

Character connection essay



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In Carson McCullers' *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*, readers are introduced to a small suburban town and its local inhabitants. Readers follow a series of strange, charming, sad, and destructive events and explore the bonds between the residents.

McCullers uses several literary devices such as parallelism, contrast, and suspense to help readers experience and understand the bonds that are made, and subsequently broken, by these characters. He also uses these devices to create different emotions in readers throughout the book, and allow them to truly enjoy the scene. In this novel, there are three main characters that are focused on: Miss Amelia, Cousin Lymon, and Marvin Macy. McCullers creates unique and at times disturbing bonds between each of these characters. Each relationship follows a similar set of strange events, which is followed by an unhappy ending. The first relationship between the three that readers are introduced to is that between Miss Amelia and Marvin Macy.

Upon falling in love with Miss Amelia, Marvin Macy transforms from a malevolent character to a male sweetheart. He learned good manners: he trained himself to rise and give his chair to a lady, and he quit swearing and fighting and using holy names in vain" (McCullers 123). Along with his heart he gives Miss Amelia all of his possessions. After only ten days of being married, however, Macy leaves town. Miss Amelia does not show physical or emotional attachment to Macy and refuses to sleep with him. Despite his efforts, Macy cannot get Miss Amelia to return his love, and he leaves.

The next relationship that readers are introduced to is that between Miss Amelia and Cousin Lymon. This time, however, the tables are turned. In this relationship it is Miss Amelia who is infantilized with Cousin Lymon. Miss Amelia spoils and treats Cousin Lymon to everything he desires, but he does not show affection in return.

Instead he is critical and demanding. Eventually, Cousin Lymon becomes detached from Miss Amelia and instead finds his interests with Marvin Macy. This is the final relationship between the three characters, that of Cousin Lymon and Marvin Macy. Again, the same pattern is recognized. Cousin Lymon does not only like Marvin Macy, he is obsessed with him.

He follows him around and constantly tries to connect and communicate with him. As predicted, Macy does not return these feelings for Cousin Lymon. Instead he is cruel to him, and even physically abusive. Every important relationship in this novel follows, to some extent, the same terrible pattern. One character is not only taken by, but obsessed with another.

These feelings are not requited, and are in fact usually responded to with harsh, unfriendly measures. In order to win the admiration of the other, the infantilized character gives up their heart, time and/or possessions to the other. Eventually, the relationship ends in a hurtful way whether it is Macy having to flee town out of hurt, Cousin Lymon abandoning Miss Amelia, or Marvin Macy using/possibly selling Cousin Lymon as a slave. McCullers uses many tools and literary devices to enhance the reader's experience throughout the book. Certain scenes work especially well at appealing to, and entertaining readers.

One such scene takes place when Marvin Macy returns to the town after being in the penitentiary. McCullers creates great suspense. Macy returns while Miss Amelia is gone, and he shows up to the barbeque pit where the whole town is present. A great buildup of emotion is set for Miss Amelia's return, and when she does finally come home, readers, like the townspeople, are expecting an extreme reaction.

" Everyone waited to see her burst into a terrible holler, snatch up some dangerous object and chase him altogether out of town"(McCullers 137). However, Miss Amelia does nothing of the sort. Instead, McCullers creates an almost anti-climax, and instead writes Miss Amelia as simply going into one of her quiet trances.. Readers are furthered confused when Miss Amelia does not react to Macy's strike at Cousin Lymon. This, more than a large fight intrigues readers and hightens curiosity The second interesting thing that McCullers does with this scene is his use of contrast.

Miss Amelia's reaction to Marvin Macy is restrained, and almost non-existent. Cousin Lymon's, on the other hand is one to be seen. " He fluttered his eyelids, so that they were like pale, trapped moths in his sockets. He scraped his feet around on the ground, waved his hands about, and finally began doing a little trotlike dance" (McCullers 138). This again creates curiosity in readers; why is it that Cousin Lymon, who has never met Macy that has such a rash reaction to him? Why doesn't Miss Amelia? This is the final way in which McCullers interests readers in this scene. He leaves us with endless questions.

We wonder how and when and if Miss Amelia will react to Marvin Macy, and what will become of Cousin Lymon now that this strange side of him has reached an extreme. By creating complex characters with unique bonds and interactions, McCullers creates an entertaining and interesting novel.

Although their relationships are similar, each character is very different from one another. Parallels can be seen in their relationships and actions towards one another (For example, Miss Amelia striking Macy, and then Macy striking Cousin Lymon). With suspense, and unexpected series of events, McCullers keeps readers on their toes, wanting to read on.