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Birds in Flight

In this world, there are plenty of topics that we have certain feelings, views, or perspectives towards. Be it politics, ethics, or even who the best baseball team is. With that in mind, people have different perspectives, and perceive things in different ways than others. Even for birds. In their passages written about birds in flight, John James Audubon and Annie Dillard implement both similar and different tactics, such as precise tone, use of words and punctuation, as well as figurative language, in order to convey their experiences witnessing the elegance of flying birds, ultimately moving the reader to develop significant admiration for them.

Throughout their passages, the authors convey their experiences through contrasting tones. Audubon takes a more personal approach within his passage, recalling his specific experience when witnessing the birds. He states, “*I left my house at Henderson, on the banks of the Ohio, on my way to Louisville,*” (Audubon), inviting the reader into his past memories and allowing them to relive the experience with him, establishing a personal tone. You can feel the emotion springing out from his heart as you flow through his story. However, Dillard instead develops her passage in a more romantic tone. She says, “*bashed by the unexpectedness of this beauty,*” (Dillard), focusing more on the subject itself than her own experience. Both of them, however, have the unifying goal of conveying their experience in a specific way, in order to evoke feeling within the reader.

The authors as well take a different approach when it comes their use of words and punctuation. Within Dillard's passage she withholds the main idea in the beginning, building up anticipation and interest in the reader. She starts off by using the periodic sentence "*It was the starlings going to roost. They gathered deep in the distance, flock sifting into flock, and strayed towards me, transparent and whirling, like smoke. They seemed to unravel as they flew, lengthening in curves, like a loosened skein,*" (Dillard), which gives great description and detail, but holds back the main idea from running loose right off the bat and spoiling her story. She further keeps her sentences simple, creating a great sense of rhythm. For Audubon on the other hand, he begins his passage with a loose sentence. "*I observed the pigeons flying from north-east to south-west, in greater numbers than I thought I had ever seen them before,*" (Audubon), displays the main idea right from the beginning, in contrast to Dillard's method of holding off. He also makes great use of longer sentences, which help to add more detail and allow him to be more descriptive. By doing this, the reader is able to more easily step inside his story and picture his experience. His punctuation as well differs from Dillard's simple approach, for his extensive use of commas within his complex sentences add soft pauses between his points, creating a more constant description, and giving the reader more time to take in those points.

Figurative language, however, is greatly dominant within both of their passages. To describe and represent the style in which the birds moved throughout the air, they implement numerous similes. Dillard compares their movement to smoke by saying "*strayed towards me transparent, and swirling like smoke,*" (Dillard), which as well gives off a reticent tone. Audubon recounts "*At once, like a torrent, and with a sound like thunder,*" (Audubon), describing the sound he heard of the birds travelling together. Figurative language in this sense

helps to make the two passages more enjoyable, as well as it makes it easier for the reader to understand what the Audubon and Dillard are attempting to convey.

In the end, both passages were simply about birds. However, the two authors by large took different approaches to the manner of conveying their experiences to sell them as grand adventures. Audubon made his passage more personal, giving great detail as to what his experiences were like, while Dillard focused more precisely on the description of what she saw. When it came to the use of their words, Dillard made use of simple sentences which added fluency and rhythm, while Audubon implemented more complex sentences with numerous commas to add much more detail. Finally, to make their passages more enjoyable and easier to understand, they both made great use of similes to make comparisons to the motion of the birds. It is important to remember that everyone has different perspectives, and the way they perceive things may greatly differ than others. Just like Dillard and Audubon, who discerned their bird watching experiences differently, everybody is unique and thinks differently in their own special way.

Works Cited

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