
The Comparison of "Poem About My Rights" by June Jordan And "The Day Lady Died" by Frank O'hara

"Poem About My Rights" is a passionate, emotional, and personal poem. Violence toward and oppression of individual African Americans and countries in southern Africa are the overriding themes of "Poem About My Rights." The poem vulgarly refers to sexual violence experienced by woman and how they are victimized, harassed and abused by men who are physically and 'socially' stronger. Jordan speaks about rape, and how excuses are provided to the law, by the offender, which makes the rape seem okay and reasonable. This results in no justice taking place and the victim being left alone, feeling unsafe, with bursting anger and frustration – making them feel even more unwanted and like an outcast. This reveals the poor justice system; corrupt police work and fraudulent government systems – an entirely different theme in the poem. Jordan's view of the world serves as a mandate for change. A bleak and violent society's condition becomes a vehicle for change both by the individual and by society.

"Rights and wrongs" and "right and wrong" are subjects of the poem despite the fact that the words "right" or "rights" are never mentioned except in the title. In the ending, it serves as a testament to the belief that the individual can make a difference even though doing so requires an ongoing struggle. The poem's title is ironic, as the narrator chronicles the "wrongs" that exist within the person she is as well as the external conditions that impact her. Society's edicts infringe upon and impede any rights that author feels are hers. She is a product of her people's heritage and, as such, must live according to contemporary cultural suppositions. This form of struggle and protest poetry truly captures and speaks for the voice of the oppressed and silent women in South Africa. Burden of proof is also left to the victim in order for justice to be served. Personal, consensual rape is then transferred to the broader area of southern Africa: South Africa's forced penetration into Namibia and Namibia's subsequent penetration into Angola are detailed.

In the poem, the "wrong" elements and characteristics of June Jordan are constantly repeated. This is to emphasize the poet's anger about her lack of acceptance that she feels not only by society but by her family. Burden of proof is also left to the victim in order for justice to be served. Personal, consensual rape is then transferred to the broader area of southern Africa: South Africa's forced penetration into Namibia and Namibia's subsequent penetration into Angola are detailed. The poem was written in free verse and it does not rhyme or have a regular meter. Using first person throughout, Jordan details the wrongs that she perceives in herself: wrong color, wrong sex, and living on the wrong continent. When reading the poem we witness the harsh and judgmental comments and remarks made, for example "I am the history of the

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rejection of who I am”.

Another example of where Jordan feels judged and unaccepted is when she says “it was my mother pleading plastic surgery for my nose and braces for my teeth” - a mother is supposed to be a woman who supports and loves their child for who they are, and not try to change them into what they aren't. We can see Jordan has personal experiences with this, through the harsh and cruel way she refers to it in her poem. I was inspired and shaken by how powerful and moving it was, and how Jordan managed to get such a graphic and empowering message across through the reading of her poem. She searches for the most harrowing or superlative way to express her feelings and get her point across.

The rape image in “Poem About My Rights” reflects this practice. The poem's shocking and violent images are used to make comparisons among individual, national, and global situations. The forced gang rape of an dissenting female in France is deemed by law as consent since male penetration did not include ejaculation, and therefore there is no proof. It is determined that the individual is wrong because of who and where she is at the time of the incident. To Jordan, this is analogous to the penetration of African nations by more powerful countries.

When reading the poem, I found that Jordan speaks clearly and uses pauses, creating a steady pace. Her tone in the beginning is not particularly aggressive or angry, however she does raise her voice to emphasize that she is upset and that the issues that she is talking about are personal. However as the poem progresses, so her voice becomes louder and more dominating, emphasizing particular words and phrases. This is particularly effective because the listeners now get a sense of how the poet feels about her own poem, adding a more personal and emotional touch.

