Poetry Approaches for "Amazing Grace"

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Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
’Twas grace hath brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who call’d me here below,
Will be forever mine.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.
Man, a sinner, is lost and lonely in the world, doesn’t know where to go in it. What’s the point of life?

Conflict: man vs. internal

Man relies on worldly things for happiness but isn’t happy.

Setting: Time- seventeenth century
Place- wicked world

Protagonist: A man in his late twenties

Speaker: protagonist, First person

Man experiences many dangers, toils, and snares on a ship in a storm.

Rising Action

Man, a sinner, is lost and lonely in the world, doesn’t know where to go in it. What’s the point of life?

Climax

Amazing Grace saves Man from storm and forgives Man for sins. Man now has a direction in life.

Falling Action

Man sing, praises, serves, and thanks the Lord for his amazing grace and love.

Resolution

God brings Man home to eternal life- heaven
“Amazing Grace” has a major connection in my life. Everyday day, God’s grace intervenes. Similar to the story in “Amazing Grace” where the Lord’s grace saves man from “dangers, toils and snares”, God has pulled me through troubled times such as the deaths of loved ones. The Lord has also been very “good to me”. I clearly recall an incident where God protected my family and me. Night was about to fall as we drove along windy, narrow mountain roads in North Carolina, making it difficult to see other vehicles without its lights. As we rounded a sharp curve, our family was paralyzed with fear. A truck was flying head on towards us in our lane. Before I could even think, we had safely swerved off onto one of the very few shoulders the mountain roads provide. I didn’t want to think what the consequences were if there had been no shoulder on the narrow roads. God’s amazing grace saved us from what would have been a fatal accident. I “sing god’s praise” and thank him for keeping my family and me safe.
Thematic Approach

“Amazing Grace” has an underlying meaning and lesson for everyone, not just the speaker in the poem. Through Grace or God, anyone can live a meaningful life. God’s mercy saves men from sin and life’s traps and dangers. No matter who you are, a “wretch”, blind man, or loner, Grace “will [be a] shield” through the many “dangers, toils and snares” one will encounter. Eventually he will lead one home from the dangers. Many believe it means the Lord will lead believers to God’s home, the eternal life, heaven- A place that will bring more “joy and peace” than life itself. Because of God’s amazing grace, we sinners are saved and will live a fulfilled life.
The text in “Amazing Grace” makes many allusions a piece of literature, the Old Testament from the Bible. The phrase “[God] will my shield and portion be” is echoed throughout the Bible. Psalm 121:5 says, “The Lord protects you; the Lord is a shelter right by your side”. The second phrase “The Lord has promised good to me” alludes to the Bible. In the Bible, God made many promises. In John 3:16 the Lord stated “whosoever believeth in [me] should not perish, but have everlasting life”. God also promised Abraham’s wife a child. Even though it sounded outrageous at the time, God’s promise was kept.
Musical Approach

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
’Twas grace hath brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who call’d me here below,
Will be forever mine.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.

KEY:
Red- alliteration
Blue- eternal rhyme
Green- Rhyme Scheme

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.
The sound of alliteration used in the begging of the first stanza to create a sound that flows and is soothing the ear. It resembles God’s soothing grace.

The poems rhythm of the poem alternates from iambic pentameter and iambic trimeter. The iambic beat is used to create feeling of someone trudging along slowly and heavily after much hardship.

The first stanza is repeated to emphasize an important point the author is trying to get across. Its similar to the story- the man eventually returns home, just like the stanza returns.
Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a *wretch like me*....  
I once *was lost but now am found,*  
Was blind, but now, *I see.*

*T'was Grace that taught*...my heart to fear.  
And Grace, *my fears relieved.*  
How precious did that Grace appear...  
the hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares...  
we have already come.  
*T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far*...  
and *Grace will lead us home.*

The Lord has promised good to me...  
His word my hope secures.  
*He will my shield and portion be*...  
*as long as life endures.*
Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail, and mortal life shall cease, I shall possess within the veil, A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, The sun forbear to shine; But God, who call'd me here below, Will be forever mine.

When we've been here ten thousand years... bright shining as the sun. We've no less days to sing God's praise... then when we've first begun.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me.... I once was lost but now am found, Was blind, but now, I see.
The writer of “Amazing Grace” incorporated Figurative Language into the poem for important reasons.

• Numerous times, parallelism is used to catch the readers attention. The author is trying to make an important point by using the same sentence structure device: God teaches man and brings him to safety. “‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear”. “‘Twas Grace that brought us safe thus far”.

• Similes and Metaphors are used throughout the song to help the reader imagine his point. The author says “the earth shall soon dissolve like snow” to create a visual image that the world will eventually melt away.

• The author uses hyperboles to support a significant point. The exaggeration of “we’ve been here ten thousand years” is used to make his important point that since we have lived on the earth long enough, we need to “sing God’s praise”.
In the mid-eighteen hundreds, John Newton was inspired to write a beautiful hymn that told his life story, “Amazing Grace”. Newton was indeed a “wretch” at the begging of his life, as in the song. An Englishman and ship captain, he was despised by many of his crewmen. One reported he fell overboard and the “ship's crew refused to drop a boat to him”. Later he encountered many “dangers, toils and snares”. In 1748 he became a servant of a slave trader a was brutally abused. On his escape back home, Newton and his fellow mates where caught in a “violent storm” with a great chance of sinking. Newton thought “all was lost” until he received a “great deliverance” from the Lord. Newton believed God had great mercy on him, addressing him in the storm and his “grace hath brought [him] safe thus far”. Newton realized God always had been part of his life and God's grace will “be forever [his]”. He lives the rest of his life serving God now that he is a “saved believer”. Newton persists many times and eventually was accepted as bishop of Olney, Buckinghamshire where his preaching and inspiring stories drew people from afar. Eventually, the church becomes overcrowded. He continued his preaching until his death. Ironically, Newton became literally “blind”, but God helped him see and believe. “Was blind, but now I see”. By the time he died in 1807, he was assured that Grace would “lead [him] home”.
Art History Approach

Imagery:

- “He will be my shield”. God is compared to a shield because he protects.
- “Earth shall soon dissolve like snow”. The earth is to be imagined like melting ice.
- “Bright shining as the sun”. Everyone’s souls reflects God’s glory when they follow God.
- “Was blind, but now I see”. The speaker in the story actually meant that he didn’t know the way of truth until he met God.
  - “I shall possess within the veil, A life of joy and peace”.
  - “That saved a wretch like me”.

Imagery is used throughout the poem to help describe the hidden meanings of the text.
Amazing grace! How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see. — Shift - the first stanzas talked about Grace. Now the text explains where the author comes from.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed. — Shift - Stanzas talk more about God's promises to the author.

Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come; 'Twas grace hath brought me safe thus far And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me His word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be, As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail, and mortal life shall cease, I shall possess within the veil, A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, The sun forbear to shine; But God, who call'd me here below, Will be forever mine. — Shifts - The phrases now explain that the world needs to sing of God's praise forever.

When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we'd first begun. — Shift - The first Stanza returns to talk about God's amazing grace. Just like the structure of the hymn, Grace continues to return.

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see.