

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FROM THE INTERNET  
Tuesday, 3 March 2020 1:46 pm

**Happy Birthday from the Internet**  
**Kim 2 Date**

The homeless man was a nice touch.

By that time I had liked a few hundred birthday messages from close friends and near strangers on Facebook.

The ATM showed a screen full of balloons and encouraged me to "Take out a little extra and treat myself on my special day!"

My barista wrote "Happy birthday!" on the side of my coffee cup.

I received competing "free lunch on your birthday!" offers from two restaurants. The burger place finished my meal with the stuff singing a royalty-free birthday song.

Every website I visited had a special message or special offer just for me, just for today.

My music streaming service included songs like "Happy Birthday" by The Beatles and "Birthday" by The Supercakes and "Happy Birthday" by Altered Images (or was it the "Ting Ting" cover!) in my rotation.

Flowers were sent to my work.

All that I expected.

The homeless man was a nice touch.

The homeless man, someone I walk by on most days, surprised me when he said "Happy birthday!" I knew he was talking to me because he knew my name. When I looked down I saw he had a cardboard sign wishing me a happy birthday, too.

I gave him a few dollars. I've never done that before. I assume BirthdayMe paid him for his services, but I felt like I should thank him for his trouble.

Yes, it is kind of nice to have the people and computers I interacted with today all wish me a happy birthday. Better than the pre-BirthdayMe years when my day would often go unnoticed. The attention does make me feel special but it needs to stop now. The personalisation industrial complex has gone too far.

This is too much.

For a moment I did smile when I saw the balloons and decorations in my house. My favorite dinner is in the oven and does smell fantastic. The cake on my dining room table looks delicious.

Then I thought, "Who was in my house?"

Someone was in my house. Someone had to come in and do all this. Break in.

I looked around more.

They had cleaned, which appreciated, but that meant that had touched my things. They did my laundry. Who was folding my clothes? My underwear?

How did they get in?

Are they still here?

"Hello? Hello? Are you still here? This is enough now. Please stop. Please go. I want my birthday to be over. Do you hear me? Let's pretend it's not my birthday anymore. Hello? Do you hear me? Hello?"

11 WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT HOW THE NARRATOR IS SPEAKING IN THE FINAL PARAGRAPH OF THE STORY, AND HOW DOES THIS AFFECT OUR THOUGHTS/FEELINGS ABOUT THE SITUATION?

- He is pleading/begging: he is in fear/scared/panic
  - Repetition "Please?"
  - "Please stop"
  - "Please go"
  - Repetition "Hello? Hello?"
  - Repetition "Do you hear me?"
- Trying to be authoritative
  - Short sentences
  - He is in fight-or-flight mode
  - Emphasises the climax of the story
- It makes reader feel scared
  - Crescendo
  - Many unanswered questions
    - Creates suspense
    - Who was in his house?
    - Are they still there?
    - What did they do?

12 DESCRIBE THE NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF THIS STORY, AND HOW THIS HELPS TO INVOLVE US IN THE STORY AND VOICE OUR RESPONSES.

- First person perspective
  - Use of "I"
  - View point of the narrator
- Things get worse and worse
- We come to the realisations that the narrator comes to at the same time as the narrator

**INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

- A situation in which businesses profit from social or public life systems, often at the expense of the best interests of society and individuals

**GIVING/Writing YOUR VIEW**

IS THE STORY "HAPPY BIRTHDAY FROM THE INTERNET" GIVING A POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE OF THE INTERNET?

The story is about the narrator's negative experience of a digital software called "BirthdayMe", which in theory was supposed to make them feel special on their birthday but in reality, used their digital information to invade their physical privacy; thus, giving a negative experience of the internet. Large companies like "BirthdayMe" are using the internet to their advantage by exploiting their customers and targeting them with advertisements. This is evident in the line "Every website I visited had a special message or special offer just for me, just for today". Repetition of the word "Birthday"

There is also social exploitation happening in the story, evident through the line, "The homeless man was a nice touch". This is an example of how companies have created an industrial complex that has gone too far as they are even willing to make a homeless man work for them in shame and embarrassment.

The fact that companies are using the internet to target their audience at any angle and cost necessary Other than that, the

**THE HOMELESS MAN**

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**GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR LITERARY APPRECIATION**

**CHARACTER**

What are we told about them or do they reveal about themselves, via their:

- Appearance
  - Homeless man: had a cardboard sign
  - Not much description of appearance of the narrator
- Speech
  - Homeless man said "Happy Birthday"
- Thought
- Actions
- Feelings

**Plot**

How is the story unfolded to us:

- In what order are things revealed, how are they arranged, and why?
  - "The homeless man was a nice touch". Flashforward (PROCEP5)
  - Everything else was arranged chronologically
- Does the story move quickly or slowly, or does it vary?
  - It moved slowly until the end where things escalated to a quicker pace
- Is suspense created?
  - A mysterious, horror-like undertone could be sensed throughout the story
- Is there gradual build up of conflict, or is it sudden?
  - Sudden - From a nice birthday day to
- Is there foreshadowing?
  - "Near strangers" - Set later
  - Overall, there was a theme of privacy being invaded bit by bit
  - "Near strangers" knowing his name, his birthdate and his facebook details
  - Even a homeless man knowing this = knowing their route to work everyday
  - The website knowing their place of work
  - Birthday - Name -> Other details -> Place of work -> Home address ->
- Are there flashbacks to past events?
  - "The homeless man was a nice touch" could be a flashforward or a flashback
- Is there an identifiable climax?
  - The climax is at the end when the narrator is pleading the stranger to leave his home
- Are the connections between events, or causes, clear or mysterious?
  - Mysterious link
- Does the unexpected happen?
  - Yes
- Is there a happy ending?
  - No, there isn't really an ending - it's sort of a cliffhanger that stops at the climax

**SETTING**

- What kind of place is the action set in? Is it usually associated with positive or negative events...?
  - Present day - in an urban environment - Mix of positive and negative events
  - Home - usually positive events
- How do the different places relate to each other: do they form a contrast, for example?
  - Home - usually positive events
- In what time is the action: E.g. night, day, the past, present...?
  - General era: Current day/near future
  - During the day (going to work)
  - Evening (after work coming home)

**NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

- Who is telling the story, and from what position (E.g. are they a character inside the story, or a voice from the outside)?
  - First person perspective (use of "I")
  - Character is inside the story
  - Told from his/her perspective
- How much is revealed by the story-teller(narrator)? Are we taken inside the mind/heart of the characters or not: all of the characters or just one?
  - Surface-level emotions are told
- Does it seem as though we can trust the narrator?
  - No, he might not be telling the whole story

**THEMES**

- Digital life in the modern world
- Impact of technology on society
- Collection and use of data
- Surveillance
- Privacy
- Convenience
- Human connection
- Identity
- Exploitation