





## Question 1: Poetry

Poetry is an excellent medium in which ideas, emotions and events can be accurately portrayed or manipulated by using different poetic devices and language techniques (Levey et al., 2013). Poets make use of these methods to convey a specific meaning or to explore a subject or theme and to place emphasis on or convince the reader to accept the viewpoint that is depicted in the poem (Levey et al., 2013). In the poem, *To The Still Born*, (Stellenboom, 2016) we see evidence that the poet has made use of various poetic and language strategies to comment on the theme of loss that occurs when one experiences the loss of a stillborn child (Levey et al., 2013). The poet makes use of tropes, schemes and as well as the influence of syntax and diction is apparent; each will be discussed with relevance to the subject of loss described throughout the poem concerning <sup>1</sup> specific ideas that the poet wants to portray (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017) 

Tropes as an alteration of language are used throughout the poem to emphasise the theme of loss. The figures of speech that are considered tropes within the context of this poem and are evident are the use of metaphor and understatement (Levey et al., 2013). Schemes are also used to alter the arrangement of words to fulfil a definite purpose or contribute to particular meanings (Levey et al., 2013). The schemes used throughout the poem and contribute meaningfully to the theme of loss are the use of repetition and alliteration (Levey et al., 2013). Syntax and diction are also important elements in concurring and creating meaning and mood as well as <sup>2</sup> reinforcing essential components of the poem (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017) 

The title states that the poem is addressed to a stillborn child. This simple choice of words makes it easy for the reader to understand what the content of the poem will be, what type of language will be used and perhaps who the speakers are in the poem will be: potentially the parents of the child (Levey et al., 2013). It is likely that this poem, based on the title, will be <sup>3</sup> melancholy with a theme of sadness and loss (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017) 

In stanza one, the speakers are referring to the stillborn child as a beautiful flower with big, bold petals which have blossomed and unfolded fully. This suggests that the point that the writer would like to make is that even though this <sup>4</sup> child is stillborn on earth, she has blossomed into a beautiful flower in heaven  the speakers believe that the child has flourished and will grow in heaven, even though she never got the opportunity to do so on earth. The writer has achieved this point through the use of metaphor, alliteration and diction (Levey et al., 2013).

Metaphors are used when making indirect comparisons between two different aspects that yet share some interactive features (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). The child has been associated with a flower, and the effect of this is to help the reader think of a stillborn child not as a lifeless entity, but as a flower that will continue to grow and live. The use of alliteration adds an emotional effect to the stanza, with the strong 'b' sound placing emphasis on the size and boldness of the petals; and soft 'p' sound mimicking and accentuating the presence and attractiveness of the petals (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). The choice of the words 'are' and 'blossom' make the reader aware that the speakers believe the child is still alive as these words are spoken in the present tense (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). Although the theme of loss is achieved in this stanza, the feeling created around is not that of devastation.

The writer is describing what the child is wearing in stanza two, as these were the clothes that were chosen for her to wear when she left the hospital to go home with her family. Through the use of syntax and diction the original meaning has changed: a funeral or memorial service is being held for the child, and the speakers are bidding her earthly life farewell, but embracing her heavenly life (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017).

The theme of loss is reiterated here through the use of the words 'embark' and 'heavenly' which have sad associations on their own. Through syntax, the mood has been changed to something more positive and uplifting by using the words and phrases 'ribbons and lace', 'divas' and 'warm embrace' (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). The way in which the last two words of the last two stanzas rhyme, 'embrace and grace', also helps to create a gentle, calming and happy tone in verse (Literary Devices and Terms). The reason that the writer chose to compose the stanza in this way is to help the reader to view a funeral as a celebration of moving onto another life, and not a time to mourn the loss of the child's earthly life (Levey et al., 2013).

In stanza three we see the speakers addressing the child, saying that she is now flying as an angel as she is no longer on earth with her family, but in heaven with other angels. She asks the child to remember that the speakers love her and will always love her. There is a sad tone to this stanza that has been created through repetition, syntax and diction and places emphasis on the theme of loss in the poem (Levey et al., 2013).

Certain phrases create a sad tone, such as 'different place' and 'all we will ever do': these draw the reader's attention to the fact that things have changed for the speaker (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). The speakers were excited to tell the child that she is loved often and to be near her when the speakers did so, but now that the child is in heaven, they ask the child to

please understand that she is still loved even if the speakers are not physically with the child to tell her that. The rhetorical use of repetition in the phrase '*it is all*' wants to emphasise the fact that the speakers will always inform the child that she is loved, even if the child cannot hear her say it. This is because the speakers have no other ways in which she can show love: they cannot hug or kiss the child (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). Through this stanza, the writer wants to show the reader that although the speakers may view having a stillborn child in a more positive light than most, the reality of a stillborn child is still a devastating event and it is normal to be sad and upset by it.

Stanza four is broken up into three parts, each emphasising a different point that the writer wants to place emphasis on (Levey et al., 2013). The first three lines of stanza three resemble the first stanza, with the metaphor of a flower being used by the speakers in telling the child how beautiful, brave and bold she is (Levey et al., 2013). The alliteration of the 'b' sound is also used to emphasise the strength and the battle that the child had to form as a bud and be ready to grow outside the womb (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). These lines are written this way to inform the reader that the child had a difficult time growing and developing in the womb. Thus, it was a great achievement for the child to have come this far in her life: to even form as a bud from a stem that is a representation of the umbilical cord. This creates a sadness around the theme of loss: the fact that the child tried hard and still was unsuccessful in living an earthly life.

