

## Analyzing a Poem

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## Analysis of a Poem:

## “Solace” by Dorothy Parker

## INTRODUCTION

## Title and author

“Solace,” by Dorothy Parker is a short poem about a character who encounters circumstances of a dreadful nature.

## Thesis statement

The narrator witnesses three incidents in which a life is shattered, and in each case, she is told that the loss is not so terrible because many more of those lives exist. With the author’s specific use of diction, structure, parallelism, irony, and symbolism, the poem emerges into a metaphorical tale about the coldness and negligence, rather than sympathy and consolation, many people display during a great misfortune.

## BODY

## Diction and structure

Diction and structure are the foundation of any literary work. To begin with, Parker uses words like “them” and “they” in her poem rather than more specific and definitive names. This word choice creates a mysterious atmosphere and raises the question: Who are “they” and “them”? The diction the

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Effect of devices  
on theme

writer uses leaves the perpetrators nameless. Furthermore, Parker structures her subjects according to importance. She writes about a rose first, then a bird, and finally a deserted girl. Each time the idea of feeling toward the subject is more tragic and more meaningful. The diction and structure used in “Solace” connect the theme in that without them, the poem would not have the impact that it sends out to the reader. For example, the effect would not be as strong if she used more particular words like “my mother” instead of “they” and “them.” In addition, this poem would not have made such an impression if the order of the unfortunate incidents was disordered. The calamities of the withering rose at the beginning and the forsaken girl at the end increase in emotion.

Parallelism and  
irony  
Evidence from  
poem

Using parallelism and irony, Parker creates a solemn mood and emphasizes the theme of the poem. What do “a rose that faded young,” (line 1), “a bird, brought down to die,” (line 7), and “a girl, whose lover fled” (line 10) have in common? Each of the lines is parallel in structure and in thought. In each instance, something or someone dies, and is remembered and

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Complexity  
explained

Evidence from  
poem

Evidence from  
poem  
Nuance explained

Symbolism

missed by only the narrator. Moreover, the word “solace” means relief from grief or anguish. It is ironic that the content of the poem is anything but comforting. Instead of consoling remarks, flippant, nonchalant comments are made: “What need to care . . .?” (line 4). Another irony in this poem is the apathy that is displayed. Usually, when something dies or is lost, depression and sorrow take over, but in “Solace,” the narrator faces indifferent attitudes. Parker conveys a sense of grief in her work not only by mentioning death, but also by using “I” in contrast to “them” time after time. For example, in line 6 she states, “I did not answer them.” It seems that the solitary character is fighting a battle against the rest of the world.

The wilting rose, the dying bird, and the abandoned girl all symbolize something greater than each of themselves. In all three scenarios, something that was once beautiful and full of life dies in some sense. Fate is not fair, nor is it particular, whether a plant, animal, or human being. Another point the author makes with these symbols is that comfort and solace cannot be found in others. When the rose fades, “they” said,

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Evidence from poem

Complexity explained

“What need to care . . .?” (line 4). After the girl’s lover fled, “they” remarked, “There’s many another lad.” (line 12). This is not the kind of compassion that the girl was seeking. When a life is lost or suffering, there is usually someone that offers condolences to the victim, not insensitivity. Aside from this, the narrator of the poem even turns an uncaring ear to the teller of the woe, stating “I did not answer them.” Does she honestly not care about the deaths, or does the narrator try to turn off her feelings to keep from hurting, as so many of us often do? When an event occurs that wounds us to the core, we hide our emotions to look strong and courageous. In this poem, however, the narrator looks away from the mediocrity that dismisses tragedy.

CONCLUSION

Restatement of thesis  
Relation to broader themes in life

Summary of main points

Dorothy Parker uses her incredible skill to create in the reader a sense of hopelessness in conflict with the need to be comforted and consoled. The reader is led to understand that the world can be a cold and unfeeling place and that solace must come from within. Parker’s mastery of the elements of diction, structure, parallelism, irony, and symbolism combine

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to make “Solace” an incredible work of literary art.