

PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricDate 1 / 2Title "The Waking"Author / Director / Theodore Roethke

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I found "The Waking" on the handout "Poetry on the AP Exam" given to us by Mr. Shakely, and I decided to do a log on it because I do not have any logs on villanelles.

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

The speaker in "The Waking" literally begins by "waking to sleep," suggesting that the poem takes place in the speaker's mind while he wonders about who he is and how knowledge can be attained. The speaker then references something materialistic when he says "God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there, / And learn by going where I have to go." The poem enters into the physical world, where the speaker wonders about some of the phenomenons of nature. Finally, the speaker returns to inside himself and again performs more abstract thinking.

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

"The Waking" is about life and self-knowledge in general and the gaining of information through experience. When the speaker claims he is "waking to sleep," he really means that he is being born into a life that will inevitably lead to death. He wants to live his life to the fullest of his abilities because life is the greatest experience that one can ever have, and he will follow fearlessly to his calling. The poem also speaks to various ways in which people can gain knowledge in order to understand their roles in life. People learn through their senses and by first beginning at the lowest level until they work their way up in complexity to reach some sort of final destination that is their purpose on earth. Even the unintellectual objects of life have some final destination that they live towards, no matter how slight or insignificant. Finally, the poem teaches that failures are much greater learning tools than successes.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

"The Waking" is a villanelle, meaning that it specifically has five tercets (3-lined stanzas) and one quatrain (4-lined stanza) for a total of nineteen lines. The tercets have an ABA rhyme scheme while the quatrain has an ABAA pattern. Even more particularly pertaining to a villanelle, lines 1, 6, 12, and 18 are one refrain and lines 3, 9, 15, and 19 are another. These lines are repeated multiple times, but there is some slight variation that occurs with the addition of verbs and changes in verb forms. The poem is also written in iambic pentameter.

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

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

I don't think I've ever personally read a villanelle, but I significantly enjoy this poem's style and format. The repetitions of the refrains and the uniform meter add to the fluidity and fluency of the poem, despite its being hard to comprehend. Roethke uses a variety of paradoxes that obscure the poem's clarity and can confuse the reader, such as "I wake to sleep," "The shaking keeps me steady," and "What falls away is always. And is near." These ambiguous statements make it difficult to understand what Roethke is trying to get across with "The Waking" because they can be interpreted in so many ways. Nevertheless, the overall concept of achieving some sort of destination in life and the path to that destination is interestingly relevant and poetic. The poem promotes the living of life in the now, or the present. It encourages people to live life to the best of their abilities and to see where their involvement takes them so that they can fulfill their role in society. "The Waking" almost reminds me of God's calling for each person earth, or the idea that He has some sort of unique capacity destined for everyone to fulfill. This poem poetically advocates the finding of that capacity through the intrinsic process of gaining knowledge and experience.