

“Katrina”

What is the poem about?

This poem is about a new born baby of 2 months old “Katrina” who is struggling to fight for her life. It shows the grief of her parents who are unsure if their child is going to survive. They have prepared for the worst and are now waiting to hear from the nurse. “Katrina” has a twin brother who is healthy at 2 months of age this is also affecting the parents.

What is the poet trying to say?

Bruce Dawe is showing us that at the age of 2 months “Katrina” is an outsider as she has not really begun to live a normal life in the world. She is stuck in a “special room in Ward Fifteen” in hospital fighting for her life. While her “brother’s two month old vigour hurts us”. His parents cannot fully enjoy their son’s healthy presence as they are preparing for the worst to happen. “Katrina” is stuck in limbo “suspended between earth and sky” as each day goes by not knowing whether she is going to survive or not. She hasn’t found a place in the world yet she doesn’t belong in society only in the “special room”. Bruce Dawe is trying to show that life is random and bad things can happen for no good reason at all. But people must try to get past these horrible events and accept that it has happened. In this situation it is going to be tough for the parents to move on if “Katrina” does not survive as they will constantly have her healthy twin brother as a constant reminder of her life. They will always look back and ask themselves why? Why did it happen to them?

Analyse the poetic devices in the poem:

Use of words and images

- “suspended between earth and sky”
- “thin straws of sunlight on your bowed legs kicking”
- “Body’s wasting” gives us an image of a weak little baby “naked” and “wasting” makes us think that she is a lot skinnier than a average baby would be at 2 months.
- The contrast of “black velvet of death” and “Your life shines like a jewel” shows both extreme’s of this situation one of death and the other of life. The colour black is used as a symbol of death as it’s scary and dark. Whereas white is the total opposite of black and a symbol of being pure and full of life.

How does it fit into the the me? Explain how it relates to identity and belonging

This poem “Katrina” relates to the theme of identity and belonging as it shows a 2 month old baby who hasn’t found her place in the world yet. Being isolated in a hospital room under constant supervision she has not been held by her parents or been outside in the sunshine.

Make a suggestion for writing task:

- A script of a phone call from the nurse to the parents explaining what’s going to happen to their baby.
- A short story from the perspective of the father about the day that the twins were born and how it felt when one was sick.

- Conversation between Nurses
- Reflective piece from the 'surviving' twin 20 years down the track- speech at his 21st