O Captain My Captain Versus Stop All The Clocks, Cut Off The Telephone: The Loss Of A Loved One

The earliest poetry is believed to have been recited as a way of remembering oral history, genealogy, and law. Poetry is often closely related to musical traditions, and the earliest poetry exists in the form of hymns, and other types of song such as chants. Poems can help you say, help you show how you're feeling, but they can also introduce you to feelings and introduce others to how you are feeling. Sometimes poetry can help a person say how they're feeling without voicing it. Each poem portrays a specific concept towards the audience. The concept that the two poems, which will be discussed in this essay, explore the loss of a loved one. O Captain! My Captain! by Walt Whitman details that Whitman had a certain connection to Abraham Lincoln. He looked at him as his captain and even his father. Stop All The Clocks, Cut Off The Telephone by W H Auden also explores the same concept but in a different way, as Auden was mourning the loss of his partner. This Essay will explore the structures and features of these two poems and show that Whitman has better conveyed the concept of the significance of losing someone dear.

The structures and features that Whitman has employed in O Captain! My Captain! has helped to convey how close this person was to him and how significant the death of this person was. Written 1865 it is classified as an elegy because it is a mourning poem that was written in memory of someone. The poem was written to honour Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States. Walt Whitman was born in 1819 and died in 1892, so he lived through the American Civil War. Being born close to the founding of the country, he knew people that were a part of the American Revolution. Whitman admired Abraham Lincoln immensely because of his political standpoint of universal equality as stated in the constitution. The captain refers to Abraham Lincoln who is the captain of the ship, which refers to the United States of America. The main line sets up a happy mood as it refers to the captain. The expression 'our fearful trip is done' is discussing the conclusion of the Civil War. The following line references the ship, America, and how it has 'weathered every rack', which means America has overcame the extreme tempest of the Civil War, and “the prize we sought”, the end of slavery, 'is won'. The accompanying line communicates a state of mind of celebration of the Union winning the war as it says “the people all exulting”; in any case, the following line quickly moves the disposition when it discusses the dreariness of the ship, and the darker side of the war. Many lost their lives in the American Civil War, and in spite of the fact that the prize that was looked for was won, the hearts still hurt in the midst of the celebration of the individuals. By utilising these structures and features Whitman has been successful in portraying this significance of his dear one.

W. H. Auden's poem, Stop All The Clocks, Cut Off The Telephone conveys the meaning of overwhelming grief, tragic loss, and an unrelenting pessimism best exemplified in the last lines, 'For nothing now can ever come to any good.' The tone of the poem is that of a melancholy sadness forced by the internal rhyme scheme (aabb) and the melodic iambic pentameter used. This poem is written from the perspective of someone mourning the loss of a lover who died. The poem calls for silence, but also an acknowledgement of a life lived. The poem artfully captures the themes of grief and loss. Auden explains the planes in the second stanza to be “…moaning overhead” “Scribbling on the sky He is Dead”. This could be referenced as personification as planes to don’t have the ability to moan or scribble. Saying that they do adds

complexity to the poem. It is almost like saying that the aeroplane is suffering grief of the death as well as the speaker. This shows how the emotions of sorrow and grief dominate over any other feelings the poet could have. “He was my North, my South, my East and West, My working week and my Sunday rest, My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song” can be explained as being an example of metaphor. This is Auden’s way of explaining that this person guided him and gave him his direction in life and without them he has nothing. In addition to that we find a hyperbole: “Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood” This is so because with the death of loved person, the poet is not able to appreciate anything. Yet it is not just that, the poet does not want to appreciate the beauty, at least not alone. As a whole even though this poem concerns with death and therefore it is full of negativity, poet brought out the tragedy together with his emotion in a very artistic way. The diction used together with imagery allowed the reader to feel sorrow and mourn together with the poet.

Through making a comparison of the two poems it is evident that O Captain! My Captain! does a better job in conveying the significance of the loss of one dear to you. Whitman exemplifies the significance through many structures and features. Whitman explains the loss of someone that was dear to everyone whereas Auden explains the loss of someone that was dear in his life and due to this not everyone can make the emotional connection and know how the loss of this person has affected him. The civil war affected almost everyone in the USA at the time of occurrence and this is why this poem means more to people because they can understand how much Abraham meant to the people of America. Auden explains the death of one person who affected only a handful of people in their lifetime. Whitman also employs more evocative text structures, the expression 'our fearful trip is done' is discussing the conclusion of the Civil War and on conclusion of this war there were many people rejoicing and celebrating. Whereas, Auden explains that we should “Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood”, this means that because of the death of his loved one no one should be able to appreciate life anymore. Everyone should miss out on nature’s beauties because we can no longer be blessed with this person’s presence. This comes across as quite self-centred and dismissive of the world around him.

In this essay two poems, with the same concept, have been explored and they have cross analysed to figure which poem better conveys the concept of the significance of losing someone dear to you. It has been made apparent that through the analysis of text structures and features that O Captain! My Captain! by Walt Whitman better conveys this concept. Overall, Whitman shows the importance of losing someone that was dear to most people, which gave the poem an evocative nature because most people could relate to it. Auden did the opposite, he explained the death of a person that was dear to him and said that nothing else matters and that the whole world should stop. He talked about how life would never be as happy, this created a highly self-centred demeanour and could’ve made people angry because of this. Whitman better employed features and structures to create a better poem.