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English 1102

24 March 2019

An Apology

The poem “This Is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams is written as a short apology note. Williams diction is very direct and the poem even starts with him saying “I have eaten the plums” (Williams 1-2). He uses denotation to create his lighthearted tone. Even though Williams poem seems very short and direct he uses free verse and his diction to put together the tone and theme he wanted to portray in this poem.

For instance, the theme of the poem is a reflection on what the speaker had done and feeling guilty for that. For conducting the apology, he begins with confessing eating the plums that were not his. This is a representation of Williams direct diction giving away at the theme even in those first few lines. Before the speaker even ate the plums, he knew he shouldn’t have, shown in these lines “you were probably…saving…for breakfast” (Williams 6-8). Also, the short lines possibly show how guilty the speaker is and it’s causing them to pause and think of what to say next.

Of course, Williams diction throughout the poem also provides some insight into what time this was written. Especially when he mentions the icebox in line 4. Iceboxes were early versions of refrigerators so we now know that the poem was written a long time ago. The speaker of this poem chooses his words very carefully, represented in the line “that were in” (Williams 3) and line “and which” (Williams 5). This could because of how guilty the speaker feels that he ate the plums that were not his.

Likewise, while Williams does use free verse in “This Is Just to Say” the line breaks are very intentional. The poem is divided into three four-line stanzas and the small pauses you must give between each very short line creates importance in each of the lines. Given these pauses, it feels lighthearted. The speaker does ask to be forgiving but he goes into detail about how good the plums were. “they were delicious…so sweet…and so cold” (Williams 10-12). This gives the reader the feeling that while he might be guilty, he still definitely enjoyed the plums, possibly giving less meaning to this apology note.

Overall, Williams poem “This I Just to Say” uses direct diction to make the reader think more about the theme of guilt and choices. This also immediately introduces why the apology was written. The free form of the poem also allows for this poem to sound more personal from the speaker to whose plums he ate.

Works Cited

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