

Analysis of short story "crossing" essay sample

[Literature](#), [Fiction](#)



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In this paper I will be analysing the short story called “ Crossing”.

Furthermore I will be interpreting this short story and I will be going in-depth with the text to do these things and utilise the English skills and abilities I have been taught throughout my time of studying the English language. I will do my very best to try and meet the desired criteria for this assignment and answer the assignment’s requirements the best I can and hopefully adequately.

The short story “ Crossing” is about a father and a son that go on a hiking/camping trip. The mother of the child plays a less significant role in the story than the father and son. It becomes clear that the mother and father are divorced, even though it is not written explicitly. The father and his son go on the camping trip to an old barn and they have to cross a river to get there, and this becomes a small step towards making up for the things his son was put through witnessing his parents get divorced. The strong current in the river they are crossing becomes a challenge to the father rebuilding the relationship with his son, and if he does not, crossing the river could be dangerous, as he needs his son’s trust to be strong enough to climb this mountain that is crossing the river, and if he slips, the strong current could crush both of them against the big rocks, potentially killing them.

When the father sits in the driveway of a house it says in the story “ the azaleas he’d planted”, (L. 14). This seems to be an indication that he used to live there and when he walks in the house he ducks his head down (L. 16) this clearly tells us that him ducking his head like a visitor is something

unusual for him and that he has not always been a visitor there, from what we can conclude that usually he was not a visitor in the house because he used to live there with his wife and kid. When the father goes to the house to pick up his son we hear him think that maybe he could make things right again (L. 20), probably referring to the trouble and rough situations the couple put their son through throughout the divorce and maybe even a lack of parenting or fatherhood from the father's side.

The trip to the barn is just a minor step along the way towards gaining his son's trust and rebuilding the relationship between the two. He genuinely wants to make up for the son's potential loss of or damage to his childhood, and he is determined to do his best. We can see how he gradually comes closer and closer to achieving this goal as we read " The second crossing with the boy on his back, was actually easier. They talked the whole time..." (L. 64-65). This shows how their relationship is rebuilding slowly as they are bonding. The setting and the surroundings help the father significantly as there is no technology, no TV, no Internet, no laptops. They have to talk, and fortunately for the father it works perfectly fine. We can also see how the father subconsciously gains strength from this as he says that the second crossing with the son on his back was easier, which normally would not make sense, but does so because he has the strength from the trust and love of his son.

At a certain point in the story we are hinted as to why the couple was divorced. The father thinks " My God, all his other fuckups were just preparations for this." (L. 135-136), referring to his own mistakes throughout

the marriage. He reflects over his actions throughout their marriage and relationship and questions whether he was the cause for the divorce and simultaneously blames himself for the divorce. The father reflects numerous times throughout the story and is in general a very reflective person, and his thoughts are a very important part of the story and definitely put their mark on the story and the way one understands and interprets the story.

We are presented to his thoughts through a third person limited narrator. A third person limited narrator is a way of storytelling in which the narrator knows only the thoughts and feelings of a single character, while other characters in the story only are presented externally, meaning that the narrator does not know their feelings or thoughts. Because of all this, it is only natural and understandable that the story is told from the father's point of view. We hear about some of the things the father has to struggle with when it says, "...he hadn't been happy in a while" (L. 5). By using this narrative technique, Mark Slouka brings us close to the father and we, as readers, feel his pain and his struggle being a part of a divorce while trying to maintain everything in his life, including his relationship to his son. We feel this pain first-hand as we know his thoughts, and as a result of this we, as readers, want the father to succeed. With this limited narrator, we have neither access nor insight in the boy's mind, and we can only guess what he feels and thinks. Though Mark Slouka does a good job by describing the son as he is seen through his father's eyes, and naturally the father's instincts will make the son seem small and fragile, and as a father his instincts telling him that he has to protect the son, will influence the description of the son. We see this in the text when it says " he looked over at the miniature jeans,

the sweatshirt bunched beneath the seat belt's strap, the hiking boots dangling off the floor like weights. " You okay?" (L. 7-8).

Directly from the start the short story builds up suspense, explicitly as well as implicitly. Throughout the whole story there is this vague sense of tension and as they are crossing the river for the last time towards the end of the story. This tension and suspense completely outbursts and erupts in an explosion of thoughts, and especially the setting and the use of words describe the father's feelings perfectly, and this is clearly the story's climax. (L. 141-154). The thoughts we hear are clearly marked by anxiety and this affects the mood and setting greatly. The father is almost absolutely sure that him and his son are going to die and the climax is suddenly interrupted by the son asking, " Dad, you okay?", (L. 155). After this, the story ends leaving an open ending to the reader like most short stories do.

To conclude, the short story " Crossing" tries to use the setting and narrative technique to create a certain tension and suspense, which it definitely does, and furthermore excels in. For example the river is a threat to the father, since he cannot control it and is scared of it, however, when he reminisces about it he is reminded of the good memories with his own dad. In the story the father does not just cross the river, he pushes the trust between him and his son to the absolute limit.