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## The general message of “Tiny Feet” by Gabriela Mistral

“Tiny Feet” by Gabriela Mistral is a tragic poem that tells us the painful lives of poor children, to convince us to feel sorry and look for support lives of poor children. The “Tiny Feet” tells a story about the author’s life. When she was 3 years old, her father left home and never returned, leaving her mother and half-sister to raise her. Mistral was falsely accused of wasting classroom materials in school, and was unable to defend herself. She was then victimized by her peers when they threw stones at her and she was sent home to be taught by her half-sister. This was the first instance of injustice and human cruelty that she encountered which left a profound impression on her as a poet. She was determined to speak for the defenseless, humble and the poor. In the poem, her views are expressed as to how society ignores child poverty.

The tone is sad at the beginning of the poem. Within the first stanza, Mistral explains the scene of the poem perfectly. Mistral presents the description of the barefooted feet of a little child, whom has no shoes in the following lines, “A child’s tiny feet, Blue, blue with cold”. She lets the reader know that the child is suffering in the cold with his painful, wounded feet, yet no one cares if he has shoes or not. “How can they see and not protect you?”, here Mistral points out that no one stops to help or protect the child. They just walk by as if they don’t even notice. The author, who was a religious woman cries out, “Oh, my God!” She calls out to God to help her to understand how the people could ignore the child and its needs. Mistral’s love for the child is expressed in this stanza with passion and wrath. This stanza leaves the reader to question how people could not see the issue of child poverty that is visual right in front of people passing by. The second stanza describes the harsh environments in which the child is living and the hardships it has to face every day. The lines “Tiny wounded feet, Bruised all over by pebbles, Abused by snow and soil!” describe the image of the feet and that they are battered and torn from the elements. Mistral explains to the reader about the suffering and distress the child is enduring, not because his feet hurt, but that no one cares or tries to protect him from harm.

Mistral employs the device of imagery to display this scene, as the reader can clearly visualize the child’s battered feet. The images directly connect the reader because we can easily feel the child’s pain. The third stanza speaks of the child’s innocence in the world. “Man, being blind, ignores that where you step you leave, a blossom of bright light” depicts that for each step the child takes it could be towards progress but because the people are too blind to see them, they will never know their full potential or what they could become. “That where you have placed your bleeding little soles a redolent tuberose grows”, the author explains that is not the child’s fault that he has to endure these hardships. She expresses that society could help the child by giving him a chance at a better life and see what progress could be made, but still they ignore him and the possibility. The fourth stanza explains the courage the child has while facing

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adversity. By reviewing the first two lines, “Since, however, you walk through the streets so straight” the reader can understand that the child is brave, and is not giving up hope, for one day he may have a better life. The last line of the fourth stanza states that “You are courageous, without fault” and shows the reader that through adversity and hardships, the child seems to not give up and that it is no fault of his own that he currently has to live this life of poverty.

Mistral criticizes society for not wanting to help the child. Two incomplete sentences and a question make up the fifth stanza. The incomplete sentences help the reader to understand the view of the author. In the lines “Child’s tiny feet, Two suffering little gems” the author addresses the agony the child is enduring and compares the child’s feet to gems, stating how children are a blessing, and should be protected as you would protect any precious gem. Mistral ends the poem with the following question, “How can the people pass, unseeing.”

The “unseeing” people are those that take for granted the blessing of children, as having her own children is something she deeply desires. Mistral is concerned about the future of the child in a society that looked away from poverty stricken children who grew up poor knowing no other way of life. How could society continue to ignore child poverty and not intervene and protect them? The last stanza leads the reader to firmly believe that no one helped the child. Part II: Scansion and Analysis The central theme and meaning of the poem is children in poverty, and the neglect by society. Children are the innocence of the world and it is our responsibility as adults to help guide and protect them. The poem is written in free verse and it has no set meter. The only rhyme within the poem is an internal rhyme that is located within the line number 11, a “Blossom of bright light.” The tone of the poem begins as sad, and full of despair with the very idea of children living in poverty with no one to care for them. Though, by the middle of the poem, the tone changes when the author shows hope is felt for the children because they are brave.

The poem has five stanzas. The views and thoughts of the author are within all stanzas. Imagery is used throughout the poem. For instance, you can clearly imagine that because the child’s feet are so cold that they have turned blue. The reader can also visualize how the feet are bleeding from stepping on pebbles. The author uses a metaphor technique when comparing the child’s feet to precious gems as children are just as precious as gems and should be protected as such. The lines within the poem are sometimes difficult because of their harshness while reading, but the author uses this to promote an intended effect, giving the reader an emotional and uncomfortable uncertainty. The author also uses descriptive adjectives to bring deeper meaning to the poem. By using words that are not well known causes the reader to search for meanings to better understand the writing. I chose to view this poem through a thematic mode. I believe Mistral used the theme of the poem to bring awareness to society regarding childhood poverty. Her approach made it easy for the reader to understand the theme and the issue at hand. I also agree with Mistral that society as a whole turns the other way and

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does not want to help the neglected and poverty stricken individuals.

The general message of the poem is to tell society to open its eyes to children in poverty and stop taking everything for granted. I feel that the poem is an expression of the children's emotional and physical pain that is endured in poverty, as well as the pain the author feels by seeing the neglected children. Mistral expressed that children were the future, and in order for the future to look bright, there must be children that love the world in which they live.

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