Jeremy Essay, Research Paper

email: dakselrod@hotmail.comtitle: Jeremy A Richardson High School student fatally shot himself in front of his classroom of about thirty students. This headline appeared in a Texas paper a couple of years ago. If this had happened during the medieval times a bard would have certainly written a song about it. In contemporary society, modern day bards, whom we call them musicians, express their feeling about issues and problems in our society through their music. For example, the song Jeremy, by Pearl Jam, relates to the problem of teenage suicide in America through its lyrics and poetic devices, like repetition and metaphors. Teenage suicide has become a huge problem in America during the last two or three decades. In the years from 1950 to 1980 s the suicide rate of people, ages fifteen to twenty four has more than tripled. After the 1980 s suicide rate decreased, due to the fact that society recognized as a problem. Methods of dealing with this problem were invented and applied, such as counseling and stronger family values. Now, in the 1990 s the suicide rate is going up once again because the problem is being neglected. Currently, teenage suicide is the third leading source of deaths among teenagers. Fifteen out of 100,000 successfully commit suicide (applies the just the adolescent part of the population), and only God knows how many teenagers try to commit suicide. Many of them fail and are left disabled or emotionally scarred for the remainder of their lives. The first step of dealing with this problem is to recognize that it exists; only then we can find means of dealing with it. Thanks, to musicians like Pearl Jam, the problem is being acknowledged more and more. As soon as we all believe that we have a problem, we can eliminate it. The song, Jeremy,” actually depicts a real teenager who committed suicide. The article published in a Texas paper about this boy inspired Pearl Jam to write the song. It is essential to know some background story about this incident before analyzing the lyrics. Jeremy Wade Delle was sixteen years old when he shot himself in front of a class room of about 30 students with a .357-caliber Magnum. Because he had missed class, the teacher in his second-period English class told Jeremy to get an admittance slip from the school office. Instead, he returned with the gun. He walked directly in front of the classroom. Miss, I got what I really went for, he said, then placed the barrel in his mouth and fired, according to the police report. The shooting occurred before the students or the teacher could react. This incident quickly spread and stunned everyone in Richardson, Texas. Sgt. Pennington, the investigating officer, said Jeremy apparently had given some thought to his actions because he left a suicide not with a classmate. Jeremy s attendance was very poor. He was in counseling with his father. His parents divorced in 1979, according to Dallas County Court records. Jeremy s classmates reported him troubled by his relationship with his father. The few students who knew Jeremy personally described him as a loner. The teenager was very antisocial and most of the time sad and depressed. Since this was the first suicide in this town since 1988, the word of it quickly spread throughout the community. After everyone knew about the problem, ideas, and answers started popping up. The town quickly found counselors to help everyone in the school deal with their emotions. Experts gathered to speak in front of the students of different schools affected by this incident. Since the town was able to recognize this problem they dealt with it effectively. Pearl Jam seized the opportunity and decided to write a song to educate the rest of the world about this ongoing and increasing problem. Even if you are not a rock music fan, you have to have heard this song on the radio because of its high rank on the music charts a couple of years ago. The song is characterized by the constantly repeated lines, Jeremy spoke in class today. This sentence is the most important idea in this song. In fact, this is the only direct clue the song gives to the idea of suicide, and even this clue is a metaphor. Jeremy was always a loner. He never related to his classmates; he kept to himself. Jeremy was not the type of person that would have joined a class discussion or would have raised his hand to answer a question. Indeed, Jeremy was not the kind of person who would speak up in class. His suicide was the only way Jeremy had actually communicated with the rest of the world; it was the only way Jeremy could get the world s attention. This is the most important idea of the song, but this is not the only clue the song gives to suicide. To better understand the meaning of the entire song, I will analyze it one stanza at a time. At home, drawing pictures of mountain tops, with him on top. Lemon yellow sun, arms raised in a V. These are the opening lines of the song. Drawing pictures of mountains and the sun sounds like a very healthy activity. Usually this implies that a person is happy and satisfied with life. To a psychologist, the sun would mean that Jeremy s life is full of happiness and joy, but he would be dead wrong. The grotesque words, The dead lay in pools of maroon below, follow the sadness-free lines. This is the first clue given by the song to Jeremy s very disturbed state of being. Notice the absence of rhyme in this paragraph. The same style is observed throughout the rest of the song. After reading the lyrics about one hundred times, I came to the conclusion that this was done on purpose. In order to focus attention on details and ideas of this very serious subject, the author eliminated rhyme from his lyrics. This makes the listener focus on detail and message of the song more, than he would if he was searching for a particular word that rhymes with the previous line. When you listen to a song written with rhyme, you tend to search for the next rhyming word. In this process you might not notice an important idea, like the example of assonance in the last line (pools of maroon). It takes away the readers attention from the normal ideas of a healthy person (drawing happy pictures) to the grotesqueness of drawing a group of dead, bleeding people in an otherwise calm scene. The first stanza is the introduction to what was going on in Jeremy s head when he killed himself.

