

Literary analysis essay



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In the short story, “ My Parents’ Bedroom,’ written by Uwem Akpan, the most defining role of literacy that sticks out is symbolism. The images that are engraved into readers brains are ones that have deeper meanings than what we initially see on the surface. The story is told through the eyes of a little girl named, Monique, who is only nine years old. It is told in first person point of view so that the reader feels as if he/she is actually experiencing the situations first hand. The symbolism in the story, “ My Parents; Bedroom,” illustrates the day to day struggle of living in Africa during the genocide.

Symbolism is integrated in the story through her parents, different religious groups, and the biggest sign, the crucifix. Monique first discovers that the night was taking a weird turn when her mother told her that she was going out in the nighttime. Monique knows that only ‘ bad women’ are on the streets when it is dark outside. Maman is also wearing the black dress that Papa had gotten for her and that he loves to see her wear. “ She’s panting, as if she’d been running; her body is shining with sweat.

She slips into the beautiful evening dress that Papa likes and combs her soft hair. ”(326) The dress is symbolic because although it is glamorous she is wearing it for a very unglamorous occasion. She wants Monique to believe she is going out, but in reality she is going in the ceiling to stay with her people and to protect them when the Hutu show up. Monique then proceeds to hand her mother the perfume that people in the neighborhood know her by. “ When I put the bottle in her hands, she shivers, as if her mind has just returned to her.

Instead of spraying it on herself, she puts it on Jean. "(326-327) The perfume, which was once a symbol of Papa's love to her was now being used to trick the attackers that were going to appear that night. Maman is smart and knows that people know her by that scent with her spraying it on Jean, the Hutu people would be confused and not be able to find her. Both the black dress and the perfume are symbolic and ironic. They were both things that Papa loved, as well as Maman and that night their love came to an end.

In order to protect their children both parents know what they must do. Papa who the previous night had watched Tonton Andre kill his wife, knew what would have to be done to ensure the safety of his children, he must also kill his wife. Although one cannot tell the difference between a Tutsi and Hutu without an ID card, the fighting between the two groups was dangerous to all. As Papa lands the machete on Maman's head Monique realizes what was being hidden from her all day. " I begin to think of Maman as one of the people in the ceiling. It's not safe for her to come down yet.

She's lying up there quietly, holding on to the rafters, just as she must have been last night when the man in the yellow trousers attacked me. She's waiting for the right time to cry with me. "(351) Maman died to protect her people, her kids, and her husband. This shows how terrible life during the genocide was, innocent lives were taken because of religion. Maman wanted to keep her family safe and her people that were in the ceiling and that's what makes her death symbolic. Most would run, get out as fast as they could, but she stayed and took the punishment as if it were owed to her. When they ask you, say you're one of them, OK? "(327) The last but most important part of the story and its symbolism has to deal with the crucifix.

Coming from a Westernized family where they married before a baby boy was born, Papa always said that the family crucifix would go to Monique. Most thought it was strange but he knew that he wanted her to have it. “ Our parlor is never totally dark, because of the crucifix in the corner, which glows yellow green. ”(327) When the Wizard breaks the crucifix into pieces, Monique does her best to save it because she knows in her head that is her way of saving her family.

At the end of the story, after Maman is dead and Papa fled all Monique and Jean had left to their family was the crucifix. The idea of hope that Papa would come back and put back the pieces of their family that so quickly fell apart. “ Everywhere is dark, and the wind spreads black clouds like blankets across the sky. My brother is playing with the glow of the crucifix, babbling Maman’s name. ”(354) The crucifix ultimately symbolizes Maman, she is always there with the kids in spirit. Their days are never dark because they have the glow of the crucifix to get them through the tough times.

In the end, readers eyes are opened up to the severity of the situation of what is going on in Africa. The idea that children as young as nine are forced to take care of their families and witness horrific crimes is sad. Here in America, we look at children as prized innocent possessions. For Akpan, using symbolism in his story, helped get his point across by showing that there is always deeper meaning in what we first see on the surface of the story. It overall helped me to understand the story better and to have a deeper connection with the main character, Monique.