

PV Log: (circle one) **Poem** / **Movie** / **Picture** / **Lyric**Date 10/11/13Title "A Word on Statistics"Author / Director / Wisława Szymborska

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

Given to me by Mr. Shakely, class assignment

Content / CD / Summary / Precis (Say? "Plot? Setting/Situation? Key lines/phrases scenes, etc?)

This poem gives many statistics on the qualities of humans, and how many people would do something or have a certain quality out of 100 people. Many of these numbers are conditional, such as "Ready to help, / if it doesn't take long." But in the end, all humans are mortal. "Mortal: / one hundred out of one hundred-- / a figure that has never varied yet." All of these qualities may apply to some people, but we are all mortal.

Content / CM / Meaning? / Theme(s)?

Most of the qualities named in this poem are negative or evil. There are a few good ones, but even those have a negative spin on them in the next line or next stanza. All of these lead up to the last stanza that says we are all mortal without fail. We will always be mortal. We will always do evil and experience pain, but we must do what we can to prevent this.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

The poem is set up so that a quality or trait is named, and then the number of people out of 100 that would apply to that trait is named below, sometimes with a condition in between for a total of 2-3 lines per stanza. There is not much symbolism in this poem. In fact, it is very literal with just the cold hard facts and numbers.

Commentary (What do you want to say? Why like? Questions? Synthesis / Allusions-Connections / Relevance to personal experience, to literature, 20Q's? etc.)? "Poetic" Traits?

I like the way this poem works. Although it is mostly examples, there are some that relate to each other and others that are cleverly worded. At the end it says "Worthy of empathy / ninety-nine," I can't help but wonder who that other one person is. Who isn't worthy of empathy? I love the last stanza: "Mortal: / one hundred out of one hundred-- / a figure that has never varied yet." It pretty much says humans are not capable of perfection because they are mortal. It presents a challenge to all of us to try to strive for perfection.

over (do not mix logs; e.g., no poem log in front, and movie log on back)

A Word on Statistics

Out of every hundred people,
those who always know better:
fifty-two.

Unsure of every step:
almost all the rest.

Ready to help,
if it doesn't take long:
forty-nine.

Always good,
because they cannot be otherwise:
four -- well, maybe five.

Able to admire without envy:
eighteen.

Led to error
by youth (which passes):
sixty, plus or minus.

Those not to be messed with:
four-and-forty.

Living in constant fear
of someone or something:
seventy-seven.

Capable of happiness:
twenty-some-odd at most.

Harmless alone,
turning savage in crowds:
more than half, for sure.

Cruel
when forced by circumstances:
it's better not to know,
not even approximately.

Wise in hindsight:
not many more
than wise in foresight.

Getting nothing out of life except things:
thirty
(though I would like to be wrong).

Balled up in pain
and without a flashlight in the dark:
eighty-three, sooner or later.

Those who are just:
quite a few, thirty-five.

But if it takes effort to understand:
three.

Worthy of empathy:
ninety-nine.

Mortal:
one hundred out of one hundred --
a figure that has never varied yet.