

Reading poetry is always interesting because each reader brings something different to the table. When I read a poem about war, for instance, I read it as one who has no true understanding of what it is truly about...you guys, on the other hand, read it as someone who has been right in the heat of the battle or preparing to go. That is what makes poetry fun....everyone has a different opinion. When I was in college, I wrote a paper for a poetry class, and when I asked my professor to look at the rough draft, he looked at me and said, "this is not what this poem says at all!" I was devastated...that was what it said to me. So, I learned a lot from that class...not about poetry...but about the kind of instructor I want to be. I think that a poem is going to speak to you differently from what it speaks to me; all I ask is that you are able to support what it says to you. If you say that the "sugar is sweet" line in our traditional "Roses are Red" poem refers to kisses, then I'll take it as long as you support your argument. So, don't be intimidated by poetry...just be willing to stand up for your opinion (you guys do that already!!!).

This is a poem that I read in one of my classes at Auburn. I think it is an interesting poem. Read it and tell us what you think. Do you agree or disagree? What do you think the author was trying to say? What do you think about it? Make sure your submission is no fewer than 300 words!!! Here's the link if you need it...

<http://www.plambeck.org/oldhtml/quotations/>

#### MOURNING THE DYING AMERICAN FEMALE NAMES

In the Altha Diner on the Florida Panhandle  
a stocky white-haired woman  
with a plastic nameplate "Mildred"  
gently turns my burger, and I fall into grief.  
I remember the long, hot drives to North Carolina  
to visit Aunt Alma, who put up quarts of peaches,  
and my grandmother Gladys with her pieced quilts.  
Many names are almost gone: Gerturde, Myrtle,  
Agnes, Bernice, Hortense, Edna, Doris, and Hilda.  
They were wide women, cotton-clothed, early rising.  
You had to move your mouth to say their names,  
and they meant strength, speak, battle, and victory.  
When did women stop being Saxons and Goths?  
What frog Fate turned them in to Alison, Melissa,  
Valerie, Natalie, Adienne, and Lucinda,  
diminished them to Wendy, Cindy, Suzy, and Vicky?  
I look at these young women  
and hope they are headed for the presidency,  
but I fear America has other plans in mind,  
that they be no longer at war  
but subdued instead in amorphous corporate work,  
somebody's assistant, something in a bank,  
single parent with word-processing skills.

They must have been made French  
so they could be cheap foreign labor.  
Well, all I can say is,  
Good luck to you  
Kimberly, Darlene, Cheryl, Heather and May.  
Good luck April, Melane, Becky, and Kelly.  
I hope it goes well for you.  
But for a moment let us mourn.  
Now is the time to say good-bye  
to Florence, Muriel, Ethel, and Thelma.  
Good-bye Minnie, Ada, Bertha, and Edith

### Student 1

I strongly agree with the author because you do not find many names like Agnes, Hortense or Myrtle. Those names represent the strength the women had and what they went through. When those names were popular women had to be strong and prepared for anything. Now, the names given to women today, speaks true to what they have been through, nothing. Alison, Melissa, and Adrienne are names of a new era. Where women do not have to churn their own butter, raise their own chickens and clean their own home. The names given today are attached to a nine to five job, daycare and a microwavable meal.

The names like Florence, Muriel and Thelma made their life and marriage work. It was a “battle” and a “victory” but they were sturdy women and could take care of the problems that come in life. Doris, Hilda, and Gertrude were strong minded and had strong morals and convictions. Mildred did not care what job she had to support her family, flipping burgers put food on the table. Instead of waiting for their husbands to come home from a business meeting across the states, as Kimberly and Kelly do, Ethel and Edith were waiting on their husbands to come home from the war. Sticking together through the good and bad was a way of life. Being a “single parent” was not an option.

When the author wrote “but for a moment let us mourns” she is right. We are losing not only the strong women behind the names but we are also losing an era of time. A time when family was the most important, and designer clothes were a figment of what was to come. Moral ran high, and debauchery ran low.

I wish there was still essence of their way of life in today’s society. The world today could use the strength and sincerity that ran the era of the past. People back then fought for what they had and did not give up on the first signs of trouble. I am not saying that everyone in the world is fearful of challenges and do not have moral but the majority of our society wants the easy way of life and when it is given to them they do not appreciate what they have.

Student 2

I agree with the things that you said. I wonder if women were the same today as they were back then, would we think names like Wendy and Michelle were strong sounding names as well?

Student 3

Student 2, if women were the same as what they were back then any name would sound strong because they embody what it was to be a woman then. Great question!

Student 1

I do not know. It makes me wonder what life would have been when those names were popular. Maybe if we went through what Mildred and Doris did, whatever name we had would represent strength.

Student 3

Glad to see that I am not the only one to take away these thoughts from this poem. You said this so much better than I did. Bravo!!!!

Great Post!

Instructor

You are right, Student 1. Those were the name of women who really LIVED life. Is the author stating that it is because we give weak names that women don't really LIVE?

Student 1

No I do not think the names are the reason women have changes over time. It is time itself that has changed and we are changing with it. If you lived fifty years ago, I think you would think the same way we think about the past today.

Student 2

Outstanding post, Student 1. Amen on the churning their own butter and cleaning their own chickens. I often think of what my grandmother had to deal with and my troubles pale in comparison. We are pretty spoiled rotten these days and our comforts have become standard. I like the way you tied it all together in what you wrote. Good one.