

# ANALYSIS

Right from the title of the poem, the reader notices the ironic tone as the title is a parody of the Monuments of Unknown Soldier in many European cities in honour of the soldiers who went missing in WW1.

The dedication below the title doubles the irony. The state is erecting a marble monument for a citizen whose name is not even disclosed. Initial letters and some numbers are all needed to identify this nobody.

Reading the poem line by line, readers discover that this ideal citizen is defined not by what he did at all. He is defined by what he he DID NOT do. He is ideal because he hardly did anything exceptional. He is ideal because he did not make any troubles for the government whose bureaus, one by one, would attest to the clean character of the citizen.

It is on the surface a government that rules by bureaus or department and is supposed to be democratic. But in fact, it is one that uses its many bureaus to collect information and even spy on its citizens. Hence, the many reports the bureau of statistics stores about the Unknown Citizen.

Reading through these reports, the reader learns that this man to be honoured never stirred complaints. He has got a clean slate as if he were a saint. "Saint" appears to intensify the irony considering that modern government all claim to be secular and to dismiss religion and faith. So, he is a saint in a strictly secular sense.

When we learn that he served the greater community, we realize that this citizen has been completely fooled by the government. While he thought he was serving the community and making sacrifices in the name of the greater good, he was in fact catering for the continuity of the totalitarian government.

In the same way and through the report, we get more information about this citizen who has worked in the same factory except when he was drafted to fight in the war. He was also an ideal worker because he first worked in a factory, which seems to be one of the definitions of being Modern according to the government. And second, his employers were happy with his work. These employers must be lining their pockets with money, thanks to the hard work and devotion of the likes of this citizen!

## The Unknown Citizen

(To JS/07 M 378 This Marble Monument Is Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be

One against whom there was no official complaint,

And all the reports on his conduct agree

That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,

For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.

Except for the War till the day he retired

He worked in a factory and never got fired,

But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.

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In these lines, the narrator in the poem goes through more reports about the unknown citizen to prove that he is an ideal citizen and hence deserves to have a monument erected in his name. As he was a worker, he respected the decisions and instructions of the Labour Union with regards to strikes. He never worked when the Union ordered strikes, therefore he was a “scab”. Likewise, he paid all his dues to the union and he was debt-free. Even though, these bits of information are mentioned in the union’s report, the union itself is reported on and both reports agree on the devotion and integrity of the unknown citizen. The report by a bureau called social psychology psychoanalyse him assuring that he was psychologically stable and he is friendly with his colleagues. He is the definition of moderation so he is neither abstains from alcohol nor drink too much. He read the government paper and reacted to advertisements very normally and is fully insured. All his responses and actions reflect a stable and unaffected personality which is the kind that serves the purposes of the government best.

There are more reports about his medical records which show that he was hospitalised only once. Also since the government needed its citizens to back its “instalment plan”, the Unknown citizen gave his full support according to another report. Totalitarian governments try to pass such plans to benefit itself and keep citizens optimistic. Even though the instalment plan proves to be economically a failure, the Unknown citizen thought it sensible enough.

Further, since the government encourages its citizens to be modern, he bought all modern devices such as a car, phonograph and a fridge. In short, this man has lived by the book, breaking no rules and never offended the government.

Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,  
For his union reports that he paid his  
dues,

(Our report on his union shows it was  
sound)

And our social psychology workers found  
That he was popular with his mates and  
liked a drink.

The press are convinced that he bought a  
paper every day

And that his reactions to advertisements  
were normal in every way.

Policies taken out in his name prove that  
he was fully insured,

And his health-card shows he was once in  
hospital but left it cured.

Both producers research and high-grade  
living declare

He was fully sensible to the advantages of  
the instalment plan

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The narrator continues to read through the many reports written about this unknown citizen. As it happens, the government has a department that surveys public opinion by sounding how people feel and think about the politics of their country. We expect this department to be a cover for one that basically collects information by spying on citizens. The governmental agents of such department, in fact, watch people and report their views on such important issues like war. The unknown citizen is watched very closely by this department and is praised for having opinions that

Our researchers into Public Opinion are content

That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;

When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.

He was married and added five children to the population,

Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.

And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.

Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:

Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

agree with the government especially about the war. As such, when the government encouraged war, he was in and he even fought in it. When the government sought peace, he also gave his full support. In short, he had no mind of his, but took his cue from the statesmen. This kind of citizen who doesn't interfere with political decisions is highly favoured by totalitarian governments.

Probably it is understandable that he didn't want to upset the government and preferred to stay away from trouble, but to allow the governmental officials plan his personal life is quite confusing. His domestic life, the family and even the number of children he had were all determined by another governmental department in which Eugenists lay plans for families. So as his government dictated, he was married and even had the right number of children. Even worse, he left the education of his children to their schools which are run by the government. The teachers of his children reported how cooperative he was and how he never interfered with their education. And in case teachers' report wasn't accurate, there's another report that invalidates the information in the report that the school submitted.

However, the last pair of lines are very interesting. So far in the many reports, nothing is said about how this man feels. No mention is ever made of his happiness or unhappiness. The many reports do not care whether he felt satisfied with his life or whether he was not. The reports all focused on his position and view regarding the policies of his government and how he caused no worry and no trouble to anyone! The last two lines take a different turn by trying to answer questions about whether the unknown citizen was happy or not. The question is even dismissed as nonsensical since happiness or unhappiness wasn't one of the issues the government gives priority to. However, it seems that the government wants a sensible reason why this man died all of a sudden and officials are worried that he might have been depressed. They are searching for any signs or symptoms of depression or unhappiness and the many reports could not offer one proper reason why he died.

This poem itself looks like the last report written about the unknown citizen commending him to be honoured with a monument. It is the last report submitted to close the case if the unknown citizen so that he might Rest In Peace!