

Essay B (329 words)

In Birthday Party, Katharine Brush uses many literary devices to bring about her purpose. Among them are the use of onomatopoeia, the use of assonance, and the repetition of certain phrases.

The first device she uses is onomatopoeia. This is using words that sound like actions, as in “Boom”, or “splat”. In line eleven, Brush uses the word “pattering” to describe the applause that was given after the piano played happy birthday. This is important to the story because it shows that there weren’t a bunch of people at the restaurant. This led the man to become even more embarrassed, which led him to stammer something curt to his wife.

Brush also uses assonance to describe certain actions during her story. By saying “something , quick, curt, and unkind”, she uses the hard “c” sound to portray the words the man said as truly hurtful. She also uses the “h” sound in the line “heartbrokenly and hopelessly, . . . “. This assonance shows that the wife was truthfully hurt by her husband’s words. It also makes the mood more somber, and the reader gets on the side of the wife.

In Birthday Party Katharine Brush chooses to repeat several key phrases. Among them are “and indignant at his wife for embarrassing him”, and some punishing thing, quick and curt and unkind.” In such a brief exposition, one may wonder why Brush chose to do this, but there is a reason. She wants the reader to almost do a double take at those points. This breaks up any reading patterns. It stops and makes the line before it stand out.

By using onomatopoeia, assonance, and the repetition of phrases, Katharine Brush is successful in her attempt to get across this message: Many times people react angrily because they react to quickly. Patience and understanding would let the man find out that his wife only did the birthday things for him because of their love, not to embarrass or spite him.

Essay F (681 words)

As clichéd as it is, many times appearances can be deceiving. People are adept at putting on a façade to cover up the true state of their lives, at putting on a happy face even when they are collapsing inside. ~~The~~ In her short story, Katharine Brush writes about a seemingly happy incident in which a wife prepares a birthday surprise for her husband. However, the husband’s cruel ingratitude causes the façade of normalcy to collapse, and his wife is left devastated. Through the use of detailed description, anonymity of the characters, and repetition of sounds and phrases, Brush suggests that even songs and birthday cake can’t fix or hide a marriage that is broken inside, and that we can’t always put on a ~~happy face~~ smile.

Brush creates a very detailed description of the husband and wife at ~~in~~ the restaurant. The man has a “round, self-satisfied face,” and the wife is “fadingly pretty.” As the author suggests, there is nothing out of the ordinary about them. Once the narrator realizes that this is actually an Occasion with a capital O, she begins to notice ~~the~~ and ~~details~~ describe the details that the wife tried so hard to include. The cake is glossy with a pink candle, ~~the~~ and there is an orchestra with both violin and piano. These details suggest the time and effort the wife put into surprising her husband, and it serves to make it all the more pathetic when her husbands rejects her. Brush’s use of detail emphasizes that adornment cannot substitute for substance, especially in a relationship.

Another technique Brush employs is anonymity of character. We don’t know anything about the narrator, and the husband and wife have o names. They are simply an average “couple in their late thirties.” This anonymity adds universality to the situation. They are not just a husband and wife; they are every husband and wife who has tried to make their relationship seem happy and gay when it is not. There are few things more painful than making a sincere effort to reach out to someone and getting it thrown back in your face. We have all experienced this, and we project our own experiences onto this hapless wife and feel her pain as our own. At once, we are the creators and observers of a façade that just doesn’t hold up to reality, and this is made possible by the anonymity and universality of the characters.

Another technique Brush uses is repetition of particular phrases and sounds that add pathos to the wife’s situation. Her plans are constantly referred to in a pejorative way (“little surprise”, “little cake”, etc.) making them seem like they lack importance, when really, they mean everything to the wife. Though the

surprise is little, she “beam(s) with shy pride.” The repetition of “little” ~~sugg~~ foreshadow the husband’s cruel rejection later in the story, and his slack of respect for his wife’s efforts. Another place repetition is very effectively employed is in the last sentence of the story. Brush uses alliteration when she describes the wife crying “under the gay big brim of her best hat.” It is truly pathetic that the wife went to the effort to get dressed up fancy for her husband’s birthday, only to be reprimanded for it. The repetition of the B sound almost sounds like someone crying to themselves as their lips quiver, adding to the pain of the wife. Her efforts to add remorse and fun to an already dead relationship blew up in her face.

