

I'm not a bot



◆Little Boy Crying◆ is a short poem written by the Jamaican Poet Mervyn Morris. In this poem a child has been hit by his father. While the boy tries to comprehend this action and understand the reason why his father hit him, he is overcome with emotions and starts crying.Mervyn Eustace Morris was born in 1937 in Jamaica. He is a Jamaican poet. He is also a professor, literary critic and an essayist. He was awarded the title of the Poet Laureate of Jamaica. He has published many books and volumes of poetry. Some of his famous works are ◆Little Boy Crying◆, ◆The Roaches◆, ◆The Pond◆ and ◆Family Pictures◆.The poem is divided into three stanzas, each consisting of six to eight lines.Your mouth contorting in brief spite and hurt, your laughter metamorphosed into howls, your frame so recently relaxed now tight with three year old frustration, your bright eyes swimming tears, splashing your bare feet, you stand there angling for a moment◆s hint of guilt or sorrow for the quick slap struck.The speaker is describing the scene when a young child has just been hit by the father. The face of the child has started to morph into a crying face. His laughter has been turned into howls of crying. His body that was so relaxed is now bound tight due to pain and sadness. The three year old boy starts to shed tears that fall down to his feet. He looks for any signs of guilt or sorrow in his father's face after slapping him.The poem begins by describing the scene where a child has been slapped and is now crying. The little boy was playing happily earlier and laughing. But after being slapped his entire mood has shifted. The mouth which was smiling is now contorted with hurt and anger. The laughter has turned into sounds of crying and the carefree body language of the child is now filled with anger and frustration. While the child is crying he is waiting for the father to apologize for hitting him. The child expects to see remorse or sadness in the father's eye.The ogre towers above you, that grim giant, empty of feeling, a colossal cruel, soon victim of the tale◆s conclusion, dead at last. You hate him, you imagine chopping clean the tree he◆s scrambling down or plotting deeper pits to trap him in.The father is a giant ogre like being to the child that towers over him. The child thinks that his father feels nothing and is very cruel. The boy wishes for the father to end up like the giant, dead. The boy hates his father and is imagining cutting the tree that the giant is climbing on or digging deeper pits to trap him in.Once the child realizes that the father does not feel sad or guilty for hitting him, his feelings turn to hate and revenge. The child looks at the father as if he is a monster, an ogre or a giant. The boy starts to plot hurting the father once he realizes that the father is cruel and heartless. The child thinks of his father as the evil giant in the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. In the same way, the boy wants to hurt his father and take his revenge on him.You cannot understand, not yet, the hurt your easy tears can scald him with, nor guess the wavering hidden behind that mask. This fierce man longs to lift you, curb your sadness with piggy-back or bull fight, anything, but dare not ruin the lessons you should learn. You must not make a plaything of the rain.The speaker says that the child can not understand the hurt that the father is feeling. The speaker tells the child that his years are actually hurting him. The little boy can't even guess the emotion hidden behind the father's mask. The fierce father wants to soothe and calm the child by picking him up in his arms and with him or bull-fighting with him, but the father can not do so because he needs to teach the child a valuable lesson. The lesson that he wants to teach the child is that he is not supposed to play in the rain.This stanza talks about the perspective of the father. The father knows that his son does not understand the reason behind his actions. The father also feels pain watching his little boy crying. Watching the son in pain makes the father want to console him and play with him but the father knows that sometimes a parent has to be strict with the child. Sometimes a parent need to discipline the child in order to teach them valuable lessons. The father, by hitting the child, wants to teach him that playing in the rain is not a good thing as it can make him fall sick or worse. Stanza 1The poem begins with a description of a child crying. However, his cries seem harsh and fierce "Your laughter metamorphosed into howl". This also suggests that the child is normally a happy one and something happened to have changed his happiness. The last line in the stanza informs us that