

Eloise Harper - Do Pigeons Go to Heaven?

Inspired by Deepa Mehta's bollywood film '*Water*,' on themes of religious maltreatment and spiritual guilt, my vignette "*Do Pigeons Go to Heaven?*" Explores concerns of religious mistreatment in the context of christian religions, through the perspective of a pre-teenage boy struggling with internal sexual identity. His internal struggles defy these traditional ideas of 'perfection,' that encourage readers to critically question the idea of 'innocence' and 'worth' in traditional christian beliefs through a moral lense.

The film "*Water*" directed by Deepa Mehta focuses on the harsh realities of widows in 1930s India, set against the backdrop of colonial India, centred around the poor treatment of and spiritual guilt imposed upon Hindu widows. My main inspiration to create a poem sharing the theme of religious guilt was through Mehta's exploration of how these marginalised women learn to internalise societal beliefs over their worth, as they believe they are impure and sinful.

In my vignette "*Do Pigeons Go to Heaven?*" I was inspired to focus on the first-hand experiences of marginalised groups like queer teenagers within christian contexts, to draw attention to problematic themes of guilt in traditional christian beliefs over sexual impurity in terms of sexual identity. This concept highlights the impact religious mistreatment can have on one's self-worth and unique spiritual experiences with connectivity to the church.

I was inspired to express my writing through a vignette-style poem as this writing style allows me to step into the character's mind, describing specific moments in time, capturing details about the environment that are important symbols in the character's life. I use elements of internationally recognised christian symbols like the crucifix to symbolise the significance of christianity in shaping the boy's perspectives on what thoughts are right and wrong, and therefore its role in altering self-image.