

Welcome

A lesson on the following topic will be imparted to the students :

An analysis of the poem Words

This poem was written in the same month that Sylvia Plath died in February 1963. The poem is written entirely in **metaphor**, with the title serving as an important clue to meaning. For the reader, the poem is about “words” And by inference poetry. The interlocking nature of the metaphors unifies the poem and leads the reader to understanding.

The poem opens with an image of axes. Axes are sharp and their purpose is to cut wood. Words when released for consumption can be sharp and cutting. Words can travel like echo from the centre like hoses and can reach the mind of many. Words are like sap in the wood, an essential part of being. Similarly words like axes hurt so deep that tears fall like water and purify one’s self. The feeling of sorrow tries to reaffirm its place into the speaker’s expression of the work of art. Those who venture to remain in the world of creativity for long symbolized by the horse in the next stanza soon meet their ends and regenerate life from their destruction. Dry and uncontrolled words are indefatigable like the hoof-taps of the wild horses. The world of creativity symbolized by wild horse is long lasting. But human lives are controlled by fate.

In this poem, the essential figures of speech that Plath uses for linking subtly changing imagery to a changing mental state is startling. Axe strokes are an image of power and controlled force. Galloping horses are exhilarating but imply the potential for loss of control. In stanza 2, the welling sap and tears suggest a reaction to the preceding violent energy, a wounded state. In stanza 3, the descent of the rock into the pool mirrors a mental descent into a nightmarish world where stones become skulls and the creating mind is a dead and empty shell. The imagery of “Words” lets the reader into the trapped nightmare world of that mind, a world unseen by the outside observer because the water has smoothed over and is now a mirror that hid the depths.

In the last two lines of the third stanza and the first two of the last , the poet rises briefly from the depths and sees her past work. Now, “years later,” her words seem meaningless. “ Dry and riderless” , They have lost the urgency of there creation. Finally, the effort of creativity seems too much. The exhilaration has given way to the relentless demands of the inevitability. The metaphoric movement is from energy to static state, from creative energy to pain, to madness, to brief barren lucidity, and finally to a standstill, the still certainty of the bottom of the pool. The ultimate inertia is death. The movement towards death is a pervasive theme in Plath’s poetry and she has used similar imagery elsewhere. At the end of *Words* , The poet has surrendered to the “fixed star” of death that has pervaded her life and her work. Among other techniques, the poet uses repetition to reinforce her meaning. The almost physical sense of vibration coupled with the repetition of the word “echoes” links the axe image to that of horse’s galloping.

Metaphor is the overriding device of *Words* Because in absence of narrative framework, even a superficial reading requires some interpretation of its metaphor. Plath does not make the reader's task easy, but she does supply the clues. The title serves as an important clue to meaning. The interlocking nature of the metaphors unifies the poem and leads the reader to understanding. One does not encounter the narrator until near the end of the third stanza. At this Point, one sees that the poem is written in the first person, Then it becomes clearer what are the thoughts of the poet in preceding stanzas are as she meditates on her subject, words. The lack of a discernible narrator here allows the reader to enter the poem and feel the physical sensation of impact of words on him. This is a particularly apt image for Sylvia Plath's poetic style, which is frequently sharp and biting.

Poets, particularly those of the confessional school to which Plath belongs, often use their work as catharsis, as a way of healing. Certainly there is a sense of attempted healing in the sap. It drops like tears to release psychic pain. Thus this short poem is worth reading because it uses words in new and intriguing ways. Plath's use of metaphoric images is vivid and original, and she manipulates images vividly throughout her work.



**Thank
you**