Model Essay:

Single Poem The Manhunt

The Manhunt is a poem written by Simon Armitage which talks about both the mental and physical problems that can happen when a man comes home from a war zone. Armitage is a poet who writes about many subjects and hasn’t actually experienced war himself: he said this poem was the closest he has come to experiencing war and reading the poem and other poems should be the closest anyone gets to war in my opinion as it is harrowing and difficult to read. He presents the pain through the damage it causes to a relationship.

Lots of metaphors have been used to convey how fragile the man is “blown hinge of his lower jaw,” which suggests his whole face has been torn apart and that it isn’t even his face anymore instead it is a mechanism which he needs to use in order to talk and eat. It makes him sound less human and is upsetting as we can imagine how much damage has been done to his face. Connotations of “blown” are bombed, ripped up and torn which sounds painful and implies devastation. Further imagery is used when “damaged, porcelain collar bone,” is mentioned in the next verse again this metaphor suggests that his bones, which are normally considered strong, are now fragile and delicate like a china cup. As we move down the poem, we also travel down his body which is suggestive of his wife tracing down the damage that has been caused to him. The persona in the poem was a Bosnian peacekeeper and should never have been damaged like this in the war as the war was over and his job was to keep stability and peace. He was shot in the throat and this caused the destruction of his physical strength.

His wife is talking in the poem and the structure is used to echo the way issues are not discussed or not effectively dealt with. Each stanza is two lines which are very short perhaps to echo the way the relationship is damaged and they now have to have short stilted conversations about what happened as the mental pain is too much for the man to cope with or for the wife to hear about. This suggestion is supported by the phrase “Skirting along,” with the end stopping making it seem as if they are going around the outside of the issues and problems they face but never confronting them. When you skirt something it is a form of avoidance and in this case the avoidance is about not talking about Bosnia. Perhaps, other soldiers need this poem to recognise that it is okay to feel different after you have been injured and that, yes, you will look different and that you will also feel differently. In writing this poem Armitage recognises that not only is the soldier damaged but the wife is too. She is in pain watching her husband suffer and feels at a loss about what to do “buried deep in his mind,” shows this as she knows that he isn’t ready to let go of the pain or to remember it. War has a significant impact and post-traumatic stress disorder is a common side effect of the war which is clearly evident in the poem.

By writing the poem from the perspective of the wife, we learn about the physical and mental discomforts that the soldier has experienced, without him having to admit to them. This may be a clever way of encouraging soldiers to be more open about their experiences at war as they do have support at home, although it is difficult and traumatic for the person supporting them after the event, they do need to speak about it. In conclusion, Armitage highlights pain and suffering for the man, his wife and for the hundreds of other soldiers who have ever been hurt or affected by fighting or going to war.