

Date 10 / 20 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricTitle Introduction to PoetryAuthor / Director / Billy Collins

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I found this poem when I was browsing through the poetry section of Shmoop during English 2XL in the library.

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

"Introduction to Poetry" consists of the thoughts of a teacher as directed to his students about poems in general. He begins by telling his listeners ("them") to take a poem and physically examine it both by looking at it and by listening to what it is saying. He asks them to contemplate its complexity, recognizing the type of poem and how the poem is to be moved through. He advises his students to look for parts of the poem that make sense to them and to "feel the walls for a light switch," enjoying it for what it appears to be. However, "all they want to do is tie the poem to a chair with rope and torture a confession out of it." Here, the speaker is proposing that all "they" ever do is blindly search for a meaning because that is all they care about as students. All they want is to merely search for some sort of complicated explanation so that they can move on with their lives.

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

Exploration and the arts are two significant themes present in an "Introduction to Poetry." The poem is about a teacher, a true connoisseur of English, trying to teach his students or possibly anyone else who is oblivious to the beauty of poetry, to appreciate and recognize its worth. He ultimately wants to instill a sense of adventure and exploration into his students so that they can enjoy its creativity of expression, instead of having them dryly analyze it. Unfortunately, the people the speaker is trying to get to experience poetry as a piece of art, for what it truly is, ultimately only try to find some sort of hidden meaning, and do so in an unrelenting fashion. He claims that people, in searching for a meaning, overlook and under-appreciate the true value of poems. They do not take time to actually listen to and observe the delicacy and artistry that a poem is supposed to embody.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

In order to emphasize the actions that he wishes his students would take upon poems but nevertheless don't, he makes poems, pieces of writing, seem like complex objects with his usage of the prepositional phrases "into a poem," "inside the poem's room," and more. This gives rise to the fact that poems are so much more than just words written on a piece of paper. In the poem, the mouse that gets dropped into a poem, like a mouse being dropped into a maze, is a metaphor for space. The speaker wants the reader to consider how he or she is to enter a poem and eventually come out of it, whether it is simple and direct route or one complexity and confusion. Furthermore, the "rooms" of a poem are like its stanzas, furthering the metaphorical exploration of a poem's space. Searching for a light switch in these rooms essentially refers to parts of the poem that seem to readily make sense or bring a strong sense of inspiration to the reader. Nevertheless, the speaker still wants the reader to enjoy and admire the poem, as he references water skiing over it, without getting lost in a deep confused mess.

Commentary (What do you want to say? Why like? Questions? Synthesis / Allusions-Connections /

Relevance to personal experience, to literature, 20Q's? etc.)? "Poetic" Traits?

The first time I heard this poem was in Mr. O'Connor's English IXL class, and it has been one of my favorite poems because of its relevance and educational point of view. Not only is it apparently applicable to my personal life as a student, but it interestingly reveals a truth, that, when recognized, is actually entirely realistic. As life has developed to be so fast paced and stressful, people simply want answers, some sort of meaning that is only required of them to know and understand. This type of oblivious learning is also apparent in mathematics, in which people learn formulas and how to apply them; however, they essentially do not understand the reasoning behind the formula or even what it is trying to solve. Many things in the modern era have become significantly degraded because of this, especially culture which people no longer possess a need for. The beautiful aspects of life are overlooked as people only strive to succeed and further their own survival. The only line of the poem that was sort of confusing was when the speaker says, "waving at the author's name on the shore." This line of the fifth stanza suggests that the author of a poem is detached from the reader in every way possible, but its presence in the poem seems ambiguous to me at least. I do think this poem is quite poetic because of its complexity and irony. The poem is essentially a poem about how to read and enjoy poems, making it unique and interesting because it is implied that the poem being read should be read in the way that the actual poem is suggesting. "Introduction to Poetry" ultimately presents a sincere reality of many aspects of life in an intricate and perplexing manner.

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