

# The pastures of heaven essay sample



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The Pastures of Heaven is a book written by John Steinbeck a book about multiple short stories that are connected by settings and the appearance of the Munroe family. The Munroe's do not have bad intentions but they always seem to destruct a family in one way or another, such as indirectly running them out of town or costing them the loss of a family member. A member of the Munroe family serve as foil a character to the other families who live in the Pastures of Heaven to relay the theme. Steinbeck portrays the theme of how a person's good will sometimes may not have a good result. Chapter three of the story explores one of the valley's residents named Edward "Shark" Wicks. Shark desires attention and respect from residents in the town and he is known as the smartest man as well as the man to go to for any advice when it comes to any type of business issue. Shark's life is built upon lies, however, for the truth is that he really has no money, and all of his wealth was just a big scam.

His wife also bore him a beautiful yet unintelligent daughter named Alice; as she got older, her beauty became richer and richer. Shark becomes even more afraid of other men because of this beauty his daughter has and is obsessed with keeping Alice's purity. Shark especially dislikes a particular boy named Jimmy Munroe which Shark bans Alice to ever speak to him. Shark, with his over-protectiveness and obsession for Alice's purity, hears that his daughter has kissed and danced with Jimmy while he was out of town. This sends Shark Wicks into a rage, leading him into grabbing a gun and heading toward the Munroe farm; he is arrested and held with a high bond. Shark ends up having to tell the judge and the residents of the Pastures of Heaven that he never had any money. Jimmy is the dramatic foil

character to Shark because the truth about Shark comes out and ruins his reputation in the valley. The reputation of Shark being a successful man comes crashing down around him because of Jimmy kissing his daughter Alice, the boy he hated. Steinbeck opens chapter four with the discovery of a baby along the roadside in town.

The newborn is an ugly baby and is given the name Tularecito by Franklin Gomez who adopted him. Tularecito is mentally challenged but has an artistic gift. The new school teacher, Miss Morgan, is well liked by her students, mainly because she reads interesting stories in class. As Miss Morgan reads one particular story, Tularecito begins to believe he is a mythical character called gnome, and hardly encouraged by Miss Morgan and sets off to find his people. He stumbles upon the farm of Bert Munroe and begins to dig holes in search of his people. Bert Munroe, finds one of these holes one morning, starts to fill it back in. Tularecito sees Bert's actions and attacks him. In the end, Tularecito's violent outburst and mental retardation force him to be sent off to an asylum for the criminally insane. Bert Munroe is the dramatic foil character to Tularecito because he ends up sending him away. Bert did not physically send Tularecito to an asylum but he did fill back up the hole made by Tularecito which enraged the young man. Steinbeck's fifth story is about a woman named Helen Van Deventer. Helen, as Steinbeck explains, is "hungered for tragedy..." (55).

Helen gives birth to a daughter named Hilda and is diagnosed as having mental problems and gets worse as she gets older. Helen decides to move to the Pastures of Heaven for a more peaceful and relaxing environment. Bert Munroe decides to pay a welcoming visit to the town's newest resident.

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When Burt arrives, he is greeted by Hilda. Burt assumes the little girl may be trouble and continues to the house and is sent away by the house servant. Hilda escapes from her room the night of Burt's visit, Helen grabs her deceased husband's gun and begins to look for Hilda. She is found shot by a stream with the gun beside her. It is claimed that she had committed suicide due to her mental illnesses. Burt Munroe is the dramatic foil character to Helen because he was willing to be a good neighbor and stop by to give a welcoming visit. But Bert had to go at the wrong time which leads Helen to murder her own daughter. Helen's stress and previous tragedies had built up and the run-away of Hilda because of Bert's visit was the last thing that broke the camel's back. Junius Maltby came to the Pastures of Heaven because of health issues. Junius becomes a lazy man while living in the valley.

He married a widow he had been boarding with and she bore him a son named Robbie. She passed away by influenza, leaving Junius and Robbie alone. They soon end up living in poverty as well. When Mrs. Munroe decides to give Robbie some decent clothes to wear for school, he becomes aware that he is poor. Junius decides to return to his home town to work and to give a better life for Robbie. Mrs. Munroe is the dramatic foil character to Robbie because she basically told Robbie that he is poor. Robbie had been a happy little boy enjoying the company of his father and without the thought of him being poor never crossed his mind. Rosa and Maria Lopez decided to open a small restaurant in the house in order to survive, but the business does not prosper as they expected. One day Rosa decides to have sex with a customer in an attempt to sell more food and she succeeds. Both sisters

agree it is necessary to encourage the customers if they want to succeed in having a good business. One day Maria decides to give a ride to Allen Hueneker while on her way to Monterey. Mr. and Mrs. Munroe passed by the both of them and Mr. Munroe jokes about telling Allen's wife that he is running off with Maria. Later that day as Maria came back home and hears Rosa explain that the local sheriff is forced to close down the restaurant because of complaints about their "encouragements."

