Sylvia Plath Discussion

[Sylvia Plath reads "Daddy": Recording on Youtube. (Links to an external site.)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hz1ar58BIM)

[Full text of Sylvia Plath's "Daddy" (Links to an external site.)](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48999/daddy-56d22aafa45b2)

The narrator identifies herself with the plight of the Jews during the Nazi regime in Germany. Using the nightmarish scenario of the holocaust as a metaphor for the daughter's relationship with her German father taps into historical depth and meaning.  Using poetic techniques, the poem is depersonalized and taken beyond mere confession of a daughter’s feelings for her father.  The poem is about something more.

What might that something more be?  Let’s answer that question by looking at the main poetic technique used in the poem, metaphor.

Throughout the poem, Plath uses metaphors and similes to describe the father in the poem.  He is compared to a black shoe, a bag full of God, a giant, marble statue, a Nazi, a swastika, a fascist, a sadist, and a vampire.

Consider the possibility that the Father (Daddy and all the comparisons) is an overall metaphor for something else, something even bigger, such as [patriarchy (Links to an external site.)](https://www.dictionary.com/browse/patriarchy).  [(Links to an external site.)](https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jun/22/the-age-of-patriarchy-how-an-unfashionable-idea-became-a-rallying-cry-for-feminism-today)

[Read a little about patriarchy (Links to an external site.)](https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jun/22/the-age-of-patriarchy-how-an-unfashionable-idea-became-a-rallying-cry-for-feminism-today) to ensure you understand it and then respond the following discussion prompts:

1. Identify a possible theme about patriarchy and explain how Plath uses poetic devices to make that theme.
2. Is it acceptable to use the holocaust in a poem like this, why/why not?

**🏆 Each initial post will be evaluated based on the following:**

🔹It consists of one or two detailed, well-written paragraphs and is a minimum of 300 words in length (using Microsoft Word word count).  Don’t forget to spellcheck and proofread.

🔹It presents a focused insight that directly addresses the discussion prompt.

🔹It does not include research but may sparingly use quotes from the literature to support ideas.

**🏆Replies to classmates will be evaluated based on the following:**

🔹 You replied to two or more classmates.

🔹 Your replies do more than simply agree or say some form of “good job.”  Instead your replies explain *why* you agree or *why* your classmate did a good job. Replies attempt to take an idea further or approach a topic from a new direction. In other words, it adds meaning to the discussion.

🔹 Your replies to at least two classmates are each 100 words or more.

Student 1:  
The major theme I found in "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath is hatred and oppression. Sylvia Plath wrote this poem about her late father to let out her feelings she had held in for a long time. This poem says "I have always been scared of *you"*which is just one line out of many that describes her feelings towards her German father. "And the villagers never liked you. They are dancing and stamping on you. They always *knew* it was you. Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I’m through." That quote is from the end of the poem and it really does a good job of showing and proving the theme. It seems as though her father was not only cruel towards her, but towards a lot of other people because he was a German Nazi during the time of the Holocaust. Her father openly showed hatred to his daughter and to the Jewish people, so she has a lot of built up hatred and oppression towards him. The theme hatred could be used both ways, the way her father treated and hated people, and how she hates and presses her father because of all of his unbelievable actions. Sylvia's built up hatred and oppression towards her father is the reasoning behind this poem. I believe that it is acceptable to tell a story of the Holocaust, especially if the poet, Sylvia Plath, is writing about her experiences. It would not be acceptable to write insensitively about the Holocaust, or about someone else experiences that did not have permission to be told. Since Sylvia is telling her story and her father's story, I believe it is acceptable to write a poem like this about the Holocaust.

Student 2:

"Daddy" by Sylvia Plath is about the loss of her father in which she expressed her grief and paints a picture of the mistreatment she experienced under his care. Sylvia never wishes to see her father again as she describes the torment she lived through because her father was incapable of showing her an ounce of comfort, love, or support. Throughout the poem, Sylvia uses various poetic techniques to express the love, hatred, and emotions of loss. Sylva's main perspective and metaphor for her father, her husband, and the male population in general were that they were the "black shoe", "ghastly statue", "panzer-man", and "vampire".  She also uses enjambment which is the continuation of a sentence because a line with have an unnatural cut off which forces readers to quickly move onto the next line. An example:

“There’s a stake in your fat black heart  
And the villagers never liked you.”

Alliteration is littered throughout as such as "You do not do, you do not do", "ich, ich, ich, ich", "wars, wars, wars".

"The boot in the face, the brute  
Brute heart of a brute like you."

Her father was cruel, harsh, and always cold in her life. She was never able talk to him, able to seek comfort or support from him. She lived for 30 years under her father's oppression and then another seven under the similar oppression of her husband. Despite the lack of love from her father, Sylvia struggled to gain and chase his approval and love. First, she prayed and dreamed to bring him back to life when she was a young child, then she tried to join him in the grave at the tender age of 20. With her attempt failed, she yearned and searched for a man that resembled her passed father and successfully found a man to marry because he was just as cruel, cold, and harsh as her father.

I do not know and do not have a solid opinion on whether t was okay to use the Holocaust in this poem. On one side, art is about expression and if Sylvia truly believed and felt as if her childhood resembled the torment the Jews experienced, then I have no authority to say she can not feel a certain way. On the other side, the victims of the Holocaust experienced unspeaking torture and losses and using their loss in a poem can be viewed as extremely offensive.