

Trevor Durbin

Mrs. Rutan

AP Literature and Composition

21 April 2017

AP Mock Essay #1

In Dalton Trumbo's novel, *Johnny Got His Gun*, Trumbo creates a son and father with a very close relationship. This this passage from the novel, Trumbo characterizes the son Joe as being worried about dissolving his close relationship with his father, and the father as a parent who understands that separating from his father is a part of life. The author uses various literary techniques to characterize their relationship.

Trumbo writes the novel in a limited third person view in which the reader is able to know Joe's feelings - but nobody else's. This perspective is used as a technique to dramatize Joe's decision to go fishing without his father. For example, Trumbo builds up the suspense of Joe asking his father if he can fish with Bill by exaggerating how big of a deal it was for Joe to fish without his father (14-19). Throughout the passage, there are no quotes. This omission of quotes serves to confuse the reader, just as Joe's memory of it is confusing because of how nervous he was. Trumbo's utilization of point of view illustrates the intensity a son's feelings when he believes his relationship with his father is in jeopardy.

Trumbo excellently uses syntax in this passage to show Joe's emotions about breaking his close bond with his father. Throughout the entire passage, syntax is altered to fit what is happening at the time. Towards the beginning of the passage, Trumbo uses long and complex sentences to show the reader that Joe is thoroughly thinking about his relationship about his

father and how this act will change it. As the story approaches Joe talking to his father, the sentences get much shorter. Sentences such as “It was a very serious thing.” (16) and “for a little while his father didn’t say anything” (35) highlight how anxious Joe was about talking to his father. When Joe is asking his father, his sentence is extremely long with no punctuation showing that Joe is just nervously rambling on (29-34). The sentences of his father talking are very short and simple, showing how Joe was scared and taking in all this information very fast. Joe even thinks to himself that it was “as simple as that” (43), and all his worrying came down to his father agreeing and being very understanding. Trumbo’s syntax variation cleverly shows how parents are understanding about a child moving on - even from a deeply cherished tradition held between the two.

Trumbo excellently characterizes the exact emotions that Joe is feeling about branching off from his father. Using creative literary techniques, Trumbo shows how Joe goes from worried about his relationship with his father, to relieved that even when “deserting his father” (54) he will still support everything his son does. Trumbo’s passage shows that when a child grows up and wants to be their own person, the parent will always be there to “[volunteer] the rod” (55).