

Style and Structural Edit Example

To a ~~very~~ large extent, Sylvia Plath used the writing of poetry to ~~declare~~ ~~articulate~~ all ~~her~~ ~~the~~ anger and frustration which arose from her difficult relationship with her father. In no place ~~can this be seen more~~ ~~is~~ ~~this more obvious~~ than in ~~what is perhaps~~ her poetic masterpiece, 'Daddy', where ~~all her frustration~~ ~~her frustration and anger reaches its absolute peak~~ ~~and the anger that comes with it comes to a nasty head~~.

Sylvia Plath's feelings of suppression are evident from the poem's opening line:

~~You do not do, you do not do~~
~~Any more, black shoe~~
~~In which I have lived like a foot~~
~~For thirty years, poor and white,~~
~~Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.~~

Plath's relationship with her father is demonstrated by the absurdity of a situation in which even sneezing is conceived an act of defiance, or a guarantee of unwanted attention. ~~The stark contrast between the 'poor and white' poet (white being commonly symbolic of innocence) and the 'black shoe' of the dad is one of Plath's most vivid images. The black shoe is also a horrifying image that introduces the Nazi theme which recurs throughout the poem. The Nazi imagery is used by Plath to show the evil inherent in her father and transforms the poem into a powerful psychodrama, which casts her father as a Nazi dictator and Plath as a persecuted Jew (she states in the seventh verse "I began to talk like a Jew."/>~~ ~~think I may well be a Jew"). However, I think we must consider that their relationship as displayed in the poem is a metaphorical one. In other words, Plath's father was not in reality a Nazi; nor was Plath really a Jew. What the poem ultimately shows is that the power relationship between them was, as the French poststructuralist philosopher Michel Foucault would say, one of the oppressor and the oppressed. In writing this poem Sylvia Plath is using the act of writing verse to voice her anger within a form of cathartic process, but also to develop a more intelligent approach to the dualistic relationship she held with her father.~~

At the very end of this poem there ~~appears a shocking verse that goes like this is an extremely shocking verse:~~

~~"There's a stake in your fat black heart~~
~~-And the villagers never liked you.~~
~~-They are dancing and stamping on you.~~
~~They always knew it was you.~~
~~-Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through."~~

Comment [D1]: Style: 'very' is unnecessary hyperbole.

Comment [D2]: Style: Improves tone of critical authority.

Comment [D3]: Style: Sweeping statements can sound off-hand and should sometimes be qualified.

Comment [D4]: Style: Individual poems should be placed in single quotations, collections in italics.

Comment [D5]: Style: Improves critical authority, avoids weak words such as 'nasty'.

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Comment [D6]: Style: Reduced verbosity and improved clarity.

Comment [D7]: Mechanics: Poem's punctuation and spelling MUST match the ...

Comment [D8]: Mechanics: Long quotes should be indented, with quotation ...

Comment [D9R8]: Mechanics: Poem's formatting MUST match that of referenc ...

Comment [D10]: Style: This is not the appropriate location for a joke, a drier ...

Comment [D11]: Mechanics: It is preferable to place all quotations from t ...

Comment [D12]: Style: Altered for authority and fluency.

Comment [D13]: Mechanics: Spelling.

Comment [D14]: Style: No need to continuously mention the reader. Consi ...

Comment [D15]: Style: Always use an author's surname; you don't know Sylvia ...

Comment [D16]: Mechanics: In-line quotations should indicate line-breaks w ...

Comment [D17]: Style: Edited for authority.

Comment [D18]: Style: Edited for fluency.

Comment [D19]: Mechanics: Jew is always capitalised.

Comment [D20]: Style: Date of birth-death not necessary in a literature essay.

Comment [D21]: Style: It is preferable to avoid using '/' within literature essays ...

Comment [D22]: Style: Improved for authority and reduced verbosity.

Comment [D23]: Style: Proceeding line removed for non-critical register and ...

Comment [D24]: Structure: This paragraph order better reflects both the ...

Comment [D25]: Style: Altered for brevity.

Comment [D26]: Mechanics: Long quotes should be indented, with quotat ...

In these lines the poet is defaming the memory of her father by claiming that he was unpopular with the entire local community. We only have her word on this, though, and as the daddies "daddy's" voice is conspicuous in its absence, he can't defend himself at all. The final line, in which Sylvia tells us she is finished with her poem and by implication with her father, leaves a shocking echo of all the hate and vitriol she so obviously feels experienced in writing it. But it does. However, the poem does leave the impression that she Plath is trying to convince herself, more than her readers, that she has worked through and resolved all the issues with her father.

Sylvia Plath's sheer feelings of being suppressed in this poem can be seen from the poem's very first verse which starts "You do not do, you do not do anymore, black shoe, in which I have lived like a foot for thirty years, poor and white, barely daring to breathe or Achoo". The relationship that Sylvia had with her dad must have been pretty awful if she felt she wasn't even able to sneeze for such a long time! The stark contrast between the poor and white poet (with white signalling innocence) and the black boot of the dad is one of the most vivid things Plath ever wrote. The black boot is also a horrifying image that introduces us, the readers, to the Nazi theme that recurs throughout the poem. The Nazi imagery is used by Plath to show the wickedness of her dad, and to show the evil within him and transforms into a powerful psychodrama that casts the dad as a Nazi dictator and Sylvia as a persecuted Jew (she states in the 7th verse "I began to talk like a Jew. I think I may well be a Jew") But I think we have to bare in mind that the relationship between them as it is displayed in the poem is ultimately a metaphoric one. In other words, Sylvia's dad wasn't really a Nazi and nor was she really a Jew. What the poem ultimately shows is that the power relationship between them was as the French poststructuralist philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) would say one of oppressor/oppressed. In writing her poem Sylvia Plath using the act of writing verse to voice her anger as a sort of cathartic process but also to carve out a more clever way of negotiating a way out of this twisted dualistic relationship with her dad. What can be a more clever way of doing this than immortalising him and their relationship for ever in a poem?

There is no doubt that Sylvia Plath was clearly in a long-suffering relationship with her father, but there might be more than a little poetic license in her portrayal of him. Within the context of her work as a whole though, this poem provides a useful insight into the ways in which writing was a coping mechanism for her. Plath used writing as a coping mechanism.

Comment [D27]: Mechanics: Grammar error.

Comment [D28]: Style: Improves fluency.

Comment [D29]: Mechanics: Grammar error, and colloquialisms lifted from the text should be placed in quotations.

Comment [D30]: Mechanics: Spelling.

Comment [D31]: Mechanics: Grammar, added comma.

Comment [D32]: Style: Felt is a rather clumsy word.

Comment [D33]: Style: Improved fluency.

Comment [D34]: Mechanics: Grammar, added commas.

Comment [D35]: Mechanics: Poem's punctuation and spelling MUST match that of referenced publication.

Comment [D36]: Mechanics: Long quotes should be indented, with quotation marks removed.

Comment [D37]: Mechanics: Seventh should be a word, not a number.

Comment [D38]: Mechanics: In-line quotations should indicate line-breaks with a '\'.
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Comment [D39]: Mechanics: Jew is always capitalised.

Comment [D40]: Style: Date of birth-death not necessary in a literature essay.

Comment [D41]: Mechanics: Altered tense.

Comment [D42]: Mechanics: Spelling, forever is one word.

Comment [D43]: Style: Word removed for clarity.

Comment [D44]: Mechanics: Missing word.

Comment [D45]: Mechanics: Long-suffering should be hyphenated.

Comment [D46]: Style: Punchier concluding sentence