

Poetry Essay

Poems and songs are similar in many ways. They each have meanings that the artist want to portray for an audience. Songs are generally consisting of rhymes, and beats that can easily be excluded from the categories of poems, but without the special side effects, some songs are just another poem. Regina Barreca poem “Nighttime Fires” and Kanye West’s song “New Slaves” both intertwine to generate a theme of change. Both artists use different poetic devices such as personification, symbol, and imagery to show how slavery still exists and is secretly and gradually increasing throughout time. Barreca focuses on how people can sometimes become slaves to themselves, while West focuses on the social aspect. West’s song “New Slaves” has the literary credentials to be taught in a college setting, and the song and the poem prove that some songs lyrics can and should be taught alongside traditional examples of poetry.

Most songs are just another form of poem but with some more than just words. A song has many minor perks that makes it seems different, such as the musical instruments that provide and differentiate it from poems. Most songs are just another version of poems that many people can actually understand, and grasp the poetic devices in many of the lines that are written. For example, in his second verse West shows the use of personification and middle diction by saying, “They throwin hate at me.” (West, 24). This is just one of few personifications and lower or middle diction that West has in his song. Removing the “g” from throwing shows that the poem has a kind of incorrect spelling, while it still make sense. The verse also creates a sense of jargon being used, which rappers such as West commonly use to relate to the newer generation of people. “They throwin hate at me” is an example of personification because hate literally cannot be

1 thrown at a person. Despite this, the line creates an imagery that all people can relate too.
2 “Throwin hate” is a verbal action that can be visualized because it is an emotion that
3 everyone feels.

4 West uses all of his surroundings to paints a vivid image that shows the social
5 injustice in the world, something that most poets try to accomplish in their work of art.
6 West’s song will greatly benefit college students because “New Slaves” opens readers
7 and listeners eyes to what is happening in the world. West’s explanation about the
8 consequences that shades over individuals who don’t obey social norms provides real
9 world knowledge and primary experiences that everyone should be frantic to grasp. West
10 illustrates that the big corporations are not only gaining power but also abusing power on
11 daily basis when anyone does not cooperate with them. They start to resent anyone who
12 resists their authority. West symbolizes big cooperation and the countries protectors as
13 the new slave masters of today’s modern society when he writes, “Meanwhile the DEA
14 teams up with the CCA”. (48-49).

15 West’s “New Slaves” makes a statement that poetic work does just as Barreca did
16 in her poem “Nighttime Fires”. In poetry, a theme is very crucial because it curves the
17 central idea of the poem. The poem and the song generate similar ideas, like, how people
18 who do not cooperate with the “new masters”, are punished, resulting in being lay off.
19 “Nighttime Fires” widen the symbolic meaning that West’s song reveals, the idea that
20 slavery still exists in modern society, but it just has a new form.

21 West’s line connects with Barreca “Nighttime Fires” because it too has
22 personification. Barreca’s work reveals personification and irony when she writes, “If
23 there were a Cadillac or any car/ in a curved driveway, my father smiled a smile/ from a
24 secret, brittle heart.” This stanza is extremely important and it is well connected to West’s

1 personification and the theme of his song “New Slaves” because it reveals that the new
2 masters and the rich people’s neighborhoods are the same people. This song and poem
3 aren’t just parallel they have the same message, but because both works of art address
4 current social disputes in modern society.

5 Barreca’s poem relates back to slavery because the father’s action don’t only
6 reveals his hatred toward the rich people, but shows a reader that the father is also a slave
7 to himself. His obsession for payback has changed the dynamic of his family. He’s
8 obsessed with revenge and his only is concern the pain that is inflicted on the rich. In a
9 way, the father has taken the role of the new masters in his family. This creates irony
10 because at first, it seems that the father is trying to be a good dad to his children by taking
11 them out. However, once the text is closely examined, people see that his children are
12 actually suffering, instead of gaining from the experience. His devotion for payback
13 against the rich has blinded him for seeing the harm he is initiating to his own family.

