

Poems # 9

Poems about Fathers

Poems about fathers is a mysterious and intimate topic. Sons have a way of bringing that mystery to life by bringing the intimacy they shared with their father to life. Three such poems come to mind. "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden, "My Father's Hats" by Mark Irwin and "My Papa's Waltz" by Theodore Roethke. Let's take a look at these poems and see how they are delivered.

First we have "Those Winter Sundays". The title of this poem suggests it's about Sundays. It gives reference to other days of the week "Sundays too" (Hayden 1), but I think the main reference is to Sunday. It appears that during the week the father works "then with cracked hands from labor in the weekday weather" (Hayden 3, 4) and on Sundays the father and son are confronted by each other. As we look at the contrast of the imagery of the coldness of the house "in the blueblack cold" (Hayden 2) we can compare it to the relationship between father and son "speaking indifferently to him" (Hayden 10). Although there is no emotional intimacy, the father shows his commitment and duty to his son by "making banked fires blaze" (Hayden 5) and "No one ever thanked him" (Hayden 5). "And polished my good shoes as well" (Hayden 12). They appear to be the only ones in the house and the son mistakes the loneliness of his father as anger, or the son is angry at the father. "I would rise and dress, fearing the chronic angers of that house" (Hayden 9). Notice the metaphor "chronic angers" (Hayden 9) I think the son is reminiscing back in time and questioning why he acted the way he did towards his father when he repeats "What did I know, what did I know (Hayden 13). You can hear the regret in his voice and the indifference. It's like he is looking back over a period of time when he could have reached out and reacted differently and shown a little more kindness. The poem appeals to me as I believe it is well written. It was written back in time when the unspoken word had more meaning than the spoken word, although the relationship between the father and son is lacking and appears detached, they seem to have a mutual respect for one another, in that they go through the motions set before them. They have established a routine. The mood of the poem is somber and full of sorrow.

Next we have "My Father's Hats". As we review this poem and read it, it all flows together. There is no periods or starting of a new paragraph. "Sunday morning I would reach high into his dark closet while standing on a chair tiptoeing reaching higher" (Irwin 1, 2, 3, 4). Somehow this has become a Sunday ritual to the child. It appears the father is gone, and the child has found comfort in the memory of a father through these hats. The curiosity and imagination of a child is invoked in the touch and feel of these hats. It transcends the child into a different place. The imagery is very descriptive "wind hymning through the pines, where the musky scent of rain clinging to the damp earth" (Irwin 7, 8). I believe the bond between the father and child is through these hats and as the child looks back, and reminisces about these hats it congers up memories of the father. I believe that the child would secretly pursue the hats as a way to still feel close to the father. The mood of the poem seems to be joy, the child has found delight, enjoyment and pleasure in these hats.

The last poem is "My Papa's Waltz". I found this poem very appealing and it was an easy read with the rhyming words that were very descriptive. Like the child in the poem it makes you feel like you don't want it to end, "Then waltzed me off to bed still clinging to your shirt" (Roethke 15, 16). It is easy to imagine a grown man on a Friday night after working all week to spend a few hours of drinking at the local pub and to show up at home earlier than usual, as it was before bedtime. I don't think the mother approves of the fathers behavior "My mother's countenance could not unfrown itself" (Roethke 7, 8).

The child is swept up in the moment and with the attention garnered by the father he plays along “But I hung on like death: Such waltzing was not easy” (Roethke 3, 4). The impression is a onetime event “We romped until the pans slid from the kitchen shelf :”(Roethke 5, 6). If the waltz was a reoccurring event it would read more like “We would romp”. The mood is festive. The waltz has brought a moment to be shared by father and son in which the child is almost in a trance and taking in all aspects surrounding the closeness of the experience, he is in the moment, note how he does not utter a sound as his “right ear scrapes a buckle” (Roethke 12). He notices things about his father that he may not have noticed before. “The hand that held my wrist was battered on one knuckle;” (Roethke 9, 10). To remember this event in such detail must have been a memory to be treasured.

These poems were written at a time when fathers were the primary provider of the home. They worked hard to take care of their families and did not have much free time. In each one of these three poems the father appears to be like a mystery, and not really known. The intimate moments that are shared by each son give life to a man they called father.

Works Cited

Hayden, Robert. “Those Winter Sundays.” Poets.org. n.d. Web. 15 March 2016.

Irwin, Mark. “My Father’s Hats.” Poets.org. n.d. Web. 15 March 2016.

Roethke, Theodore. “My Papa’s Waltz.” Poetry Foundation. 2015. Web. 15 March 2016.

	Y	N
Describes what each poem is about		
Interprets and analyzes the meaning of each poem, applying the terms, mood, imagery, and simile or metaphor appropriately		
Supports statements about the poems using evidence from the texts		
Explains which poems are appealing and why or why not		
Begins with an introduction that clearly introduces the topic		
Introduction contains a clear thesis statement		
Ends with a conclusion that synthesizes the ideas in the essay		
Writing is clear ,with no major errors		
Any sources of information are cited, using APA format, with no major errors		