Marriages and relationships in general can be destroyed by a lack of respect and sensitivity. Though we do not know the circumstances of the husband and wife’s relationship, his utter cruelty in rejecting her kindness ~~clearly~~ could not have been an isolated event. The public display of the birthday surprise suggests that the wife was trying to convince herself and the world that she had a healthy marriage, when clearly she did not. Through the use of specific details, anonymous characters, and repetition, Brush shows that appearances really can be deceiving.

Essay J (199 words)

In the short story, “Birthday Party” Katharine Bush uses a handful of literary devices to achieve her purpose. The point of view, suspense and type of language used make the reader feel as though he or she was watching the couple in the restaurant.

Katharine Bush uses a first person speaker throughout the entire passage. This allows the reader to feel what the narrator is feeling and to see situations objectively. The reader felt sad for the woman toward the end because that is how the speaker felt ~~Bush uses this to manipulate feelings~~. This is a manipulation because the reader is not able to think for himself, but rather in the sense of the narrator.

The use of language in the story was also a manipulation. The words were not too big or complex as expected by the writers, but average. An everyday person spoke exactly how the story was written. The reader can understand and sympathize with the woman in the story.

The narrator of the story was undefined. It was never said whether a man or a woman was telling the story, or even the age of the speaker. This allows for many people to identify with the feelings of this observer.

Essay L (385 words)

In the short story “Birthday Party” by Katharine Brush, the author uses an anecdote, character description, and change in point of view to portray the shallow and callous nature of society.

The short story is told in an anecdote where a husband is embarrassed rather than pleased that his wife makes a small scene on his birthday. ~~His~~ The author introduces the couple with a small description. He is average, and “self-satisfied” and she is “fadingly pretty.” At once the man is disliked for being self-satisfied instead of humble and the wife is the heroine. The author is ~~a little bit~~ upset that the woman is only fadingly pretty. Perhaps she ~~had been~~ was prettier one time when she wasn’t married.

The first two paragraphs are told in the third person and are relatively formal. The trimmings society demands are seen in the wife’s “best hat” the “pink candle” and the “pattering of applause” by the diners. Such an occasion in a restaurant is not remarkable, yet the reaction of the husband towards the innocence of the occurrence pushed and incensed the author.

Wanting to share the repulsion she felt with her readers, the author switches point of view to the second person. “... You thought ‘Oh, now, don’t be like that!’ when the husband is angered at being embarrassed by a public birthday display. The husband ~~is angry~~ becomes angered because he cares what others think of him. He cared so much that he was willing to punish his wife for her thoughtful thoughtlessness. The husband is so shallow, that he is angered over a birthday present.

The author concludes her story by switching to first person point of view. “I couldn’t bear to look at the woman then . . .” she admits. She is saddened and angered at the occurrence; that the demands of others would turn a lovely celebration into a reprimand. At the end of the story, the wife is crying under the brim of her “gay . . . best hat,” or rather under the oppression of society that the hat represents.

The importance and judgement of public opinion is soundly lamented in “Birthday Party.” The author does not protest the occurrence, but rather uses an anecdote of an ordinary event to bring the issue to light.

Essay P (370 words)

Katharine Brush’s “The Birthday Party” is a short story about a wife’s birthday surprise for her husband gone terribly wrong. By the end of the story, the reader is left quite sympathetic of the ~~young~~ woman. To achieve the effect, the writer ~~employs~~ uses diction, imagery, structure, and characters’ actions.

Brush is quite descriptive in creating her restaurant scene, ~~using~~ employing a wide array of words to present setting, character, and action. With words such as “unmistakably married,” “shy pride,” and “hotly embarrassed,” the reader’s attention is focused exactly when and where the author wants the reader to notice or feel something a certain way.

The diction of the story also creates vivid imagery. The entire first paragraph presents such a well formulated description of the couple sitting at the table in the restaurant that one can almost reach out and touch them. In the final scene, the woman’s heartbreak is so apparent and so real that the reader can feel genuine pity for her.

The narrator, although no significant figure by any means in the birthday story whatsoever, nonetheless plays an integral role in conveying the mood of the room surrounding the couple. When the narrator sees the man reprimand the woman, he or she instantly thinks, “don’t ~~be~~ like that!” – a sentiment that is also generated in the reader. The narrator is then forced to look away, and sees the woman is still crying when he or she looks up again, further emphasizing a strong sense of pity.

