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Not Understanding the Pain

“When I Try to Say I’m Sorry to Those Who Are Suffering” is a poem written by Trish Lindsey Jagers. The title of the poem evokes strong emotions of bittersweetness and maybe even defeat, because of the word “Try”. Those who haven’t read the poem will generally assume the poem describes the interactions of the author and the targeted audience, and the record of the reactions of the audience when the author attempted to say sorry in such situations. Because of the word “Try” and the emotions it produces, the reader will have overall negative orientation towards the poem, expecting themes of tragedy and loss.

The poem places heavy emphasis on the environment with the author centered around it. It talked about the church’s bells ringing in the distance, claps of thunder before the glooming storm, and the twisting branches and roots that caused the author to fall; all in their retrospective order. In addition, the poem utilized elements of structure, imagery, rhythm, and repetition to enrich the descriptions of the poem. The poem’s depicted storm relates to Kentucky’s recent tornado disaster. The natural tribulations and the horrors it brought closely correlates with the feeling of dread the poem’s descriptions conveyed. Due to the fact the poem was told from the author’s point of view, which was shown by the author’s use of first person perspective, the utilization of literary devices were critical to the poem’s message and the relationships with Kentucky’s tornados. A prominent example is the structure of the poem, each line ending and starting in an unconventional manner. Such structure sharply reflects the flow of the poem, or

rather, the author's emotions and thoughts as she noted her observations. The flow of the structure was shown by the length and number of words at the beginning of the poem, which was 11, and the observable decrease in the number of words and length as the poem progresses, concluding with four words. In addition, the decrease of words and increased abrupt stops during the poem's progression reveals the author's negative emotions indicated by her dark perspectives. The irregular progression also portrays the abrupt appearance of the tornado, the decreasing number of words relating to the number of homes destroyed and peoples' lives lost, and the conclusion of four words expressing the tragic remains. The description of an incoming storm and the breaking of her arm further enhanced literary devices such as imagery, and repetition and relates to the theme of man versus nature, like the victims and survivors versus the tornado.

If structure was the flesh, then imagery would be the skeleton of the poem. Imagery was heavily utilized in the poem because most of the poem's content relied on the author's vivid descriptions of her environment to insure the reader's immersion. The immersion suddenly gets disrupted at the conclusion connecting the entire message and tone of the poem back to the title. The disruption caused by the two lines of "it should have bled" clarifies the obscurity of the title, revealing insight into the author's character (lines 27-28).

Through analysis and information gathered from the poem, the reader can infer that the author was inflicted with a sense of guilt and shame for attempting to say sorry to the suffering victims because she can't truly relate nor understand the full extent of a victim's sufferings. Therefore, the author concluded that her act of apologizing was a hoax, which was unfair to the victims, and she felt guilty about it, as how the people, who weren't affected by the tornado and had their homes destroyed, can not comprehend the pain of the afflicted. The repetition at the end

of the poem is the author's own way to find repentance and develop some understanding towards the suffering victims through her own pain of a broken arm.