**Nocturne**

In the poem “Nocturne” by Gwendolyn B. Bennett, the narrator talks about how children are sad when summer is gone, and when winter is here.

The narrator tells reader that not everything is going to be permanent. “Far frosts are caught… chilled to crystals tears.” This shows how people caught colds, and they cried because winter came and summer have gone away. It seems like the children in this poem dislike winter, and adore summer more. The narrator is just trying to get across to us that nothing will stay forever.

The narrator uses descriptive imagery in this poem. “In moon’s pale light…” This shows how the summer nights are light because of the moon’s light that looks very pale. This gives readers how the scene relates to the poem the narrator is trying to describe. It provides a cool scenery to how the picture can help tell the story as well.

This cool night is strange   
Among midsummer days...   
Far frosts are caught   
In the moon's pale light,   
And sounds are distant laughter   
Chilled to crystal tears.

3

**Heritage**

I want to see the slim palm-trees,   
Pulling at the clouds   
With little pointed fingers....

In the poem “Nocturne” by Gwendolyn B. Bennett, the narrator expresses her thoughts and feelings on how people have struggled.

The narrator tells readers that not every day is going to be a bright and easy day for many people. In each stanza, she writes/explains how she feels about the brutal days of these people. She adds different examples to show how not only humans are suffering in different ways. This just proves that she might be going through some tough times like these herself.

The narrator uses descriptive imagery to show how she wants things to look like. “I want to see the slim palm-trees, pulling at the clouds with little pointed fingers…” This is just one example of many. The key is at the very beginning of each of the stanzas. They always have the words “I want to see…” She used those words to help build up the imagery, and to support her idea. She wants to “imagine” every day to be a good day, with people having a good day.

I want to see lithe Negro girls,   
Etched dark against the sky   
While sunset lingers.

I want to hear the silent sands,   
Singing to the moon   
Before the Sphinx-still face....

I want to hear the chanting   
Around a heathen fire   
Of a strange black race.

I want to breathe the Lotus flower,   
Sighing to the stars   
With tendrils drinking at the Nile....

I want to feel the surging   
Of my sad people's soul   
Hidden by a minstrel-smile.

4

**Advice**

The poem *Advice* by Gwendolyn B. Bennett tells readers how one person can change who you are.

The narrator started out with a little story, and worked her way to the end by incorporating specific events that happened. Each stanza shows how each event made her feel more special. Towards the ending, however, it showed how the narrator got so upset since the person she loved had passed away. “Like night and death,” comes from the poem, and shows how she really missed that person.

The narrator used personification. She literally used it to write her whole poem. She shows all the events that had happened to her in chronological order. “You were a sophist,  
pale and quite remote, as you bade me, write poems, brown poems, of dark words…” This is just an example in the beginning of the poem to show how she started from the very beginning. The author used a very unique way to show it.

You were a sophist,\*   
Pale and quite remote,   
As you bade me   
Write poems---   
Brown poems   
Of dark words   
And prehistoric rhythms....   
Your pallor stifled my poesy   
But I remembered a tapestry   
That I would someday weave   
Of dim purples and fine reds   
And blues   
Like night and death---   
The keen precision of your words   
Wove a silver thread   
Through the dusk softness   
Of my dream-stuff....

5

**Secret**

In the poem *Secrets* by Gwendolyn B. Bennett, the narrator says that sometimes feelings are quite hard to express, but just reacting to a simple action can just give it all away.

The narrator is trying to tell readers that not all people can express their feelings/emotions out loud to people. It can be personal. The narrator included many adjectives that describe how she felt about a person just by using adjectives, descriptive words, and specific details. The poem she wrote just showed all of her emotions, and she really didn’t have to explain. The very descriptive adjectives/actions just poured out all she had to say.

The narrator used a metaphor to compare how she reacts to the person she’s talking about in the poem, and then to her reactions.” Blue like your eyes are blue.” This line from the poem shows how she relates a blanket to the blue in the person’s eyes, and compares it. The metaphor(s) help move her poem forward.

I shall make a song like you hair . . .  
Gold-woven with shadows green-tinged,  
And I shall play with my song  
As my fingers might play with your hair.  
Deep in my heart  
I shall play with my song of you,  
Gently. . . .  
I shall laugh  
At its sensitive luster . . .   
I shall wrap my song in a blanket,  
Blue like your eyes are blue  
With tiny shots of silver.  
I shall wrap it caressingly,  
Tenderly. . . .  
I shall sing a lullaby  
To the song I have made  
Of your hair and eyes . . .  
And you will never know  
That deep in my heart  
I shelter a song for you  
Secretly. . . .

