

ENTER NUMBER OF QUESTION	PART B - PROSE FICTION	DO NOT WRITE IN THIS MARGIN
	<p>Susan Perabo presents the mother's grief at the death of her baby as largely irrational and tragic, primarily through characterisation - of the mother and her husband, Todd - and the deceptively trivial narrative of the mother herself.</p>	
	<p>Primarily, the narrative voice of the mother begins her account by noting 'After the baby died, I found it imperative that my German shepherd should understand & accept the concept of death.' This instantly injects humour in an almost oxymoronic fashion, as the initial weight of the baby's death is followed by something so ridiculous as teaching her dog about it. Perabo's choice of the word 'imperative' creates a high sense of irregularity in the notion, as the reader gets the sense that the mother is not prioritising the the</p>	

emotional development of her dog over the actual loss of her child, an idea which Perabo continues throughout the piece.

Perabo then goes on to effectively mirror the actions of Stu in ~~the~~ the mother herself, whereby the dog almost becomes a symbol of the mother. The inference that 'with all our friends and relatives round smothering Stu with affection', and her husband Todd ~~is~~ preparing casseroles 'accidentally on-purpose' for her to 'indulge in' could perhaps be perceived as the mother's account of the response to the death by those around her. Furthermore, the idea that Stu - a dog - 'had a big hand in raising' the baby is ~~for~~ similarly suggestive of the dog representing some sort of transferred epithet for the mother's grief, taking on typical responses that are out of

notion that the mother's grief is almost a danger to herself and her own mental state and involves a certain level of denial. 'Todd' and the relatives had cleaned ~~out~~ it out the day of the funeral because they said it was just too sad to look at, gives the impression that in fact she is denying the extent of her grief by passing it on to others, a key idea mobilised by Perabo throughout the piece. The ~~use~~ use of 'stashed' and 'hid' connote stealth and evasion, and suggest that she had to be kept away from the baby's things for fear her grief would worsen in being faced with them everyday. Perabo creates, then, a sense of dramatic irony through the central idea of denial, as we as ~~readers~~ readers can better understand the mother's true intentions and liabilities than she.

The unsettling nature of the benign tone adopted by Perabo is accentuated by the placement of humour, created through the almost mumsy alliteration of 'canine cookies'. This defines the ~~side~~ indifferent side to the mother's grief which alternates so readily with its counterpart of ~~excessive~~ raw emotion.

The previous exploration of the mother's denial has developed now to the mother inventing details. She claims that 'you could tell he was looking for the baby', which both revisits the dramatic irony created by Perabo and evokes a strong sense of pity from the reader, particularly later on in the account where she claims 'In the middle of the night I ~~was~~ woke up and heard the baby crying'. We as readers ~~do~~ know that Stu was neither looking for the baby

nor did the baby cry in the middle of the night.

~~This~~ Here, however, Perabo creates another alternating idea, where the mother is trapped between her own denial and her ~~under~~ perception of the truth. Throughout the piece there are instances where perhaps the mother is aware of her use of Stu as a coping mechanism, both in treating him as she would a child - by taking him to the park and trying to teach him the ways of the world, - and in transferring her own actions and feelings onto ~~the~~ him as an outlet for her intense denial. In trying to explain death to Stu - a priority for her grieving mind - she recognises that 'he had no idea what I was talking about'. This then leads Perabo on to a ~~complex~~ discussion of the complexity of the human

condition, whereby as humans we are
~~plagued~~ plagued by our own ability to understand
the world around us: ignorance is bliss.

~~The~~ Perabo further injects humor into the
piece by the means by which the devastated
mother is attempting to teach ~~to~~ Stu about
death: finding old ~~magazines~~ magazines depicting
the deaths of JFK and MLK Jr. ~~As~~ as
though this will make him understand
better. ~~Instead~~ Instead, this, along with
Stu's inability to understand ~~a~~ death as
a whole contributes to Perabo's ultimate
discussion of death, whereby neither humans
nor dogs - nor anyone - can truly understand
death in its needlessness: the death of an
innocent baby juxtaposed with the deaths of
two prominent peace and civil rights figures.

Furthermore, Perabo, through the mother's
inner thoughts, projects ~~the~~ the feelings and

nature of Stu onto Todd, "in another complex anamorphic transferred epithet. While Stu is personified by the projection of the mother's grief, ~~Todd~~ ^{of a dog} the blankness and inability to connectⁿ has been replaced by Todd, whereby he now takes on Stu's detached expression: 'eyes empty like he was a vegetable'... 'Todd didn't seem receptive to the idea'. This shows how, in her grief, the mother further morphs the natures of human and animal, and is somewhat disappointed in her husband seeming lack of grief, which is perhaps ironic given her light-hearted tone. This idea is continued through the introduction of Todd's 'howling noises', where he cries like a dog rather than a person thanks to Perabo's careful word choice.

The alternation between the mother's

denial and acceptance culminates in the trip to the park, where she decides to 'force' Stu down the slide. This could easily be taken as simple humor, but the humor can be perceived as disturbing to the reader as she is ~~for~~ 'forcing' Stu to take on the qualities of her lost child. Pained with her newfound realisation that life can be construed as easier without the baby in trivial senses: no pram to push etc. is also a disturbing culmination of both of Perabo's alternating notions: grief and indifference, denial and acceptance.

Perabo creates the grief of the mother as a means of exploring human complexity through universal experiences; she does this most simply through the nameless mother and baby, removing uniqueness from the case. As a reader, it is also unclear

who the most complex character is, ~~and~~ as Stu and the mother seem to project on to each other. Perabo presents the mother's grief as highly tragic, confusing and elusive, shifting between denial, detachment and a raw dissatisfaction. It could be considered to be born out of guilt: we are told that Todd not sleeping was because to sleep would be to be guilty if the baby died, and subtly we are told that at the time of her death, the mother was sleeping. The extraordinarily intricate relationships between mother and child and man and beast prove for a deeply tumultuous, ~~and~~ disturbing, but no less empathetic portrayal of the mother's grief, which Perabo explores through characterisation, narrative, ~~and~~ and ~~and~~ humour, and ultimately ends with the conclusion that the true

meaning of death eludes us all, as her
troubled character ^{seemingly} resolves herself at the
end of the story.