

Questions

Assisi

1. Describe the imagery MacCaig evokes when he portrays the beggar?
2. What is the main message conveyed in the poem?
3. Explain the irony MacCaig puts forward in stanza two with his description of Giotto's frescoes.
4. Identify the tone of the persona used in the second stanza.

Hotel Room

1. What are the connotations of 'midnight' and how does it relate back to the main theme?
2. What does the poem say about the city? (comment on word choice and images that convey its message to you.)
3. How does Norman MacCaig distance the reader from the injured people described in stanza two?
4. How effective is MacCaig's use of word choice in conveying the violence in the city?

Answers

Assisi

1. That the beggar is inhuman - puppet-like
2. The hypocrisy of modern society including the church towards poverty.
3. That MacCaig highlights that the hypocrisy of the priest's proclamation about Giotto's "gift" to the poor about the bible through paintings when they blatantly ignore the poor in the present day
4. condescending, mocking

Hotel Room

1. Darkness, violence, corruption - relates back to the theme of people being naturally violent
2. There is no wrong answer
3. Describes them as injuries rather than people
4. Quality of answer

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Hotel Room, 12th Floor and Assisi

Study Guide



How to write an introduction

Themes

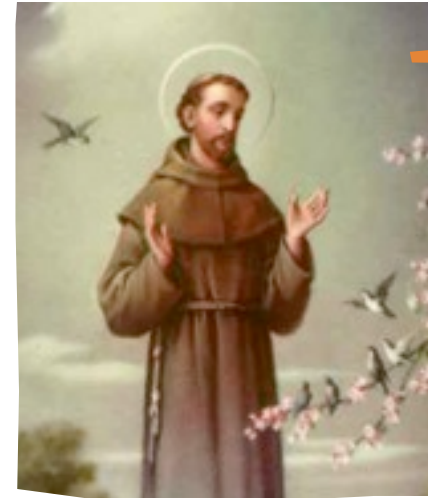
To make a good start in an essay, you need a catchy introduction. To achieve this, you should mention 4 things:

- *Text:* Assisi/ Hotel Room 12th Floor.
- *Author:* Norman MacCaig
- *Task:* (the question given)
- *Themes:* see Themes page

To start your introduction, begin with a sentence other than “Norman MacCaig wrote this poem because...” Try to make it personal by either:

Mentioning a theme and explain the connotations of it
Or by putting your personal thoughts into a theme/message

Try to write at least two different introductions so you can pick the best one to fit your question.



A portrayal of Saint Francis of Assisi

Assisi

- Hypocrisy, duality of man, corruption, social dichotomy, wealth/poverty



NYC by helicopter

Hotel Room

- darkness, violence, evil, corruption, failure, fear

Characterisation

Assisi

Beggar - embodiment of poverty and sickness - “slumped” “twisted”, suggestion of simple mind - “hands on backwards,” “back was higher than his head”.

Tourists - Mindless droves - “clucking”, “fluttered”. Blind to poverty - “they who had passed the ruined temple”.

Priest - the church - hypocrisy. “he scattered the grain”, farmer-like, not carrying out his proper occupation as a priest. “reveal to the illiterate” - not helping dwarf though.

Hotel Room

Persona - “damaged insect”, “12th Floor” the feebleness and smallness of the helicopter might compare to the personas inability to stop the evil that is going on below him.

Symbolism

Assisi

Beggar - poverty, people in need

Priest - Church's/society's forgotten teachings

Tourists - ignorant masses, modern society, us

Hotel Room

Midnight -darkness, evil, corruption, violence

“ups and acrosses” windows - our defence, religious defence against evil - doesn't work.

Word Choice

Assisi

“hands on backwards”, “back was higher than his head” - disfigurement but also double meaning, suggesting the simplicity of his mind.

“eyes wept pus” - repels us, shows our own hypocrisy

“had the advantage of not being dead yet” - dwarf has nothing to live for - suggests the message of St Francis is dead.

Hotel Room

“uncivilised” personifies and reveals darkness is actually human evilness.

“broken” “screaming” “blood” - violence, extent of evil

“glazed” - old, quality of varnish, evilness is always present, permanent

Structure

Assisi

Lack of rhyme/rhythm - parallels reality

Tense - first person, viewing scene, bystander

Title - “Assisi” setting, comparison between the two things its famous for, St Francis and his humbleness and the churches, their magnificence.

Hotel Room

Lack of rhyme or rhythm - parallels reality

Title - “Hotel room, 12th Floor”, setting, height - idea of looking down

Shortened final stanza - concludes and reveals that he is not talking about a specific place but everywhere and that evil is unstoppable

Setting

Assisi

“three tiers of churches” - luxury, magnificent in comparison to “half filled” - the church has more than enough yet has not helped the poor.

“Assisi” famous for big churches and St Francis - contrast between grand and humble - absurdness of churches being built in honour of him.

“frescoes” - adds to hypocrisy - “revealing to the illiterate the goodness of God” yet the church is no longer helping the poor.

Hotel Room

“morning” in contrast with “midnight” - night has to come, evil will always come.

“damaged insect” - hugeness of buildings

“million” - hyperbole, massive amounts of windows



Imagery

Assisi

“half-filled sack

on tiny twisted legs from which
sawdust might run,”

Lack of value as a person, useless, only “half” a person - viewed as inferior, deformity, only “half” portion of happiness.

“A rush of tourists clucking contentedly,
fluttered after him as he scattered
the grain”

chicken-like, stupid, following on mindlessly, not seeing the obvious.

“as a child’s when she speaks to her mother” - innocence, similarity to baby Jesus, inner value. simplicity.

Hotel Room

“jumbo sized dentist’s drill” - child like fear

“a million lit windows, all

ups and acrosses” - cross shapes, we try to defend ourselves against evil but fail, even religion can’t pierce the darkness.

“wildest of warwhoops”, “glittering canyons” “frontier” “stockades” - wild west, violence and lawlessness still in our modern “glittering” society.