

A world Where News traveled slowly

Lavinia Greenlaw's nostalgic poem "*A World Where News Traveled Slowly*," captivates readers with its brilliant description of the evolution of communication. The poem is chronologically ordered, giving us the effect of how communication moved through the ages. The modern poem is written in three stanzas each describing a different form of communication. Starting from the time when electronics never existed to the current information age. The fashion in which the poem is written, takes the reader on a journey that lasts centuries.

The first stanza talks about the old fashioned way of communication. People living far away carefully sent handwritten letters to each other. These letters were taken by horse rider to their destination. It is implied, importantly that these letters were mainly sent "while the head had to listen, the heart could wait." That is at extremely important times and not just for insignificant banter. These lines imply that personal letters were not the prime objective of the post. It was for example at important times such as during war, that people sent mail.

The second stanza is maybe a few hundred years later, in the seventeen hundreds, during the "French Revolution." It describes a new quicker way of communication. This is still old fashioned and unheard of for the modern day man. It is the time of the "telegraph," and the "semaphore." This stanza implies that it was not an easy task and was yet difficult and hard to manage. "It still took three men with all their variables....to read record and pass the message on." This indicates that communication at this stage is still not an easy occurrence. However, the line "judgment of swing in a vertical arm," has a double meaning. Literally, it refers to the physical movement involved in a semaphore and how it was interpreted based on the movement of the arm. The line it can also be argued refers to the progress made in science during the French Revolution and in this case the vertical arm could symbolize a pendulum. The Judgment of swing of a pendulum is calculated using complex physics – perhaps people of the time like Leonardo Da Vinci were only just starting to make these calculations around this period.

The last stanza represents the modern day in which we live. It is the one we can relate to and mentions what we all go through. However there is a melancholy tone to this stanza. Even though we live in the world of "nets," that "tighten across the sky and sea bed," that is a world of instant information with fiber optic cables and signals, we still lose what is being told. We do not weigh the messages with enough importance.

This poem's main theme is one of nostalgia of the past ways of communication. Another, important theme refers to the current act of communication or in fact the way in which it is not possible for "your voice to reach unaltered." These two themes are intertwined and refer to the fact that even though communication has evolved into sending messages instantly, we now do not weigh these messages with any importance. "They leave no trace on us." The author feels that hundreds of years ago it was hard to communicate and if a letter was received it had an important meaning. Now letters travel from one person to another and simply bounce off as the recipients do not consider them important. Centuries ago even if a letter came "stained with the leather and sweat of its journey," the condition it came in did not matter to the worried mother or distressed wife

who had not heard from her son or husband, working or fighting abroad. A letter if received contained information that was worth sending and thus was important.

The key to the line “we’re almost talking in one other’s arms,” is the word “almost.” This word is important as it could be thought that the poet is trying to indicate the fact though even though we feel as if we are so close, we are still not. These messages sent to us so quickly make us feel as if we are incredibly close to each other.

The title of this poem describes to us that the author thinks that maybe it would be better if we lived in a world where news traveled slowly. This poem gives us the feeling that the poet believes that technology is both a good and bad thing. Even though it gives us instantaneous messages, the importance of these very messages is lost. The author feels that the smoothness and speed of the current age is not in keeping with the way we talk to each other. It is implied that the world is now sending a barrage of messages that are not weighted with enough importance by the recipient. Maybe people would consider communication with much more importance if we resided in “A World Where News Traveled Slowly.”