

PAPER 1 SL

EXEMPLAR

**“DEPARTURE” BY
COVENTRY PATMORE**

**SCORE 17/20
IB SCORE 7**

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STUDENT EXEMPLAR



The rather archaic poem “Departure”, written by the poet Coventry Patmore in 1877, is a moving work that explores the conflicted emotional landscape of a speaker who has suffered heartbreak from the unceremonious departure or abandonment of his/her lover. Most interestingly, the speaker’s tone is not constant but instead fluctuates between a profound bitterness and sombreness and a contrasting fondness. Hence, Patmore utilises the speaker’s shifting tone in lines 1 to 10, 11 to 24, and 25 to 35 in order to convey the internally conflicted, bittersweet emotions that continue to haunt the heartbroken speaker’s feelings towards his/her lover.

Indeed, in the outset of the poem from lines 1 to 10, the poet highlights this internal conflict through the use of a conflicting amalgam of positive, sombre, and accusatory tones. The positive tone is first emphasised by the alliteration and positive diction of praise in “great and gracious” (line 1). The sombre tone of the speaker is further constructed through the use of rhyme in lines 2, 3 and 5 to 9. Not only does the rhyming construct the lamenting of the speaker in response to her lover’s departure, but it also works in conjunction with enjambment in line 3 to emphasise the accusation of her lover, as shown in the diction in “repent”. Hence, the loss and blame that the speaker feels are also tempered by the lingering love. The latter emotion is consolidated by the poet’s use of fragmented sentence structure in the rhetorical question spanning lines 2 to 9. The frequent use of commas and subordinate clauses, such as “that you naught other to lament” (line 2) and “that July afternoon” (line 4), creates pauses which reveal to the readers the hesitancy in his tone, thereby shedding light on his internal conflict. The gentleness of the tone is also constructed through the term of endearment of “my love” (line 3) and the use of the rhetorical question, as the plead serves to attenuate the accusatory tone established by the consistent, penetrating use of the second person pronouns “you” and “your”. Thus, through Patmore’s manipulation of the speaker’s tone, the readers are compelled to empathise with the internal conflict of emotion which the speaker experiences due to the sudden “departure” of his lover.

Subsequently, in lines 11 to 24, Patmore delves into the loving memories of the speaker in order to consolidate the reason for the conflicted tone that is established in the first section of the poem. Patmore creates impression of the intimacy of the relationship primarily through the use of tactile, visual and auditory imagery, juxtaposition and alliteration. Firstly, Patmore signifies the change in the focus of the speaker from the accusatory stance to one of nostalgia and reminiscence in line 12, where the auditory imagery in “You whispering to me” (line 12) establishes the intimacy of the relationship.

This quality of the relationship, which is characterised by a sense of gentleness, is emphasised through the quietness which the act of whispering suggests. “Whispering” further connotes a close physical distance which reinforces the intimacy which the speaker and his lover had once enjoyed. This use of auditory imagery is employed again in line 24, “...you spoke so low that I could scarcely hear”. The affectionate tone is emphasised by the tactile imagery of warmth in line 18, in which the speaker compares the love to “a warm south-wing”. The relatively upbeat tone is also constructed in lines 21 to 22, in which the alliteration of “I” combines with the detailed visual imagery of the lover’s “pathetic lash” (line 21) to reinforce the love and intimacy which had once been shared. Therefore, the poet employs imagery in order to portray the unconditional, shared love through the memory of the speaker. In contrast to the conflicted, quasi-accusatory tone in section one of the poem, the tone in this flashback is entirely positive and affectionate, thus allowing readers to understand the beauty of the relationship which the speaker had previously enjoyed. In addition to this, the repetition of “your great and gracious ways” is significant in line 17, for it juxtaposes directly with the first line where the lover apparently has lost her commendable characteristics. The complete contrast in these lines therefore create a positive mood for the readers as they experience the love in a vicarious manner.

However, tone again shifts in line 25. The final section of the poem (lines 25 to 32) indicate to readers the everlasting, cyclical torment which the speaker feels towards the unceremonious departure, precisely due to the bitter sweet emotions which the poet has clearly established in the prior sections of the poem. The repetition of the first section of the poem is particularly significant in constructing the speaker’s inability to move on from the incident. Lines 27 to 32 share almost identical lines with the initial lines of 6 to 9. This repetition not only re-introduces the lamenting, accusatory tone to leave the readers with a clear sense of the bitter sweet perspective of the speaker, but the repetition also symbolises the cyclical nature of the blame, love and loss which the speaker suffers from. Hence, through this cyclical portrayal of the speaker’s emotions, Patmore invites the readers to sympathise for the speaker and internal conflict. In juxtaposition to the positive, upbeat mood in the speaker’s flashback, the visual imagery of the “lovers look”, emphasised through alliteration, forces the readers to also experience the sense of sadness, bitterness and betrayal which perpetuates this torturous cycle of emotions.

In conclusion, Patmore portrays the bittersweet emotions of blame, loss and love which the speaker experiences in order to provide insight about the internal conflict of the speaker. The poet utilises multiple sections to portray the aspects of conflict, love and cyclical suffering. The conflicted emotions of the speaker towards the departure, and indeed towards his/her lover, is thus encapsulated by the emotionally-neutral tone in the title “Departure”, which symbolises the internally conflicted position that he takes between blame and hate, and love and forgiveness.

JACKSON'S CRITIQUE

17/20

The commentary is well-written, although some sentences contain lapses in grammar. The interpretation of the poem can be more refined and insightful; the interpretation here is too superficial.

Criterion A - Knowledge and Understanding: 4/5

The student missed the more complex techniques of the poem. These include paradox, oxymoron, and the fact that the speaker's lover is more likely to be dead than to have abandoned the speaker for another love interest.

Criterion B - Appreciation of writer's choices: 4/5

Strong analysis. To get 5/5, the student needs to make the analysis flow more coherently by thinking more carefully about the logical links between separate quote analyses.

Criterion C - Organisation: 5/5

Organising by tonal shift is a *perfect* example of structuring by section (my favourite type of commentary structure).

Criterion D - Language: 4/5

Fix up some grammatical issues such as awkward sentence structure.

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1 HR TUTE ON "DEPARTURE"**

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