

AP Q1 "Plants" Rewrite

Olive Senior offers an intriguing perspective on plants in her 2005 poem "Plants." She challenges the common perception of plants as harmless and simplistic by portraying them as a dominating force that can overwhelm humans in the long run due to their nature. This message is emphasized through Senior's deliberate choice of imagery, diction, and organization.

The imagery associated with plants in this poem paints them as an invasive force in the reader's mind. Senior describes "armies of mangrove on the march," "shoots bent on conquest," and "invasive seedlings seeking wide open spaces" to evoke images of real armies bent on military domination. These descriptions parallel human armies that employ the same tactics to achieve victory, who also march, hunger for conquest, and seek spaces to establish forward bases of operation. In particular, the image of "parachuting seeds and other airborne traffic dropping in" is a clear reference to human paratroopers that were an integral part of many offensives during World War II, once again linking images of the battlefield with plant proliferation. This reinforces Senior's notion that plants, through "the way they breed," are capable of overwhelming and dominating the listener and audience like an invading army.

The diction throughout the poem emphasizes this message by highlighting the manipulative and "imperialistic" ambitions of plants. Senior describes hitchhiking burrs as possessing "colonizing ambitions," implying the subversion of the human race as colonization has historically entailed the subjugation of local peoples and exploiting them for the colonizer's gain. Senior even directly touches on this exploitation, saying that the appealing "sweet fruit" is nothing more than an "instrument to seduce" us into helping their proliferation. The word "seduce" further emphasizes the power of plants, as that word implies that we are so dominated by plants that we willingly help them without any regard for ourselves. The concept of seduction as a whole hinges on one party drawing great benefits from another party who has lost all rational judgement, further solidifying the image of plants being above humans and manipulating us for their own gain.

Senior's use of the word "weed" to end the poem also emphasizes the negative intentions and power of plants. While she had used the term "plant" to start the poem, the discussion ends with "weed," a plant commonly treated with disgust and annoyance by readers and thus carrying a strong negative connotation. Weeds provide no tangible benefit and require great amounts of effort to remove, which makes them a symbol for plants in general in Senior's perspective. After all, she believes that all plants are weeds that provide us with no real benefit, yet they enslave us in expending our efforts to maintain or remove.

Senior makes her message personal and thus more impactful by also organizing her poem to accuse the reader of falling into the plants' ploy. After discussing their imperialistic tendencies, Senior addresses the reader directly and says "I've seen you / sniff and exclaim." This brings the reader into the discussion and further emphasizes the scope of plant dominance by making the reader realize he himself has fallen victim.

In conclusion, Senior employs imagery, diction, and organization to claim that plants are seeking to overwhelm and dominate humans in the long run. She makes us realize that when we bite into an apple, we've actually fallen victim to plants' larger goals of proliferation and subsequent dominance.