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Poem Review: My Papa's Waltz

In 1948, a man named Theodore Roethke published a poem called "My Papa's Waltz". "My Papa's Waltz" is about a father and his son having fun before bed by dancing. The narrator is a young boy describing the fun time he had with his father. The author is recreating a vivid picture of a peculiar father/son relationship. The poem has at least four rhyming stanzas, and the author develops the poem using simile, word choice, imagery, and rhyme.

To begin with, Roethke's word choice shows evidence about his relationship with his father. Roethke chose the waltz because it's a partner dance, like the saying "It takes two to tango." the waltz is a dance that shows the relationship between the partners in this case the boy and his father in their relationship. By using the waltz, the author shows that the son and the father have a clumsy but fun relationship. Next, Roethke had a phrase that said "We romped until the pans slid from the shelf." I read in the dictionary that romped means, "To play in a boisterous, lively way," Which means they were probably jumping up and down and stomping while dancing. The final example of word choice in the poem said that "Mother was frowning in countenance," Roethke probably meant that there mother was upset that they were destroying "her" kitchen. I said "her" because I meant that because a mother spends most of her time in the kitchen cooking dinners, cleaning the kitchen, and just chilling out. I didn't know what "countenance" meant until I looked it up and found out it meant "a person's or people's face

or facial expression”, so I assumed that countenance meant that it’s the way her face looks when she is upset like my mother when she seems upset.

In addition, the author, Roethke uses imagery throughout to the poem. “We romped until the pans slid from the kitchen shelf .,” was in the poem. Although there is not that much detail in this phrase it is still easy to imagine the ^{scene} theme, which is the boy and his father causing a ruckus by just dancing. Also, the author writes in the poem “You beat time on my head with a palm caked by dirt.”which is another example of imagery. The author probably gives evidence to match to the reader to the conclusion that the son was being hit by his father who was an potentially an abusive father. The father seemed like an alcoholic because of the first and second line in the first stanza, “The whiskey on your breath could make a small child dizzy”. But if you look a bit deeper in the poem’s meaning you can tell that the father might be tapping the beat on the son’s head and that the abusive part was just an assumption of the reader. His hand might be caked by dirt, which makes you question why? It’s because his father might be a construction worker or has a job that requires you to get your hands dirty like a gravedigger or a garbage man or a sewage pipe cleaner.

Finally, the author has only one simile which is “But I hung on like death.” The young boy probably had to hold on tight to his father so he doesn’t fall off of him and ruins their fun. The narrator is also trying to hold on to the good memories that him and his father is trying to hold on to so they can always look back and laugh at the good times they shared.

In conclusion, after reading and analyzing, “My Papa’s Waltz”, I thought it was an interesting poem. The author interpretation to make you think of two different ideas at once while reading about a father who may be an alcoholic and a young boy who seems to be having fun. The author creates a

peculiar relationship between father and son by showing that by using literary tools of imagery, simile, and word choice so we can better understand this relationship, and help those who are confused by it in the future. I can relate a little bit to the boy and his father because when I was little, my dad and I used to do a lot of things together like go to the park or play a game every now and then like hide and seek. Even though he never liked to dance, my father is a good man and I love him to the end.