

Music as Poetry

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Introduction

The song I have chosen is titled "Worker Bees" which was written by the band Billy Talent and appears on their latest album. This particular song explores a theme quite relevant to our world right now as it makes reference to the direction in which our world leaders have led us and what our leaders have become with time. With the album being released in June of 2006, it is apparent that this is recent look at our reality. Based on some research, it appears that this song was written as a way to address our world and where we are headed. Billy Talent has the ability to write music and influence people so it is a way to express feelings and introduce some to the reality of today. It is there way of contributing to change.

First Poetry Element/Literary Device

The most outstanding poetry element would have to be the extreme symbolism. It does encompass the whole poem but it just seems to connect to society on every level and it portrays a good perspective. The part which contains the best symbolism is the first verse which begins at the third line.

"We take our orders given by the queen
We're not the killers, we're the worker bees
If you resist us you will feel our sting
Surrender now before the swarm sets in."

The worker bees are obviously representing people in our world and in different levels of society. However, depending on how this poem speaks to you, this class of "worker bees" could vary in definition. At first glance, this poem spoke to me of the war between the US and the Middle East. On one hand, the queen could represent a figure such a George Bush with his army of worker bees who follow his every order. The worker bees are not the killers but instead are just doing what they are told and if you do not cooperate you will feel their sting, referring to the fact that they will not hesitate to turn violent. In this case, the worker bees do not really know what they are fighting for. On the other hand, the soldiers are still the worker bees, but the queen represents their country and who they fight for. Basically the worker bees can relate to anyone, such as teens falling into social conformity in school to please the queen, or the particular standard of "cool" or "popular". The symbolism is so effective because anyone can picture a swarm of bees, how they work together for the same purpose, and also how they can turn on you with a painful sting if you do not cooperate. This portrays an image of a powerful swarm of bees ready to attack.

Second Poetry Element/Literary Device

The next effective element happened to be the rhetorical questions. These proved to provoke thought in an attempt to determine what is right or wrong, when should morals be ignored, and how far is to far?

"Can we fight to save our souls?"

This specific question which appeared on line ten alluded to the possibility to save our souls after so much has been done. Taking soldiers for example, is it possible for one who has merely followed orders despite the act, able to save their soul, or has it been lost with the rest of the worker bees who remain mindless and loyal to the queen?

"Can the Lord... above, forgive what we've done?"

In the same sense, this questions whether you can ever go back to before. Once again, from the soldier's perspective, they might come to terms with the emotional side of what has been done and want to take back their actions, wondering if what they did will hang over them for the rest of their lives. Also, this could refer to the general public who allow war to go on with no real feeling for those effected by it. This stands for any situation as well, such as being the onlooker of a bully but just turning the other way while allowing it to continue.

Other Elements

Throughout the poem, there was also a consistent usage of repetition.

“March on, worker bees!
Know your enemy!”

These lines appeared at the beginning and were repeated throughout to really push the point across. It seems that the bees work for the queen and no one else, the queen gives you orders and you follow them no matter what.

“Protect the hive from enemies!
Protect the hive from enemies!”

This appears in lines seventeen and eighteen and once again involves the repetition. It represents how essential it is to avoid contact with those who may threaten your gain. I also found that this fell in with line fifteen which states:

“Supply of honey flowing bottomless.”

This could refer to the US invading the Middle East for what seemed like an appropriate mission but then seemed to be more for the possession of oil. The worker bees will invade to retrieve what is most important to them and any enemy who threatens to expose this will not be accepted. They must protect the hive from the enemies.

One line that I felt impacted the poem greatly was line twenty-six.

“And we'll ride... the rails, with our pistols drawn”

After some thought, the rails seemed to symbolize a train track that is mapped out perfectly with no detours. The worker bees, or soldiers do not even know what they are fighting for anymore and just follow the path the queen sets out. The plan is predetermined and it will be accomplished regardless of the situation. The soldiers are just prepared to shoot.

Conclusion

For anyone who has listened to the song, it should smack a little bit of reality in their face. Hopefully, some of those worker bees out there have heard this song and questioned their intents. For many who attend Billy Talent concerts, I believe the song has made them stand up and be aware. In many shows, lead singer, Ben, will start with a comment about George Bush or Steven Harper and people come together and stand up as worker bees themselves, but this time they are against the queen for the society that has been long walked upon.

Worker Bees

Written by: Billy Talent

March on, worker bees!
Know your enemy!

We take our orders given by the queen
We're not the killers, we're the worker bees
If you resist us you will feel our sting
Surrender now before the swarm sets in

Protect the hive from enemies!
Protect the hive from enemies!
Follow the herd mentality!
Can we fight to save our souls?

March on, worker bees!
Know your enemy!

A pollination coming from the west,
And in a flash we will invade your nest
Supply of honey flowing bottomless
Play by our rules or you'll be powerless

Protect the hive from enemies!
Protect the hive from enemies!
Follow the herd mentality!
Can we fight to save our souls?
And we'll march... along, with our blindfolds on
And we'll ride... the rails, with our pistols drawn
Can the Lord... above, forgive what we've done?
Can we fight to save ourselves?

And we'll march... along, with our blindfolds on
And we'll ride... the rails, with our pistols drawn
Can the Lord... above, forgive what we've done?
Can we fight to save ourselves?

Can we fight to save ourselves?
Will we die to save our home?