

Date 12 / 9 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricTitle "A Noiseless Patient Spider"Author / Director / Walt Whitman

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I first came across "A Noiseless Patient Spider" on the English 2XL Edline webpage under literature documents.

Content / CD / Summary / Precis (Say? "Plot? Setting/Situation? Key lines/phrases scenes, etc?)

"A Noiseless Patient Spider" begins with a spider working on its web. The spider stands by itself on a point of high land jutting out into a large body of water, "marking how to explore the vacant vast surrounding," as it attempts to lay down the first line of its web. The spider is launching "forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself," trying to get it to stick or catch onto something. Then, however, the speaker switches from spiders to the soul, relating the two by characterizing the soul as "ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them." The soul too seeks connections and ways to attach to those around it "till the gossamer thread...catch somewhere."

Content / CM / Meaning? / Theme(s)?

Walt Whitman's poem "A Noiseless Patient Spider" explores a search for the very place and position that humanity holds within the vastness of the universe. Somehow and somewhere humans have managed to come into existence because of the occurrences of seemingly improbable and overly complex events, suggesting that their presence must be of some reason or definitive purpose. Although the poem isn't necessarily religious and does not relate this purpose to a God or another spiritual figure, the poem at least portrays the importance of this search for meaning and a purpose. The discovery of this reason for human existence has unfortunately influenced the creation of overly ambitious pursuits of knowledge and oftentimes has resulted in unfortunate, disillusioning consequences. Human intellect is naturally inclined to search for some sort of rationalization for everything that occurs in the universe, and so the vagueness of the purpose for human existence leaves people restless with their souls frantically searching in the sense that their lives may be completely worthless or insignificant in the bigger picture of things. Perhaps all people can do for know is live at their maximum potential, casting out their soul until it reaches some place or another.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

"A Noiseless Patient Spider" consists of two stanzas that are five lines each. As with most of Walt Whitman's poems, the poem is written in free verse, meaning that it does not rhyme and possesses no set rhythm or meter. Despite the free verse, this poem does contain some repetition and reiteration in order to bring at least a little organization and structure to the poem. Moreover, symbolically, the soul is clearly compared to a spider forming its web. The spider's launching forth of filaments to latch on and begin web production acts as a metaphor for the soul in its search for something meaningful and significant to attach to.

Commentary (What do you want to say? Why like? Questions? Synthesis / Allusions-Connections / Relevance to personal experience, to literature, 20Q's? etc.)? "Poetic" Traits?

"A Noiseless Patient Spider" probably resides as one of the most true and genuine poems I have read thus far for this project and in life in general. The poem not only tries to bring clarity to the ambiguity of human existence by generally explaining the affinity of the soul, but it also encourages people to never give up in their pursuits and endeavors, no matter what they are striving to achieve. The poem is also optimistic in the sense that it almost expects the soul to attach or latch on to something, as if it is almost destined for someone to achieve his goal or reach his final destination no matter the circumstances. Sometimes, however, this is not always the case, as evident in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* through Victor Frankenstein's radical experimentation with the human body as well as with the bounds of human knowledge in general. Both Victor Frankenstein and Robert Walton in the novel are entirely consumed by their inner desires and passions to profoundly contribute to society in a beneficial way, almost as if they believe that their extreme versions of zealotry and enthusiasm to better humanity are justifications for the existence of mankind. They persistently strive until they reach an eventual state of satisfaction, which never really arises for either of them, predominantly reflecting both of their yearnings for a meaning to life. Overall, this poem is poetic because it urges people to never give up and to keep fighting in their pursuits because it optimistically believes that people will eventually make it to the end. The entire process may be a long and enduring journey; however, once that web is attached, then the whole entire journey will have been worthwhile in the first place.

over (do not mix logs; e.g., no poem log in front, and movie log on back)