

What Exactly Has the Motorcycle Said in “What the Motorcycle Said”

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This poem is composed of lots of onomatopoeic words. In the first stanza, the poet used the words, such as “Br-r-r-am-m-m,” to create the images for readers to know that the motorcycle was telling its own story. The sentences are full with the thoughts of the motorcycle. I suggest that the noise that a motorcycle would make while reviving its engine or roaring down the roads are written into this poem to give readers a great sense of raw power. In my opinion, the noise is just like the remarkable speech that Douglas MacArthur delivered, “Old soldiers never die. They only fade away.” The motorcycle was just like an old soldier who was falling into dusk, but still standing up for its reputation. After fighting such a long time, the motorcycle didn’t give up cruising down the highway. For example, the words: “I hate plastic, wear it black and slick, hate hardhats, wear one on my head, that's what the motorcycle said” show the hate of new things.

Another special thing I find out is: “What the Motorcycle Said” has an irregular rhyme scheme, because it does not use a consistent rhyme pattern. The poem presents couple of mixed attitudes. In my opinion, one of the effects is that the poet’s feelings and message of the poem can be interpreted without too much trouble. The speaker uses words such as hate or shit to express one’s feelings toward society as one rides on the motorcycle.

The diction in “What the Motorcycle Said,” is rather informal and almost easy to understand. The poet wrote this poem in a way that it could be understood by everyone. The colorful language and written motorcycle sounds show that perhaps this was also meant to be a humorous, fun-type of poem, which is especially effective

when being read out loud. When my classmates and I were reading this poem loud in the class, we found out it is pretty funny and catchy. We can get the author's spirit immediately. What's more, the entire poem was the personification of a motorcycle. A line used repeatedly by Van Duyn to illustrate this point is, "...that's what the motorcycle said." The motorcycle's attitude mirrors its owner's, and that is the implied author's main suggestion.

Sometimes, I take riding motorbike as leisure activities. The glorious sceneries pass through so fast that I can't collect. But it doesn't matter at all. There are endless picturesque views in the route of life. I consider the author wanted to express the attitude of "Carpe Diem," which means to seize the day. Living in the present will give us courage to face the difficulties and make the risky choices. In modern society, people are always regretful for the past and anxious about the uncertain things. The truth is that we can't predict our life or how long our life spans are.

In conclusion, if the poem can connect our daily life or express our deepest feeling, we will find out that we are poets too. Poem writes us.

What the Motorcycle Said

Mona Van Duyn

Br-r-ram-m-m, racketsy-am-m, OM, Am:
All-r-r-room, r-r-ram, ala-bas-ter-
Am, the world's my oyster.

I hate plastic, wear it black and slick,
hate hardhats, wear one on my head,
that's what the motorcycle said.

Passed phonies in Fords, knocked down billboards, landed
on the other side of The Gap, and Whee,
bypassed history.

When I was born (The Past), baby knew best.
They shook when I bawled, took Freud's path,
threw away their wrath.

R-r-racketsy-am-m. Am. War, rhyme,
soap, meat, marriage, the Phantom Jet
are shit, and like that.

Hate pompousness, punishment, patience, am into Love,
hate middle-class moneymakers, live on Dad,
that's what the motorcycle said.

Br-r-r-am-m-m. It's Nowsville, man. Passed Oldies, Ugliers,
Straighties, Honkies. I'll never be
mean, tired, or unsexy.

Passed cigarette suckers, souses, mother-fuckers,
losers, went back to Nature and found
how to get VD, stoned.

Passed a cow, too fast to hear her moo, "I rolled
our leaves of grass into one ball.
I am the grassy All."

Br-r-r-am-m-m, racketsy-am-m, OM, Am:
All-gr-r-rin, oooohgah, gl-l-utton-
Am, the world's my smilebutton.