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English 222

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"A Song in the Front Yard"

A Song in the Front Yard is an interesting poem that explores the speaker's desire to see the darker side of life. The young speaker begins by comparing her front yard to her life, and her backyard and adjoining alley to the life she would like to experience. She was jealous of the freedom of charitable children. It was something she wanted for herself, even if it did come with the repercussions of future crime and bad behavior. Her mother disapproves of these children, but that doesn't stop the speaker from dreaming of a life as a "bad woman". The poem's assertion is an unwavering look between the rich and the poor. The author carefully examines this distinction in the thinking process of children. The poem consists of four stanzas of twenty lines. It is highly symbolic, with metaphorical and superficial irony.

It begins with a child who wants to "peek behind" / where the rough, untended and hungry weeds grow," and she stays in the front yard all her life. The "front yard" symbolizes wealth, as the first line of the poem says. It is clear that the poet's character is a child who wants to weave the "rough and untended" part of her life because "a girl is tired of roses". This child is tired of the strict lifestyle prescribed by her rich parents.

In the second stanza, she says: "I want to go in the back yard now / And maybe down the alley, / To where the charity children play.". She sees the backyard as a place to showcase the richness of her childhood fun. But her mother objected, she "sneered," but the child didn't mind because the backyard kids had unlimited freedom, "How they don't have to go in at quarter to nine.". Her mother's opposition certainly makes us understand the hatred that these poor people are so deeply involved in.

Society hates the poor with surreal discrimination. The poor are bad people who only commit atrocities, as her mother tells her "Johnnie Mae / will grow up to be a bad woman" and "George will be sent to jail sooner or later" because he is a thief. Johnnie Mae and George's descriptions portray how people view people of lower status; since they have nothing to their name, they try to replenish the void by stealing. But this is not shown in all poor people, it is just a general stereotype of being elevated by the rich.

The last stanza shows the child's defiant gesture, "But I said it's okay. Honestly, I do. / I want to be a bad woman too, / And wear brave stockings of black lace / And walk down the street with my face painted and my head held high." The child's confrontation is unprecedented. She wants to breathe their air and play on their land. The language is clear: the tone of a child who insists on getting what she wants. That's why she wants to be a "bad woman," a very direct metaphor, a metaphor in which she finds solace and longs to strut. But the poem is very ironic. Imagine a rich man who wants to live in the suburbs. The irony is that the child decides to enter the poor catacombs, which in fact seems paradoxical and only makes sense if you infer that this is a child who wants to engage in such activities.

The rhyme scheme seems to appear only in the last two lines of each stanza, with the exception of the fourth stanza, which has a rhyme in each line--"grows" and "rose," "play" and "today," "late" and "gate" (for the first, second and third stanzas), then "do" and "too", and "place" and "face " are used in the fourth stanza.

In addition, the poet uses several literary devices in this poem. These devices include, but are not limited to, the following.

Enjambment: occurs when the poet cuts off a line before its natural stopping point. For example, the transition between lines two and three of the first stanza and lines one and two of the second stanza.

Alliteration: can be seen when the poet repeats the same consonant sound at the beginning of words. For example, “girl gets” in line four of the first stanza and “charity children” in line three of the second stanza.

Caesura: a pause inserted in the middle of a line of verse. For example, “My mother, she tells me that Johnnie Mae.”

Imagery: can be seen when the poet uses especially interesting and memorable descriptions. For example, “And wear the brave stockings of night-black lace / And strut down the streets with paint on my face.”

Finally, "A Song in the Front Yard" is a relative poem. The themes of this poem include darkness/light and life experiences. The speaker contrasts her own life with the unknown life in the backyard and uses dark images such as "night-black lace" to express this. The tone of the poem is one of longing and curiosity. Its touchstones have far-reaching implications due to its obvious relevant message. Brooks examines the relationship between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the disadvantaged. She also points out the treatment and stereotypes experienced by the poor.

Works Cited

Brooks, Gwendolyn. "a song in the front yard." *Poetry Foundation*. 1963.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43310/a-song-in-the-front-yard>.