

The passage from The Crossing conveys a sense of awe and mystery, and in doing so, imparts the depths of the man's emotions towards the wolf. The mourning for the wolf is raised to an elegiac level, ~~and~~ ^{as} the man reflects upon the wolf, "at once terrible and of a great beauty." ~~The~~ Several devices are employed to effectively enhance the tone of reverence and loss, ~~and~~ including figurative language, diction, sentence structure, rhythm, and repetition.

The pace of the passage fluctuates, alternating from short, detached sentences, such as "He squatted over the wolf and touched her fur. He touched the cold and perfect teeth," to unusually long sentences which are connected by conjunctions (mostly "and") and which serve to reflect the outpouring of emotions and the blurred response the man is experiencing, as in lines 41-47 ("The eye... before her"). This dichotomy in sentence structure ~~only underline~~ emphasizes the periods where the man is overcome by remembrances and extrapolations.

The figurative language interspersed within the passage is also highly effective, causing an air of mystery, ~~and~~ wonder, and respect. This mood is set when the cries of the coyotes are described, "seemingly to have no origin other than the night itself." The analogy of the sheet steaming ^(lines 21-24) enhances the aura of power and sacredness by ~~fiction~~ such as "celebrants of some sacred passion" and "burning scrim". This sense of ~~awe~~ ^{religiousness} and power is again

by his comparison to a "dozing penitentiary." A sense of the awing mixture of terror and beauty is evidenced when the narrator compares the wolf's soul to "flowers that feed on flesh," introducing an element of ~~the almost horrifying, yet~~ ~~inspiring~~ ~~in the depiction of the wolf.~~ how "all was fear and marvel" regarding the wolf.

The repetition of certain phrases and words emphasized the ideas behind them. For example, "What we may well believe has power to cut and shape and hollow out of the dark form of the world surely if wind can, if rain can."

The repetition contained within this sentence really clarifies the point that our beliefs shape our perception. Also, the repetition of "and" throughout the passage, as in lines 15-21, brings a rhythm to the passage while providing a sense of the man not really realizing what he is doing, only going through the motions.

The unspecific pronoun "He" actually provides a contrast where the grief of the man becomes more poignant. The passage ~~slowly~~ metamorphosizes from a more detached account about man's treatment of the body to a touching scene where the man reflects upon the wolf and her spirit.

The final ~~paragraph~~ ^{thoughts}, and especially the last line, is made more important by the reflections of the man. The last line is particularly emphasized by the complete lack of punctuation, ~~and~~ which

Conveys the magnitude of the man's loss. His
utter grief over losing the wolf is fully revealed to
the reader in it, ^{especially the last 4 words,} ~~in stating,~~ in stating, "But which
cannot be held never be held and is no flower
but is swift and a huntress and the wind itself is
in terror of it and the world cannot lose it!"

The importance of the wolf's hole in "the
possible world ordained by God of which she
was one among and not separate from" is
made known to the reader by the man's thoughts
and actions. In doing so, and in the setting (with
the sun beginning to "faintly gray" the east), a
mood of respectful reverence and wonderful
power is created. The ~~the~~ man is shown to be
deeply impacted by his experience.

In the dark of the night, it runs swiftly along the mountains, up the slopes, past the creek, faster than the winds. What is this "it" that runs so freely after the body is dead, and decaying? It is surely the soul that escapes after death and returns to its home. In the passage from McCarthy's "The Crossing" the soul of the dying wolf leaves the body and the man carrying him, to return to his homeland. McCarthy uses imagery and the description of the complete narrative experience to recount the philosophical revelation that the protagonist encounters as he caresses the death in the tranquility of nature.

An outstanding quality about this narrative is the care with which each imagery is told. One imagery-repetitive image is that of dark and light. The narrative begins in the dark, though close to dawn. The coyotes call from the "dark shapes of the rimlands", the image giving a clear picture of the grandeur of nature in which the narrator now sits. There is also the image of the weak fire lit in the cold darkness, a symbol ^{perhaps,} for some hope after death. The fire at first dies; the main character must fan it and delight it, until the dawn sky begins to gray.

What the main character experiences at dawn can be called mysticism, a philosophical epiphany, and a new window of understanding. Such a tone of mystery and enigma is created in the final paragraph (lines 40-65) through the change in the style of writing. The narrative here uses long sentences that run continuous as a stream. The sentences begin to lose the ordinary grammatical form that the narrative followed earlier; "What blood and bone are made of but can themselves not make on any altar nor by any wound of war." The narrative ~~steps~~ leaves its narrative flow, and begins to build on the image of what is passing by the main character's closed eyes, as the limited or omniscient third person narrator can do. The passage has religious allusions, "ordained by God", as well as personification that breathes life into the mountain "the flowers feed on flesh", the wind and rain "cut and shape" the sand, and the soul runs wildly through this nation.

The experience teaches illuminates the power of nature and the strength of the soul to the main character. He, in reaching out "to hold what cannot be held," grasped in the moment the mystery of death and eternity, the enigma that is conveyed through the powerful images in this narrative.