the reason why the child is crying is because he has been beaten "the quick slap struck". The little boy is also staring at the parent hoping that he might be feeling guilty for hitting him. This might mean that the child is trying to play on the parent's emotion "you stand there angling for a moment's hint". Stanza 2It is important to note that the stanza is giving the point of view of parent. The parent is imagining that the child is demonizing him for hitting him "The ogre towers above you, that grim giant./ empty of feeling a colossal cruel". From this, we can understand that the parent thinks that the child believes that he is cruel and evil for hitting him and therefore is thinking of ways to overcome or get away from the parent. Stanza 3Poet makes it clear that the father loves his son. However, he is slapping him for is own good. He also suggests that the father is hurt by the son's tears and would do anything to make him stop crying. "This fierce man longs to lift you/....." Yet, the lesson must be taught. Stanza 4Maybe this stanza suggests that no matter that there are often important behaviour or lessons children must learn by children. Themes Parent - Child Relationship The father seems to be firm and strict with his son. Although he loves him he does not allow him to have his own way. Childhood Experiences The little boy experiences pain and resentment for his parent. Unlike Ana, his childhood is not one that is carefree without any consequences for undesired behaviour. Parenting The father tries to be a good parent. In his eyes there are some lessons that his son must learn. Therefore, he carries out physical punishment so that he can learn these lessons. Your mouth contorting in brief spite and hurt, your laughter metamorphosed into howls, your frame so recently relaxed now tight with three year old frustration, your bright eyes swimming tears, splashing your bare feet, you stand there angling for a moment's hint of guilt or sorrow for the quick slap struck. The ogre towers above you, that grim giant, empty of feeling, a colossal cruel, soon victim of the tale's conclusion, dead at last. You hate him, you imagine chopping clean the tree he's scrambling down or plotting deeper pits to trap him in. You cannot understand, not yet, the hurt your easy tears can scald him with, nor guess the wavering hidden behind that mask. This fierce man longs to lift you, curb your sadness with piggy-back or bull fight, anything, but dare not ruin the lessons you should learn. You must not make a plaything of the rain. The poem is narrating an interaction between a father and his son, who he has punished for playing in the rain. The little boy feels somewhat betrayed by his father, and finds no sign of remorse in him. So, he sees him as evil figure, likening him to the evil giant from the fairy tale of Jack and the Beanstalk. The poem accurately shows how the child feels in the moment- a sudden emotion of cold hate and anger towards this 'colossal cruel' who has harmed him. In the third stanza though, the poet introduces the perspective of the father, who evidently cares for his son. Through the child's eyes, he is painted in a light of supreme cruelty and callousness due to emotionally-caused exaggeration. The father is shown to be caring because he feels guilt and remorse when he sees the tears of his son. But the dilemma within is obvious- he doesn't enjoy making his son feel this way, but he must teach him this lesson. He wants to comfort him and show his care; but he knows that he must maintain his composure in order for his son to truly learn the lesson. The poem is written from a third person omniscient perspective. The themes are parenting, vulnerability and childhood experiences. The mood is tense."Your mouth contorting in brief spite and hurt,"This line begins to show the little boy starting to cry. His mouth twists (as shown with 'contorting'), showing not only his pain (emotional and physical) but also an attempt to spite (deliberately annoy) his father."your laughter metamorphosed into howls,"Contrast is introduced here, where the laughter of the child (happiness) metamorphoses (an example of diction by the poet) into howls of pain and hurt. To metamorphose means to change completely in form or nature- so, in the same way his laughter changes to howls, his happiness changes to despair and pain."your frame so recently relaxed now tight with three year old frustration"The poet continues to show contrast between his previous disposition and now- when his frame has tightened as he contracts in beginning to cry. His frame tight with 'three year old frustration', which is sort of ironic considering that, being 3 years old, he would have very little to be frustrated