

The shipping news by annie proulx essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The first chapter of 'The Shipping News', written in 1993, by Annie Proulx, exposes the modern reader to the development of what everyone has experienced before; the development of their childhood. The chapter, a flashback-like image of the main character - Quoye, displays his development into a resigned, submissive character, and one who is often under the object of cruelty. The interactions of Quoye with a hyperbolically cruel world reveal to the reader Quoye's 'walk-upon' status by others. My context has positioned me to see that Proulx expresses the effects of a hyperbolically cruel world, the inevitable tendency to be judged on physical basis' and the fear that many people experience to experience new things in life. It is through the use of figurative language, tone and allusion the reader may infer the effects of cruel surroundings on the shaping of a repressive and unconfident personality.

Proulx expresses the possible notion of a hyperbolically cruel world, one of which, in conjunction with figurative language, shows Quoye's personality as a result of a long and painful childhood. Proulx herself was deeply fascinated by harsh living conditions in different countries, which may have been a possibility for the need for such expression. The inhumane symbol of family within family hate creates the sense that the reader has entered over exaggerated world, where the only thing that happens within Quoye's life is bad news. Quoye's father, in essence 'taught' Quoye to grow up as a failure.

Quoye, who feared water, was constantly drowned within the waters that his father threw him into, until he 'knew the flavor of brack and waterweed'. However, the constant harassing by his father continued, 'failure to speak

clearly; failure to sit up straight; failure to get up in the morning; failure in attitude; failure in ambition and ability; indeed, in everything. His own failure.' The repetition of the word failure, Proulx alludes the audience to believe that Quoye is just simply a failure within a failure. Proulx furthermore presents Quoye's cruel circumstances when his brother, his own sibling, teases him with incessant insults: ' Lardass, Snotface, Ugly Pig...'. The representation of family, a symbol of which is often depicted as love, caring and support when all else fails is used as the opposite to strongly reinforce Quoye's circumstances of an extremely cruel world

. Furthermore it may be argued that Proulx presents the idea that humans have the inevitable tendency to be judged negatively purely on looks, which is portrayed through strong use of figurative language and the characterization of Quoye. Quoye is frequently compared or referenced to food when described by Proulx, which may be inferred to the reader as a ridicule of Quoye, who is there to ' please' everyone else. The earliest example of this is his ' eating prodigiously' and ' ham knuckle, ' buttered spuds', where the tone of Proulx is of one in disgust. Quoye is then described as ' a damp loaf of a body', emphasizing the fact that damp bread is often thrown away or useless. Quoye is further shown as the child that is always left out, expressed as ' a head taller than any child around him', representing his left out position.

Thirdly, Quoye's chin is exemplified as his own little quirk, being described by Proulx as ' monstrous'. His chin is inferred by the reader often in the chapter as his main source of low-self esteem and judgement, as he would often cover it up. It is overall that the subjectivity to Quoye's physical

appearance and comparison with food, that he is judged upon others a consequently reveals to the reader a character of a depressing life. Being the oldest of five sisters, Proulx acknowledged the way that her family had affected her career upon 'The Shipping News'.

She had always expressed her yearn for an older brother, who could explore and try out new things that her other sisters would not dare to achieve. It is through the choice of language that perhaps Proulx portrays Quoye as afraid of trying new things in life, due to his circumstances. This is first shown to the reader when Proulx quotes 'Quoye steered away to Newfoundland, the rock that had generated his ancestors, a place he had never been nor thought to go'. Emphasizing Quoye's carefree and drifting life, Proulx demonstrates to the reader the lack of enjoyment or excitement within Quoye's life.

This may be first seen when Proulx states 'stumbled through his twenties and thirties...', emphasizing the carefree and neglectful attitude Quoye had in his childhood. This is significant in contrast to many adults of today, where one typically enjoys or misses their childhood with passion. A second example of this is when Proulx lists out the careers that Quoye had experienced, 'distributor of vending machine candy, all-night clerk in a convenience store, a third-rate newspaperman'.

Her emphasis upon the number of jobs that Quoye has been through illustrates to the reader the monotonous jobs that he has gone through. Lastly, Proulx alludes to the reader the swiftness and uninteresting life Quoye has simply had, due to the little and hasty language used. The

evidence suggests to me to believe that Proulx has expressed Quoye as an example of a person with an uninteresting life; possibly showing her personal yearn for excitement and adventure.

The cruel world that Quoye is portrayed by Proulx to live in helps portray to the audience the struggles that many of people within society tend to live upon. The notion that Proulx presents to us reflects upon the growing nature of people to become more 'popular' or based upon appearance. Via the use of metaphors, choice of language and characterization of Quoye, it is with my context that the reader is exposed to the way society thinks and behaves, including the fear that many people possess throughout life. As Annie Proulx once said, 'A spinning coin, still balanced on its rim, may fall in either direction.'