C

The techniques employed by McCarthy here create an increasingly prickled and thoughtful recollection of the main character's remorse. The first lines give no indication of any problem until it bluntly says, "his trousers were stiff with blood." This introduces, in a startling way, the main character's dilemma. There are only hints of guilt thus far, however. This is hinted at by the explicit attention to the state of the wolf, for instance, "she was stiff and cold and her fur was bristly..." Also, later there are coyotes howling in a haunting way because "their cries seemed to have no origin other than the night itself."

The second paragraph gets more definite about half-way through it. The sheep was washed of the wolf's blood and then set by the fire on a freestone pole. This is still unconvincing until the work talks about how this scene resembled "a burning scrim standing in a wilderness... some sacred passion... fled in the night at the fear of their own doing." This account seems severely tinted by an attitude of guilt and self-incrimination equal to that of Poe's beating heart and that of *Crime and Punishment*. However, this is over a wolf, not a human being.

The third paragraph leaves absolutely no room for doubt. It starts with, "he fell asleep... like some dreary penitent." When he awakes he sat by her "and closed his own eyes that he could see her running in the mountains..." Next, there was a virtual role-call of her prey "ordained by God of which she was one among and not separate from"

This is a further statement of his guilt. Then he "reached to hold what cannot be held," which is the spirit of the wolf. What is left of the passage is mostly spent on elaborating on the concept of that spirit. It was "terrible and of great beauty, like flowers that feed on flesh." As the emotion gets higher, punctuation lessens and what comes out is a Hemingway-like burst of thought. It can shape rock "surely if wind can, if rain can." "But which cannot be held ~~to~~ never held and is no flower but is swift and a heartless and the wind itself is in terror of it and the world cannot lose it." This demonstrates how McCarthy thinks of that spirit, and how the main character realizes these things through his guilt and remorse. The main character gets increasingly emotional and philosophical as the author relates, ~~without mentioning that~~. Although there are no quotation marks, any tags on the thoughts stating that they are those of the main character, it is obvious through McCarthy's style.

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Question 2

Sample A

This ponderous analysis captures and conveys the thematic impulses of the passage as well as its powerful artistry. The devices the essayist discusses are familiar and conventional — "figurative language, diction, sentence structure, rhythm, and repetition" — but the comments as to how they contribute to the atmosphere of mystery and reverence in the passage are astonishingly astute: probing, precise, and illuminating. The student never falls upon paraphrase or recapitulation of plot to provide an organization for these remarks, and he or she sustains the connections between observed details and their overall function in the poem. A few spelling errors and other brief lapses (such fine points as inconsistencies with respect to placement of quotation marks with other punctuation, for instance — hardly a hanging offense) mar an essay that otherwise requires little revision, even if its writer had additional hours to accomplish that task. The student sees with a keen inner eye the situation described by McCarthy — and fully comprehends its significance. What 200-level college literature class would not welcome this student's presence?

The studied approach reflected in this outstanding analysis is effectively contrasted with the imaginative flights of another fine essay (see the next sample) that evokes the spirit of McCarthy's piece in its own introduction.

Sample B

Some readers might resist as indulgent the emotional renderings of this essay; those who disdain McCarthy's passage as melodramatic to a fault would perhaps similarly dislike this student effort. Yet the student's language clearly conveys a sensitive reading of the passage and an ability to grasp the full intensity of both text and sub-texts. Enthusiastic response to the tone of the passage and faithful evocation of the high mystery conveyed in the experience that the McCarthy piece describes are underscored with keen analytical commentary.

The discussion of the light and dark imagery of the passage, particularly the extended reference to the fire, points to the relationship between concrete, literal image, and symbol and thus one very important authorial technique. Examples of effective syntax are threaded through a number of other significant observations about imagery — all in the service of capturing and conveying the atmosphere and mood of the transfiguring event.

Perhaps additional development of all these details would have made this essay stronger, but the essay as is demonstrates admirable focus on the contributions of some of the most effective images to the author's emphatic emphasis on "mystery" and "enigma." The integrity of the student essay as it shaped its own design — as well as the student's appreciation for links between sense and spirit — make it worthy of reward.

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Question 2 (cont.)

Sample C

Aware and intrigued by the guilt of the protagonist, the writer of this essay prompts questions about possible familiarity with the novel — or perhaps negates the notion that guilt is less than self-evident within the context of the passage as excerpted. However, tracking the reader's growing awareness of the protagonist's guilt may not be the best way to illuminate the dramatic transformations within this text. Nonetheless, the student writer's observations about the "burning scrim" and "dosing penitent" support his argument well, and this essay is focused and well-directed.

Though allusions to the mission and style of other writers do not always provide effective connections, this student's comparisons of McCarthy's characterizations and prose strategies to those of other authors are not without merit. The Dostoevsky may be reaching, but the reference to Hemingway's style is apt — and represents perhaps another evidence of previous contact with this novel. No matter: the rhythms and syntax compare, and the educated linkage adds to the value of this student's discussion.

This essay provides too little analysis of the passage to rank with the essays above. But the material that the essay does contain is intelligent and cohesive. This essay then makes an upper-half score.