

Mrs Tilscher's Class

She includes details to set the scene and help us image the classroom-chalky pyramids (on the blackboard) / A window opened with a long pole. She uses similes and metaphors.

The classroom glowed like a sweet shop. This emphasises how special the classroom was to child's, since a sweet shop is a place full of treats and surprises for children.

Brady and Hindley faded, like.....a mistake. She uses a typical classroom image of rubbing out a mistake in your work to show how Mrs Tilscher helped the children 'erase' their fears.

Inky tadpoles. This description is very visual and helps us 'see' the blots and dashes as the children learnt to use ink pens.

The poet appeals to our senses to help us experience the classroom more fully:

There are vivid descriptions, as if the poet's memory is like a photograph, so we can see the children's fingers travelling up the blue Nile.

There are many sounds mentioned so we can hear the classroom as well as see it. Mrs Tilscher chanted. The laugh of a bell. A xylophone's nonsense. We can also smell the classroom air - The scent of a pencil.. - and almost taste the electricity of the end of term and feel untidy, hot, fractious.

The poet is remembering a year in primary school when she was in the class of a teacher called Mrs Tilscher.

She remembers a particular lesson (Geography) and a typical breaktime. She preferred school to home because of the magic of enthralling books, sugar paper and coloured shapes which helped her to forget her fears of Brady and Hindley (the moors Murderers who killed a number of children in the 1960s).

She describes details of other lessons and playtimes, especially one day when a rough boy told her the facts of life. At the end of the school year, when asked about how you were born, Mrs Tilscher didn't let on, but there is a sense of growing excitement with coming thunderstorm.

The poet seems to be confiding in us and talks to us directly, so the poem sounds a bit like the patterns of everyday speech. The length of sentences is very varied. Ethiopia, Khartoum. Coloured shapes. Compare them to longer sentences: Three frogs / hopped in the playground....

She speaks very affectionately of Mrs Tilscher, emphasising all the personal touches that made her special - she'd left a good gold star by your name. She also loved the special atmosphere in Mrs Tilscher's classroom. She grateful for all that she learnt and discovered. She generates excitement as she remembers the start of her adolescence.

She obviously felt very safe and secure and happy in Mrs Tilscher's class. She emphasises how Mrs Tilscher taught her (about the Blue Nile and commas and exclamation marks). She also values the things that she learnt during that year but were not specifically 'taught' she grew up a lot in that year.

The first two stanzas are very innocent, the laugh of a bell swung by a running child, while the third and fourth are about gaining experience - the inky tadpoles changed.....the heavy, sexy sky. Each stanza moves us through the school year, so the poem ends at the end of the summer term.