

"the red convertible"
by louise erdrich
essay



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Introduction

"The Red Convertible," is the most anthologized short stories of Louise Erdrich, as is the second chapter of her unveiling novel Love Medicine. The author is able to use common characters and themes in compiling fourteen stories into one novel. In Erdrich's series of novels, Love Medicine is considered to be the first novel that portrays the twentieth-century Chippewa life, which took place in North Dakota. "The Red Convertible" talks about a relationship between Lyman and Henry, in which Lyman has a huge motivation for bringing out the story with an aim of embracing and preserving the memory of his brother (Erdrich, 393). In this story, the reader is not directly linked into Henry's feelings and thoughts, and this is because of the fact that the story is told from Lyman's point of view. His affection towards his brother and the value he had towards their relationship is expressed through his words and actions. For example, he wanted to give the car to his younger brother when he was almost leaving for Vietnam War. This was a car that had brought them so much happiness. Therefore, "The Red Convertible" can be identified as a stand-alone story, and in this case, it has gained a huge reputation within various educational institutions. This has led to a point of introducing Erdrich's writing to students, as it is found to be quite enriching within their realm of study. In this story, Erdrich expresses difficult situations that many of the Vietnam veterans and probably their families went through after the war, and he does this by showing how these two brothers are struggling to deal with relationship and the world that are changing more often.

Throughout the entirety of the story, the theme of sacrifice is touched, and the author does a better job of providing clues to the reader about the sacrifice to be brought out. From the beginning of the story, there is an illustration of the sacrifice to be when Henry lies on the ground while his arms are wide open. The action of spreading of arms or cross-like pose, in many cultures, has always been an indication of sacrifice. Another incidence where the theme of sacrifice is brought out is when Henry bleeds after biting through his lip. In this case, blood is taken to be an inherent sensory item for informing about the sacrifice believed to take part in the future, and Erdrich is good enough to use such ideas in his story. For example, he says " every time he took a bite of his bread his blood fell onto it until he was eating his own blood mixed in with the food" (Erdrich, 410). Therefore, such powerful words and visions bring out a better comprehension on Henry's sacrificial position in the events of the story. Since the blood of Henry has been shed, the predictability of a sacrifice happening in the future is considered to be true. The sacrificial elements of Henry are shared by the words of Erdrich, and at times it is confusing to clearly know the main reason behind Henry's drama, whether if it is by himself or the army.