

# "montana 1948" by larry watson essay sample

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## **“ Montana 1948” by Larry Watson Essay Sample**

The novel “ Montana 1948” written by Larry Watson held a series of tragic events, which were to have a permanent and decisive impact on David and his parents. This chain of events were to turn David’s young life and that of his family upside down forever and which was to angrily lead him out of childhood, destroying his innocence and youthful naivety in the process. However, David’s shocking revelations lead to his painful gaining of wisdom. David is forced to make ethical choices of loyalty and justice between his loving father and a devoted uncle Frank, a local white doctor, a war hero, and favourite son of the town’s leading family.

When David’s story begins, we learn that his life is a stable and a happy one, his present family is close and loving. David’s innocence is protected by his parents. His family is very stable combined with the respect in which the much loved and admired Frank has held by both the townspeople and David, that made the events which occurred suddenly and with an increasing speed, so shocking and destructive, particularly for David.

David’s view of life dramatically starts to change through the eavesdropping of his mother and father’s conversation regarding Frank’s behaviour towards Marie Little Soldier, a housekeeper, a member of the underprivileged and discriminated Indian indigenous race, a person with no power or influence.

David learns a great lesson about morals after Marie was sexually assaulted, raped and found dead a few days after Frank goes in to see her. Frank claims she died of pneumonia. David reveals the fact that he thought he saw Frank

walking into David's house a little while before Marie was found dead and he confesses to his parents, " While I was sitting there I saw someone cutting across our backyard. There's a knothole you can see out of. I was pretty sure it was Uncle Frank. Then I got out and watched him go down the tracks. He was going toward town"(pg-97). After receiving the shock of knowing his uncle is a murderer, David experiences a growth in morality. He chooses to inform his parents what he knows, or at least part of what he knows, about Uncle Frank. This shows that he is developing in the area of honesty. Before, David would have kept all this to himself, rather than face his parents with knowledge he knows will displease them.

Wes (Frank's brother, a county sheriff) abuses his powers, as a sheriff to incarcerate Frank in his home basement. Wes chooses to protect his family reputation before the law. He does not fulfil his role of duty as a sheriff by discriminating against the Indian community. Julian (David's grandfather) was very unhappy that Wes would lock up his own brother despite the fact that Wes saves Frank from the humiliation of going to jail. David faces an even more intimidating threat when he notices that a few of the hired hands from his grandfather's ranch come to his house to try and break Frank free. He comments, " These men must have figured, with Grandpa's help, that Frank was in the basement, and that rear door was the way they were going in after him" (pg-132).

Through dreadful experiences, David feels an emerging sense of adulthood because he realises how he must act and the gravity of the situation in which he and his family are involved. He is far from the child who once looked

forward to visits from his uncle and visits to his grandfather's ranch. As an adult, he is concerned with the welfare of his family and his parents' well being, emotionally. David exemplifies this and stands by his family when they are in need. He does not desert them or feel shameful. He stays loyal and true to those he cares for and loves. Thus, he has shown his ability to act as an adult would.

A loss of David's innocence also appears during his killing of a live magpie. This brings about a an evil in himself also reinforcing the fact that he has killed a living creature in the wild and mentioning that " I needed that, I thought, I hadn't even known it but I had to kill something"(pg-81). The particular significance about this plays an important part in his morals and sends of thoughts as he considers that he also is capable of committing such unfortunate yet amoral things. " Looking in the dead bird's eye, I realised that these strange, unthought of connections – sex and death, lust and violence, desire and degradation – are there, there, deep in even a good heart's chambers"(pg-82).

In the rapid journey, which David has been forced to undertake from innocence to experience, to seeing life in a whole, truthful and certainly more painful way, he learns many lessons and gains some important insights, but none more disturbing than that which immediately follows Frank's suicide. " You see, I knew – I knew! – I knew! That Uncle Frank's suicide had solved all of our problems ... I felt something for my uncle in death that I hadn't felt for him in life. It was gratitude, yes, but it was something more. It was very close to love" (pg-161).