

English 110 AK
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Essay #4
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Final Draft

“How to Write a Poem”

Prime Time Apparitions by R. Zamora Linmark is a collection of poems that makes a person think hard before making a conclusion about a poem; he does this by putting hidden messages within each poem. Linmark is an author who loves language and uses many different figures of speech throughout his poetry to convey his message. In the poem “First Lessons”, Linmark talks about how to write a poem. He says the best way to write poetry is to not believe everything that you see, observe your surroundings and steal with the intent to replace. As long as these three things are done then a person has the potential to write a good poem. [In “First Lessons” Linmark uses allusions to describe how not to write a poem, and he uses imagery and allusions to describe how to write a poem properly.]

“First Lessons” is divided into three sections each section telling how to either write a poem or how not to. Starting with the first section, Linmark says how not to write a poem and he uses allusions to help get his point across. Linmark first tells us that we should:

Put aside Carver and Bukowski / for the meantime; that rum and Coke
too. / They'll resurface like all the others, / the way Dickens' ghost returns
each December / or Hamlet's father whenever darkness / drops in from
nowhere.

Carver, Bukowski, Dickens' and Shakespeare are all famous authors that were worldly known masters of their expertise; but Linmark wants us to forget them because their writing is so familiar and is doomed to be copied and will result in a dull literary world. Although these four authors have produced worldly renowned literature, Linmark says that there is a better way to write, and that we should also pay attention to other literary techniques than those from the four authors listed above.

In the next section of the poem Linmark tells us how to write a poem by using visual and auditory imagery. He wants his audience to pay attention to their surroundings and use their surroundings to write their poetry, the speaker tells the audience to observe and through auditory and visual imagery tells them how to observe:

Pay attention instead / to the walls of your apartment building / record the
landlady who nightly quizzes / her husband on how well he knows her,
what / color her panties were on their wedding / night, the number of
orgasms she simulated.

It is easy to picture a man being quizzed about his wedding night, as strange as it is; one can almost see the puzzled face that the man might be expressing. Through Linmark's example of auditory and visual imagery he showed the audience how to use their surroundings within a poem. Being able to document ones surroundings is a huge point that Linmark tries to make. He uses visual imagery to show a fight between a couple: "or during a fight with / a lover the f-word blossoms into a dozen / roses..." By using words such as blossoms and roses he is painting a picture of a couple arguing: the man uses the f-word to tell the woman off, then later gives her a dozen roses as an apology for using

the f-word. The imagery Linmark uses in this section of his poem helps the audience grasp the idea of observing ones surrounding to write a good poem.

In the next section of the poem Linmark uses allusions to help convey his message of how to write a poem properly. Linmark is still trying to teach his audience how to write a poem, but now he refers to famous people and their actions to get his point across. One allusion that the author makes is to a presidential family in the Philippines: “Pursue, / attack, seduce, and yes, like the Marcoses, / steal, steal everything and more.” The point the speaker is trying to get across is to take from your surroundings, steal from other authors, and learn anything, everything and more from who ever you can to become a good writer. If a person does steal from others and learns from their writing then the new writer can use everything they learned to write a good poem. But if the person does take ideas then they must practice one cardinal rule that is practiced by all: “steal / with the intent to replace. This and, yes, / don’t rush. You still have a poem to write.” What the speaker is telling his audience here is if one does decide to take from other authors and learn everything that they can, they need to replace the old ideas and writings with new ones. If this is done, then other aspiring poets and authors will be able to do the same thing; steal ideas with the intent to replace them.

Again the author’s intent of the poem was to help his audience learn how to write a poem properly; to help them he said that they needed to observe their surroundings, not believe everything that you see, and to steal with the intent to replace. The author was able to convey this message by using allusions and imagery; both of these figures of speech are used in ways that make the reader use outside resources so they can figure out the message within the poem. Once the reader was able to figure out the allusions, the

poem started to make sense. The only way the poem can be figured out is if a person happens to know what every allusion is referring to or has a ready source of information in front of them (a computer with internet). If the author was able to get his point across to the audience of the poem, then audience has the potential to write a good poem based off the information that they have received. If the audience is now capable of writing a good poem then they will be able to write about how they see the world and hopefully help out another potential writer by being a muse to them. Because the poem does cover the main aspects of writing a good poem the audience should be able to successfully write good poetry.

Works Cited

Linmark, R. Z. Prime Time Apparitions. Brooklyn: Hanging Loose P, 2005.