

English 12 Poetry

Scale Point: 6

Comment

This paper was awarded a 6 because this essay has superior insight, sophisticated use of language, and smoothly integrated quotations. There is an excellent depth of discussion. The writing is effective, with smooth transitions. There is a clear thesis and conclusion.

The speaker in Sharon Olds's "High School Senior" experiences a variety of feelings before arriving at a final realization that a temporary separation will not change her great love for her daughter. She first reveals her feelings of having become accustomed to the constant presence of her daughter, "like food or air." The speaker feels that having this "daily sight of [her daughter]" will make her feel the temporary separation even more deeply when it occurs. This leads to a feeling of powerlessness; the speaker attempts to see the house without her daughter in it, but finds that she cannot. However, recalling the time before her daughter's birth comforts the speaker. She comes to the realization that just as she was able to adjust to a new life when her daughter was born, she will also become accustomed to this new lonely life when her daughter leaves for college. The speaker also finds solace in considering creatures "whose children float away/at birth," as it reminds her how fortunate she has been to appreciate her daughter for seventeen years. The most important realization that the speaker reaches is when it becomes clear to her that this separation will not alter or diminish the love she has for her daughter. She will hold this love "in her heart" forever, something "to be weighed and then reweighed." Thus, the speaker in "High School Senior," by Sharon Olds, experiences feelings of separation and powerlessness before finally accepting her daughter's departure for college.