14 Barreca indicates that the children are suffering through the simile she uses to
15 portray the father’s facial expression. She writes, “I could see his quiet face in the
16 rearview mirror, eyes like hallways filled with smoke.” (34-35). Comparing the father’s
17 face to hallways filled with smoke shows the rage that the father held within him. It
18 becomes even clearer that the father’s rage has made him a slave to himself Barreca
19 writes, “My old man likes driving to rich neighborhoods best, swearing in a good mood
20 as he followed fire engines that snaked like dragons and split the silent streets” to
21 compose an irony because the father has lost his job, and is forced to sit home and do
22 nothing for most of the day, there is no way that he will be in a good mood (16-18). As
23 a matter of fact, this stanza reveals the tone of the father, while showing pain, and hate
24 that he carries inside of him because the words “snake” and “dragon” relate to two of

1 the most dangerous animals. Often in literature, snakes and dragon are symbolized as
2 evil entities. People can imagine the two animals' special traits, like the snake's venom
3 and the dragon's fire breath as the hate that is within the father, which is fueling his
4 rage every time he hears a fire engine.

5 West also reveals his feelings in "New Slaves" which replicates the same rage
6 that the father in "Nighttime Fire" is feeling. West writes, "See they'll confuse us with
7 some bullshit like the new world order". (46). West is clearly angry that big corporations
8 come up with different tactics that commence taking down anyone who does not obey
9 and play by their rules. West tone in this verse is clearly anger, and although people can
10 sense his tone from the very beginning of the song, this line makes it very clear because
11 he's using aggressive language. Using a word like "bullshit" West puts emphasis on
12 the entire line, showing his rage and also showing that his work of art contains poetic
13 device.

14 The difference between West's and Barreca's work of arts is that West's song
15 lyrical line combine with musical sounds to condense and expand west's tone more than
16 Barreca's. Some songs should be taught in school especially in this time and age. With
17 technology advancing rapidly, Songs formats, style, and the ways that artist's approach
18 writing is changing every day. People do not listening to music to hear bunch of words,
19 but instead, how the words are arrange to provoke certain meanings and emotions as
20 traditional poems do. Many artists develop their crafty writing skills by hearing and
21 reading from great poets. Many songs are poetry, and some people can argue that some
22 songs allow listeners to develop their emotions quicker through the artist tone, and
23 reasons, faster than traditional poem. It connects back to the theme of change because
24 both artists show how changes in society have had a negative impact on people.

1 The difference between West's and Barreca's work of arts is that West's song
2 lyrical line combine with musical sounds to condense and expand west's tone more than
3 Barreca's. Some songs should be taught in school especially in this time and age. With
4 technology advancing rapidly, songs formats, style, and the ways that artist's approach
5 writing is changing every day. People do not listen to music just to hear bunch of words.
6 The poem and song consist of poetic devices that students will be able to understand if
7 is taught in school. I think that songs will be a lot more easy to understand beacuse most
8 people can easily relate to it, unlike traditional poems that present many minor struggles
9 along the way.

Work Sample Evaluation

Subject Area: English Literature

Task Title: Verses vs. Lyrics: Poetry and Song

Student Work Sample Title: Poetry Essay

The document was scored using the CCR Task Bank Rubric. The final scores are indicated in the following chart.

| Scoring Criteria | Insufficient Evidence | Developing | Progressing | Accomplished | Exceeds |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------|
| Research and Investigation | | | X | | |
| Ideas and Content | | | X | | |
| Reading and Analysis | | | X | | |
| Communication | | | X | | |
| Organization | | | X | | |
| Accuracy | | | X | | |

Annotations: The following evidence from the work sample and the reviewer’s comments support the scores above. Page and line numbers refer to the original work sample.

