

Notes on Death of a Young Son by Drowning by Margaret Atwood:

"Death of a Young Son by Drowning" is a narrative poem talking about a young boy who drowned and how his mother feels. There are ten stanzas. The first nine each have three lines. They are tercet, a poetic unit of three lines rhymed or unrhymed. and the final stanza contains two lines.

The literary devices used in Death of a Young Son by Drowning are imagery, personification, simile, metaphor, and enjambment. Imagery is the use of figurative language to represent objects, actions, and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses. Personification is a figure of speech in which something non human is given human attributes. Simile is a figure of speech that makes a direct comparison using like or as. Metaphor is another figure of speech which makes a comparison between two things that are unrelated but share some common characteristics without using like or as. The comparisons maybe implied or hidden. Enjambment is moving from one line to another without a terminating punctuation mark. The personification in the poem is in line twenty two and twenty three "the new grass leapt to solidity;". The similes are in lines twenty eight to twenty nine "I planted him in this country/like a flag." and line seventeen "he was hung in the river like a heart."

The metaphor can be found in lines eleven to thirteen "his head a bathysphere/through his eyes' thin glass bubbles/he looked out". A bathysphere is a spherical chamber used for deep sea observations. Enjambment is found in lines seven to ten "His feet slid on the bank,/the currents took him;/he swirled with ice and trees in the swollen water/and plunged into distant regions.. These lines force you to just continue reading, imagining what is happening.

The main theme of this poem is about how life never goes as planned. "After the long trip I was tired of waves./My foot hit rock. The dreamed sails/collapsed, ragged." lines twenty five to twenty seven. It was just supposed to be a "voyage of discovery" line four but all her future plans and dreams fall apart after her son drowns. Even if her son did die the world didn't just stop it kept on going "It was spring,/the sun kept shining, the new grass leapt to solidity;" lines twenty two and twenty three.