Daddy didn t give attention to the fact that mommy didn t care. These lines begin to analyze Jeremy s family life. I have discussed the fact that Jeremy was in counseling with his father. The reason s are actually unknown because this information is kept confidential. Nevertheless, this illustrates that the child came from a family that was very far from perfect. Jeremy s mother left his life in 1979, after her divorce with his father. Pearl Jam interpreted all this information in just one sentence. Even though there were no poetic devices used in these lines, they are effective nonetheless. King Jeremy the wicked ruled his world, is a very powerful metaphor. Jeremy always lived in his own world; he kept to himself. No one really knew what he was thinking about, what was on his mind. During all this time Jeremy was inventing a plan to revenge the world for being so insensitive. Jeremy ruled his own world. He was a wicked king, creating a master plan of revenge, in his one-man universe. He was an innocent person to the outside world, but wicked enough to conceive this violent act of vengeance. Through the repetition of the words, Jeremy spoke in class today, the writer introduces his listener to the main idea of his song. Next, the author begins to describe what Jeremy was holding inside of his head. We realize how a harmless person, who everyone picks on, can become the most violent creature on the planet. Some people have a tendency to keep all their anger and feeling repressed in their subconciousness. The subconciousness is not an abyss; sooner or later it will overflow and the feelings will come out, and this is what happened to Jeremy. Everyone, including the author remembered picking on him because no one expected him to answer back. But they unleashed a lion, and paid for their mistakes — here, again the author used a metaphor. By comparing Jeremy to a lion, the author makes us realize what Jeremy was like when he shot himself. A lion stalks his prey until he is unquestionably ready. Then he gathers all his might and leaps for the final kill; much like Jeremy was building up inside for his last hunt. How could I forget? is a rhetorical question the author used to show that this incident is impossible to forget. This is a strong poetical device that forces the reader to analyze the situation on his/her own. Instead of just being informed that it s unforgettable, the reader has to think about how hard it is to forget. The repetition of an entire stanza allows the author the put emphasis on the fact that Jeremy came from a dysfunctional family. Daddy didn t give attention, and the boy was something mother wouldn t wear, reminds the reader that no one, including his family cared about him. This makes me think that the child actually had elaborate reasons to commit suicide. Jeremy had no friends as we found out from the testimonies of his classmates. Everyone saw him as a loner and an outcast. Jeremy had no choice but to rule his own world and be his own wicked king. Jeremy had to be the most important persona in his realm, since he wasn t important to anyone in the real one. Jeremy spoke in class today, the repetition of this line throughout the entire song is the most powerful poetic device the author implements. To me, this means that Jeremy always kept everything to himself; he never had courage to speak up. Finally, Jeremy found something inside of him, in his wicked world, that gave him the bravery he needed to speak. The repetition of try to forget this…try to forget this, signifies the seriousness of Jeremy s actions. No one can forget this incident; nothing can be done to erase it from the memory of the people involved and everyone who heard. Try to erase this from the blackboard, at first seems like not a very nice thing to say about the situation. However, it can be a metaphor to an open mind. I think that it means that Jeremy s blood is partially on the hands of his classmates. Usually, when a child can t find love in his immediate family, he finds happiness with his friends, but Jeremy had no friends, and everyone constantly picked on him and teased him for being different. He had no where to retreat, but into his own realm. Jeremy shot himself in front of the people he felt were to blame for his miserable life. There is no better way to end the song than with another repetition of Jeremy spoke in class today. The end of the song combines the two most effective and widely used poetic devices in this song, repetition and metaphor, into one extremely powerful stanza. The entire song can be considered a metaphor because two out of three lines are metaphors which are constantly repeated throughout the song for maximum effect. Minor examples of poetic devices also contribute to he overall effect. The absence of rhyme allows the reader to concentrate on specific details and analyze metaphors to greater extent by freeing him from searching for specific rhyming words. The rare examples of assonance and alliteration take away attention from not so important points and put emphasis on crucial details. This song is truly a work of art. Furthermore, the lyrics send an important message to the society. The song not only explains how important the problem of teenage suicide is, it also provides the listener with a basic set of characteristics of a suicidal teen. Jeremy was a loner with no friends. His family did not care for him, much like the rest of the world. The boy s artwork in the beginning of the song illustrates his troubled personality and antisocial nature. If you do some research on suicide, you will without a doubt find Jeremy s characteristics among the warning signs of suicide. By providing this information and making us think about the problem, the song, Jeremy, by Pearl Jam, brings our society one step closer to preventing the horrible act of suicide.

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