

A controversial issue

Business



The novel *Sophie's Choice* is written by William Styron.

It revolves around an American Southerner who befriends Nathan Landau, a Jewish, and his lover Sophie, who is a non-Jewish survivor of the Holocaust. In the novel, Sophie is forced to make a tragic choice in her life which makes a great impression in life. " This decision shapes Sophie's character and is applied in the novel as an idiom (Styron, 1979, pp. 56)." In this paper we will discuss about the Holocaust as a controversial issue and how it affected the lives and decisions of different characters in the novel. The holocaust is presented in this book as a flashback whereby Sophie narrates a number of things she had never shared with anyone before concerning the holocaust.

Most of the decisions she made were mandatory if she was to survive in the concentration camps. " After realizing that her mother was dying, Sophie decided to smuggle ham to her (Styron, 1979, pp. 67)." However Sophie was interned by Rudolf Hoss who was the commander at Auschwitz during the time. Having found herself in such a situation, Sophie decided to seduce the commander so that her son can be allowed to leave the concentration camp, and then be taken to the Lebensborn program and be raised as a German.

Sophie is one of the individuals who appeared to have reacted differently to the happenings of the Holocaust. Sophie is forced to make harsh decisions after finding herself in the camps. As she tried to flee with Stingo, Sophie narrates the darkest secret to him: a certain doctor at Auschwitz forced her to make a choice between her children and decide the one who was to die by gassing and who would live. She sacrificed her seven-year old Eva, and this

decision disturbed her for so long. This caused guilt she could never overcome.

After the long time, Sophie leaves Stingo who had just asked her to marry him. She disappears and leaves a small note saying that she will have to return to Nathan. “ She left for a short while and needed to go to Nathan (Styron, 1979, pp. 87).” The two commit suicide in Brooklyn by ingesting poison, thus leaving Stingo devastated.

This explanation helps us learn much about the holocaust and what it forced people to do. As we can observe from this story, Sophie reacts differently to the situation faced by offering what she believes is the best decision. As we have seen from the novel, we note that the people suffered so much in the hands of the Jews. For instance, Sophie is forced to make a very hard choice whereby she had to “ sacrifice her daughter so that her son can live (Styron, 1979, pp. 45).” This is the greatest punishment one can endure.

Due to Nathan’s schizophrenic condition, we observe that at times he becomes delusional and violent. He continues to lie about his career and no one is aware of his situation for quite a long time. There is continuous abuse of people in this novel as presented by the author. Different people are also forced to make decisions which are non-expected therefore causing great pain to others because of the holocaust. For example, Sophie abandons Stingo having given him hopes that they will be married.

Basically, the holocaust caused great pain and sorrows to many thus making life unbearable. Different people are killed in the concentration camps as we can see from the novel. The narration in this story shows how the Americans

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are abused. Slavery is also a common event in this book. By placing someone who is “ non-Jew in the novel shows how the problem is universal (Styron, 1979, pp.

58).” That means that the Holocaust could not be taken as an exclusively a Jewish tragedy. As we can see from the book, Sophie is a major character who is brought in the center of this novel. She appears to react differently to the issue faced. For instance, she decides to intervene and help her mother who is in her deathbed by smuggling huns to her.

However, she finds herself in trouble and is forced to make decisions to make herself free. As well, she decides to seduce the commander at Auschwitz so that her son can be out of the “ concentration camps and be brought up as a German” (Styron, 1979, pp. 90). At some other point, Sophie learns of her children’s fate when a sadist doctor forces her to decide the child who should live. She chose her daughter, Eva, to die to that her son can live.

As a major character in the novel, Sophie is used to explain how the struggle in the novel is beyond the Jewish viewpoint because many people suffer despite being not Jews. On the other hand, Nathan is another character who plays a big role in this novel; however, this character shows a totally different reaction to the holocaust compared with Sophie. Though he is schizophrenic, Nathan appears to form a strong basis through which this novel has been developed. Another thing is that Nathan learns that Sophie and Stingo are having an affair and therefore decides to kill the two of them.

This makes it possible to develop the theme of this novel thus showing how different individuals respond to certain situations facing them.

These two individuals are therefore forced to make “ weird decisions because they have to determine their fate (Styron, 1979, pp. 93).” This presentation has therefore been useful in presenting the characters and major themes of the novel. For instance, Sophie’s decision to have her daughter gassed to death forms a big discussion point for this novel. The other thing in the book is the Sophie’s choice during the time holocaust. Looking at the situation whereby one is forced to sacrifice a child so that the other can live, it is something very detrimental because the person has to determine what appears best for her.

Sophie has no choice but sacrificing her own daughter, she said that was hard decision (Styron, 1979, pp. 88). This is something she cannot forgive herself for and therefore she is forced to live a life full of regrets. According to me, I believe the life at the concentration camps during the time of the Holocaust was something detrimental and led to the loss of many innocent lives. What Nathan reacts most to is the belief that Stingo and Sophie had left to fall love and marry. This saddens him so much and the only thing he thinks of is revenging by killing the two.

Nathan is not so much reactive to the holocaust compared to some other characters in the novel. Basically, using Sophie’s choice to sacrifice her own daughter, the event signifies that the holocaust was a no win situation and every individual suffered enormously in the hands of the Germans. This affected many people and not only the Jews (Styron, 1979). The events

occurring during the time force Sophie make decisions which she has to regret about later in life. The book Sophie's Choice therefore explains how the holocaust was a no-win situation and how it led to the suffering and death of many during the time.