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What is the gist of those winter sundays

Robert Hayden was an American poet who was born on 4 August 1913 in Detroit, Michigan, USA and who died on 25 February 1980 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Hayden was the first African-American writer ever to serve at the Library of Congress as a Consultant in Poetry. Apart from poetry, he is also known for his essays. Hayden’s collections of poetry are Heart Shape in the Dust (1940), Figure of Time (1955), A Ballad of Remembrance (1962), Selected Poems (1966), Words in the Mourning Time (1970), The Night-Blooming Cereus (1972), Angels of Ascent: New and Selected Poems (1975), and American Journal (1978). Likewise, his Collected Prose was published posthumously in 1984. ‘Those Winter Sundays’ is one of Hayden’s most popular poems that talk about his traumatic childhood. His parents separated before his birth and he was brought up by foster parents. Hayden’s poor and troublesome family life during his childhood is vividly reflected by ‘Those Winter Sundays’. So, let’s get deeper into the poem through its summary, analysis, and theme in separate sections below. Those Winter Sundays Summary Robert Hayden’s ‘Those Winter Sundays’ is a memory poem in which the speaker talks about his past. Now, the speaker is a grown-up man who remembers his father’s love for him as a child and which he didn’t understand back then. In Those Winter Sundays, the speaker reveals that his father got up early every day and made a fire. Then, he would call his son who would slowly rise and dress, fearing that chronic anger might burst in the house. Furthermore, the speaker’s father also polished the good shoes for his son. Despite all these, no one ever thanked the father. Instead, everyone talked to him indifferently, not acknowledging the grand role he had in the house. The speaker of Those Winter Sundays also remembers the fact that his father’s hands were cracked and aching from weekday labor. Nevertheless, nobody ever knew what it took him to keep the family going. Those Winter Sundays Analysis Robert Hayden’s poem Those Winter Sundays has fourteen lines in total, and it has three stanzas. Both first and last stanzas are five-lined whereas the second stanza has only four lines. If we do a close-reading of the poem, we can see a painful story. Hence, let’s make an analysis of each stanza of Hayden’s poem Those Winter Sundays. Sundays too my father got up early and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold, then with cracked hands that ached from labor in the weekday weather made banked fires ablaze. No one ever thanked him. The first stanza of the poem Those Winter Sundays opens with the phrase ‘Sundays too’. So, why is the word ‘too’ after Sunday? Sunday is normally a rest day for the Western folks and they are supposed to sleep till late in the morning to get rid of the weeklong painful labor. The synsthetic word ‘blueblack’ in the second line shows the time of dawn in the winter when the sky is bluish-black in color. It literally means early morning. We know that the speaker’s father works in a field which is reflected by his cracked and aching hands. The last sentence of the first stanza gives a hint that there are more people than just the father and the son in the family. Had there been only the father-son duo, the speaker would have said ‘I never thanked him’ but he says ‘No one ever thanked him’. I’d wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking. When the rooms were warm, he’d call, and slowly I would rise and dress, fearing the chronic angers of that house, The trio of ‘cold’, ‘splintering’ and ‘breaking’ reflect the environment inside the family. Since it is the winter, they might as well mean the breaking of icicles. ‘When the rooms were warm’ might mean when his father was happy. Only when his father was overjoyed, the speaker would be called to him. You might be interested in: What is the Summary of ‘The Recurring Dream’?Yet another word ‘slowly’ shows the fact that he is aware of the wrong family environment. On one hand, ‘the chronic fits of the anger of that house’ means the father’s anger toward him. On the other hand, it also might mean that there are other members of the family who are jealous of the love the speaker gets from his father. Speaking indifferently to him, who had driven out the cold and polished my good shoes as well. What did I know, what did I know of love’s austere and lonely offices? We already knew everyone spoke to the father indifferently and they also never thanked him for his sacrifice. In a literal sense, the speaker’s father drove out the cold by making a fire. It might also connote that he fulfilled the needs of the family and made peace with them. We cannot say that shoes always mean the literal shoes that we wear. ‘polished my good shoes as well’ might actually mean that his father made the speaker able to walk and live independently. In the last two lines of the poem, Those Winter Sundays, the speaker regrets that he could not understand the love his father gave him. He says ‘What did I know’ twice which means he is emphasizing his remorse for knowing the truth late. Despite being hard to him, the speaker realizes that his father always meant the best for his son. Those Winter Sundays Theme There are multiple themes of Robert Hayden’s poem Those Winter Sundays. It has the themes of memory, family, love, regret, poverty and more. ‘Those Winter Sundays’ by Robert HaydenWritten1962CountryUnited StatesSubject(s)Family and personal relationshipsGenre(s)PoetryFormThree stanzas‘Those Winter Sundays’ is a poem written in 1962 by American Robert Hayden (1913–1980), while he was teaching as an English professor at Fisk University. The poem is one of Hayden’s most recognised works, together with another poem entitled “Middle Passage” [1] The poem is about the father/son relationship - recalling the poet’s memories of his father, realizing that despite the distance between them there was a kind of love, real and intangible, shown by the father’s efforts to improve his son’s life, rather than by gifts or demonstrative affection. The author’s words suggest that the son feels remorse that he failed to recognise this in his father’s lifetime. History Authorship history 3-23-12 RobertHaydenRobert Hayden was born on August 4, 1913 and was brought up in a poor neighborhood by his foster parents, Sue Ellen Westerfield and William Hayden. His life with his foster parents was tumultuous with frequent bouts of verbal and physical violence. He was the first African American to be named as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress (Poet Laureate). He is famous for writing about cultural themes and African American history. He died on February 25, 1980 at the age of 66.