

Stereotyped when  
she is met in the



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Stereotyped Characters in "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" 1Francis Brett Harte was born in the East, but moved west and changed his life to become a writer. Harte's works were said to, ". . .

express the matter humor briefly but more or less essentially, the power of laughing not only at things, but also with them." (Chesterson 339). He prospered as a writer with his work "The Outcasts of Poker Flat." "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" is one of, if not the, defining short stories for the Western genre. It takes stereotypical characters and places them in a typical western situation. This is a form of local color. Local color is the use of dialect, scenery, and stereotyped characters in a story.

Harte primarily uses stereotypical characters as a form of local color in "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" by his portrayal of the naive innocents, the golden hearted prostitutes, and the reserved gambler. Tom Simson and Piney Woods are prime examples of stereotypical innocents by their naivety, their ingenuousness, and even their sleeping habits. They are the newly wed couple of the story. One way of telling their innocence is by their how naive they are. Tom Simson assumes that one of the prostitutes traveling with the outcasts is married to the gambler. He also, does not realize that he is sending his virgin wife to sleep next to women less pure. Piney is the major example of ingenuousness by the way she giggled, and the how she was hiding behind the trees blushing. After she overcame her doubt she began to talk.

Harte described her talking as an "impulsive girlish fashion." (Harte 416) Once sleeping, Tom sleeps with a good Palmer, 2humored grin across his

freckled face, while his wife slept next to her frail sisters as though she was being guarded by angels. Although the prostitutes have a horrible persona they are still stereotyped by their true golden hearted demeanor. When you first meet The Duchess and Mother Shipton they come across harshly and have an unpleasant aura about them. The Duchess, while riding her horse, adjusts her "somewhat draggled plumes" (Harte 415) indicating that she is still wearing her costume. Later she blushes so that it is seen through all of her make up. Mother Shipton has more of radicalism behind her. When she is met in the story, she is cursing the town of Poker Flat.

In the end, you find out that she had been starving herself to save food for the young Piney. In sleep their truth comes out, once again they are angels guarding the Innocents. John Oakhurst, the reserved gambler, is characterized by his mannerisms: he does not drink, he shows compassion toward Tom, and is always dignified in his actions. When the group decides that they will pass around the whiskey John does not take part to maintain his whits for his profession. Tom devotes himself to Oakhurst after losing to him in a game of poker. John returns the money that was lost to Tom.

Even when he realized that the group was doomed after finding all of their supplies stolen and a blizzard approaching, he does not bother his companions. He tells them that there is a good camp there and that they will be able to make it for about a week until the snow thaws. As one can see Brett Harte effectively uses stereotyped characters as a form of local color in the short story, "The Outcasts of Poker Flat", by using innocence, promiscuity, and subduedness of his roles.

He gained his fame to be the, "...

greater than that exerted by any other American author, always excepting Irving,"(Pattee 341) which he was. He is an effective writer that understands the use of local color to make for an impressive satire on the Western short.

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