Part I: Spliced Wire: This poem is about electricity and how it enriches the life of the antagonist. However, the antagonist wants a bigger mansion but the narrator denies this request and leaves by unplugging itself. The antagonist wants to believe that the power went out because of lightning but the narrator reassures the antagonist that it was not lightning. The narrator ends the story by suggesting that even though many will plug in, the lights will always dim.

Part II: A key difficulty would be interpreting the line, "I brewed your tongue to a rich dark coffee, and drank my fill."

Part III: The question involves understanding the use of words in ways we wouldn't normally use them. A play on words can be deciphered many ways.

nicer clarification

Part IV: I think the key difficulty can have two different interpretations. It can either be devious or loving.

great

Part V: The line can be interpreted as the narrator being devious (i.e. using the antagonist). The line suggests drawing someone in close and then leaving once you've gotten what you wanted. The narrator says, "I brewed your tongue to a rich dark coffee, and drank my fill" suggesting that the narrator lured (using brewed as scheme) the antagonist with something appealing (in this case, to the senses) and then left when the narrator was done (drinking the coffee).

- drank my fill as indication of selfishness and grasping?

good

The line can also be interpreted that the narrator is very loving. The narrator says, "My words I gave you like soft warm toast..." suggests that the narrator was kind, warm, and thoughtful. The narrator also says, "I brewed your tongue to a rich dark coffee, and drank my fill" meaning that the narrator excited the antagonist's tongue to a rich and meaningful conversation and the narrator talked until there was nothing left to talk about.

tongue suggests conversation

interesting

Part VI: After rereading the poem a dozen times, I feel that the loving interpretation is the best fit for this poem. - because?

#3

Think Piece #2

“Spiced Wire” is a poem about a relationship between a man and a woman that eventually failed. The man loved the woman he was with and gave her his all. However when she asked him for more than he could give the relationship ended.

good summary

The key issue in the poem is who the speaker is talking to throughout the poem. The issue is about how we interpret the speaker's tone, and word choice in the poem to understand who was at fault for the relationship ending. The main issue has two possible readings: whether it was the speaker's fault the relationship ended or if it was the woman's fault. In the reading of the speaker being at fault the image is of the man not wanting to put out more. In the poem he says, “You turned away wanted a larger mansion. I said no. I left you.” When he says that the woman wanted a “larger mansion,” that could be seen as the woman asking the speaker for something more, and he (the speaker) not giving her what she wants. In the opposite reading the woman is seen as the one at fault because the speaker does so much for her already, and she still wants more. Throughout the poem the speaker uses electricity as a metaphor of himself to describe what he has done for her. The speaker says in the poem, “I filled your house with light. There was warmth in all corners of the house [...] I turned on the music for you [...] I brought reception clear to you.” The speaker is the power in the relationship he is what keeps it on. Although when the woman he does so much more ask him for a mansion (bigger than a house) he can't give out more energy—more love.

Jeopardy

good

good

Both readings of the poem are possible, but I believe the interpretation of the woman being at fault is more plausible. The man gave a lot to the woman but in the end she still wanted more.

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