| Scoring Criteria | Page # | Line # | Commentary about the work sample |
|--|--------|--------|---|
| Research and Investigation: <i>Locating resources independently and/or identifying information within provided texts</i> | 1 | 5-6 | The selected poems are introduced properly with authors identified, but the author did not include a Works Cited page. |
| | 1 | 17-18 | The author introduces evidence from the song lyrics to support his/her ideas and identifies how the example has personification and middle diction. |
| | 2 | 22-24 | Author includes discussion of lines from the poem that support the analysis of the two texts. |
| | 3 | 15-16 | Continuation of analysis of the lines of the texts that serve as supporting evidence. |
| Ideas and Content: <i>Presenting a thesis and understanding concepts</i> | 1 | 10-12 | The work sample contains a clear thesis that indicates where author will go with his/her analysis while discussing an example that is worthy of being taught in the literature classroom. |
| | 1 | 7-8 | The author discusses the poetic devices and connects them to the thematic ideas presented in both texts. |
| | 1 | 13-15 | The author includes two topic sentences that begin the discussion of why the song selected is similar to a poem, which includes “minor perks” that make it different. |
| | 2 | 4-5 | Strong topic sentence connecting West’s ability to effectively communicate an important idea. |
| | 4 | 14-24 | This paragraph uses the poems as examples of the ways both authors convey ideas worthy of study— this could be more effective if integrated into body paragraphs. |
| Reading and Analysis: <i>Examining and evaluating sources, data, and/or supporting evidence</i> | 1 | 4-5 | This sentence speaks to the nuance of a difference between a poem and a song while indicating some analysis of how the two texts are sufficiently sophisticated. |
| | 1 | 18-19 | The author explains what West has in the evidence, but does not discuss its significance. |
| | 2 | 13 | Paragraph ends with supporting evidence but does not elaborate on the significance of this quote in connection to prompt. |
| | 2 | 15-16 | Though awkward in construction, the author transitions to Barreca’s poem and draws comparisons. |
| | 2 | 21-22 | Topic sentence identifies that both texts have personification, but does not include any discussion of why that is important to argument. |
| | 3 | 2-4 | This paragraph concludes with commentary about the similarities in topic and theme between the two texts. |

| Scoring Criteria | Page # | Line # | Commentary about the work sample |
|---|--------|------------|--|
| Communication: <i>Using subject appropriate language and considering audience</i> | 1 | 1-2 | The author uses general and vague vocabulary with phrases such as “similar in many ways” and “each have meanings.” |
| | 1 | 7 | Vague language: “different” poetic devices, but goes on to specify types of devices used in the works. |
| | 1 | 19, 21, 23 | Author uses poetic language, thought somewhat awkwardly with words such as a “few personifications.” |
| | 2 | 4 | Awkward use of language, “West uses all of his surroundings to...” |
| | 3 | 22-24 | Complex sentence structure discussing the nuances of the ideas presented in the text. |
| | 4 | 9 | Discussion of importance of tone in the development of West’s ideas. |
| | 5 | 8-9 | Conclusion is unclear and uses vague language - “...unlike traditional poems that present many minor struggles along the way.” |
| Organization: <i>Structuring main ideas and incorporating supporting information</i> | 1 | 9-10 | Compound sentence that speaks to the complexity of the two texts and their development of the issues being explored. |
| | 1-2 | 13-3 | First body paragraph follows the structure of an analytical paragraph, though somewhat superficially. There are a number of ideas identified, but little discussion of their importance in the context of the larger argument. |
| | 2 | 7-12 | Mostly summary of West’s ideas with very limited supporting evidence from the text. |
| | 2 | 16-17 | Student digresses into the use of theme in a text whether it’s a song or poem. |
| | 3 | 5-15 | Again, this is mostly a summary of the poem and brief connection to significance, but with no direct evidence from the text in support of comments. |
| Accuracy: <i>Attending to detail, grammar, spelling, conventions, citations, and formatting</i> | 1 | 3 | Misuse of comma separating the direct objects in this sentence. |
| | 2 | 24 | Specific lines of song are not cited after quote. |
| | 2 | 23 | Student cites lines correctly with use of backslash to indicate new line of poetry. |
| | 3 | 15-16 | In this case, student correctly cites lines of poem. |
| | 5 | 4-5 | Minor errors in punctuation and capitalization. |