

Student's Name

Professor's Name

Course Number

Date

Poems Compare/Contrast Essay

Death: 1. When I consider how my light is spent

2. Examination at the womb-door

Introduction

Both Ted Hughes' "Examination at the Womb-Door" and John Milton's "Sonnet 19: When I consider how my light is spent" explore the subject of mortality and the complexities of people's reactions to life's transience. While Hughes' poem emanates defiance and emphasizes human power and perseverance in the face of mortality (Hughes), Milton's poem muses on acceptance, commitment, and finding purpose amidst limits (Milton). We can learn more about various perspectives on death and their relevance in influencing the human experience by examining these two poems side by side.

1. Perspectives on Mortality:

In "Sonnet 19," Milton' muses on the fleeting nature of life and the anxiety associated with unrealized potential. It serves as a sad reminder of life's transience because "light" is a metaphor for both life and creative potential. The speaker struggles with the conflict between his desire to use his gifts to serve God and his fear of coming under divine wrath for perceived incompetence (Pietrzak).

As opposed to this, Hughes' "Examination at the Womb-Door" takes a more direct stance on death. Death is represented as a strong entity that claims control over different facets of life.

The character of the poem raises concerns about who owns what body parts, highlighting how death has an unavoidable hold on human existence. The persona, however, brazenly asserts that they are "stronger than Death," demonstrating human fortitude in the face of mortality (Hughes).

Significance:

These different points of view on mortality highlight the variety of human attitudes and emotions around the certainty of death. The internal conflicts people have with accepting their finite lifespans are explored in Milton's poem, which emphasizes the need for meaning and the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment. Instead of encouraging readers to accept death as a given, Hughes' poem stresses the strength of the human will to fight and thwart death's hold (Calder).

2. Relationship with the Transcendence and Divine of Mortality:

In "Sonnet 19," Milton's speaker looks to serving God despite apparent flaws for consolation. The speaker finds peace in accepting God's will and in the notion that spiritual commitment is more important than worldly success. The poem underlines how important it is to seek fulfillment through a greater purpose and find meaning beyond earthly achievements (Milton).

In contrast, Hughes' "Examination at the Womb-Door" doesn't specifically mention a deity. Instead, the persona's defiance and assertion of power suggest a faith in human adaptability and the ability to get past the dread of dying by developing inner fortitude. The poem claims that the constraints set by death can be defied by the human spirit by drawing strength from within (Hughes).

Significance:

These various perspectives on the divine and the transcendence of death reveal various perspectives on spirituality and personal empowerment. While Hughes' poem emphasizes the

human capacity to find strength and meaning inside oneself, regardless of external circumstances, Milton's poem underlines the necessity of spiritual devotion as a source of solace and purpose (Troupes).

3. Defiance vs. Acceptance:

Milton's "Sonnet 19" eventually reaches a state of resignation and acceptance. The speaker accepts the constraints of life and recognizes the importance of steadfast commitment to God, regardless of accomplishments or circumstances. The poem emphasizes the value of accepting one's mortality and finding peace in it (Milton).

In contrast, Hughes' "Examination at the Womb-Door" exhibits defiance toward death's authority. The persona's resistance to accepting death quietly exemplifies the human spirit's resolve to battle mortality. The poem inspires readers to face death with fortitude and courage and emits a rebellious feeling (Hughes).

Significance

The opposing themes of defiance and acceptance reflect the many perspectives that people have on death. Milton's acceptance demonstrates the value of committing oneself to a greater cause and the recognition of life's limitations. Hughes, on the other hand, challenges the idea that one is helpless in the face of death by highlighting the resilience of the human spirit and the refusal to be controlled by mortality (Pietrzak).

The comparison of Ted Hughes' "Examination at the Womb-Door" and John Milton's "Sonnet 19: When I consider how my light is Spent" offers a rich exploration of the theme of death and deepens our knowledge of human nature and the various ways in which people deal with mortality. These two poems, written in various eras and poetic forms, provide complementary viewpoints on the universal theme of life's fleeting nature and the quest for

significance in the face of mortality. The parallel comparison of these two poems demonstrates the universality of the theme of death throughout literature. Hughes' poetry depicts a rebellious spirit that rejects the oppressive grasp of mortality, but Milton's poem speaks of acceptance and finding meaning in devoting oneself to a higher force. The relevance of these parallels and contrasts resides in their capacity to arouse a variety of feelings and ideas in readers, inspiring reflection on the transitory nature of existence (Troupes).

Furthermore, because the idea of dying is a universal human experience that cuts across time and place, both poems transcend their historical and cultural contexts. While Hughes' visceral poetry inspires readers to face mortality with resistance and fortitude, Milton's sonnet gives consolation to those who struggle with their own perceived limitations and the fear of wasting their potential.

Conclusion

Ted Hughes' "Examination at the Womb-Door" and John Milton's "Sonnet 19" both provide remarkable insights into the subject of death and the human experience. Hughes' poem takes a rebellious position, highlighting human strength and perseverance in the face of mortality, in contrast to Milton's poem, which explores acceptance and devotion amid life's limits. Together, these poems reveal the complex and different reactions to death, illuminating the depths of human emotions, spirituality, and the desire to transcend the transience of existence.

Works Cited

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