

SAMPLE

"It Was Long Ago", a simple poem by Eleanor Farjeon, records the poet's earliest memory, an incident that occurred when she was around three years old. While she was walking along a dusty road, she saw an old lady sitting under a tree. The lady invited her over and gave her bilberries and cream to eat, a 'feast' that the poet recalls with pleasure.

Subject-matter

At first glance the poem may appear to have no serious purpose other than the, recording of an early memory, but the last lines suggest some additional significance. The poet shows that this simple, pleasant memory means much to her because, 'then I grew up, you see'. We are reminded that 'growing up' is not always so pleasant. Sadly, being an adult can sometimes dull us so that we no longer appreciate the simple pleasures of life.

Purpose (Theme)

The poem is gentle and nostalgic. It seeks not only to recreate the scene for the reader, but to have him or her feel the child world goodness of the incident. The poet begins by asking our permission: 'I shall tell you, shall I, something I remember?' In the manner of a small child, she regularly checks to see that we are attending, that we understand: 'You know'; 'You see'. Thus the poem has a confiding, warm feel to it.

Emotion (Mood)

The poem has an interesting, simple structure built around three line stanzas. Has the poet deliberately used three line stanzas as the most appropriate for a three year old? At any rate, the simple structure is certainly appropriate for the situation. Similarly the language and rhyming scheme are deliberately simple. Words are uncomplicated, tending to be single syllables, with considerable repetition of words. The first line in every stanza ends with the word 'remember', and there are only two other thyme sounds 'ee' and 'oh', used absolutely regularly throughout the poem. The rhythm is gentle and slow, appropriate to the subject matter. Such structural economy and simplicity form a very appropriate vehicle with which to recreate a childhood memory.

Craftsmanship

- Structure
- Language
- Imagery
- Movement
- Sounds

Throughout the recreation, the poet seeks to involve our senses. She introduces concrete objects ('a mountain, an old house, and a tree'), and simple colours ('in a red shawl with a grey cat'), to help us visualise the scene. She invites us to hear the memory ('and while she hummed, and the cat purred'), to taste it ('...the taste of berries'), and feel it ('the feel of the sun I remember') as she draws upon her own sense memories. Thus, the memory is evoked for us in a much clearer way.

Summary

Through the poet's skill in using appropriately simple words, structure and rhythm, to recreate her earliest memory, she successfully involves us in the poem. For all its simplicity, the poem has a gentle robustness to it. We share the uncluttered goodness of the incident and are left with some wistful longings for our own childhood.