about, and the harsher more oppressive concept of frustration clashes with the small non-threatening nature of a 3 year old "your bright eyes swimming tears, splashing your bare feet,"This is an example of hyperbole, where the poet suggests that the child's eyes are 'swimming tears' that splash his feet. Obviously a human's eyes can't produce enough tears to literally splash upon their feet- but the poet uses this device to show the exaggerated crying of the child. The phrase 'eyes swimming tears' suggests that the child's eyes are completely submerged in tears."you stand there angling for a moment's hint of guilt or sorrow for the quick slap struck,"Now the boy searches for any sign of remorse, empathy or guilt in this unnamed person who has hit him. Alliteration (slap struck) is used along with monosyllabic language ("quick slap struck," each word is one syllable to convey the speed of the slap). "The ogre towers above you, that grim giant, empty of feeling, a colossal cruel, soon victim of the tale's conclusion, dead at last."In this stanza, the little boy is now likening the evil of this unnamed person the best way he can- using fairy tales and mystical fictional evils. (Using a metaphor, he refers to this person as an ogre towering over him. Using alliteration, the boy calls this person a 'grim giant' who is cold and unfeeling, and a 'colossal cruel.' This is, of course, a caricature/exaggerated description of this man by a teary-eyed and hurt child. He is so angered and frustrated in this moment that he compares his abuser to a giant, an allusion to the fairy tale Jack and the Beanstalk ("...that grim giant") and hopes for him to eventually end up just like the giant at the end of the fairy tale- dead."You hate him, you imagine chopping clean the tree he's scrambling down or plotting deeper pits to trap him in."The boy continues with sentiments exaggerated by momentary pain, frustration and anger. The boy is said to hate this man, and imagines for him the same defeat as the giant in the tale- chopping down the stalk he climbs down. These plots correspond to the child's feelings of sadness and anger, he wants to defeat this person who has harmed him."You cannot understand, not yet, the hurt your easy tears can scald him with,"The speaker now considers the perspective of the father. The child doesn't understand yet what happens beyond the steely exterior of his father. He doesn't know that his tears really do harm him, and that he does truly feel remorse for hurting his son. The boy cries endlessly and without restraint or difficulty, but he doesn't know that his father feels these tears and they 'scald him like acid or hot oil,"nor guess the wavering hidden behind that mask,"Adding to the list of things the boy doesn't understand, he cannot guess the conflict within his father that is hidden by an unflinching facade. He doesn't want to hurt his son, but he cannot show the hesitation."This fierce man longs to lift you, curb your sadness with piggy-back or bull fight, anything, but dare not ruin the lessons you should learn." The poet uses contrast again here, juxtaposing the description of this man as 'fierce' with the description of this man as a vulnerable, loving, empathetic one who wants to curb the boy's sadness. The father sees his son crying, and his natural reaction is to want to comfort him- but he cannot, in order to ensure that he learns the lesson."You must not make a plaything of the rain."This final line conveys what was likely the reason for the father punishing the child, he was playing in the rain. Little Boy Crying Poem Summary by Mervyn Morris and Line by Line Explanation. Mervyn Morris's poem "Little Boy Crying" is a poignant portrayal of a father-son relationship. It explores the complexities of this relationship through the lens of a father's attempt to discipline his son. The poem captures the father's frustration and the son's innocent tears, highlighting the clash between love and discipline. Through vivid imagery and emotional depth, Morris delves into the nuances of parental love, authority, and the pain of childhood. Little Boy Crying Poem Summary by Mervyn Morris and Line by Line Explanation Summary: In "Little Boy Crying," Morris vividly depicts a moment between a father and his son. The father has punished his son for disobedience, and now the little boy stands crying, tears streaming down his face. The father, though he knows he must discipline his son, is deeply affected by the sight of his child's tears. The poem delves into the conflicting emotions of both father and son, exploring the themes of love, discipline, and the pain of growing up. Line-by-line Explanation: "Your mouth contorting in brief spite and hurt," The poem opens with an image