

Date 2 / 15 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricTitle "The Emperor of Ice-Cream"Author / Director / Wallace Stevens

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I found this poem on Shmoop while browsing for poems to log. After reading the title of the poem, I imagined the poem to be frivolous and silly; however, I was surprised to find that the poem was actually meaningful and worthwhile.

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

The poem begins when someone characterized by "the roller of big cigars" is called to prepare some ice cream in a kitchen. The setting is rather unclear until the speaker goes on to describe young girls in normal dresses and "boys / Bring[ing] flowers in last month's newspapers," most likely suggesting that the setting is a person's funeral or perhaps even a vigil service for someone deceased. The speaker then claims that the "only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream," almost degrading and reshaping the reader's view of what a powerful emperor should seem like. It is then divulged that the deceased is a woman, whom the reader learns "embroidered fantails once," meaning she used to sew, and has "horny feet," which doesn't sound quite attractive. Finally, the speaker repeats the line about the emperor of ice-cream.

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

"The Emperor of Ice-Cream" is about gaining a better and greater appreciation of various occurrences in life rather than focusing alone on superficial and insignificant appearances. Stevens is trying to get the reader to appreciate all the meaningful and beautiful things that life has to offer without worrying about the serious things because, ultimately, everyone will end up at some sort of funeral or ceremony of remembrance. The poem tries to realign the reader's priorities by urging him to live in the here and now, to appreciate things for what they are rather than what they seem. For example, an emperor may appear to be an omnipotent ruler that has the responsibility to govern and control vast amounts of land; however, this poem turns the importance of an emperor upside down. The emperor's job in this poem is to make sure that they are "enjoying their ice cream" in a sense, or being grateful for the present rather than worrying about the inevitable future and all of the problems, stresses, and anxieties of everyday life.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

"The Emperor of Ice-Cream" consists of two stanzas that are eight lines each. There is no particular rhyme scheme throughout the poem, but the last two lines of each stanza both form couplets, or two lines of verse that are usually in the same meter and joined by rhyme that form a unit. The poem also consists of a lot of enjambment, as the sentences that comprise the poem run over and flow into the next line or two without any pause. Finally, the "emperor" in this poem symbolizes not an actual emperor that strictly rules a kingdom, but instead represents an impetus for the reader to reconsider the way he lives his life, and the value he places on appearances.

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 a seemingly foolish poem, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" possesses a much more significant and worthwhile meaning than the title gives credit. In fact, one of the main aspects of the poem is about false appearances, and so the title fits well with the greater understanding of the poem itself. The poem is also quite contradictory in nature. The title suggests that the poem will be about happiness and joy and ice cream; however, it is in fact about a dead person, who has an underwhelming funeral ceremony. Nevertheless, the poem relays a positive and uplifting message about life and how life should be lived, bringing even more confusion to how a person should feel about the poem. The poem particularly reminds me of *The Bucket List* starring Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman and directed by Rob Reiner. In the movie, two terminally ill men escape from cancer ward and set out to perform a list of to-dos, known as a bucket list, before they both die. Both of them know that the end is inevitable, so they both seek to appreciate all of the things in life that they overlooked by previously only focusing on the technical and serious stuff. Ultimately, I find this poem quite poetic because it is genuine and does not fear or try to reject the inevitability of human death. Rather, the poem accepts the fleeting, brief nature to human life and presents a solution to make the maximum of life on earth. The poem seeks to change the mindsets of people of the modern age, who are so hung up with the most trivial and insignificant things in life, such as social reputation, appearances, and personal possessions.

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