A Kind of Nature That Mirrors Us

Poets have for centuries been inspired by the world around us to base their poems upon. Nature surrounds us with its serenity and beauty and poets feed off this elegance and turn it into some of the best known poems in recorded history. A critical reason for its widespread success was the ability for poets to capture nature in a complex manner. Nature is far more than just the physical environment; and this idea has continued to be explored by a plethora of poets to create a variety of inventive poems. Emily Dickinson’s “*The Grass so little has to do”* and Robert Frost’s *“Birches”* are great examples of the ideology behind thought of there being more to nature than its physical traits.

Throughout our existence nature has been symbolic of human emotion. Emily Dickenson writes about grass in an extraordinarily emotive way. When she mentions how the grass “[holds] the Sunshine in its lap / And bow to everything –” she draws on the grass’ ability to enjoy existence, while still having to bow under the bane of it. Life comes with responsibility; the grass is trampled and subject to large factors of the outside world; like a person being forced into an education, or a job, which leads to eventual unhappiness. Similarly, in the poem the grass ends up dying and become reborn again as hay. This is also an inevitable connection to how everything ends; time wears us away and nothing is immortal. In *Birches,* Frost expresses the idea of pain: “And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk / Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more, / But dipped its top and set me down again.” Frost’s lines depict how one can work their entire lives and find themselves back at square 1 in the end; futility. What is the point of life when it seems pointless or useless? Robert Frost explores these questions by portraying nature it in a way which shows more than just its physical attributes.

Furthermore, Frost and Dickenson draw connections in their poems to the portrayal of humans in nature by describing their human ideals by integrating them into the landscape. In the introduction of *Birches,* Frost draws on his experiences as a child to describe the way the Birches have swung down as if “some boy’s been swinging them”. Further into the poem he mentions “riding them down over and over again” as he reminisces himself once too being a swinger of birches. “They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load, /… so low for so long, they never right themselves.” These lines are used to draw on one's own difficulty in living a hard-working life of unhappiness but entrapment under the taboo of breaking. The constant bombardment of hardships our lives assault us with and the skeletons that it wears us down to, are expressed by the load the birch trees are put under. Looking through the perspective of where we came from, nature, we use this knowledge to create a better understand of ourselves.

In *The Grass so little has to do,* Dickenson emphasises the closeness of many human lives to the one of grass. Dickenson also expresses the human idea of life after death. She draws connections to the sadness of human nature through the phrases: “with only Butterflies to brood / And Bees to entertain –”. The butterflies which brood correlate to the beauties of one’s life, which could come empty and lead to depression. The problems and pains in life which occupy and distract us are also explored with the personification of entertaining bees. Moreover, the use of bees could signify the negative connotation of being stung. Entertaining bees could closely link with dancing with the devil, which leads to eventual pain. The exploration of nature helps uncover its meaning beyond its physical environment.

Finally, Robert Frost and Emily Dickenson explore the idea of nature having the ability to make us feel better about ourselves; to believe that all the awfulness instilled in our very being is ‘natural’. Dickenson explains that the grass threads the dew drops like pearls “And make itself so fine / A Duchess were too common / For such a noticing.” These words play on how even the highest class of human society can be too ignorant to understand the finer details and the real issue of life. Even the best of us sometimes can’t identify what’s really important in life. In Robert Frost’s *Birches*, the metaphor of “life is too much like a pathless wood” is a clear example of the use of nature in context of a human analogy. Like a real pathless wood, life can often become without direction. We can make a comparison to nature because occasionally life can be daunting for us. A forest without a path is full of obstacles which you must overcome; the same could be said about life. Although a forest may be a physical environment, what stops you from progressing in life aren’t necessarily tangible barriers; they are the hurdles in your head.

Nature is more than just a physical environment. It is a platform for creative and thoughtful contemplation in which we as humans can see ourselves mirrored. Nature is symbolic of human emotion as displayed in the poems of Frost and Dickenson; seeing that we are born of nature, it’s such a predominant key to our existence. People search for themselves in nature because by looking at where we came from, we can better understand ourselves.