

Alias grace and in the park essay



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In any case, the happiness and well-being of a person is generally achieved as a result of the thorough understanding and acceptance of their identity. This is evident through the novel, "Alias Grace" by Margaret Atwood, the film "American Beauty" by Sam Mendes and the poem "In the Park" by Gwen Harwood. All three texts portray protagonists who either struggle to find their identity or is unhappy with their current identity. Indicating to the reader of the discontentment that is present if one's identity is unknown or despised.

Margaret Atwood's "Alias Grace" supports this concept and it is highlighted to the reader through the protagonist of the novel, Grace Marks as her identity is perceived by numerous forms of media and outside society, impacting on the way in which she views herself. Thus causing confusion for Grace and an obvious hindrance for the daily life in which she lives. To convey this, Atwood uses a variety of real media accounts regarding Grace's case, that all of which influence in Grace's self perception. This is evident in, "I think of all the things that have been written about me- that I am an inhuman female demon... that I have blue eyes,.

...

that I am soft in the head and little better than an idiot." (p. 25) Here a combination of repetition and cumulation is used as Grace lists a summary of all that has been said of her, starting from her trial, to her appearance then to her personality. The combination of the techniques provides the reader with knowledge of what the outside media and society have identified Grace as she constantly repeats "That I am". The whole statement concludes with

the rhetorical question, " And I wonder, how can I be all of these different things at once? " The question sums up Grace's view towards what has been said of her as it highlights the confusion of Grace in her knowledge of herself. Enabling the responder to feel empathy for Grace as a result of what has been said of her, and through the techniques it is apparent that the different perceptions of her identity has impacted on the her personal view of her identity, providing her with confusion and an urgent quest to find herself. Another example of Grace's discontentment towards the diverse perceptions of her was the treatment from the keepers who endlessly bombarded Grace with many sexual, gender based taunts and comments.

This can be seen when one keeper says, "... That's what I like, a little high spirits in a woman, a little fire, they say it comes with the redness of the hair. " (p. 278).

The keepers often make cliched notions about Grace in relation to women, evident in the comment made about Grace's hair, showing the stereotypical opinions of red haired women, comparing them to fire and saying that a fired up woman is what men want. This shows the misogynic attitude of victorian men towards women and thus indicates to the reader of the extent to which victorian women were treated. The comments towards Grace, in particularly would have given her the impression that all men are misogynous and consequently would contribute not only to her ability to trust men but the way she viewed herself as a woman in society. Gwen Harwood's poem " In The Park" represents the concept of happiness that is derived from the knowledge of one's identity because of the woman's degrading of herself as a full time mother. Harwood uses relatively simple techniques, which offers

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an insight in the life of a mother who bares the burdens of children. To convey the significant change in the woman's lifestyle, Harwood uses a great contrast between the hint of a past romance and the present dismal reality to portray the regretfulness that the woman possess in choosing the path of marriage and children. This can be seen in " someone she once loved passes by- too late.

The words ' too late' indicates a certain resentment for her selfless giving, for when she sees her ex-boyfriend she sees all the opportunities missed and that her sense of self has diminished in amongst the lives of her children. We can thus see that the influence of motherhood has changed the woman's identity, to the person she saw herself as when she was with her ex-boyfriend, a contrast between a happy life, to a now woeful life. Due to the her circumstances it is apparent that the woman has experienced not only a change of lifestyle, but her emotional and physical self and the way she looks at and experiences life.

We can see this when the poem concludes with the hyperbole, " they have eaten me alive. " This finalises her feelings of resentment towards her children and her present life and identity, showing the emotional drains that children can place on adults, that children can literally consume the life of a parent. It overall offers a pessimistic outlook of both motherhood and childhood and indicates to the reader that her children have indeed changed who she is and that she definitely resents the fact.

It is apparent that the extent of her burdens and responsibilities have caused the woman to somewhat lose her sense of self and identity, and simply

define herself as a full time mother, supporting the initial concept that contentment can only be achieved if a person's identity is fully accepted and understood.