**The Woman Speaks to the Man Who Has Employed Her Son**

**Please note that the information given on this poem is not meant to replace any material given in the classroom setting. It is a very BASIC giude to enable a literal understanding of the poem. Metaphorical interpretations should be sought in the classroom.**

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| **The physical structure of this poem has been altered from the original layout in the text.**  Her son was first known to her as a sense of unease, 5.a need to cry for little reasons and a metallic tide rising in her mouth each morning. Such signs made her know that she was not alone in her body. She carried him 6.full term 7.tight up under her heart.  1.She carried him like the poor  carry hope, hope you get a break or a visa, hope one child go through and remember you. He had no father. The man she made him with had more like him, 2.he was fair-minded he treated all his children  with equal and unbiased indifference.  She raised him twice, once as mother then as father, 8.set no ceiling on what he could be doctor earth healer, pilot take wings. But now he tells her is working for you, 3.that you value him so much you give him one whole submachine gun for him alone.  He says 1.you are like a father to him she is wondering what kind of father would 4.give a son hot and exploding death, when he asks him for bread. She went downtown and bought three and one-third yard of black cloth and a deep crowned and veiled hat for the day he draw 9.his bloody salary.  She has no power over you and this at 10.the level of earth, what she has are prayers and a mother's tears and at 11.knee city she uses them. 4.She says psalms for him she reads psalms for you she weeps for his soul her 12.eyewater covers you.  She is throwing a 13.partner with 4.Judas Iscariot's mother the thief on the left hand side of the cross, his mother is the 14.banker,15.her draw though is first and last for she still throwing two hands as mother and father. She is prepared, she is done.4.Absalom.  Goodison, L. 'The Woman Speaks to the Man Who Has Employed Her Son' in A World of Prose. Edited by Mark McWatt and Hazel Simmonds McDonald. Pearson Education Ltd, 2005 | **This is the OPINION of one individual, which might not coincide with the views of others.**  LITERAL MEANING The persona in this poem is telling the story of a mother who loved her son. The mother became aware of the child's presence when she experienced morning sickness. She placed all her hopes in the child and raised him as a single parent because his father was indifferent to the child's existence. The mother had set no barriers on what the child could become, but is told that he has an employer who values him so much that he is given his own submarine gun. The son tells his mother that his employer is like a father  to him, but the mother wonders at the father figure who purposefully endangers his child. She prepares for her son's death by going downtown to buy funeral apparel. The mother feels powerless, so she prays for her child and says protective psalms for him. On the other hand, she reads psalms of retribution for the employer and weeps for her son. Her situation does not look good and is likened to a partner system in which she draws both the first and the last hand.  Picture  LITERARY DEVICES 1. SIMILE   * Lines 1-2: The persona emphasizes that the mother placed all her hopes in her son. When you are poor, generally, you have no prospects, you only dream and hope. Therefore, the persona uses this metaphor to drive home the mother's dependence on her son's success. * Line 17: The employer is being compared to a father figure. This implies that this person fills a gap in the son's life. |

2. SARCASM  
The persona appears to praise the child's father by referring to him as 'fair-minded'. She is, however, chastising him for not only ignoring his son, but all of his other children.  
  
3. IRONY (situational)  
The son innocently tells his mother that his employer values him so much that he gave him a whole submachine gun for himself. The irony in this situation is that if you really care about someone, you do NOT give them a gun due to the negative results that are bound to occur.    
  
4. ALLUSION (biblical)

* Lines 28-29: This line alludes to a particular verse in the Christian Bible, [Luke 11 vs 11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%2011:%2011&version=NIV). The verse questions what the actions of a good father should be.
* Lines 38-39: Psalms is a particular chapter in the Christian Bible. In this chapter there are verses for protection, the mother uses those for her son, as well as verses for retribution and rebuking. It is implied that the mother chooses those for the employer.
* Lines 43-45: In the Christian Bible, Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus. Therefore, it does not bode well for the mother if she is in a 'partnership' with this person because she might also be betrayed. The banker in the 'partnership' also happens to be the thief on the left hand side of the cross' mother. This also does not bode well for the mother if the apple does not fall far from the tree.
* Line 49: Absalom is the son of David, in the Christian Bible. Absalom betrayed his father, which implies that the mother feels betrayed by her son because she has placed all her hopes in him.

IMPORTANT WORDS/ PHRASES  
5.  'a need to cry for little reasons and a metallic tide rising in her mouth each morning.'  
These two symptoms are early signs of pregnancy. The metallic tide refers to vomiting. These signs usually occur in the first trimester of pregnancy.   
6. 'full term'  
This means that the mother carried her son for the full nine months that a pregnancy should last.  
7. 'tight up under her heart'  
This hints at the love that the mother harbours for her child. He was not simply 'close to heart', but 'tight up' under it. It implies that the son holds a special place in her heart.  
8. 'set no ceiling'  
A ceiling is something that blocks you in, you cannot get past it. The mother set no limits on her son, he could be anything he wanted to be.  
9. 'his bloody salary'  
This implies that the mother believes that the result of the son's 'job' will be death.  
10. 'the level of earth'  
The mother has no power to change her son's situation. Earth is used to emphasize her powerlessness on this level, the realm of 'reality'.   
11. 'knee city'  
This refers to the fact that the mother constantly prayed for her child.  
12. 'eye water covers you'  
This implies that the mother cried constantly for the plight of her son. The fact that it 'covers her' speaks to the high quantity of tears that were shed.  
13. 'partner'  
This is an informal saving scheme set up with a specific number of individuals for the duration of a specific time span. Each person agrees to pay a designated figure on a monthly basis. The 'draws' are decided, meaning who gets the money first, second, third etc, on a monthly basis.The banker then collects the money and gives the monthly pool to the person who is to receive their 'draw'. Therefore, a 'partnership' is dependent upon the honesty of the banker, who could abscond with the money, as well as the honesty of the members of the savings scheme, who could decide NOT to pay after they have received their draw.   
14. 'banker'  
The banker, or financial controller, of this partnership is the mother of a thief. This does not bode well for the mother if the thief on the cross learnt it from his mother.  
15. 'her draw though is first and last for she still throwing two hands as mother and father'.   
This statement implies that though the mother has the advantage of first draw as mother, she loses that advantage because she also has the role of father. Mothers cannot father sons. The fact that the son has found a father figure proves this to be true. Therefore, she has the last draw, which carries with it the disadvantage of not receiving a full 'draw'. The longer one waits for a draw is the most likely that dishonesty will come into play on the part of the participants.  
  
  
MOOD/ ATMOSPHERE  
The [mood](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is reflective. The persona is thinking about a mother's response to her son's life choices.  
  
TONE  
The [tone](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is pragmatic and pessimistic. The persona is telling the tale as it is, with no positive energy.  
  
THEMATIC CATEGORY  
Death, love, survival, desires/ dreams, childhood experiences.