

# An interpretation of love in chang-rae lee's "a gesture life"

[Life](#), [Love](#)



Love, as they say moves in mysterious ways, we can say that it really did in Chang-Rae Lee's novel "A Gesture Life." The novel was basically about the life of Franklin "Doc" Hata and his reminiscing of his colorful and interesting past to restore his present life. The bulk of the narrative was mostly about how Hata expresses his love for the other characters in the novel.

Interestingly, "A Gesture Life" is certainly not the kind of story that portrays love in a typical manner. It is quite amusing that there are lots of ironies if love was to be discussed in this book. This essay will show the readers that the desire for love in "A Gesture Life" had ironically hindered the acquisition of love. The novel of Chang-Rae Lee was basically about probably the worst kind of tragedy there is, not being loved by everyone even by oneself.

If we are to classify the different forms of love in "A Gesture Life," there are lots of technical terms that are always related to the concept of love like agape, pragmatic love, eros, complex chemical reactions and terms like pheromones and dopamine, and lots of scientific terms that few of us comprehends. This essay will only employ types of love that is understandable by all for the purpose of keeping this essay from being too general. This essay will focus on the main character's love for the other characters and concepts in his life. But the essay will not settle for mere descriptions of the protagonist's love, it will show the reader how love had been distorted and given meanings by the traumas that the protagonist had suffered during the war.

The first kind of love from the novel is the love for acceptance. The protagonist Hata, had been begging (although he didn't express this

explicitly) for acceptance from the people in his life and his neighborhood. Hata was too careful about everything he does in his neighborhood. That is because he doesn't want to commit mistakes that could get him noticed. He wanted a low-profile life in his neighborhood because he has this assumption that he will be the target of discrimination in the community.

But contrary to what Hata is thinking, the citizen's of his community, Bedley Run, appears to like Hata, but in the way Hata wants them to like him. Hata was treated like an Oriental mascot because the people in Bedley Run seem to like him only for the differences he and most of the people in Bedley Run share. Hata speaks of his love for acceptance in his community, "...my assumption is that once I settle in...I will be treated like as people should be treated" (Lee 3). His assumptions of being accepted was brutally debunked by what had transpired during his stay in Bedley Run, " It seems to me that people took a weird interest in making me feel that I am unwelcome" (Lee 3)

Hata's love for acceptance didn't end with his failed attempt with his neighborhood. It appears that Hata's love for his adopted daughter Sunny, whom he had adopted when he was still in Korea when Sunny was just a child. While Sunny was growing up, she and her father were having endless disputes. In the long run, Sunny ran away from home even when she was just a teenager. Later in the story, Hata will have the chance to make up with her daughter.

Sunny went back to Hata and asks for support for she was pregnant.

Irritatingly, Hata denied Sunny's plea for support. Hata had prioritized more

his and his family's reputation more than the well being of her daughter. It appears that even though Hata loves her daughter, his family's reputation weighs more than the affection of his daughter. This is Hata's real and unfortunate dilemma. He had stated several times in the narrative that he loves her daughter very much, but still he is quite unable to show his love. After this he will contemplate heavily as to why his life is devoid of love, he will contemplate heavily as to why his life is remote to the lives of the ones he dears most.

Hata's weird and unproductive approach to love will backfire at him at the most tragic of scenarios. Hata had accidentally brought his house on fire and he was hurt in the fire and was hospitalized. After that he was caught in a web of nostalgia, he reminisced about the time he served as a paramedic in an army camp in the Pacific War. There he had fallen in love with a certain woman whom he calls "K" who was about the same age as her adopted daughter Sunny.

He had loved K as genuinely a man could love a woman. He was even willing to die and kill for K as she had committed murder and Hata was willing to offer help in covering up. But then, just like in the bulk of the story, Hata's love remains unrequited. K had viewed his love as having ill intentions. K thought that Hata was only after her youth and was only after sex. This tragic memory of Hata had some great effects in later in his life especially the relationships he had, especially with her daughter.

In a weird but true manner, Hata's kind of loves are real and unfortunately remains unrequited. Hata's situation is what we see everyday happening to real people. That is just the truthfulness that made this story a success. The novel "A Gesture Life" may have been talking about the tragic life of Hata when it comes to love, but what it was actually talking about is how some people find it very hard to be loved just because they themselves find it hard to love others. In the story, Hata seems to be the kind of person who never knew the feeling of being loved. He has this hunger to be loved by the people around him. This for me is one of the reasons why many people find it easy to empathize with the character of Hata.

## **Work Cited**

Lee, Chang-Rae. A Gesture Life. CA: Riverhead books. 1999