

Converting notes into an essay: the note stage

Poem for My Sister by Liz Lohead

Possessive pronoun: responsible for sister? Older child.

Structure: begins description memory. Dressing up.

Perspective: distance. Onlooker.

Older sister. Look after. Responsible. Experienced.

My little sister likes to try my shoes, to strut in them, admire her **spindle thin** twelve year - old legs

in this season's styles.

She says they fit her perfectly, but wobbles on their high heels, they're hard to balance.

I like to watch my little sister playing hopscotch, admire the neat hops and skips of her,

their quick peck, never missing their mark, not overstepping the line. She is competent at peever.

I try to warn my little sister about **unsuitable** shoes, point out my **own distorted feet,** the callouses, odd patches of hard skin.

I should not like to see her in my shoes.

I **wish** she could **stay** **sure** footed, **sensibly** shod.

Metaphor 'spindle' = stair rods. Homely image. Endearing. Loving. Vulnerability.

Idea: innocence. Speaker = thinks cute.

Onomatopoeia: pace = fast. Admiration. Expert. Skill. Confidence.

Ends in wistful, reflective tone: sibilance Fear of harm.

Converting notes into an essay: the essay stage.

In this poem, the speaker is the voice of an older sister, describing a memory of watching her sister dress up in adult's shoes. The fact that she begins with the possessive pronoun 'my' indicates how she feels responsible for her younger sister and wants to look out for her. The older sister describes her fear of her sister coming to harm, which is reflected in the ending with the wistful tone in the sibilance of 'wish' and 'sure-footed' demonstrating her hope that her sister will not come to harm as she grows into an adult. The fearful mood is foreshadowed by the word 'wobbles' when the sister was walking in ill-fitting shoes, emphasising her vulnerability. However, the sister is expert in 'hop-scotch' highlighted in the onomatopoeia of 'their quick peck' – she doesn't appear to have any fear of life as her footsteps are never 'missing their mark'. The contrast of the mood between the older sister and the younger sister is shown through the language used to describe their actions: the younger sister is 'playing' whereas the older sister can only 'watch' and 'warn'.

There is a tension between the sister's idea of the world and the younger child's innocent idea of life. The main metaphor which stands out to suggest this is her 'spindle thin' legs, described by the speaker in an endearing image but also highlighting the girl's vulnerability. The poet contrasts this with the image of the 'neat hops and skips' of the younger sister: even though her legs are 'spindle thin', she doesn't seem to let that prevent her from enjoying life to the full. Instead, she enjoys the independence and freedom of life, whereas her older sister is waiting for the snap of her weak and vulnerable limbs.

Overall, the poem uses this event, often seen as a staging post in childhood, as an extended metaphor to explore attitudes about growing up. It is effective at showing a contrast between the speaker's anxiety and the younger sister's confidence because of the language it chooses to show each sister's different perspective on life.

Go back to the annotated poem on the previous page. Re-read the student annotations in the boxes. Highlight in this student response where the annotations have been used.

You will notice that the notes have been written up almost word-for-word into full sentences. The only things linking the ideas are connectives like however, the contrast and overall.

Next, highlight where AMITY has been used. How does the student use AMITY as a framework?