

Exemplar Grade 9 Essay 2

Compare how poets present family relationships in 'Walking Away' and in **one other poem**

**POEM FROM 'LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS
[30 MARKS]**

PLAN

- Intro: both poem present family relationships as difficult to leave but walking... shows it from a parents perspective and mother.. from a child's
- Para 1: theme of regret and guilt from fathers perspective and child's but
- Para 2: language and structural
- Para 3: form

The prospect of renouncing family relationships, even if it is for the best, is shown to be a difficult concept to be at peace with by Day-Lewis and Armitage in their respective poems. Both poets show a sense of conflict in parting with their family but from differing perspectives, Armitage's from a son leaving his mother and Day-Lewis' from a father sending off his son.

The speaker in Cecil Day-Lewis' poem 'Walking Away', speaks with undertones of regret, as he sends his son off to boarding school. Regret and family relationships being difficult to let go of is a theme which permeates the poem. He describes his son as "like a satellite/ wrenched from its orbit", using a space simile and thus creating the image that his son going to school is like him being thrown into the vast immensity of space. The hyperbole here, combined with syntactical gap between the word "satellite" and "wrenched", which appears in a new line, creates a sense of distance, highlighting the undertones of guilt in his language. Akin to Day-Lewis, Simon Armitage, in his poem 'Mother Any Distance', also writes about the theme family relationships to be incredibly difficult to relinquish. The poem tells of a speaker whose mother is helping him move into a new home, thus we know he is leaving her and becoming an adult. The speaker addresses his mother directly, saying "you at the zero end, me with the spool of tape". Like Day-Lewis, Armitage makes use of syntactical separation between the words "you" and "me" and enjambement to highlight the physical gap between the speaker and his mother. he describes there to be "years between [them]. Anchor. kite". "Anchor. Kite" is partially oxymoronic as one flies in the air while the other sits underwater, but both are tethered and are an apt metaphor for how the speaker feels ever connected to his mother. Furthermore, the hyperbole of "years" again creates a huge sentence of distance between the speaker and his mother; perhaps the speaker's over exaggeration might stem from a place of reluctance, reluctance to leave his mother and become independent. And yet the contrast between the hyperbole and the "kite" shows a partial desire to leave. The speaker sounds conflicted. Like Day-Lewis, the speaker is reluctant to let go of his mother, but we see this reluctance from the perspective of a son instead, hence why Armitage's speaker sounds more conflicted than Day-Lewis'. Armitage, like Day-Lewis, writes semi autobiographically which, in this context, gives the poem a fable-like feel. It encourages the readers to unearth the moral to be discerned.

Armitage writes, in his first stanza, that he “requires a second pair of hands”. The verb “require” demonstrates the reliance he has on his mother and the noun “hands” evokes ideas of help and generosity. It creates a sense of community which he shows is a necessity in his life. The speaker cannot live without his mother. Hands also typically evoke strength and power which shows that his mother is a stable, helpful force in his life. The speaker is “reporting [...] back to base” but then “leaving up the stairs”. The juxtaposition of these two phrases represents the dichotomy he feels between being with his mother and also wanting to be independent. Day-Lewis’ speaker also talks of conflict as he laments, “I can see you walking away from me”. the syntactical gap between “you” and “me” combined with the poets use of enjambement, demonstrates, visually, the gap between the speaker and his son. The poems rhyme scheme also reflects that gap, with the Day-Lewis employing an ABABC rhyme scheme. The rhyme’s unevenness perhaps represents the reluctance of the speaker to let go of his son. The poems slow renunciation of the rhyme mirrors the speakers slow renunciation of his son. Furthermore, the personal pronouns make the reader feel more intimate with the speaker, thus making the poem more relatable. Day-Lewis shows, from a father’s perspective that family relationships are inherently hard to renounce, even if the renunciation is beneficial. He talks about and thus normalises the guilt parents feel in letting their children go. Day-Lewis sent his own son to boarding school and this poem is believed to be semi-autobiographical in its nature. Knowing this, the poem appears all the more authentic which makes its readers more involved in the world of the poem and thus they are more likely to internalise the message of the poem. Armitage also normalises the conflict and guilt in such relationships, but from a child’s perspective.

While the poems are incredibly similar in their themes of family relationships being difficult to relinquish, Armitage’s speaker appears far more secure in his family relationship than Day-Lewis, who poem is permeated by undertones of worry. Day-Lewis’ speaker describes his son as “like a half-fledged thing set free into a wilderness”. He uses language of nature to portray a sense of worry. The simile used by Day-Lewis compares his son to an animal or a “thing” and the school he is sending him to a “wilderness”. His tone demonstrates concern that his son might not be safe, which is ironic given the rigid, strict natures of school. The irony present reveals that perhaps it is maintaining his relationship with his son after his departure that he is worried about, not the environment he is sending him off to. By contrast Armitage describes his mother “two floors below [her] fingertips still pinch[ing]” which metaphorically represents how no matter how far he travels, his mother’s love is unconditional. The poets sonnet form evokes love and reinforces this. Both poems end with a sense of contentment, but Day-Lewis’ final line “love is proved in the letting go” sounds more self-reassuring than confidently assertive. As though he has to vocally remind himself that he is doing the right thing in letting go. In comparison Armitage seems far more secure in the knowledge that his relationship with his mother will always be strong, no matter the distance.

Both poets show a certain amount of reluctance in their relinquishment of familial proximity, but Armitage’s speaker is ultimately more secure in his family relationships than Day-Lewis’. This could exemplify that there is more security in leaving than there is in letting go. Afterall, those who leave may always return but those who let go must be secure in the knowledge that they may not re-claim what they have let go.