

Date 12 / 7 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricTitle "Kitchenette Building"Author / Director / Gwendolyn Brooks

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I first heard this poem in Mr. O'Connor's English IXL class because he used to begin each class with a new poem everyday, and then he left them open for discussion. The title of the poem looked familiar when I was browsing through Shmoop for poems to log, and, after reading through it again, I was certain that it was a poem that surfaced in my English class last year.

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

"Kitchenette Building" is about a poor family who lives in a kitchenette, a small one unit room. Brooks chooses to use the first person plural, "we," as the speaker of the poem because the harsh experiences of living in a kitchenette not only plague the minds of one person, rather, an entire group of people, especially African-Americans. The poem takes place in the 1930s when discrimination against African-Americans was prominent in the United States. These people have dreams of a greater life but doubt they can ever be achieved when the speaker says, "But could a dream send up through onion fumes / Its white and violet." They think that the monotony of the boring but necessary things in life take away from the pursuing of dreams. Even when the speaker is thinking about dreams in general, her mind is overrun by the poverty she lives in when she says, " Number Five is out of the bathroom now, / We think of lukewarm water, hope to get in it."

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

"Kitchenette Building" is about the denial of dreams due to the struggles of everyday life. People who live in poverty especially are deprived of their aspirations because their time and focus is spent on the necessities of life, such as obtaining nourishment for the family and being able to pay the bills. This, however, does not mean that dreams should be given up on, rather, that they are just not easy to achieve. Though dreams and aspirations may be pushed to lower priorities in the busy lives of people, they should still at least be held onto in order to make life endurable. Dreams can at least bring psychological appeasement to the daily tasks of life, as they provide a standard to work towards. A life without goals or dreams would be a life of stagnancy and a life without any improvement whatsoever.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

"Kitchenette Building" consists of four stanzas of three lines each (except for the second stanza, which has four lines), and it is written in free verse. A subtle rhyming scheme, in which the last word of the first and last lines of each stanza rhyme, and enjambment add to the musicality and flow of the free verse. Symbolically, daily life stands in direct opposition to achieving dreams and goals, and the kitchenette is representative of the poverty experienced by the speaker. The dream of the speaker in the poem somewhat ambiguous, and is described as something that is hidden behind poverty, such as when the smells of a dream are portrayed as being hidden by garbage, onions, and fried potatoes.

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

Even though "Kitchenette Building" is actually quite a melancholy poem, I significantly enjoy the way it sounds and speaks to me every time I read it. It is one of those poems that does not need to be understood in order to be enjoyed because its delicacy and flow are more pleasing. Nevertheless, when observed more closely, despite the fact that the poem discusses quite an unjust and sensitive topic, it at least provides information in a narrative form rather than using factual and historical evidence. This is one of the reasons that I like the poem so much and also why it is quite poetic. The poem addresses a serious topic but in a subtle way without directly referencing the topic, which automatically detracts from the poem's severity. Moreover, the poem brings to life a historically based even but through story and a personal account, making the poem more intimate and appealing. The topic of dreams being deferred or rejected in "Kitchenette Building" can be seen in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* when the monster observes the poor exiled family from his makeshift shelter connected to their farmhouse. Because the family is so focused on acquiring the basic necessities, they are unable to direct their attention to achieve something greater, though they do aspire to return their father to a life of affluence. Finally, I also think this poem is poetic because it seemingly inspires people to hold onto their dreams no matter the circumstances. Hopes and dreams are the only things that keep humans motivated and able to progress, and thus the maintenance of these dreams is imperative.

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