Mr. Munroe is the dramatic foil character to the Lopez sisters because it is odd that the Lopez sister's restaurant closes down the same day Mr. Munroe made his remark. So it is reasonable to assume that he is the reason why the Lopez sister's restaurant was closed down. Molly Morgan arrives to the town for an interview for a teaching position. During the interview Molly is having flashbacks about her past and family members. Her father was a traveling salesman and only came home twice per year. One day Molly's father leaves and never returns. Her mother assumes he must be dead but Molly and her siblings refuse to believe it. Molly is hired and things are going smoothly until Bert Munroe mentions a farm hand he hired that goes off on drinking binges at the school board meetings. Bert describes the man exactly how Molly remembers her father. She is forced with the possibility that her father is still alive and living in town. Unable to deal with facing her father, Molly believes she has no choice but to leave the Pastures of Heaven immediately.

Bert Munroe is the dramatic foil character to Molly because he is the reason why Molly left the Pastures of Heaven. Since Bert describes exactly how Molly's father as she remembers, she cannot bear to figure out if her father really has come back to her life even though her father had abandoned her

family when she was a child. Steinbeck introduces another resident of the Pastures of Heaven named Raymond Banks. He is a successful farmer and other residents looked upon his place as the model farm of the valley. Raymond is friends with the warden at San Quentin Prison and is often invited to watch executions. Bert Munroe having heard about Raymond's trips to watch prisoners being hanged asks Raymond if he can join him on his next visit. Eventually Bert decides he does not want to join Raymond. Later Raymond decides he will not attend the execution himself. The dramatic foil character is Bert Munroe to Raymond because he changed the attitude of Raymond about executions.

Bert made Banks feel self-conscious about witnessing executions and did so by just explaining himself to Raymond about why he did not want to attend the execution. Pat Humbert was raised by parents that gave birth to him at an older age. Upon their deaths, Pat locks up the sitting room from where his parents spent most of their lives and Pat avoids it for years. Pat, upon overhearing a comment made by Mae about how pretty the outside of his house looks, decides to remodel the sitting room in the house hoping to impress Mae and take it as an opportunity to have a relationship with her. Pat, with the room finally finished, got the courage to pay Mae a visit and begin his courtship, arriving to see that there is a party going on. Pat discovers the party is to celebrate Mae's engagement with Bill Whiteside and is now heart-broken. The thoughts of Pat's parents come back to him and he decides to sleep out in the barn. The dramatic foil character is Mae Munroe to Pat because Pat saw Mae as the person that would help him forget about his parents.

Once Pat heard the comments made by Mae, he took it as a chance to truly forget about his deceased parents by thinking Mae and himself would possibly have a relationship together. Chapter eleven begins with the history of the Whiteside farm. Richard Whiteside settled in the Pasture of Heaven and dreams to establish a long family lineage and a productive farm for the future Whiteside generations who will live on the land. Richard's wife only bore him one child named John. John has the same hopes and dreams as his father did, his wife only bore him one child named Bill as well. Bill ends up having different dreams and goals than his fathers and grandfathers. Bill decides he is going to marry Mae Munroe and intends to leave the Pasture of Heaven. John is not too happy about Bill's goals in life but accepts his decision. John will carry on and work the farm after Bill leaves. One day Bert Munroe convinces John to burn the brush to get fine pasture next spring. While burning the brush, John's house catches on fire.

John accepts that his dreams have now changed and decides to leave the valley and move in with his son Bill and new wife Mae in the city. The dramatic foil character is Bert Munroe to John because he brought up the idea to John to burn the brush for better farming the following year. This leads to John's house bursting into flames. But when seeing two generations of Whiteside's burning down, John now knows for sure that his and his father's dream will never come true. Once again one of the Munroe family members makes a life changing situation in the Pastures of Heaven.

Ultimately, the theme is to never get into someone else's business because you will never know what kind of effect will happen towards that person. The Munroe family, with good intentions, always ends up messing everything up

and somehow makes a life changing situation. In every chapter discussed above, one of the characters ends in a down-fall. All the stories are connected with a member of the Munroe family, who usually bring evil with them.

If the Munroe family were never in the picture there would be a possibility for different endings to every short story. The truth about Shark Wicks could have remained a secret and his desire for attention and respect from others would have increased. If Bert had never come out the morning Tularecito was looking and asking “ Where are you, my people” (52) when digging up holes on Bert’s farm, Tularecito could have grown up in good hands with Mr. Gomez. Helen would have never lost her mind and murdered her daughter Hilda if Bert never stopped by to give a welcoming greeting. If Mrs. Munroe never tried to donate clothes to Robbie, Robbie would have never felt ashamed about the way he lived and would still be living in the Pastures of Heaven.

If Bert never wanted to explain his story about his drunken handy man, Miss Morgan would never have thought of her father coming back to her life and still be the school teacher and be adored by the children. Banks would have continued going to the executions if it was not for Bert changing his attitude about executions. Pat was finally happy and would have stayed that way if Mae was never engaged. Lastly, if Bert never brought up the idea of burning the brush, John’s dreams about having a long lineage of Whiteside generations possibly would have come true. Overall the Munroe family are good people that try to help and do good for others but unfortunately end up doing the opposite. Jonathan Estrada- 3B