

Analysis of setting in the "the rocking horse winner" and "araby" essay sample



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It is said that reading literary works is more than just setting the eyes on one individual story or another. Rather, it has been suggested that all possible connections between two or more works are taken into considerations so as to reach to better understanding of all. True enough, this recommendation once put into use for the two stories “ The Rocking Horse Winner” (by D. H. Lawrence) and “ Araby” (by James Joyce) could lead to a revelation of many details in common between them, especially the setting, or the living environment of the leading characters. The likeness is that both the novelty in life targeted by “ I” character in “ Araby” and mother love thirsted by Paul are partially obstructed by the disturbing surroundings.

In “ The Rocking Horse Winner”, there is only one word precisely describing the mood of the house where Paul lives: Anxiety. It could be found at least seven times throughout the story. In the story, the house is “ loaded” all the time with bizarre whispers: “ There must be more money”. That is because all members in that family just rush for their needs, money, luck and so on, and hardly pay any attention to each other’s inner thoughts. The mother, though being housed in a well better-off family, feels that “ at the centre of her heart was a hard little place that could not feel love” just because she always listens to the “ anxiety” for money lurking here and there in the house. She is haunted by the ideas of luck and money. Never could we spot any saying when the mother lets out a word about “ love” or “ happiness”, not at all. Instead, she just thrusts herself in expensive hungers. The more money she gets, the more she craves. Even when receiving five thousand

pounds from her son, she just feels it " Quite moderately nice" - she wants more.

Paul's father is always busy involving in money-making activities " for the social position which they had to keep up". Paul indulges in gambling because of, on one part, his close contact with his uncle and Basset the gardener, who are both gamble addicts and, on the other part, the alleged magical rocking horse and the conversation about luck and money he holds with his mother at the beginning of the story. It can be concluded now that due to the mood of the setting, Paul's driving force of gaining mother love is terminated. The geographical setting, or the house, disables him to fulfill his aspiration. In fact, I think that Paul really loves it when his family has enough money because the whispers then might stop and some peace of mind might be restored, a critical condition to maintain love and happiness. In response to his uncle's question, he says " I started it for the mother. She said she had no luck,..., so I thought if I was lucky, it might stop whispering. Unfortunately, it never happens as expected.

Likewise, in " Araby", the geographical setting as well as the human unresponsive attitudes are just unbearable, " bad humor" as complaint by the leading character. As for geographical factor, the small community where the boy lives, the overall ugliness falls upon every corner of the story and hampers his positive thoughts. Many times throughout the story could we observe the disapproving words used to depict the environment. "

Musty", " stragging", " somber", " curses", " shrill litanies", " single sensation", " innumerable follies", " monotonous" are just some of them

which denote the unwelcoming sense of the small community where the boy
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lives. The newness and novelty of life, the driving force of the boy, therefore, also has no chance to be possible. The only "bright spot" in the hideous picture of that society that the boy clings on to live by is Mangan's sister, who embodies his driving force, his desire.

It is not a coincidence when the author always "sketches" this girl in full light: "The light from the opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair...lit up the hand..." or "her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door." or "the brown-clad figure...touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck..", which is extremely contrasting to the "feeble", "dusk", "completely dark" background of the setting. Situated between two extremes: one is the ugly and tedious setting, the other is the beauty and "newness" of the girl, not surprisingly that his buddy "romance" for the girl finds the setting hard-to-accept, "hostile to romance" as he comments. For several times he has to retreat to the back drawing-room or the front parlor or the upper part of the house where he can peep at his beloved girl, "went from room to room singing, or enjoy some short moments of being "liberated". About the attitudinal factor, the insensitivity of the boy's acquaintances, be it specifically his uncle and aunt or even Mrs. "garrulous" Mercer, also discourage him from enjoying life and make him feel so lonely.

His uncle gives him the permission to go to the bazaar with a dull, unenthusiastic, "curtly" reply: "Yes, boy, I know". Even when asked again by the boy about the bazaar, he seems to show no appreciation or care for his nephew's desperate need, he just talks about "The Arab's Farewell to his Steed", which is by no means related to Araby. His aunt, in her own way of <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-setting-in-the-the-rocking-horse-winner-and-araby-essay-sample/>

thinking, consider the boy's intention of going to Araby " some Freemason affair". She even nearly breaks the boy's dream as saying " I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord". Mrs. Mercer, though only unintentionally, does contribute her " gossipmonger talent" in heightening the boy's tension, " When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists." Around that moment, time is running out while the bazaar is coming to an end, which means he may break the promise with Mangan's sister of " bringing you something". It is to say the boy has no real companion, a person who can recognize, sympathize or even share his fantasy. The figure of him sitting nervously in a " deserted train", " bare carriage" may be a symbolism for his lonesome.

The boys in the two stories, though being located in two different societies, are both afflicted in the same way. They are dispirited and frustrated by the setting. Their liveliness as well as their normal emotional developments are seriously retarded by their surroundings, relatives or even the dull outer shell of the community. It is true that in this life when you are too much obsessed with materialistic cravings, or you are overmuch busy facing uninteresting, unchanged tasks, you will not have enough time and effort to think of ideal, positive yet ever-abstract notions such as love, peace or happiness. In terms of this reflection, the two stories do supply to me really precious life lessons.