6

Introduction:

Poems are such a beautiful way to inspire others and express your feelings. Gwendolyn B. Bennett was one of those poets who influenced many other poets to write such inspiration poems. Bennett wrote many poems, but the 4 poems (shown later) are some of the most popular, meaningful ones that stuck out to me the most. Bennett has shown much progress through her work, and developed over years. The reason why I selected this poet is because she wrote soulful poems. They were strong yet soft at the same time- not physically, but mentally with a unique style, yet a pint emotion. I’ve realized that I should always be determined. I’ve got my eye on the goal, and I’m not letting go. Many other readers might enjoy reading her poems because they’ve got a fun rhythm to it. They start with a beautiful, sad jig to it, and then bounce off into suspense. They then reach their climax, and then fall into conclusion which can be surprising. Bennett was such a bold poet, who left a mark in the history of poems and poets.

1

Biography of Gwendolyn B. Bennett

Gwendolyn B. Bennett was born on 1902, and had a very complicated life. At the age of 7, her parents had gotten divorced, and she separated from her dad. Her stepmother didn’t gain custody to take Bennett in with her, but her stepmother took her anyway. Her stepmother and brother “kidnapped” her to live in the west such as Pennsylvania and Brooklyn. After that, she started to focus on art, and received many scholarships to many great schools. She got accepted to many outstanding schools such as Columbia University, and the Pratt Institute. She attended those schools and mainly studied art. However, she started getting into poetry. There she wrote her first poem, *Heritage*, which was published in the magazine *Opportunity*. Bennett wrote lots of poems dealing with her feelings that had to do with her life at times. She mainly wrote about depressing obstacles that appeared, and her feelings towards it. After graduating, she received a scholarship to a French school in Paris. She attended to that school, and it helped her improve her understanding of poetry and art. As she got older, she wrote so much fascinating poems that we still have today. When she finished her studies, she returned back to New York. She had gotten a job at Howard University, teaching college students. She got married in 1928 to Alfred Jackson. He had died early in 1936. As the Great Depression came in the 1930’s, the Depression helped Bennett move her poetry forward. She had joined a group, which she had such an amazing experience working with professionals such as Langston Hughes, Helene Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, and a few others. They had participated in many events having to do with young African artists. They helped these children develop and grow their interest into poetry. After she had gotten all of these amazing opportunities, she decided to work for the editor of the magazine, *Opportunity,* and was very happy. In 1981, it was definitely not her forte, and had passed away. She had accomplished a lot of work, and really made everyone ecstatic. What a life she lived.

2

Gwendolyn B. Bennett



Learn all about Gwendolyn B. Bennett and her amazing journey to poetry. She had gone through some harsh times in life, but her poems will blow you away with deep understanding and passion.

By: Tiffany Chen

**Friends**

I wrote this poem because it really meant something to me. It felt really personal, and I was really disappointed when this event had happened, but just turning it into a poem definitely made me feel better. Like *Advice*, it talks about passion, and a deep understanding of my feelings. This is why I wrote this poem.

You were a friend,

Quite intelligent and funny.

We used to laugh,

The same laughter each day,

Until one ironic day,

Turned into a stormy

Nightmare.

The day you moved away.

The sad smile and sad wave you gave to me,

I treasured it in my heart.

It felt almost unbearable

It felt almost insane

It felt absolutely heartbreaking

We were like 2 peas in a pod

Until you had gotten eaten

Now today,

I laugh alone.

With only one laughter I remember.

The memories have faded,

The pain has ended.

7

Struggled

I used to struggle.

Hard.

That’s the word.

I felt like a knot

That could never be untied.

I felt like the dullest knife,

Not sharp, yet functioning wrong.

It always seemed so far away,

The goal,

The sweat,

The pressure.

Why?

Why couldn’t they just close their eyes?

Why couldn’t they just look way?

I don’t like being watched.

I included this poem because the poet I chose to write about struggled herself, and this poem talks about how I struggled too. This poem relates to the poet, and others that are having or have had a bad time in their life.

8

Dreams…

I wrote this poem because it showed how I once had a dream, until I finally gave up on it. Like *Heritage*, it showed how I wanted my dreams to come true. I imagined things how I liked them to be. This is why I wrote this poem.

I used to have a dream.

One that sailed across the sky,

Into the night,

And out of this world.

I used to have a dream,

One that was the shiniest one.

That blue ribbon,

On my outstanding work.

I used to have a dream,

But it all crumbled down,

And fell like the twin towers did.

My dreams have vanished,

And a darkness came over me,

That no one had ever felt before.

I was alone.

9

Me

I wrote this poem because it shows all the real characteristics of me. Sometimes people act like one thing, but are actually something totally different. I included this poem because I want to let people know that not everyone is perfect. Sure, sometimes we forget, but don’t be afraid to express yourselves. Be who you really are. It might even be the best thing you’ve done.

I’m different.

Unique

I’m weak.

Wimpy

I’m shy.

Afraid

I’m strange.

Unusual

I’m insecure

Clumsy

In my soul,

This is the person I am,

And I’m not afraid to show it.

You shouldn’t either.

10

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