of the little boy's mouth twisting in pain and anger as he cries. "Your laughter metamorphosed into howls," The boy's laughter has turned into loud cries. "Your frame so recently relaxed now tight" The boy's body, which was relaxed just moments ago, is now tense with crying and distress. "With three-year-old frustration, your bright eyes Swimming tears, splashing your bare feet," The boy, frustrated and upset, is crying so much that tears are falling down and splashing on his bare feet. "You stand there angling for a moment's hint Of guilt or sorrow for his quick offence And then with added insult – and intent You say you do not love him any more," The little boy is hoping to see some sign of guilt or sorrow from his father for punishing him, but instead, his father tells him that he doesn't love him anymore, adding insult to injury. "And I, seeing you taken up with tears And hearing you ask again, and all the while Within me, boy, affection grows and clears Like water from a mossy well, this coil Of love that, trampled down, will spring and flow Through jungle back to light," The father, seeing his son crying and begging for his love, feels a surge of affection for him. He compares this affection to water springing from a well, even if it has been trampled down. This love will always find its way back to the surface. "As though he were an islet, with the breeze Blooming and dispersing bright green Under the water's face, whose subterranean Presence finds no refuge in the sea," The father imagines his son as an islet, a small island, with his love for him being the bright green life that grows on it. Even though this love may be submerged temporarily, it will never be lost completely. "But you are flushed with pleasure, Fogged with tears, You believe yourself Loved once more," The boy, despite being upset and crying, feels happy and relieved to believe that his father loves him again. "Fool, you are crossed with sorrow; This child, who was your grief. Is your delight," The father recognizes that it is he who is feeling sorrow, not the child. Despite being the cause of his grief, his son is still his greatest joy. "And would you not His sadness to spare, Look at the sorrow He had to bear?" The father questions whether he should not spare his son from sadness, considering the sorrow the child had to endure because of his actions. Themes: Parental Love and Discipline: The poem explores the complex dynamics between a father and his son. While the father knows he must discipline his son for his disobedience, he is deeply affected by the sight of his child's tears. The poem reflects the father's struggle between love and discipline. Innocence and Childhood: Through the portrayal of the little boy's tears, the poem captures the innocence and vulnerability of childhood. The father's love for his son is evident in his struggle to discipline him while also being deeply affected by his tears. Guilt and Redemption: The father experiences a moment of guilt when he sees his son crying, realizing the extent of his sorrow. However, he is also redeemed by his love for his son, which ultimately triumphs over his momentary anger and frustration. Emotional Complexity: The poem delves into the emotional complexity of the father-son relationship, highlighting the conflicting emotions of love, guilt, and frustration experienced by both father and son. The Pain of Growing Up: The poem captures the pain and confusion of growing up, as the little boy learns that his actions have consequences and experiences the pain of being disciplined by his father. Little Boy Crying Poem Summary by Mervyn Morris and Line by Line Explanation In conclusion, "Little Boy Crying" by Mervyn Morris is a powerful exploration of the complexities of the father-son relationship. Through vivid imagery and emotional depth, the poem captures the conflicting emotions of love, discipline, and the pain of childhood. Morris delves into the nuances of parental love, authority, and the pain of growing up, leaving readers with a poignant portrayal of the bond between father and son. Related "Little boy crying" by Mervyn Morris Mervyn Morris writes "Little boy crying" making reference to the relationship between a kid and an adult, who in this case is his father. Throughout the poem different feelings and emotions are expressed, not only of the child but also of the man. The little boy turned his "recently relaxed" face into "tight" because of that "quick slap struck" his "guilty" father gave him. But despite the fact that the kid took his father as a "grim giant" because of hitting him, this man's intention was not to make him suffer of pain or anything like that; it was just an unwanted but necessary little punishment, perhaps for a