

Notes on Daystar by Rita Dove:

“DayStar” by Rita Dove is a poem that illustrates the life of a woman who feels trapped because of her role as a mother and wife.

Paraphrase:

The woman wants free time to think but all she can see is the endless amount of diapers she has to change and all the time it takes to care for a child. She feels like a limp, lifeless doll.

The mother takes a chair outside when her children are napping to have time to herself.

Sometimes she observes nature, a cricket or a leaf floating in the wind.

Other times she would simply stare until when she closed her eyes, she would feel alive.

The mother only has an hour or less for this free time to think and observe until her child demands she come back inside.

Her child might wonder why her mom is sitting outside where there are creatures like mice. She sits out there to create a fantasy in her mind.

At night, when her husband lies in bed with her, she lies awake and thinks about that one hour she had to herself during the day. The only time that she didn't have to do any of her responsibilities as a wife or mother.

Analysis:

Rita Dove writes about a woman and her day as a mother and wife. She plays the typical role as a stay-at-home mom, most likely while her husband is at work. Her day is monotonous and tiring with child care tasks such as changing diapers. The mother feels like she has no freedom in her life. She is not able to do any exciting or stimulating activities. The only time that she can do what she wants is the short time that her children are taking a nap. Even then, all that she can do is sit alone outside and think about feeling free while observing nature. In lines eight through eleven, Dove writes, “Other days she stared until she/was assured when she closed/her eyes she'd only see her own/vivid blood.” The woman feels as if she's lost herself and she stares into the yard so that when she closes her eyes, she feels alive. Her existence is dependent on taking care of her children and nothing else. All she really wants is to do something else, anything to break away from this stifling and dull life. This character really represents all the women in society who feel stuck in their role as a stay-at-home wife and have no opportunity to do anything else with their life.

Dove uses imagery to express the woman's tiresome life. In the third line, she references to “A doll slumped behind the door.” A limp doll has the same amount of energy that the mother is feeling. The symbolism paints the pictures of a woman sagging down with no vitality left inside of her. This image is supported with the fourth line stating “so she lugged a chair behind the garage.” The words express lack of strength of vigor behind the action, most likely from fatigue. In the second line, the repetitive tasks the mother has to take on every day are referred to “diapers steaming on the line.” There is no break from the endless responsibilities that she has

to do. The poem is written as a free verse with relatively short lines. The absence of rhyming makes the poem feel more like a personal story being shared. It is not as lyrical, but feels very natural to read. The free verse style allows for any mother and wife out there in a similar situation to relate easily with the poem.