Finally, the very structure of the story enhances its meaning. Although only three paragraphs in the length, the story ~~begin~~ brings us full circle with a build-up to a climactic point and drops into a tragic ending. The tale builds up with happy images of a couple and warm feelings generated with the birthday surprise. However, the husband’s quiet remarks and the woman’s quiet tears cause the story to collapse on itself into pity and melancholy.

Such a short story cannot easily have such a strong effect on a reader as “The Birthday Party.” Katharine Brush is able to achieve such an impact with her ~~use~~ careful employment of literary devices, turning a joyful situation into a heartbreaking tragedy.

Essay S (762 words)

In the deceptively simple passage entitled “Birthday Party,” Katharine Brush achieves near perfection of recreating this scene for the reader through diction, point of view, repetition of sounds, and irony.

The word choice in this passage is nearly as effective as a picture in its ability to create a mental image of this “Party.” Everyone has seen a couple that’s “unmistakably married,” and although the author doesn’t go into great detail about appearances, a “self-satisfied face” and a “fadingly pretty” woman are concepts so universal that anyone can instantly connect with the scene. By capitalizing the word “Occasion,” Brush immediately communicates what is truly going on in this scene. For this older, married couple, eating out at a restaurant is probably about as exciting as life gets, but on top of that, this is a special day, the husband’s birthday. The wife “beamed with shy pride” when her birthday surprise is revealed, and that innocent, uncomplicated statement truly sets the reader up perfectly for the terrible destruction of the scene and that poor woman’s happiness.

Although it happens only once in the passage, a quick change in point of view has a dramatic effect on the reader. For most of the piece, the point of view is third person limited, perhaps from someone else dining at the restaurant. We cannot read the thoughts of the couple, but are completely limited to observation, as we would be if we were actually there. Brush magnifies our removed position by not allowing us or the narrator to hear the “quick and curt and unkind” admonishment made by the husband. Then, abruptly, we are included in the scene with a direct reference: “You looked at him and you saw him and you thought . . .” by employing the rarely used second person perspective. Brush effectively dumps her readers – albeit unwillingly – in the middle of the action. Indeed, this quick hiatus from the normal vantage point is

exactly what was needed to complete the reader's journey out of a detached reality and into this scene by the author.

Irony completes the reader's sense of disgust at the senseless, hateful actions of the husband. The title "Birthday Party" is the first and most poignant instance of irony. Birthday parties are ubiquitously occasions of joy and celebration, not of apathy and cruelty like this one. The man is indignant at his wife who was obviously trying to make the day special for him. The fact that her extra effort has resulted in this extra meanness from him is so sad and ironic, the reader cannot help but feel bad for the wife. Especially at the very end, when Brush describes her weeping under her "best hat." The woman wanted so much to make her husband happy on his birthday, and all she got was his indignance and needles cruelty. The reader is left contemplating the irony of the situation further by wondering if they are mistakenly married, for she made a mistake of marrying him and of throwing a party he was "hotly embarrassed" about. The irony is strong and meaningful.

Finally, the repetition of sounds is a subtle but important factor in the creation of the mood of this passage. Two noticeable instances of this occur. The first is when the husband says "some punishing thing, quick and curt and unkind." The polysyndeton lends emphasis, and the repetition of the "k" sound underscore the harshness and shortness of whatever the husband said to his wife. This is almost onomatopoeia, mimicking the forceful whispering of the husband in his mean tone so that no one else will hear. In response the wife starts "crying quietly heartbrokenly and hopelessly." The repeated "ly" on the end of the words drags out the phrasing, bringing to mind the desperation of her sobs, and perhaps her effort to control them, but only able to delay for a time before they come on again, stronger. Also, in that sentence the "h" sound at the beginning of a word is repeated three times, symbolizing her heavy sobs and gaspy breathing through her tears. We cannot see the thoughts of this couple, but the very sounds of the words provided by the author tell us exactly how they are acting and reacting during the incident.

This little story is so packed with literary devices it seems ready to explode. Through diction, point of view, irony, and repetition of sounds, Katharine Brush has masterfully created a scene so realistic we can almost see the smoke form the candle on the birthday, slowly swirling away into oblivion.