

What I Hate Most About Mom by Steven Espada Dawson

Introduction: *"Grief is not just one emotion. I think western society teaches us that grief is about being sad. Or, it's about being depressed. But, grief is actually a spectrum -- a real plethora of emotions.*

So, grief is about anger. It's about sadness. It's about regret. It's about guilt; shame. Those uncomfortable emotions. It's about joy. It's about peace and hope. All of these things are a part of your narrative and a part of how you get to the story of who you are and how you are."

- Alesia Alexander

As Alesia Alexander stated, a person's grief encompasses a wide range of emotions; it is never a single, solitary, isolated feeling. Steven Espada Dawson's poem "What I Hate Most About Mom" exemplifies this idea, as he writes about his mother's ailment and his struggle to reconcile with her imminent death. Today we are going to explore how the tone of the speaker fluctuates as he reflects on his array of conflicting feelings toward her passing.

Directions: Follow the steps provided below:

1. Read "[What I Hate Most About Mom](#)" by Steven Espada Dawson, paying particular attention to the literary elements and techniques he uses to convey his emotions.
2. Find specific pieces of the text that exemplify a mixture or combination of emotions. Then use at least two words from "[wheel of emotions](#)" to come up with the best adjectives that capture the tone of the speaker/the different ways the speaker is feeling at that exact moment. Write those descriptors in the left-hand column.
3. In the second column, simply copy/paste the textual evidence from the poem that exemplifies those emotions.
4. In the third column, briefly describe the literary/stylistic element, technique, or move the poet is using to convey those emotions, i.e. "words that all connote fear or death," "stilted syntax," etc.
5. In the final column, analyze and discuss how your evidence captures the speaker's range of conflicting feelings and conveys a specific tone. Your analysis should consist of no less than three complete sentences.

An example has been provided below.

<u>Emotions</u> and Tone of Speaker <i>*You may choose more than two if you'd like.</i>	Textual Evidence	Stylistic Element, Technique, or Move	Analysis <i>*Your response should consist of no less than three complete sentences</i>
• Annoyance • Apprehension	"What I Hate Most About Mom/is her dying"	The enjambment between the lines and the quick shift from one emotion to the next	With the very first line of the poem (and the title), Espada is able to convey the array of emotions he's enduring with his mother's imminent death. The title of the poem immediately suggests an annoyance or anger with his mother with a phrase that many readers have probably used at some point in their lives, e.g. "I hate when my mom does this..." or "I hate that mom says..." Those feelings quickly shift, though, as the speaker reveals the source of his annoyance in the first line of the poem; his mother's imminent death and his apprehension with it on the horizon. The enjambment serves as a stylistic means of moving quickly from one state of emotion and seamlessly melding into the next, thus

			mimicking the way the speaker's emotions quickly transition from one to another. With this abrupt shift, Espada illustrates how his emotions regarding his mother's ailment are fleeting, emotions that vacillate and oftentimes contrast sharply with one another, which very much reiterates one of the many ways in which grief manifests itself.
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