

PV Log: (circle one) **Poem** / **Movie** / **Picture** / **Lyric**Date 3/29/14Title "The Unknown Citizen"Author / Director / W.H. Auden

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

Found on shmoop.com while looking for poems

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

This poem is a huge wake up call to just about everybody in the world. It describes the perfect United States citizen, a saint in the government's mind. He doesn't do anything wrong. He leads an average life, and even can afford a little luxury from time to time. He is the definition of average, normal, conformity, even boring. He has done nothing wrong in his lifetime, but he hasn't done anything extraordinary either.

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

The theme of this poem is not only the effects of conformity and letting society direct your life, but it is more than that. It encourages us to take chances in life and not be so conservative with everyday decisions. Life is really not worth living if you don't take chances and go on adventures and act daring.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

The man described in this poem represents the average person. If somebody took every statistic associated with a person and took all the averages, this is the man that would be created. He represents the perfect citizen. The poem is set up so that everything mentioned in it applies to this man or his life or what he owns. It is a rather superficial life, and this man doesn't have much to live for.

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

This poem reminds me greatly of the movie *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. It is about a regular guy with an office job who has done nothing extraordinary with his life, but he turns it all around and goes on a great adventure that takes him all around the world. This poem describes Walter Mitty before his great transformation, and the movie represents what the author of this poem wants everybody to do. He wants us to get out and do something. We only have one life, and we need to make the most of it. What is the purpose of living an ordinary life? What makes life special is everyone can do something different with theirs.

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

The Unknown Citizen

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a
saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Instalment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his
generation.
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their
education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.