

# Poetry Approaches

“What I’ve Done”-Linkin Park

By Clair Susong

# Lyrics

In this farewell  
There's no blood  
There's no alibi  
'Cause I've drawn regret  
From the truth  
Of a thousand lies

So let mercy come  
And wash away  
What I've done

I'll face myself  
To cross out what I've  
become  
Erase myself  
And let go of what I've  
done

# Lyrics contd.

Put to rest

What you thought of me

While I clean this slate

With the hands of  
uncertainty

So let mercy come

And wash away

What I've done

Chorus

What I've done

I start again

And whatever pain may  
come

Today this ends

I'm forgiving what I've  
done

# Novelistic/Dramatic Approach

## Climax

Bob forgives himself for being so wasteful.

## Falling Action

Bob begins changing his ways. He buys a smaller, more compact car and starts recycling his paper and plastics.

## Conclusion

Bob finally feels good about himself and what he's done. He's learned that everyone can make a difference, no matter how small.

## Rising Action

Bob starts to feel bad about his lifestyle, but he doesn't do anything about it because he thinks he couldn't make that much of a difference.

## Introduction

The story begins with Bob, a typical man from the United States. Bob is very wasteful. He drives a big SUV and never recycles.

# Realistic Approach

This song is mainly about realizing that you've done something wrong, but learning to forgive yourself and trying to fix it. One issue that has been mentioned frequently lately is global warming. This song has a message about global warming. Yes, we know we've not been taking care of our planet the way we should, but if we forgive ourselves, like the song says, we can start trying to make things right again.

# Thematic Approach

The theme and lesson of this poem is simply to forgive yourself. We all make mistakes, but it's important to get over yourself and learn from them. Even if you might not be sure of yourself you have to be confident and “clean [your slate] with...hands of uncertainty” as the lyrics state. Everyone deserves second chances, and third, and fourths, so learn to move on and use them.

# Allusion Approach

The song “What I’ve Done” is used in the soundtrack of the movie Transformers. In the movie, an alien race called autobots are searching for something they call the allspark, which can help keep them alive. Archibald Witwicky finds one of the autobots, and the autobot gives him a map to show him where the allspark is hidden. A century later his grandson, Sam Witwicky, played by Shia Labouff, buys a car that is actually an autobot and finds the map. The song “What I’ve Done” is used when Sam fully realizes the effects of his grandfather finding the autobot. His life has been completely changed due to the autobots.

# Musical Approach

There is really no rhythm or rhyme in this piece. The most common types of feet found are iambic feet and anapestic feet. There are also a few amphimacer and trochaic feet. The only pattern I could find was that each verse and even the chorus begin with iambic dimeter. Often the lines only have one foot. Sometimes, such as in the second verse, the verse starts out as only one foot, but by the end of the verse the foot has been added on to in each line. There were not any cases of alliteration, assonance, or consonance that I could find. The effect of the short lines is that you pay more attention to the words because they are given in short bursts.

# English Teacher Approach

In lines two through three there is an example of both parallelism and an anaphora. Lines six and twelve are hyperboles. Also in lines seven and eight there is personification because mercy can't actually come or wash anything away. As far as the text goes there is not much in the way of figurative language, but the music video uses many juxtapositions to get the point across. Images of an overweight man are shown side-by-side with images of starving people from Africa. This really adds to the effect of the video. Instead of just showing the people from Africa, the overweight man really helps you understand the comparison.

# Significant Event Approach

This song was written very recently, so it deals with some very recent issues. The music video is the best place to look to understand the song. In the music video there are images of the 9/11 attacks. There are also images of starving people from Africa and images that pertain to global warming such as images of polar bears and penguins. All of these are concerns that have been emphasized in the past decade, and many of the images depict things that could have been helped if the leaders of the world had taken some responsibility and some action.

# Art History Approach



# Art History Approach contd.

The images on the previous page are similar to some of the images on the music video for “What I’ve Done.” The image of the polluted city is shown next to pictures of famous places in the world such as Stonehenge and the pyramids because we are slowly destroying our world by polluting it more and more each day. Animals such as the polar bear and the elephant will be gone even sooner than the famous places because they are already endangered. Images of the starving people in Africa are shown because we can help these starving people, but everyone needs to help. Finally the picture of Saddam Hussein’s statue being pulled down is shown because it is an example of people finally taking some responsibility and doing something good for all of mankind.

# Structural Approach

The main shift in this song is at the end of the last verse. All throughout the rest of the song the singer is mad at himself for not helping the world around him. Finally in the last line of the last verse he decides to forgive himself and move on with his life.