

## ENGLISH STANDARD: *THE SHOE-HORN SONATA*

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The play “Shoe Horn Sonata” and the poem “Dulce et Decorum Est” both use distinctively visual to convey interesting views on society about the suffering of the female PoWS and soldiers in war. Distinctively visuals appear when a text illustrates vivid images in the audience’s minds and enables them not to only perceive the meanings within the story and emotions of the characters but also to experience the situations as if through multiple senses. In the two texts, themes of sacrifice, reconciliation and truth have been presented through the distinctly visual element created by the use of motif, dramatic techniques, graphics, symbolism and imagery. The themes explored through distinctly visual images portray both positive and negative features of humans and their lives in war which bring up interesting views on the society.

In act one, scene eight of “Shoe Horn Sonata”, the theme of sacrifice is underlined through the distinctive images when Sheila reflects in her memory about saving Bridie’s life by going to one of the Japanese soldiers “I couldn’t look at them in the eye so I ... started at their boots”, employs ellipsis and the verb “stared” to reveal Sheila’s unwilling and solemn tone. Hence it creates an image of Sheila looking down at their boots which evokes a sense of shame and misery. This idea is then reinforced in the stage direction [looking down at the shoe-horn] as the “shoe-horn” symbolises immense pain, shame and sacrifice in the play which acts as a constant reminder of Sheila’s suffering. The theme of sacrifice is also evident in “Dulce et Decorum est” when the person creates vivid images to describe a soldier and his suffering while fighting for his country in the war. In stanza one, powerful verbs of “blood-shod”, “drowning” and the paradox “marched asleep”, contributed to the motif of suffering which projects the horrible image of the soldier experience those pains into the audience’s hearts. The scene is then made more vivid, realistic and painful for the readers through the use of onomatopoeia, ‘choking’, ‘guttering’ and ‘blood-garglish’. These distinctive visuals in the two texts strongly engage the audience to put themselves into the situations. As a result, the views of humans like Sheila, who is extremely brave and loyal, consider that sacrifice oneself for a friend is something worthy and Owen, who is courageous, strongly sacrifice a war, on the society have been conveyed.

The ‘distinctive visuals’ in “Shoe-Horn Sonata” also help explore the theme of truth when a ‘photograph of Australian army nurses’ ‘projected on the screens’ in the scene, are juxtaposed with the description of the disgraceful attitudes towards the women in the Japanese camp. In the photography a full-shot depicts a group of nurses in straight stances, clean and well-dressed which suggests an image of pride. Their facial expressions reveal

their happiness, and excitement where direct gazes allow the audience to feel their moods. “Toilets were dug out in the open... You had to squat... in front of everyone”, portrays an idea of ‘no privacy for women’ and embraces the scene created by the descriptive “dug out in the open” and “squat – in front of everyone” more vividly. Hence it forcibly makes the readers put themselves into the nurses’ position and experience the lack of dignity and extreme humiliation evoked in the scene. Similarly, the theme of reconciliation is expressed in “Dulce et Decorum est” when the persona juxtaposes the horrible state of dying, “white eyes”, “hanging face”, and “devil’s side of sin”. By comparing this image to the title, it makes the title sarcastic and hence creates empathy in the reader’s minds. The heart-wrenching images employ the perceptions of that frequent atrocity and violent reality exist in society.

The theme of reconciliation is explored through the terrible and vivid visuals in the persona’s “dreams; before” his “highest sight” in the poem. “He plunges at me... white eyes writhing in his face” use powerful verbs as extended imagery to the images created and authentically through the poet’s eyes. By using present continuous tense, Owen gives an idea of terrific continuity of pain. In the play, the theme of reconciliation is expressed in scene as she saw a “bus load of Japanese tourists”. She says “heart began to pound with terror... I... started to shake. So I ran. Outside. Still clutching the tin.” This emotive term “pound with terror” and the descriptive verb “shake” and “clutching” illustrates Bridie’s movements at that time as well as her intense fear. The short sentence length enhances the actions described. The visuals of the characters’ experiences powerfully explore the verbs of the people suffering the impact of war in society.

The play “Shoe Horn Sonata” and the poem “Dulce et Decorum est” have used distinctively visual images to convey interesting views on society. Both texts explore themes of sacrifice, truth and reconciliation through a variety of techniques to depict the usual images in the audience’s minds in order to engage them to understand different views from people who experience different situations in this life in society. As a result, views on reality society have all been conveyed through the distinctively visuals in the two texts.