[2] Background “Those Winter Sundays” is about Robert Hayden’s boyhood.[3] Robert grew up in a difficult environment, surrounded by fights and poverty, and due to these facts he didn’t appreciate his foster parents’ love as he should have. Through mental maturity, he regretfully learned that he neither knew nor appreciated the sacrifices that his parents and, generally, every parent makes out of parental love.[4] Publishing history The first, original version of the poem, which was slightly different from the definitive version, was published in Hayden’s A Ballad of Remembrance (1962). The common version is part of the book called Collected Poems by Robert Hayden, edited by Frederick Glaysher. In 1997, the poem was ranked in a Columbia University Press survey as the 266th most anthologized poem in English.[5] Title The author wants the title to imply a sense of old age and exhausted behaviour. He is reminding us about those cold and dark Sundays during his youth. The poem is featured by a presence of alliteration and a narrative of many similar Sundays that seemed an enormous obstacle. Even if this poem is characterised by a mundane and unhappy moment of the author’s life, he remembers these memories because of their unique “coldness” and “silence”.[6] Themes and symbols The main focus of this poem is the love of parents for their children, but this kind of love can be easily misunderstood by the latter, as it isn’t about being kind and saying lovely words but instead are all the sacrifices that parents do; for instance, as it is implied in the poem, keeping the house warm and polishing the “good shoes”.[7] “When the rooms were warm, he’d call, and slowly I would rise and dress [...]” [...] “...who had driven out the cold and polished my good shoes as well.” The poem reflects how Hayden’s perspective of his father’s love has changed, and his understanding of it has actually gotten deeper as the years have gone by; eventually the speaker starts to appreciate the selflessness of parental actions, while feeling a sense of regret for not having ever thanked him for he has done.[8] Statue of the Good Shepherd The main symbol is temperature: Imageries such as “blueblack cold” make the reader aware of the cold temperature. However, soon in the poem, it becomes warm and words such as “fires blaze” enhance this image.[9] The difference in temperature outside and inside the house reflects the author’s relationship with his father. The image of cold also evokes solitude and emotional human distance. “From labor in the weekday weather made banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.” A small part of the poem is stated above, this summarises the main idea of the poem itself: the father works to keep the family safe and warm without expecting appreciation for it.[10] Another symbol found in the poem is the symbol of the “good shoes”. As the titles reminds the readers, it is a Sunday, a religious day. This shows how the father cares about his appearance like he cares about protecting his family. The author tells the readers that his father had “driven out the cold”, an image which evokes a shepherd’s behaviour with his herd. This can be linked to the idea of the Good Shepherd, thus creating a biblical reference. Analysis “Those Winter Sundays” contains 14 lines in 3 stanza. This makes it look like a typical Sonnet even though it isn’t, it neither has a rhyme nor a regular iambic pentameter. The first line does not have a metrical pattern. In comparison, the second line is in a metrical pattern. Both lines are 10 syllables long. The third line is much shorter, and it does not have a rhyme.[11][12] There is a repetition in line 13 “What did I know”.[13][14] Those Winter Sundays is a poem of discovery and definition. For example, it discovered the synchronicity of sound between certain words that remind the theme of reconciliation while reading it. Listening to the repetitive sound of the letter “K” in words like blueblack, cracked, ached, weekday, the reader can draw a melodic map of how to read the entire poem, connecting the fire, the season, the fire, and the son.[15] Hayden also uses a metaphor, using the image of his father building the fire that suggests the speaker finally discovered his father’s love which he thought it never existed before.[16] The speaker ends the poem with a rhetorical question by which he realizes his father’s love towards him. This question changes the tone of the poem from nostalgic to regretful.[17] Popular culture The poem was the subject of the third episode of the first (and unique until now) season of Poetry in America with Elisa New (2018-), produced by Verse Video Education that follow a storyline that is a plot summary and first aired on April 1, 2018. The programme featured by an important person of the world panorama as the Vice President of the United States Joe Biden, and even by a renowned poet as Elizabeth Alexander (poet), Angela Duckworth, and working fathers and sons.[18][19] This shows the international recognition of the work, and how it has the power to make readers travel to different eras in time, such as when industries were the main economic forces in 1960s America.[20] In 2009, Hayden’s poem was included in the Poetry Foundation’s DC Poetry Tour, a multimedia tour of Washington DC under leads poets point of view, through a collaboration lived in a fully way .[21] “Those Winter Sundays” was one of the poems which were celebrated at the Black History Month 2018 in February. It was celebrated with poems, podcasts and articles which are dealing with the African American history.[22] Bibliography Laurence Goldstein, Robert Chrisman: Robert Hayden: Essays on the Poetry published by University of Michigan Press, United States (2001). JSTOR. www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.17204. ISBN 978-0-472-12040-6. Robert Hayden: Collected Poems of Robert Hayden published by Liveright Publishing Corporation, edited by Frederick Glaysher (2013). . ISBN 978-0-87140-679-8. Gallagher, Ann M.: Hayden’s ‘Those Winter Sundays.’(Robert Hayden), Published by Taylor & Francis Ltd., The Explicator, v51, no.4, 1993 Summer, p245(3). . ISSN 0014-4940 Cengage Learning Gale: A Study Guide for Robert E. Hayden’s “Those Winter Sundays” published by Gale, Study Guides, 2017. . ISBN 9781375394772 Robert Hayden: Angle of Ascent: New and Selected Poems published by Liveright Publishing Corporation, November 17, 1975 (first published January 1, 1975). 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