

Most poems reflect upon the soul, rarely do you find poems that call a person to reflect upon others. In Karl Shapiro's *The Alphabet*, Shapiro writes about two religions and how they affect people. His thoughts about religion are shown in a variety of passionate words. Weaving through concrete and abstract thoughts, Shapiro expresses the bias look that is cast onto his religion.

Shapiro uses strong diction. Using harsh words such as stubbornly, strict, and tipsy show off Shapiro's negative feelings toward the harsh shadow Judaism is cast in. While the words seem randomly thrown about, I noticed that every time a soft spot opens up a harsh word follows to close it tightly.

Christianity is chosen as the religion to compare Judaism to because it is put on a pedestal unlike Judaism. Shapiro felt that Christianity was seen as the "perfect" religion to associate with, hence the resentful tone taken in the poem.

In lines 15 and 16 Shapiro talks about the "Gothic rose" and the "blue eyes" to give examples on how Jew's are recognizable. During WWI Shapiro worked as a battle doctor and witnessed many unjustly injured people. This plays into the poem by using more violent examples of religious stories such as the burning bush and crown of thorns.

In line 20 Shapiro uses the metaphor "Jews are dancing knives." Making the Jews knives shows the sharp destructive image they were given during Shapiro's time period. Shapiro uses other metaphors to show the image the Jews were given such as "The letters of the Jews are black and clean."

Repetition is used quite often as a way to emphasize the severity of this issue. Shapiro emphasizes the word refuse toward the end of the poem to show how fed up he was with the injustice happening. Repetition is also used on the word past to show how immensely the past effects the now and the future.

All through out the Shapiro's poem he uses a vast variety of literary tools, but his main tools were knowledge and emotion. Shapiro wanted to get his thoughts about Judaism and injustice out into the world, but

more importantly he wanted to show how the two go hand in hand under the shadows.