The following three lines of the stanza show the speakers telling the child that they are grateful for all the time, effort and hope that the child gave the speakers while she was growing and forming as a bud in the womb. Alliteration and an almost onomatopoeia effect of the 'g' sound are used in these lines to emphasise the effort the child exerted in growing while in the womb (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). The writer potentially wrote these lines in this manner to enlighten the reader that although the child is no longer physically with the speakers, they value the effort and treasure the memories that were given to them while the child was still developing (Levey et al., 2013).

The last seven lines of the poem have a sad tone, where the speakers state that the thought of the child not being with them in the future makes them devastated to the point that they feel they may not cope. The speakers continue saying that the only thing that saves them from this state of mind is knowing that the child is alive and blossoming in another place (Levey et al., 2013). The theme of loss is evident in this section of the poem, where the speakers are faced with the everyday reality that the child will not be a physical presence in their lives.

The syntax is used in the first three lines of this section to create an atmosphere of sadness by using the words 'lost', 'cave' and 'sorrows' to reiterate the feelings of loss that the speakers are experiencing (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). There is rhythm created by the rhyming of the last words of the lines: 'tomorrows' and 'sorrows' as well as 'day' and 'say' which make the pace of these lines start off long and slow and speed up with the shorter words (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). There is the use of understatement in the line, 'It's knowing you exist in a place not too far' where after a few lines of melancholy, the writer tries to change the mood into a more positive one. This is done by deliberately undermining the genuine sadness that is experienced through loss. The repetition of the metaphor, 'what a beautiful flower you are' has been done purposefully to emphasise the importance of this line: that the child has not died but is living and flourishing in a different place to the speaker, in heaven.

To conclude, it is evident that the use of poetic and language techniques is essential when wanting to emphasise and discuss a theme or topic in poetry (Levey et al., 2013). Meaning, mood, tone, rhythm and atmosphere are all achieved through the use of these techniques and all of which contribute to the creation of the theme portrayed in the poem (Literary Devices and Terms, 2017). One would not be able to understand, sympathise and experience the feeling of loss shown in this poem without deciphering the figures of speech, syntax and diction that is utilised by the poet (Levey et al., 2013). Therefore, it is essential that poetry is to be read with the understanding of these poetic and language elements to fully grasp the concept and message of each individual poem.

### Bibliography:

Levey, D et al. 2013. *Genres in Literature and Language: Theory, style and poetics: Study Guide*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Stellenboom, S. 2016. *To The Still Born by Simonne Stellenboom*. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.poetrypotion.com/to-the-still-born-by-simonne-stellenboom/>. Accessed on: 3 April 2017.

Unknown, 2017. *Literary Devices and Terms*. [Online]. Available from: <https://literarydevices.net/>. Accessed on: 3 April 2017.

# RESULTS

Final Comments = 75

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Total = 75 / 100 (75%)

# COMMENTS

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Good! Your introduction is sound and informative!  |
| 2  | A fair observation, which I assume you will build on later in your argument.   |
| 3  | Look at the title again. Consider why the poet has used "the" instead of "my", given the personal nature of the poem. Then take another look at "still born". The poet has very likely intentionally misspelled it, to create a play on words, which you should consider carefully. What could the poet be saying? There is much more going on with this title than is initially suggested by its seemingly straight-forward nature. |
| 4  | Consider the parallels between a flower and an infant, however, and you might find it more likely that the metaphor has more to do with the child's time on earth, rather than her state after death, especially given that the speaker associates the child's time after death with specifically angelic imagery.   |
| 5  | This is a very narrow interpretation. What about the other symbolic reasons for the comparison? The cyclical and short-lived nature of flowers, that only bloom for a season and then wither and fade; the ephemeral beauty of many flowers; their delicacy and the ease with which they can be killed when removed from the plant they bloom on?  |
| 6  | Very good! Insightful and well-expressed.  |
| 7  | Why do you say this? You need to provide examples from the text to substantiate your claims.   |
| 8  | Good! Insightful.  |
| 9  | Good again!  |
| 10 | Again, why do you say this? You need to provide examples from the text to substantiate your claims.  |
| 11 | Excellent! Insightful, very detailed and well-expressed.   |
| 12 | How does it do this? Be more specific.   |
| 13 | Good! An interesting observation.  |
| 14 | Again, how does it do this? Be more specific.  |
| 15 | Good!  |
| 16 | Does it not seem to you that the speaker derives comfort in this thought, though, thus lightening the tone somewhat?   |
| 17 | These individual words are examples of diction, not syntax, as syntax deals with sentence construction. You need to be familiar with these terms and be able to differentiate them easily.   |
| 18 | Good! An interesting observation.  |
| 19 | Good! Your conclusion is appropriate to your essay and sums up the salient points of your argument!  |
| 20 | Thank you for submitting this assignment. Your essay is good. It is fairly well structured, goes into a fair amount of technical detail and is well-substantiated with quotes from the text. Congratulations! Study hard and good luck for the examinations! Marked by: Russell Goldman  |
| 21 | Total /100:  |