***Kamikaze* by Beatrice Garland**

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| ***Groups:*** | | War, Memory, Fragile Life, Home, Nature, Crime, Change |
| ***Good poems to link with:*** | | *Tissue, Remains, War Photographer, Kamikaze, Emigree, Checking Out me History* |
| **Bio and Context: Beatrice Garland** was born in 1938, and has also worked as a teacher. This, probably her most famous poem, is about the Japanese ‘Kamikaze’ pilots of the Second World War. Meaning ‘divine wind’, the pilots loaded their fighter planes loaded their aircraft with bombs, and flew suicide missions into enemy US ships. Surprisingly, less than 20% of Kamikaze attacks managed to hit target ships; and almost 4000 Kamikaze pilots died during the war. Pilots who returned from failed or aborted missions were often seen as failures, and many were shunned by friends and family. | | |
| ***Summary:***  https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/Kamikaze-characters.png | The poem is seen through the eyes of woman who is a pilot’s daughter. She is discussing her father’s experiences with her own children – the pilot’s grandchildren. Although mostly told in the third person, it switches to her direct voice in the final two stanzas. The first stanza describes the prepared and determined pilot heading out on his mission. In the next two stanzas, she is imagining him in his plane, looking over the ocean, and seeing fishing boats. She imagines that this would have reminded him of being with his brothers as a child, waiting for their fisherman father to return with his catch. This is a clear contrast to how the pilot’s family behave upon his return, which is explored in the final two stanzas: they see him as a disgrace, and ignore him. It is not clear whether this was because he failed his mission, or because he was prepared to die for his country above providing for his family. | |
| **Interesting Features:**   * Six-line stanzas, but no regular rhythm or rhyme scheme used * The switch from third to first person perspective towards the end of the poem * Use of foreshadowing and vivid natural imagery to compare relationships with fathers and explore concepts of danger and sacrifice | | |
| **In a Nutshell:** *Kamikaze* explores a controversial topic from a very human angle. Many in the West wondered how anyone human could fly these missions and write off their own lives and relationships in such a focused and brutal way. Garland wonders what this was like for the families and also for the pilot himself. It is a topic which resonates in today’s world as much as it did during the conflict over the Pacific in the Second World War. | | |