

TO THE TEACHER

Page 12 in *We Are Climbers, All* by Tom Blaisse (www.TomBlaisse.com)



In the midst of indecision
 When this world seems split apart,
And the joy of what was once safe
 Turns solid in the heart;

In these days of growing wonderment
 When confusion rears its head,
And time is twisted, tightly, slightly,
 To find so many dead;

In the work that lasts forever
 When answers can't be found,
And so many of us turn our heads
 With tearful, fearful frowns:

You surpass that gory doubt,
 And finger through the mire,
To lighten up so many minds,
 And cultivate desire.

TO THE TEACHER Commentary

Page 56 in *We Are Climbers, All* by Tom Blaisse (www.TomBlaisse.com)

STRUCTURE

Each of the four verses in this poem follow the same structure: Lines 1, 2, and 4 are iambic trimeter; Line 3 is iambic tetrameter. The rhyme scheme is an atypical ABCB. As with many very structured verses, this poem could lend itself to a tune, except perhaps that the theme is a bit too ponderous. Verses 1–3 set up challenges for a teacher (indeed, for the world), with each verse beginning with “In the...” followed by “When...,” then “And...” Note that these three verses are single sentences that build on each other, connected with semicolons. The end of Verse 3 has a colon that sets up Verse 4, to reconcile all the challenges with a classic homage to the teacher for his/her efforts and results. Given it’s a strict meter, it is important to read the poem with a prosaic style, de-emphasizing the obvious rhyme and rhythm of the piece.

IMAGERY

The beauty of this poem is in the richness of the images created for the reader in every line. One can see, hear, or feel the impressions made with each idea presented. Note the picture and feeling words:

Verse 1: Indecisions, split apart, joy...safe, solid in the heart (all very kinesthetic);

Verse 2: Growing wonderment; confusion, twisted, dead (emotionally gut-wrenching);

Verse 3: Work...forever, (can’t be) found, turn...heads, tearful, fearful frowns (visual and emotional)

Verse 4: Note the action verbs beginning each phrase, followed by a strong visual or emotional image: (Surpass) gory doubt, (Finger through) the mire, (Lighten up) so many minds, (Cultivate) desire.

THEMES

The message in this poem is that the world is a pretty frightening place, falling apart, decelerating over time. One would think all is lost, but No! The teacher is there to break through the “doubt” and the “mire,” and to once again “cultivate desire.” The overtones of this poem suggest a teacher’s mission is one of worldly or even spiritual salvation.

PERSONAL COMMENT

I wrote this poem in 1983, as a birthday card to my mentor who was the owner of Asset Center/Wilson Learning of Philadelphia, a small training and consulting firm. Back then, I felt I had finally found my niche, as a Seminar Leader and Adult Learning Facilitator. The “boss” taught me a lot about working a classroom, and using the “self-discovery” adult learning method. The original title of this poem was “To The Trainer.” I later re-titled it “To The Teacher,” having realized that the job of a teacher/trainer is indeed not only a most formidable one but also a most rewarding one. This poem is on a plaque hanging in my office, to remind me of my Mission: “Turning on lights so people can shine.”