

Date 10 / 12 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricTitle "Silence"Author / Director / Marianna Moore

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I found this poem on the poetry page of Shmoop.com during period 1 on Friday when the everyone in the class was supposed to be "poem hunting."

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

"Silence" presumably takes place in Cambridge, MA because of its reference to the glass flowers in the Harvard Museum and Longfellow's grave. The poem begins with the speaker quoting his or her father, who gives advice to the speaker about people that are supposedly "superior" or better than others. He discusses how these "superior" humans act when they are visiting other others. Suddenly, the poem switches to a metaphorical representation of these greater people with the image of a cat after it successfully catches its prey. The cat does not try and show everyone that it had succeeded in any way; rather, it remains silent and humble in its accomplishments. Finally, the speaker's father returns to his discussion of visits, suggesting that the speaker make his house into a place of brief visitation, not an actual home.

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

The entirety of Moore's poem encompasses the characteristics that the speaker's father believes are found in people that are superior to others. Interestingly, the speaker does not comment or discuss his or her views on the father's beliefs, implying that he or she may in fact be superior to the father because of his or her implicit "silence" or "restraint." Talking versus remaining silent is obviously a theme throughout the poem. In the beginning, the father explains how superior people never stay long; they are self-reliant and they prefer to remain alone a lot of the times. These people keep to themselves, and they always know how to control their behaviors and words; thus, they know when to remain silent because silence is a lot of time the best way to express an emotion. For example, silence is perhaps the best portrayal of success because it shows that someone is humble, while restraint on another's opinions can prevent any unnecessary conflicts. Silence is a form of restraint, and superior people are ultimately ones who utilize and develop their capacity to restrain themselves.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

"Silence" is almost written like a sonnet, except for that it doesn't rhyme or follow iambic pentameter. It is fourteen lines like a sonnet, and it relatively has a butt shift at the end. The poem is almost entirely a quote by the speaker's father but in the last two lines, the speaker comes in again as he or she says, "Nor was he insincere in saying," (line 13). Visits, as in going to stay somewhere other than home, are also used at both the beginning and the end of the poem, portraying how a superior person would visit other people's houses. Finally, these superior people are metaphorically compared to a cat that catches its prey in private without depending on anyone else or boasting about its success.

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

Although being quite confusing, ironic, paradoxical, and even probably having a deeper meaning than I have brought to the surface, "Silence" struck me by its oddity and out of the norm portrayal of something significant. Because silence can be a form of communication, it reminded me of the communication that Merlyn warns Arthur to avoid as he says, "Asking advice is the fatal thing" (233). Superior people supposedly know when to remain silent; they know when to restrain themselves, but they also know when to not even talk at all. Asking advice is crucial in developmental stages, but once someone can think independently, asking advice should become silenced or put to an end. According to survival of the fittest, asking advice can only be degrading and detrimental because the results are most likely not in one's own interests. Thus, the fittest people do and make their own decisions self-reliantly in their own silence. Silence can also be viewed from the other end of the spectrum, restraint in communication and giving advice. Superior people are humble and at least appear to be accepting of things that may not be fully true in their eyes, so as to prevent unnecessary conflict. Ultimately, this sort of virtuous silence is poetic. Moments of silence imply that a person's own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs are concealed and unable to be tarnished and destroyed by anyone else. Silence is a time when someone is solely under his or her own influence, staying true to his or her personal and unique nature that God has created. Unfortunately, an infinite and complete poetic state of silence is not attainable, and good ideas become soiled while healthy emotions become destroyed. Opinions clash, and irrelevant information and communication become the focus of daily life. If only people could learn some silence and restraint.

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