

Traveling Through the Dark

September 24, 2003

Vocabulary

Swerve—Verb—To turn aside or cause to turn aside from a straight line, course, etc.

This word used to mean to me in the sense of an object turning, a car, bike, or even your physical body. I guess I knew it could be used for mental and emotions as well but I never thought of it in that context. I took it for its literal meaning.

Heap—Noun—Many things lying together in a mass; pile; mound.

In the poem, Stafford used a noun that describes many things to describe a single animal. I think his use of the word was correct in making a point. As I think he meant even though it seemed like a single deer was there really an unborn fawn lay inside of it, meaning mistakes can affect more than one person or objects.

Through—Prep.—In one side and out the other side of; from end to end; between the parts of.

I guess it's sort of a subconscious thing to realize through means an end and beginning but rare, at least I didn't really ever think about it being much different than other prepositions. I think Stafford's use of it is not only witty but also very creative as it gets you thinking about the poem before you even read it.

Strategies

Symbolism—Both inner circles used the concept of symbolism to really try and dig into the guts of the poem to find the real meaning. This poem by Stafford is dripping with symbolism, it is contained in every line, it's not the hard part finding what each line is saying it's hard trying to piece together what they mean as a whole.

Word Choice—Word choice is also very in-depth in this poem, every word seems to be well chosen to convey a certain hidden idea. As I discussed before the use of through is a good example of this, it is possible he could have said "Traveling *in* the Dark" and we wouldn't have even stopped for a second to think about it otherwise.

Vivid Imagery—Stafford's use of words also help at least me image what is happening in my head. This helped for me to better grasp what is trying to say. Although I never really was able to come to a final all-including conclusion in till Mr. Copeland discussed it with us I think the use of the words helped me better understand the text.

Reflection on Performance

I think my preparation was poor for the seminar, mostly due the fact I had a hard time understanding its true meaning, therefore I had a hard time really thinking of good content to add to the discussion. While I was in the inner circle I just kind of kept to myself, I had certain ideas of what maybe the poem was saying but whenever I got around to saying it, it seemed somebody else had just made a revelation. My performance inside the circle was poor for the simple reason I didn't contribute much of anything to the discussion. While I was on the outer circle I was interested very much in where the group's discussion was going. They were so close and yet so far, and I was only disappointed at the very end. For my next seminar I can't promise to be able to contribute a lot but maybe an extra 5 minutes on the text or another reading of the text could help me piece it together better.

As for Group performance I think we did poorly, but not that I can be much of a critic. The frequent pauses from my view-point wasn't while we were thinking but simply nervousness about what should be said next. We had a rather large group and I think that combined with the general lack of understanding from most of our circle lead to poor coordination and discussion. While we were on the outside I think our critical points were valid although we were hardly any better. Nonetheless constructive criticism is always a good thing.

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Reflection on Content

Thesis Statement:

William Stafford in his poem "Traveling Through the Dark" uses symbolism and word choice to convey the idea that all choices have an end and beginning and that we should make them carefully for they not only affect us directly but also others indirectly.

Some points I would include in my essay over William Stafford's meaning he is conveying are, how somebody's choice of driving to fast and therefore killing a deer, not only killed the deer but affected the fawn inside and possibly could have affected others driving. I would also make a point of the car and how it is waiting for Stafford to return to it so he may continue down "the road" or life, symbolizing the fact that choices must be made, no matter how painful before we may continue on life's journey. Another point that I could make is how the title of the poem suggests something about choices in life and how they all end and begin with *Through the Dark* not *in the Dark*. All choices and their consequences for bad or worse will come to an end, and regardless we will still be moving down life's road.

Everybody makes bad decisions, I am no exception, nobody is. I have made bad mistakes in the past and will continue to do so, the only thing I can do is try and learn from them and prevent future ones from happening using past experience. Stafford in this poem is making the same point, however I believe he isn't denouncing the fact that mistakes are all okay, some mistakes are unavoidable but those that are extremely profound deserve dire consequences. I think this sort of ties into the whole thing with Bush and Iraq, it seems whenever they say something and it is proven the other way around or they are proven to have made a mistake they simply blow it off saying "everybody makes mistakes." That may be true but mistakes are never any good unless you learn from them, and so far Bush never has been forced to do that in his sheltered rich life and now as leading his Administration. A mistake of disregarding intelligence causing 3,000 deaths or invading a country on shady intelligence that is later proven false deserves dire consequences, your mistake left them with nothing but blood on their hands. Anyways, before I get too side-tracked or possibly offend you I'll conclude this again, Mistakes are good but we learn from them much less than we could.

FIGURE 8.8 Example of Reflection (*continued*)