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Mrs. Browning

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“Sorry” Will Never Be Enough

The poem “When I Try to Say I’m Sorry to Those Who Are Suffering” by Trish Lindsey Jagers can be compared to the recent disasters that have struck southcentral Kentucky. Jagers uses poetic devices such as repetition and shifts to convey her feelings of guilt, regret, and remorse. The mood set in this poem is similar to the mood of many southern Kentucky residents on December 11th, when tornadoes ripped through downtown Bowling Green.

There are two clear shifts in the poem. These shifts are signified by a simple “no,” standing alone on lines six and twenty. This single word separates “When I Try to Say I’m Sorry to Those Who Are Suffering” into three unique sections which signify the before, during, and after of a tragic event. The first section gives readers the image of a nice, calm day until the shift on line six indicates an abrupt change to a scene of preparation for chaos. Kentucky residents felt the same way as Saturday morning was nothing but some rain, yet Saturday night would change everything for them. This major shift to urgency and panic woke thousands of residents. The author writes how after she said the dreaded words of “I’m sorry,” she began to “...go in, close the windows, / and wait for the opening up,” as the poem quotes. Jagers indicates that she is hiding from an impending storm, resembling how many families sat in basements, bathtubs, and closets as they waited for the storms to pass. The next shift in the poem can be compared to the morning after the vicious tornadoes. Signified again with the simple phrase “no,” the author concludes with a section that sums up the aftermath of her tragedy. Many bystanders who were

helping to clean up and provide shelter within demolished communities were speechless, much like the author states she, “couldn’t say a word,” after her tragedy. This last portion reflects the guilt and remorse that Jagers and survivors share.

Towards the end of “When I Try to Say I’m Sorry to Those Who Are Suffering,” the author repeats the lines “it should have bled, / it should have bled.” The repetition of this phrase emphasizes how Jagers feels guilty that her tragedy is not as severe as what others may have experienced. This phrase could be something similar to what many residents, who were lucky to have braved the storm with little to no damage, may have repeated to themselves. Homeowners who were untouched throughout the night saw video footage of businesses, apartments, cars, and homes torn apart, leaving them with a heavy burden of survivor’s guilt. Jagers wishing her arm had bled can be compared to owners wishing their home had been damaged and rather than their neighbors. The significance of the phrase is increased as it is repeated, similar to how residents of Bowling Green feel guilt everytime they drive past devastated homes.

After reading and analyzing the poem “When I Try to Say I’m Sorry to Those Who Are Suffering” by Trish Lindsey Jagers, it is clear how the author of the poem and those affected by recent storms share feelings of guilt and remorse. Jagers uses poetic devices such as shifts and repetition to convey her feelings and allow readers to understand her point of view while comparing the poem to their personal experiences.