

“Resemblance” Artist Statement

I chose to work off of Kyle Minor’s “Suspended,” because I absolutely loved the way he ended his piece. The idea of a child recognizing and understanding why a bully acts the way he does is incredible and almost left me feeling proud of the child who was narrating (as if he were my own kid, just learning the realities and unfairness of life), or even sympathetic for the bully. The whole piece in fact, did an outstanding job of creating empathy, which both made me appreciate the work as a critic and analyzer, but also enjoy it as a reader. By the end, many readers are left feeling left without half of the story, or so I felt. Minor gets rid of the typical simplicity of a good vs. bad theme found in many stories of bullying, and introduces this new idea that there is another story to be told. I hoped to present that other half by writing my piece from the perspective of the bully.

My intentions with “Resemblance” were to get the reader thinking about motivation and behavior. I strongly believe that everyone acts the way they do for specific reasons, and I really wanted to explore this idea with the concept of bullying. The issue of bullying itself is addressed really often, but the actual factors which cause a bully to become a bully are not discussed often enough. I also wanted to play with the idea that people often embody what they dislike or critique about their parents, even if it’s something as serious and despised by the child as passionate and aggressive/abusive behavior like in my piece. I attempted to depict the obvious without directly using cliché lines like “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree,” and clarifying statements that would define the entire piece simply while consequentially taking away the artistry of it—lines like “I am my father,” I chose to leave out in hopes that the reader got the point without my actually having to say them. Instead I employed certain words to communicate these things for me, such as in the line that says “my green eyes meet his in the mirror.” Here, “his” has a double meaning. The boy is looking at his own reflection, yet he so much resembles his father both in appearance and action that it is as if he is also staring into the eyes of his father.

One thing I found slightly difficult while writing was the incorporation of flashbacks in my piece. I really tried to be strategic in my placement and introduction of each memory, and wrote it so that the story would still flow well even if they were all removed, so they would serve only to enhance the experience of reading it (hopefully making it easier to feel what the bully feels). In order to figure out how to add these in the best possible way, I just had to write everything that came to mind out, and then go back and adjust parts of the story to sort of blend the edges of the story where the past met the present. I also played with space a lot, and ended up using it a great amount to isolate the flashbacks in a somewhat of obvious way. I normally wouldn’t like a stylistic technique to be so obvious, but I found that the weight of the story wasn’t affected by making it so easy to identify the flashbacks. It was honestly a bit easier to integrate them this way, but next time I use them I would like to try to challenge myself to find another way to make it work.

As I wrote the piece, I discovered how effective point of view is at enticing emotion in readers who otherwise would be unable to relate to a character or story. I think both the voice and the point of a view of a narrator can make or break a story and its relevance, as well as its power on the audience. Varied points of view are often acknowledged for placing the reader in someone else’s shoes; I realized how much writing from a different perspective forced me as an author to step into someone else’s shoes as well, to write the piece. One thing I am slightly dissatisfied with in my piece is the voice. Most of my writing sounds like I wrote it, and I have a hard time changing that voice up. (Which is strange, because I don’t feel like I have an extremely conspicuous or distinctly unique voice when I am writing anyway.)