Pink Hot

By Gary H.

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As lightning struck and volcanoes erupted (somewhere on Earth), one bird broke out of its egg to conquer the entire United States. And what bloodcurdling monster of a bird would this be? The pink flamingo. The fact that it was both pink *and* a flamingo allowed the bird to surge to unprecedented levels of popularity. In Jennifer Price’s essay “The Plastic Pink Flamingo: A Natural History,” she **satirizes** American culture of the times by focusing on the bird’s flight to fame in America and its outrageously ostentatious color.

Her **satire** begins in the title: Price mocks the pink flamingos’ popularity with an **ironic antithesis** of “plastic” and “natural.” Despite the flamingo’s awkward and gangly appearance, it gracefully soared to popularity in the 20th century in America. In order to explain why – and how stupid it was – she first establishes the **contrast** between the real flamingo and the plastic, pink flamingo, noting the cruel **irony** of how “Americans had hunted the flamingo to extinction” in the late 1800s. But in the 1950s, Miami first flaunted the plastic replica and it became “the bird synonymous with wealth and pizzazz.” Immediately, the flamingo held **symbolic** value — it represented unabashed materialism. American culture must worship materialism: Flamingoes began popping up in all sorts of places. It flocked North across Florida, spread into New Jersey, and headed out West to Las Vegas. But these were just plastic flamingoes! What was going on? More irony and **satire –** in their quest to look unique, wealthy, and flamboyant, all the foolish Americans were doing the same thing. The culture of America in the 1950s was conformity, stability, and relative prosperity. The flamingo **symbolized** these values and therefore embodied the decade. At the essay’s **conclusion**,even New England ultimately catches flamingo fever; Price uses the **oxymoron** of “an inland sea of grass” to emphasize the silliness the spread of the plastic pink flamingo.

Price states there are two reasons for the popularity of this plastic emblem: one is that it was a flamingo; two is that the flamingo was *pink*, with extra emphasis on pink through more italics. In the 1950s, plastic industries preferred flashy colors. Price uses **imagery** to describe the brilliant colors of the decade: “broiling magenta, livid pink, incarnadine, fuchsia demure, Congo ruby, methyl green.” The generation, “raised in the Depression” indulged in these pastels to celebrate their new wealth and optimistic hope. Even though these colors were unorthodox, they became the norm during the decade, reinforcing Price’s view of United States culture as uniform and conformist. The **allusion** to Elvis’ hot pink car not only shows conformity to the times, but reveals more of United States culture. Wealth was the ultimate goal of all, and it was absolutely necessary to flaunt and flash it. Price adds **ethos** when she directly quotes Karal Ann Marling, who wrote that “sassy pinks were the hottest color of the decade.” These colors weren’t even red hot, they were pink hot! They brought with them that extra “pizzazz” and punch.

In her final **paragraph**, Price finishes off the **satire** by teaching readers how the flamingo had been “singled out as special” by many cultures who revered the living creature. **Compare** this with the American **attitude** – *Who cares that we killed off the real bird? Let’s mass-produce it in a factory, stick a price tag on it, and sell it!*  The overly ostentatious, wealth-seeking, and conformist attitudes of the 1950s are matched perfectly by the plastic pink flamingo.