

“At the heart of the tragic experience is an overwhelming sense of not pity but fear”

Introduction: the tragic experience can be seen to consist of an overwhelming sense of fear rather than pity, prevalent in the poems of Keats and in ‘Death of a Salesman’ (DOAS). Fear is created through using the moment of happiness as a vulnerable moment and leaves the readers and audience fearing the tragic victims’ eventual downfall.

Paragraph 1: *Isabella; The Pot of Basil*

In the poem ‘Isabella’, the tragic experience being an overwhelming sense of fear can be seen through the highs of the moments of happiness. Ultimately, readers expect and are aware of the potentiality of the poem having a tragic ending and so the moments of happiness seem to have undertones of foreboding, leaving the readers with fear.

The beginning of the poem contains many moments of happiness- “and his continual voice was pleasanter to her than noise of trees or hidden trill”, showing the blooming romance between the tragic victims, using the semantic field of nature.

However, Keats doesn’t just describe their love in such an innocence way, he adds warning of their fate and forebodes the dangers of their love, creating fear for their fate. - “Know there is richest juice in poison flowers”, highlights the dangers of their love. Keats may have created this message about the dangers of love due to his own personal experience with love as well as his brothers.

Paragraph 2: *Isabella; The Pot of Basil*

The love between Isabella and Lorenzo can be seen to have a sense of naivety surrounding it, which could create pity for the lovers, however, fear plays a more important role in the tragic experience. Isabella is described as “fair Isabella, poor simple Isabella”- Epithet used connecting her to a tragic fate from the beginning of the poem and creates fear for readers from the start as they worry about the lover’s conclusion. Her being “fair” and “simple” show her innocence about her own fate: being unaware of her eventual fall and the dangers that are soon to come along. The epithet forebodes the lover’s eventual downfall, evoking fear which remains through the poem, despite the moments of happiness.

Paragraph 3: *The Eve of St Agnes*

Fear is created from the start through the harsh descriptions of the setting Keats creates. A medieval castle on a cold night of the eve of St Agnes with “bitter chill” and “frosted breath”, forebode a tragic ending from the initial image presented to the readers- this creates fear as the first feeling for the readers and so remains with them.

Paragraph 4: *The Eve of St Agnes*

The journey that Madeline goes through also creates fear; Madeline is initially presented as “thoughtful” and is “so pure a thing, so free from moral taint”, but she goes through a “painful change”. Whilst this could be seen to evoke fear, the poem then ends with an overwhelming sense of fear at the incompleteness and lack of a resolution as the readers are left with the image that the “lovers fled away into the storm” and “glide like phantoms”. Moreover, this ending can be seen to create fear for the readers about love and the dangers of love, therefore making fear the heart of the tragic experience.

Paragraph 5: *La Bella Dame Sans Merci*

Fear is created through the lack of a resolution and the cyclical ending. Whilst pity can be felt due to the bleakness of the poem, ultimately due to the ending, fear can be seen to have a more overwhelming part in the tragic experiences. The knight is left neither dead nor truly alive, he just remains there and the readers are left fearful for his outcome. The title and message Keats is trying