

Candidate 3

Grief:

presented in 3 ways -

- the preoccupation with the dog
- the contrast with her husband
- what she defines herself as.

techniques: structure (things come full circle, she ends up in the baby's room, the dog still doesn't understand death, nothing happens)

repetition of stillness and death.

pathetic fallacy

PART B - PROSE FICTION.

Discuss the effectiveness of the ways in which Susan Perabo presents the mother's grief in this ~~so~~ story.

Within Perabo's story, grief is presented in three ways: the mother's obsession with the dog, the contrast of her reaction to loss with her husband's, and the crisis of identity she experiences throughout. Overall, this is a story about what ~~we~~ you do when you ^{feel that you} have no purpose, and the way people fill their days when there is something missing.

The story follows a cycle, in which nothing happens. In the face of a loss, the mother's actions become meaningless. She follows the dog into the baby's room, he follows her out. The dog follows her into the baby's room, and they stay there.

The story starts and ends in the bedroom of the dead infant, and ~~these~~ mother's attempts to teach the dog about death have not been triumphant.

From the beginning, the dog seems to be a proxy ~~by~~ through which the mother is allowing herself to feel pain. The opening paragraph states that "the first week wasn't so bad, what with all our friends and relatives around", and although she is addressing the comfort of the dog, the word choice of "our" - hers and her ~~husband's~~ husband's - betrays the fact that she is discussing her own emotional state.

Throughout the passage, the mother's insistence that the dog must be taught about death comes across as a desperate plea as she ~~herself~~ herself attempts to come to terms with what she has lost.

The mother is clearly lost, waking up in the middle of the night to the sound of her dead daughter crying, with no one to reach out to. It is clear that she feels that her husband is inaccessible to her, as she lacks "the courage to touch him, to wake him up". Unable to seek comfort ~~in~~ in her partner, the mother superimposes her hurt onto the dog, credits her emotions to him and tries to seek answers.

Just as she cannot tell her husband what she is feeling, his pain is also inaccessible to her. She watches him cry, "making little howling noises with his throat", and she does not go to him. Therefore, we can see how her grief is fracturing her relationship. Her husband is mourning in a different

	<p>way, unable to sleep and seeking solace in religion. This contrast, between her husband's devastating breakdown and her quiet, confused grief, puts emphasis on how neither of them are coping, but they are refusing to share their grief. In the morning, they have stilted conversation, skirting around the issue but never directly addressing the death.</p>	
	<p>The morning itself is described as "cool and dark", going against the seasons. This pathetic fallacy shows how the mother's world has been flipped completely, how nothing makes sense for her anymore. The weather reflects how "the natural order order of things was wrong", showing how the mother feels that the world has betrayed her. The husband goes to work, and she is left</p>	

alone, with only the dog for company, in a house filled with silence and death.

The outpouring of grief onto the dog, crediting him with emotions ~~he~~ that he is not capable of, it all seems inevitable when we experience the emptiness of her life.

As the husband leaves, anxious to "get busy again", the mother is left to consider who she is without a child. "What had I done before the baby? I had been pregnant" she thinks, demonstrating how her entire sense of self had been wrapped up in motherhood. Can you be a mother if there is no child?

This question is unspoken, but the implication is clear, and the mother struggles to find a new identity. Perabo repeats the ~~same~~ words "death" and "silence"

multiple times, and this repetition creates the effect of the death of the child echoing off the bare walls of the house, condemning the mother to a life now defined by quiet desolation, not motherhood. Her obsession with the dog may at first read as illogical, but when stuck with a sentence such as this, wouldn't you do the same?

Perabo's story is the account of a woman in crisis, questioning her very being. Therefore, it is effective in conveying how a devastating loss can shake us to our core, and how the loss of one life can destroy the meaning of another. The mother in the passage is struggling to redefine herself, something we can all relate to, whether or not we have experienced such a loss.