prank or misbehaviour. In fact the father felt "guilty" and full of "sorrow". Mervyn introduces an allegory of a rather famous story called: "Jack and the beanstalk". The child imagined his father as an "ogre", who climbed a huge tree. "He hates him". He imagined himself "chopping clean the tree he's scrambling down or plotting deeper pits to trap him", as it happens in "Jack and the beanstalk". The relationship between the "three-year-old" full of "frustration" child and the adult seems to be bursting of complications because the kid is quite capricious and the man has to punish him, so that he learns not to do whatever he wants without evaluating the consequences before. But he "cannot understand, not yet" how his "easy tears" affect his father who is wishing to "curb" boy's sadness. Even though an ogre can punish you, you know that he loves you and that you have to learn the "lessons" from him, because you know, very deep inside, that ogre is your father. That last sentence can summaries the moral of the poem. This particular poem uses words to make the reader feel he or she is "seeing" it, or being part of it: "the quick slap struck", this last sentence is composed of monosyllabic words that imitate the sound of the hit. Another example of this "trying the reader to feel part of the poem" is the use of the "you"; it is a kind of conversation between the writer and the reader. Other images that facilitate this process are made by the use of words or phrases suggesting movement or sound, like "chopping" and "scrambling down". But in this poem is not all about the kid, and his feelings, and the other character has a very important role. He has to pretend being something is not, "behind that mask" there is a man who suffers the situation more than the kid, but he has to be seen as a strict authority, as any parent must. This poem reflects nothing but the truth of an ordinary relationship between any father and his son during the growing and maturing process of the kid; but it does not end there: in the last paragraph, which is also the last line, there is a nine words long sentence emphasized by being left alone, that carries a moral in it: "you must not make a plaything of the rain". This is a metaphor that could be translated as: you must not cry just because" (the rain represents the tears). Julie Targi Think and Write for CSEC English Note that this response/essay will help with any theme question that relates to childhood experiences, parental role and parental love, family relationships, and love. It will also help with answering questions on literary devices (allusion, emotive words and narrator voice) Mervyn Morris's poem "Little Boy Crying" delves into the intricate relationship between a father and his son. The poem revolves around two main themes: a father's love for his child and his efforts to guide his child towards the right path in life. Morris uses second-person narration and employs literary techniques like allusion and emotive words to explore the parent-child relationship in depth. The first stanza of the poem presents a vivid image of a boy who is initially carefree but becomes tensed and emotional when his father punishes him. The phrase "Your laughter metamorphosed into howls" captures the sudden change in the boy's mood due to his father's scolding. The father's strict discipline leads him to slap the boy, causing him to cry. However, the father's actions stem from his love for his son and his desire to guide him towards the right path in life. The father's understanding of his son's emotions is apparent through the line "You stand there angling for a moment, a hint of guilt or sorrow for the quick slap struck." In the second stanza, the poet presents the boy's perspective, which is a stark contrast to the first stanza. The boy imagines his father as a heartless and cruel giant who exercises his power over the little boy. The imagery of the "grim giant, empty of feeling, a colossal cruel" highlights the boy's hatred for his father. The boy imagines himself as Jack from the fairy tale "Jack and the Beanstalk," cutting down the beanstalk before the giant ogre, a metaphor for his strict father, comes down. The boy's imagination provides insight into his emotional state and his desire for retribution. The final stanza of the poem once again emphasizes the father's love towards his son. The line "This fierce man longs to lift you, curb your sadness with piggyback or bullfight, anything/ hidden behind that mask" portrays the father's softer side, despite his strictness. The father's priority is to guide his son towards the right path, which is why he disciplines him. The line "But dare not ruin the lesson you should learn" underscores the father's intention