Explication: “It Sifts From Leaden Sieves” Essay, Research Paper

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ENG-157W

Explication #3

8-11-00

“It Sifts from Leaden Sieves”: Explication

In the poem “It Sifts from Leaden Sieves”, by Emily Dickinson, many different things can be analyzed. The difference in the two translations; one being a literal translation, telling the true meaning of the poem, and the other being thematic translation, which tells the author’s theme and symbolism used in his/her work. Another thing that all poets have in common is the usage of poetic devices; such as similes, metaphors, and personification.

Before beginning with the translations and devices, readers should first acknowledge the structure of the poem. In structure there are 8 different topics: speaker, setting, occasion, tone, rhyme, meter, number of lines and stanzas, and language of the poem. In “It Sifts from Leaden Sieves”, the speaker is a man, sitting outside, which takes care of speaker and setting. He is watching it snow, describing all the effects of the season of winter. His tone is content in describing, loving the season completely. This poem does use rhyme such as posts/ghosts, and rail/veil. The poem is also metered which is the use of rhyming words described in letters. The metering would be: ABCD, EFGF, GHIH, IJKI, LMLN. Lastly this poem has 20 lines, also containing 4 stanzas using the language of standard English.

Included with the structure of a poem is a literal translation that is the easiest to understand and very informative to the reader. In reading “It Sifts from Leaden Sifts”, a literal translation would be:

It falls through the gray clouds, and powders all the trees. It fills the cracks of the road with white wool. It makes an even face of the mountains and of the plains. It reaches from the fences, and wraps around the rail, till it’s lost. From tree stumps to flower stems, the snow just lays. It ruffles the world till it’s gone.

After reading the literal translation, the reader would be fairly knowledgeable about the poem but lacking a very important aspect; the thematic translation. The thematic translation tells the author’s theme and reasoning. The thematic translation of this poem would be:

In this poem, by Emily Dickinson, many different things are shown. When reading the poem for a first time the reader would probably infer that the poem is about a person, sitting outside watching nothing but the snow. There is nothing really thematic about this poem; it is just mostly imagery of a real snow storm.

Lastly, a poet usually uses some types of poetic devices to enhance the quality of the poem; such as similes and metaphors. She uses a lot of metaphors like “leaden sieves”, and some similes such as “as ankles of a queen.”

In Sum, this poem was a very good, descriptive poem, and makes me want it to snow.