This poem to be incredibly motivating and inspiring in terms of taking a stand against gender inequality and violence. However the poem does have an optimistic and unexpected ending when Jordan says that she will now defend herself, leaving the listeners/readers with a hopeful and encouraging ending. We can learn from Jordan, using very visual and graphics words, it allows us to sympathize and even empathize for the way she has been treated and feels, making the audience connect with the poem on an even more personal and emotional level. Her use of diction greatly emphasizes the harsh circumstances faced by woman, as well as Jordan's anger towards the little political action and support against such abuse and neglect. When we write poems, we can start from the small things that we experience to reveal the social background. We need prove the facts with evidence so that it will be more convinced.

The Day Lady Died by Frank O'Hara

“The Day Lady Died” describes Frank O'Hara's activities on the day he found out that Billie

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(Lady Day) Holiday had died. Although the poem appears to be a straightforward narrative, the title emphasizes the day itself rather than Holiday's death or O'Hara's activities, and thus it hints at something larger, something that perhaps combines both Holiday and O'Hara. It suggests that the poem should also be read as something other than the narrative it may first appear to be.

"The Day Lady Died" is a visionary poem, one in which the ordinary world is pulled away to reveal something much larger. The poem becomes a poem about how disparate things, people, and events are all interconnected, even when they apparently have no connection whatsoever. He connects himself to her, not only by focusing on the day itself and by remembering her singing, but also by depicting a moment of epiphany. In this moment, the ordinary concept of time is pulled away to reveal an eternal present, and ordinary, concrete reality is pulled away to reveal something extraordinary, something much larger than one's ordinary senses reveal.

The title of the poem sets a serious tone: A lady died. But the poem begins with the O'Hara speaker recording the details of the day. Then he switches to describing his own activities. The poem sets up its literally breathless moment by its cataloging of the trivial activities of the day. At other times, O'Hara seems to be using lists and names for their own sake, but in this poem there is a clear utility to these techniques, as the revelation transforms the ordinary into something memorable.

It is interesting to note that the art of Billie Holiday is seen here as turning a public moment into a private one (she "whispers" a song in public), while O'Hara's art is to make private moments and experiences public. Yet it would be a mistake to leave the poem at that most literal reading. For what O'Hara is ultimately doing is showing some surprise and leading us to expect an elegy. The poem is written in the first person and in free verse. It is the same as the Poem of My Right. Poets often use the first person either to address a particular person or the world, while the reader is a witness rather than the addressee. O'Hara, however, uses the first person differently.

One of the striking features of this poem is its conversational tone; combined with the first-person point of view, it creates the impression that the poet is talking directly to his readers, including them in the seemingly innocuous moments of his life. This effect brings an intimacy to the poem. O'Hara furthers this intimacy by including the names of friends and places that are meaningless to almost anyone who does not know him or his social circle without ever explaining who or what they are or what their significance is to him or his life. He appears to be telling readers about his life as though they already understand all the references; the poem becomes a conversation.

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Though the poem's narrative structure looks simple, O'Hara employs devices that ultimately break down ordinary concepts of time and perception. For many years he was an art critic, and many of his friends were abstract painters. One of the developing thrusts of visual art at that time was that the painting itself became a record of the process of painting; so, too, O'Hara makes the poem a record of the process of the contents of the poem. O'Hara accomplishes this through the impressionist quality of the writing, telling of events as he goes about his day. He does not link them together through metaphor, imagery, or any other standard poetic device, but merely sets them down as they occur. Yet this seemingly innocuous jotting down has a peculiar effect; the poem becomes not only a record of the day but also a mirror of the actual process of going through the day. Clearly, when people are standing in line at the bank, they are not linking that action, on some larger scale, to eating a hamburger in a restaurant half an hour earlier; neither does O'Hara.

What he does instead is mimic real life. Readers see him as he goes around New York, and the poem becomes a record of that process rather than a poem of any one particular event. This mirroring of the process of going through a day has a peculiar effect on time. His casual description is an effective way of establishing the date and time in which a surprising and momentous event will be recognized. The poem is written entirely in the present tense, and the sense of going through the day while.

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