

Poetry Analysis of “Head, Heart by Lydia Davis”

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Lydia Davis’s poem “Head, Heart” highlights the communication between the head and heart of an individual with a short poem. Lydia Davis was born in 1947 (Knight and Davis). As he progressed in her career, she developed into a well-known fictional writer and a book critic. Working as a novelist, Davis excelled as a short story writer as well. Based on her work, she won different American writing awards. The ten-line verse poem “Head, Heart” is termed as one of the exceptional works done by Lydia Davis (Knight and Davis). In this paper, an overview of the tone, word choices, imagery, figures of speech, and other elements present in the poem will be highlighted and assessed.

The meaningful interaction between head and heart starts with the discussion of a fair share of loss suffered by both entities, who are suffering from distress. In the time of great sorrow faced by the heart and head, the heart is consoled by the head as it is considered the duty of the head to comfort the heart in its moment of sorrow. Davis depicts the perception of heart and head in a very realistic manner that lets the spectators associate with entities as their own heart and head. Throughout the poem, Lydia Davis tries to encourage and induce a sense of sympathy among the readers, helping them to imitate their individual lives as they try remembering their own conversations with their head and heart, as the poem encourages the individual to help their head and heart to develop a contract of helping one another, as the poem mentions:

“Head is all heart has.

Help, head. Help heart (Head, Heart, 9-10).”

Even though “Head, Heart” seems to be a short poem with ten lines of free verses, however, a close assessment of the poem highlights that each line in the poem finishes with the term “Heart” in it. As the reader reads the words head and heart, an emotional sensation is felt by the reader. Moreover, the title remains relevant to the poem as the heart and head are mentioned several times in the poem (“Lydia Davis – Head, Heart”). However, the reader can also feel a sensation of confusion. The confusion is evident in lines five to eight, as the poem mentions:

“But the words of the head do not remain long in

the ears of the heart.

My heart is so new to this.

I want them back, says Heart (Head, Heart, 5-8).

The major theme in Head, Heart is the emotional connection between the two entities and how the heart is dependent on the head. Being set in heartbreak, the tone of the poem is kept on the emotional side. Even though the poem lacks major rhythm, with this short and powerful poem, the idea of the struggle faced by individuals on a daily basis is highlighted. As the poem mentions in the line “Heart weeps” (Head, Heart, 1), the speaker addresses the perspective of how individuals lose their loved ones and face heartbreak as a result of this. The perspective of losing a loving relationship or the possibility of losing a loved one to death is addressed well with the idea of the weeping heart in the poem. Figures of speech are an important element of the poem, as the head and heart are the two important things someone focuses on when making an important decision in their life (Knight and Davis). Hence, a constant fight about whether to listen to the heart or head is an evident part of the individual. With the theme of heartbreak, the steps involved in the grief of a person are elaborated. First, the heart weeps; the second step is highlighted with the line of

“Head tries to help heart.

Head tells heart how it is, again: You will lose the ones you love (Head, Heart, 2-3).”

When people face loss unexpectedly and out of the blue, they do not know how to tackle it. They start by crying and head, heart comforting perspective, hoping to receive a positive response from this, as the poem mentions the comfort given by the head to the heart makes the heart feel better. People are not aware of their positive direction as the main entities of the heart and head interact with one another as the realistic parts of the [human body](#). Heart and head are a living perspective of the human body, which adds more meaning to the poem. The heart understands the inevitable things eventually after going through moments of sadness. The time needed by the heart to process things is supported by the head. Hence, the heart relies on the head.

“They will all go. But even the earth will go,

someday.

Heart feels better, then (Head, Heart, 4-5)."

Hence, Lydia Davis's poem "Head, Heart" is a poem about individuals losing their loved ones. When an individual is sad about someone they love, the heart has no reason to believe that everything will be good. However, the head understands the inevitable loss as nothing on this earth lasts forever. Such rational explanations give calm to the heart and head in the life of a person. Even though comfort is temporary, individuals still miss their loved ones and keep on calling the head to comfort the heart. The writer is giving a message of hope to the individual that things will be good eventually.

Work Cited

Knight, Christopher J., and Lydia Davis. "An Interview With Lydia Davis". *Contemporary Literature*, vol 40, no. 4, 1999, p. 525. *University Of Wisconsin Press*, doi:10.2307/1208793.

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