

Question 1: Plants

Charles Darwin's survival of the fittest concept suggests that the inherent competitiveness amongst all species. In the poem "Plants", the poet Olive Senior argues that plants contain this competitive quality through the use of personification, warlike imagery, and 2nd person speaker approach.

Through the semantic field of warlike imagery, Senior greatly portrays the plant's as intent on dominating and eager to spread their seed to the readers. For example, his choice of words such as "imperialistic" (line 8), "colonizing ambitions" (line 18) draws an analogy to the European powers when they expanded their territory back in the 19th century. Senior also uses phrases such as "bent on conquest" (line 13) and adjectives such as "invasive" (line 14) to show the plants' aggressive drive. By his choice of language, Senior presents a unique view of plants that is more ambitious than our usual impression of these natural things.

Another technique Senior used to portray the significance and competitiveness of plants and flowers by personifying them as "special agents". For example, Senior suggests that flowers are "Dressed, perfumed and made up for romancing" (line 23). These are all human qualities as flowers can't "dress up" or make themselves look better. Therefore, by adding human qualities to the flowers, it gives the feeling that the flowers have a hidden agenda and possibly an ulterior motive.

Lastly, through the use of second-person narration, Senior suggests that the readers are naive and are mistaken with their love of plants. This is clear in the phrase, "Don't deny it, my dear, I've seen you sniff and exclaim. Believe me". (line 25-26) It's as if the narrator is directly calling out the reader that they have been missing out on the point. Furthermore, the word choice of "my dear" and calling the reader "innocent", gives the impression that the speaker has an intimate relationship to the implied

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audience, but at the same time much more knowledgeable. The tone, therefore, is quite condescending while being accessible. Through this relationship, Senior impresses on the reader that the plants are competitive and that the readers should know better.

To conclude, Senior challenges readers with her point of plants being dominant and competitive. Both historical allusions and personifications give the plants human qualities and therefore make it more relatable to the reader. Furthermore, although some may find the 2nd person speaker rather condescending, nevertheless, it's also a technique that brings the implied audience much closer to the speaker. As a result, Senior leaves readers with the lasting impression that plants have a strong drive to dominate and reproduce.