to instill good values in his son. The last line "You must not make a plaything in the rain" provides the father's valuable lesson that the boy should learn to avoid making mistakes in life. Overall, the poem "Little Boy Crying" provides an insightful commentary on the intricacies of the parent-child relationship. Morris's use of various literary techniques provides a deep understanding of the emotions and motivations of both the father and the son. The poem's crucial message is that parents love their children and will do everything in their power to guide them towards the right path, even if it means disciplining them. Subscribe to get the latest posts sent to your email. The Full Text of "Little Boy Crying" Read the full text of "Little Boy Crying" Where this theme appears in the poem: Lines 6-7 Lines 8-13 Lines 14-20 Where this symbol appears in the poem: Lines 11-12: "you imagine / chopping clean the tree he's scrambling down" Where alliteration appears in the poem: Line 3: "recently," "relaxed" Line 5: "swimming," "splashing" Line 9: "colossal," "cruel" Line 12: "chopping," "tree" Line 13: "plotting," "pits" Line 17: "longs," "lift" Line 18: "back," "bull" Line 19: "lessons," "learn" Line 20: "must," "make" Where anaphora appears in the poem: Line 1: "Your" Line 2: "your" Line 3: "your" Line 4: "your" Line 6: "you" Line 11: "You," "you" Where assonance appears in the poem: Line 3: "recently," "relaxed" Line 4: "three," "year," "bright," "eyes" Line 5: "tears," "feet" Line 6: "hint" Line 7: "guilt," "quick" Line 9: "cruel" Line 10: "soon," "conclusion" Line 11: "at," "last," "him," "imagine" Line 12: "clean," "tree," "he's" Line 13: "deeper," "pits," "him," "in" Line 14: "cannot," "understand" Line 15: "easy," "tears," "him," "with" Line 20: "make," "plaything," "rain" Where consonance appears in the poem: Line 1: "contorting," "spite," "hurt" Line 2: "your," "laughter," "metamorphosed," "into" Line 3: "your," "frame," "recently," "relaxed," "tight" Line 4: "three," "year," "frustration," "your," "bright" Line 5: "swimming," "tears," "splashing," "your," "bare," "feet" Line 6: "stand," "there," "for," "moment's," "hint" Line 7: "guilt," "sorrow," "for," "quick," "slap," "struck" Line 8: "ogre," "towers" Line 9: "feeling," "colossal," "cruel" Line 10: "conclusion" Line 11: "hate," "him," "imagine" Line 12: "chopping," "tree" Line 13: "plotting," "deeper," "pits," "trap" Line 14: "cannot," "understand," "not" Line 15: "hurt," "your," "easy," "tears," "scald" Line 16: "nor," "guess," "wavering," "hidden," "behind," "mask" Line 17: "This," "fierce," "longs," "to," "lift," "curb," "sadness" Line 18: "back," "bull" Line 19: "dare," "ruin," "lessons," "should," "learn" Line 20: "must," "make" Where metaphor appears in the poem: Lines 8-13: "The ogre towers above you, that grim giant, / empty of feeling, a colossal cruel, / soon victim of the tale's conclusion, dead / at last. You hate him, you imagine / chopping clean the tree he's scrambling down / or plotting deeper pits to trap him in." Line 20: "You must not make a plaything of the rain." Where caesura appears in the poem: Line 4: "frustration, your" Line 5: "tears, splashing" Line 8: "you, that" Line 10: "conclusion, dead" Line 11: "last. You," "him, you" Line 14: "understand, not" Line 17: "you, curb" Line 18: "fight, anything" Where enjambment appears in the poem: Lines 3-4: "tight / with" Lines 4-5: "eyes / swimming" Lines 6-7: "hint / of" Lines 10-11: "dead / at" Lines 11-12: "imagine / chopping" Lines 17-18: "sadness / with" Where juxtaposition appears in the poem: Lines 2-5: "your laughter metamorphosed into howls, / your frame so recently relaxed now tight / with three-year-old frustration, your bright eyes / swimming tears" Where irony appears in the poem: Line 10: "soon victim of the tale's conclusion" Lines 14-15: "You cannot understand, not yet, / the hurt your easy tears can scald him with," Select any word below to get its definition in the context of the poem. The words are listed in the order in which they appear in the poem. Contorting Spite Metamorphosed Frame Angling Ogre Grim Colossal Soon Plotting Scald Wavering Curb Plaything Location in poem: Line 1: "contorting") Poems About Fatherhood — Check out the Poetry Foundation's collection of poems that, like "Little Boy Crying," center around the topic of fatherhood. Morris Gives a Reading — Watch Mervyn Morris read some of his poetry aloud. More About Morris — Check out this overview of Mervyn Morris's life and work, including a number of recordings of the poet reading his own work (including "Little Boy Crying"). Poems About Childhood — Take a look at this overview of poems that, also like "Little Boy Crying," are concerned with childhood and growing up.