

"crackling day" by
peter abrahams and
"a hero" by
r.k.narayan essay
sample



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“ Crackling Day” by Peter Abrahams and “ A Hero” by R. K. Narayan Essay Sample

‘ Crackling Day’ by Peter Abrahams is set in South Africa during the apartheid time. Apartheid is a political system where white people were in power over black people. The main character in the story is a boy called Lee who everyday makes the journey to collect the crackling. On his way back, he and his friend, Andries bump in to some white boys who insult Lee’s dead father. Lee learns the hard way and his Uncle punishes him.

‘ A Hero’ by R. K. Narayan is set in India. It is about a boy called Swami whose father teaches him a valuable lesson of growing up and to become a man. Both stories give us an inside into how other cultures live.

After reading both stories we can see that the two families are very different. Lee’s family is quite poor, where as swami’s is well off. We know this because lee’s Aunt and Uncle runs a farm, his Aunt’s hands are described as swollen from manual labour and working extremely hard. Swami’s father is reading the paper at the beginning of the story, ‘ Father looked over the newspaper he was reading’. This shows us his father has been educated and is wealthy enough to find the time to sit around and read the newspaper. Swami mentions the cricket club he is a member of, this tells us that he is educated enough to be able to join something like this. However, in ‘ Crackling day’ there is no mention of any education for Lee. Lee is wearing shorts, shirt and no shoes despite the fact that it is winter in South Africa and icy cold. ‘ An icy cold draught, sharp bites to the morning air’. ‘ My feet felt

like frozen lumps that did not belong to me, yet jarred and hurt everytime I put them down'.

In ' A Hero' we know that Swami and his family must be quite well off as they wouldn't be getting broken in to otherwise, they obviously have belongings worth stealing. After the burglary has taken place it tells us that ' Father, the cook and the servants' come into the study to find out what all the noise is about. This is another example of their wealth. In India there are a lot of tigers, Swami's father wants him to be prepared incase he ever comes in to contact with one.

In ' Crackling Day' Lee lives with his Aunt Liza and Uncle Sam, we realise that Lee is closer to his Aunt rather than his uncle. This is because she is the one who comforts Lee after he has been punished by his uncle. We can see that Lee's aunt is the strong and dominant one in the family, as she is the only one in the family who doesn't apologise to the whites. As Lee's father is dead, he looks up to his uncle as a father figure and when the whites come to the house Lee sees Sam grovelling to them. Sam is extremely ashamed of what he has done and can not face Lee to apologise. ' Explain to the child Liza' Liza replies ' you explain, you are the man, you did the beating, you are the head of the family, this is a mans world, you do the explaining' Lee has to understand that he needs to respect the white people and act as though they are superior to him. Whether he believes it or not he has to pretend that he does.

In ' A Hero' Swami's father wants him to grow up, to become a man. He does this by taking him away from his usual sleeping place, (next to his

grandmother) to sleep in his father's office alone. When Swami's father asks his wife what she thinks of this she says 'I hardly know anything about the boy'. This is quite a shock for the reader as you don't expect to hear a comment like this off a mother talking about her own child. Swami's grandmother meets our typical stereotype grandmother, but she also plays the role of a mother to him. This is completely different to our culture as Swami's mother is more or less saying she doesn't play a part in the upbringing of her son. His father is fulfilling the role of a father too, however in a crisis Swami is more likely to return to his grandmother as he looks up to her.

In both stories the two boys are each taught a valuable lesson. Although very different but each lesson is needed in order to survive in where they live. Swami is taught the lesson that he has to learn to act like a man in order to survive where he lives. Although he spent the night, until the intruder enters the room, the next night he returns to his grandmother's bed. Therefore, his lesson of growing up didn't work although in a way it did work as he grew up a little bit when he caught the intruder.

In 'Crackling Day' Lee was taught the lesson of respect he doesn't respect the whites we know this as he doesn't say 'baas' to them. It doesn't matter whether or not Lee thinks he should respect them, he must act like he does think that he should.

We can see that both cultures are extremely different to one another, and when compared to the culture in which we live in today they are also very different. In South Africa children have to grow up more quickly than children

in India and in our culture. Life in India isn't completely different to ours as relationships with adults are similar to ones which take place in the culture we live in. Although, children are treat older from a younger age.