

The whaler essay sample



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Every innocent child has an Idol, a person who has a life they dream about having when they grow up. Children often ask questions about their future, that is why they often search for their identity in a role model. To picture their future life in such a young age often causes disappointment. This is exactly what happens in this short story written by Joe Sheerin, it is an Irish short story which appeared in 2000. This innocent boy gets very disappointed when all he ever dreamed about fell apart in less than an hour.

The boy is not the only one who gets disappointed, another character in the short story is the Whaler, the boy's biggest idol. The Whaler has lived his whole life based on one big lie and that is why the Whaler, when he finally opens up and tells the truth, realizes how disappointed he is about his life, and therefore ends up hanging himself. The boy, who also is the narrator in this short story, is proximately 10-12 years old; he is in his early puberty, he does not know about a trivial of things, but he is also old enough to do some shopping for his mother.

The Whaler was the idol of his imaginations, " One from the old tribe of gods; hero, magician and priests", a man with great arms and wide shoulders, a secretive man, with an air of mystery. One day he sees a Whaler, a man growing out of the field, the boy was in sharp disbelief, he had only met a Whaler once before. The fact that the Whaler is defecating, makes the boy embarrassed. The boy is described as a clever boy. The Whaler tells the boy a secret, the secret about his whole life based on a lie. This shocks the boy. The Whaler never saw a whale.

He just ran boats on the St. Lawrence, he only ran the seaway. The boy grows with this secret, mentally he gets a little bit older, and he now realizes that life is not just an easy process, which forms exactly how you imagine it. A lot of things reveals after this. The boy, who has imagined a whale being as big as the hills, is told the whale only is a little bigger than a bush; the disappointment grows but also does his knowledge of life. He goes from an ignorant and innocent boy to a boy knowing about the truth but also about sexuality.

The first sexual knowledge he gets is the Whaler telling him that the hill looks like a tit, even though the boy always has seen it as a whale. He says himself: " I didn't see for I was innocent of all trivial things, it looked like a whale to me. " Furthermore the Whaler tells him a secret about his teacher Mrs. Early. The boy really likes her, " she is a good teacher, she knows a lot about the world. " She taught them about religion, about the infinite mercy of God's love. She made him seem as such a soft and reasonable man, which gave our narrator a reason to actually like him.

But also in this case our narrator ends up being disappointed, when the Whaler tells him another secret. The whaler had an affair with Mrs. Early, when her husband was still alive (died a few years ago). The boy now feels guilty, he feels damned and thinks " All the time she was teaching us religion" He gets disappointed once again. He feels like this information had aged his body, suddenly he feels very tired. This is a clear symbol of the fact that he during his meeting with the Whaler grows up, but not physically, only mentally.

The text also says in the beginning, when the Whaler is still an Idol, the boy only reaches him to the Adam's able, and after the first secret he now reaches his chin, and then at last he looks him in the eye (his is standing on an incline, and that's why he does not grow physically, but only metaphorically). "The sun filled the whole sky", this could be a symbol of the fact that the mist before his eyes, the mist of imagination, is gone now, and he sees things clearly now he knows the truth.

Another important symbol, is the loaf, the loaf is a symbol of innocence, and wasp a symbol of the fact that the innocence now is being broken, the boy is trying to avoid the change, he is waving the wasp away, just as he is in constantly disbelief of the information he gets from the Whaler. "I has agreed to keep one secret I would preferred not to have known" When the Whaler at last just reaches down and grabs the end of the loaf, walking away eating it, the boy has giving up his innocence, he is already "damned" like he says. When he at the end sees Mrs. Early, he sees her with different eyes.

In the beginning he sees her as a spotless teacher with no dark side, and in the end he sees her as a catch just like the whaler, and animal, which can be brought down. Gleaming and ungleaming, this symbolizes her personality, a bright side and a dark side. "Thar she blows" this is also mentioned in the beginning of the story in relation to whaling, and now in the end as a relation to Mrs. Early, it could symbolize the fact that his old sight of her blows, just like the whale blows when it is being hit by the harpoons. The boy's life has a new beginning; this is the start of a new era of his life.