

Critical response



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Shareef Sharkawi English 103 Dr. Sommerfeldt tuesday-thursday Essay
response to " Happy Endings" In order to respond the question of whether or not Margarete Atwood critiques not only the lives of men and women, but their reading preferences as well, I will demonstrate what is highlighted by a series of experimental fiction scenarios narrated and commented on by Atwood.

These scenarios coming together for a common goal; this common goal is educated the readers , and the educational factors tie into the unanimous response of: Yes, Atwood is critiquing the lives of women and men through her illustrations of seemingly very real and everyday experiences of various man and women relationship scenarios which all inevitably (and authentically)end in death. It has been noted that several renowned feminists had taken certain notice to the level of critique Atwood presents towards women, and were not approved; not bias in the least, she is critical of men too throughout her illustrations.

Atwood uses the multitude of relationship scenarios as stories in order to cater to the preferences of the reader(s), as most readers prefer certain storylines that mostly end in benign circumstances, or more commonly one that personally relates to them. In doing so, the author has basically insulted plot readers, for the real world does not have a happy ending. Relationships end in sickness, sadness and death. The end (according to Margarete anyways). Atwood characterizes women based through her representation of relationships of men and women.

The characterization and dramatization of women throughout her scenarios aroused suspicions of feminists as to whether or not she was critiquing them.

These allegations had some point though. For example, in Story B she depicts women as weak and quite stupid in fact, she does this by allowing her main character to be emotionally abused by a man, while secretly hoping and believing that: "" This other John (the abuser) will emerge like a butterfly from a cocoon", meaning his ugly attributes will eventually turn into something much more appealing; someone much more kind. (282) From my knowledge, this tends to happen quite a bit. Feminists did not approve due to the circumstances that follow her abuse, which in fact is suicide. Upon hearing of John treating a different woman much better than Mary (the abused), she (Mary) writes a note indicating that she intends to take her own life, or attempt to anyway in an attempt to get John's attention. The manner of which she conducted her suicide seemed to indicate the author though it was " lady like" in the sense of using sherry instead of whiskey to drown her life away (282).

A clear lack of empowerment of women led to her untimely demise, which is why this particular story leads the majority of critique from feminists in her work. Atwood of course is critical of men too; characterizing them as cold, sex hungry, and ultimately pitiful in the adultery -murder-suicide scenario entitled " C". Atwood's scenarios culminate into what you could say are the typical lives of men and women in modern western societies. Story C illustrates the epitome of weakness in men; security.

Had John been content with his life, and wife the carnal craving of wanting more and better would not have overtaken John. Atwood depicts a situation in which the main character, John cheats on his wife for a younger woman (she does it to comfort him of his hair loss, which ties into security of

a male), but upon finding his mistress in bed with another man, he is overcome with grief and despair; he then buys a gun and kills his mistress, her lover and finally himself. The insecurity leads John to adultery, which lead to double-murder-suicide.

This story illustrates and critiques the weakness of men. Although the characterizations of men and women seem different, Atwood is really toying with the readers in the sense of reading for plot. I believe she has set this story up in accordance to accommodate several types of plot readers; as well as their gender. For example in her statement " If you want a happy ending, try A" she is essentially stating that if you're into this type of storybook ending, which Atwood knows most are, stick with and read scenario 'A'.

By doing this, it is solidified that she is indeed critiquing or tailoring her audience to a certain degree regarding male or female plots and plot readers. The general tone of the story further adds to my ascertainment of belittling the plot readers, and says that even though we as humans think we are all very different, we will equally receive the same inevitable authentic end of life through death.

The situations were represented in a way, which I believe was designed to appropriate all types of audiences, readers and relationships in Canada, because she indicates " This is Canada, you'll still end up with 'A'(Life well and die), though in-between you may get a lustful brawling saga of passionate involvement, a chronicle of our times, sort of. " Atwood is critical of women, and men in this story; it has been noted by feminists that she

almost too critical, and this is done through the characterization (or dramatizations) of the women in such stories.

Creatively and nearly accurate she depicts several scenarios in order for plot readers to be satisfied. Doing so clearly implies sympathy for those types of readers and it very well may tie into the fact that plot readers seek to envision themselves in the happy ending scenario; which we as the readers of this experimental fiction author know lacks authenticity. Atwood achieves her affects through various scenarios, that happen to inevitably end as they should; authentically. Authenticity of an ending, according to Atwood is justified through the "happiness level", which means if it ends in anything, but death(s) consider it falsified.