

Where the Scattering Began

‘Where the Scattering Began’ is a poem written by Merle Collins. In this poem she uses many clever techniques such as rhythm changes, diction, repetition and personification. She uses these techniques in order to make the poem more interesting to read and effective.

The poem is about how she has left her home and come to a new place called London. She talks about her memories and how she is still united with her race though she is abroad. However, she has changed some things about herself such as her name and language. She describes these changes as being the ‘Scattering’.

Rhythm changes are used throughout the poem in order to obtain a variety of rhythms and keep it interesting. We know the pace of the rhythm by looking at the punctuation that Collins uses. For example, the comma after the word ‘here’ in the first line tells us that we must pause before continuing to read. However, the third line of the poem has no commas so we know that it should be read fairly continuously.

The rhythm of the poem changes slightly in line sixteen. “We come with intonations that reshape languages we have been given”. This is because, the previous lines were telling us how she feels she has lost a lot and this line now tells us what she has been given. So now the rhythm picks up a bit of pace.

We can also predict the rhythm by looking at the overall mood of the poem. It is nowhere near bright and cheerful however it is neither too sad nor gloomy. It is just thoughtful and slow. We know all this because of the diction that Collins uses throughout her poem.

A poet’s choice of words for a poem contribute in a major way to the overall mood of the poem and also how interesting the poem is. Most of the words used in this poem are about the human body parts, speaking and items from her country.

Collins uses a lot of words on the human body parts because she refers a lot to her changes in how she communicates and sees things. For example, in last lines of the poem, “Hands and eyes and ears begin to shape answers to questions tongue can find no words for asking.”

She also uses a lot of words referring to speaking as she obviously feels that this is the most important change that has happened to her. She uses words like say, call, talks, wail, denying, speak and many more. It is important she uses these words in order to emphasize what she is trying to tell us.

She tells us about items such as the ‘Ghanaian drum’ and the ‘mbira’, which are musical instruments from her country. She uses them to tell us about her identity and what she used to be. This is good as she also gives us an idea of where she is from and it is obviously a culture that bases a lot of belief on music.

Repetition is used a lot in this poem with especially two words. 'We' and 'come'. This is a good use of repetition as it emphasizes what she is trying to say and it always reminds us that the whole poem is based on her change and how she has 'come' not 'been'.

Collins uses personification in this poem in order to give us more of an idea of what she is talking about. She uses it in lines five and six. For example, "Against the call of the Ghanaian drum that talks..." She makes it seem that the Ghanaian drum is a person that she is acting against now because she is in a different place. It is very effective as it makes it seem that the drum has feelings and emphasizes to us how she thinks she is going against her culture and how much she thinks she has changed.

In conclusion, Merle uses many techniques to make this poem the amazing poem that it is. These techniques include rhythm changes, diction, repetition and personification. These techniques effectively communicate to us what she is trying to say about herself and how she has changed because of her location. However, she is aware of these changes is obviously slightly guilty about them.

By Akshatha