

Rhyme undermines seriousness of situation

The Tay Bridge Disaster

By William McGonagall

Scale of horror

definite

Polysyndeton  
repetition of  
the storm

a Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay!

a Alas! I am very sorry to say

a That ninety lives have been taken away

b On the last Sabbath day of 1879,

b Which will be remember'd for a very long time.

c 'Twas about seven o'clock at night,

c And the wind it blew with all its might,

d And the rain came pouring down,

d And the dark clouds seem'd to frown,

a And the Demon of the air seem'd to say-

a "I'll blow down the Bridge of Tay."

e When the train left Edinburgh

e/f The passengers' hearts were light and felt no sorrow,

g But Boreas blew a terrific gale,

g Which made their hearts for to quail,

a And many of the passengers with fear did say-

a "I hope God will send us safe across the Bridge of Tay."

a But when the train came near to Wormit Bay,

a Boreas he did loud and angry bray,

a And shook the central girders of the Bridge of Tay

b On the last Sabbath day of 1879,

b Which will be remember'd for a very long time.

absurd, unintentionally bathetic.

BATHOS

BOUNCY

enthusiastic

discomforting change of rhymescheme

anaphora day of rest → irony

personification

very original (not clichéd...at all)

deliberately childish

wish to live juxtapose wish to kill.

dichotomy of two stanzas

direct access to thoughts → more sympathy from reader.

periphrastic do undermines seriousness

animalistic → sense of aggression

accurate, scientific language.

undermining since central girders are supposed to be strongest part of bridge

can never forget this due to constant repetition.

C So the train sped on with all its might,  
C And Bonnie Dundee soon hove in sight,

happy scottish folk song  
~~cruel~~ Juxtaposition  
of happiness  
and cruelty

c And the passengers' hearts felt light,  
h Thinking they would enjoy themselves on the New Year,  
h With their friends at home they lov'd most dear,  
h And wish them all a happy New Year.

lexical field  
of hope & love.

a So the train mov'd slowly along the Bridge of Tay,  
a Until it was about midway,

long line, reflects  
train moving slowly

d Then the central girders with a crash gave way,  
a And down went the train and passengers into the Tay!

what  
a surprise?

a The Storm Fiend did loudly bray,  
a Because ninety lives had been taken away,  
b On the last Sabbath day of 1879,  
b Which will be remember'd for a very long time.

i As soon as the catastrophe came to be known  
i The alarm from mouth to mouth was blown,  
i And the cry rang out all o'er the town,  
i Good Heavens! the Tay Bridge is blown down,

e And a passenger train from Edinburgh,  
e/f Which fill'd all the peoples hearts with sorrow,  
g And made them for to turn pale,  
g Because none of the passengers were sav'd to tell the tale  
b How the disaster happen'd on the last Sabbath day of 1879,  
b Which will be remember'd for a very long time.

C It must have been an awful sight,  
C To witness in the dusky moonlight,  
a While the Storm Fiend did laugh, and angry did bray,  
a Along the Railway Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay,

no hidden meaning  
complaint to bridge-builders

a Oh! ill-fated Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay,  
a I must now conclude my lay  
a By telling the world fearlessly without the least dismay,  
a That your central girders would not have given way,  
a At least many sensible men do say,  
j Had they been supported on each side with buttresses,  
j At least many sensible men confesses,  
k For the stronger we our houses do build,  
k The less chance we have of being killed.

] truisim

matter-of-fact

absurd  
word  
order