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ENG 1121-D428

Textual Analysis Essay-Draft 1

Poem: “Brueghel’s Two Monkeys” by Wislawa Szymborska

Abstraction of Human Conditions

Wislawa Szymborska poem “Brueghel’s Two Monkeys” starts out in a strange way. It begins out by what the author “dreams about final exams” (1). Oddly, what she sees in her dream is “two monkeys, chained to the floor” (2). The poem is about the human conditions in different settings of mankind. The monkeys are the things that of the poets dream about the exam. The monkeys are a symbol of the suffering of mankind—based on the chains—through the unpredictable events. As said in the last stanza, “One monkey stares and listens with a mocking disdain” (7), while “the other seems to be dreaming away” (8). The poem is full of metaphors that get the reader thinking about what it means in respect to what the author is addressing. Reality has junctions in which one is peaceful while the other is harsh. In the poem “Brueghel’s Two Monkeys” by Wislawa Szymborska, we will look at representation of human condition in a certain event. We will examine the human conditions through exams, history, and solution.

In the poem, when it comes to exams it shows a great deal of decision making. In the first stanza of the poem it shows a significant note of assessment. The part where the two monkeys were “chained to the floor, sit on the windowsill” (2), the line after states “the sky behind them flutters” (3). The monkeys are being assessed in beginning of the poem. The part of where the monkeys “sit on the windowsill” (2) illustrates the idea of whether one should stay in the position of where there at or go against something—sort of a higher power—and try to run away from it. Szymborska than excites the reader by presenting that “the sky behind them flutters” (3). What Szymborska means about “flutters” is probably a good thing because, as an illustration, if one escapes something very injustice they might come towards freedom. The whole idea in the first stanza is all about testing of whether the monkeys are willing to get away from brutal “chains” or head towards the fluttering sky (freedom). Since the beginning of time, people have gone through circumstances in where they felt the need that the government or some kind of higher power is not doing their society any good. The potato famine demonstrates in Ireland a great deal of exams whether people they should stay “chained” or get away from the society.

There is a saying that states those who don’t know history are destined to repeat it. The reason of history is to get a better understanding of affairs that happened and to prevent them from happening in the present and future. From the poet’s perspective, she views history as a significant study. In the first stanza, “final exams” (1) are seen negative based on the “two monkeys, chained to the floor” (2) of the poets dreams. The chains on the monkeys represent the suffering of many human beings that had to go through. The two monkeys illustrate the “history of mankind” (5) and the conditions that came upon many societies. One event that recounts this idea is slavery of Africans in the United States during the 1800’s. Mankind’s history can be concluded as a man’s brutality to man, the enslavement of man by his fellow man.

In certain events, human conditions are seen through people who try to find solutions to major problems. In the last stanza, Szymborska says “but when it’s clear I don’t know what to say he prompts me with a gentle clinking oh his chain”. This is hard to understand coming from this poet but it clear of what it means. This is an act of trying to give the answer whatever the situation is. The “clinking of his chain” describes the solution to something. The line is said in a metaphoric way so that it can have more than one meaning to the reader. As said earlier in the poem, the two monkeys have a problem of being chained to the suffering of the society that they come to civilize in or being forced to become part of the society. Knowing that the society that the monkeys are in is a harsh place, they try to get away from it. The other part of reality that was recognized in the poem known as peaceful is hidden in where “he prompts me with a gentle” (10). The words peaceful and gentle are both from the same root which indicates that the next line reading “clinking of his chain” (11), shows that there would be a solution or answer towards the reality of serenity. Again with history, many movements have been created to ensure a better society. Revolutions, independences, treaties, and other historical phenomenon have created solutions in order to maintain their society’s order of mankind and civilization.

I think that the poem shows a great theme in representation of human conditions in certain events in terms of exams, history, and solutions. Exams in this poem are seen as a decision making and whether one tries to go against an authority. In many societies, there are many assessments to where the kind of government wants to see how people react towards their ruling. History mimics an art museum of the past and shows what the poet mean about “chained” as the state of sorrow and enslavement. We look at the past to correct ourselves from making big decisions that lead to previous problems. Solutions defined in the poem as a way to escape the realities harsh factors. The dream of the poet describes the history of mankind as being an exam to see if we have understood or judgments towards our fellow beings.