

The transformation of amy foster

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



The Transformation of Amy Foster In Joseph Conrad's short story " Amy Foster," Amy, at first, seems to be a very passive, simple minded and introverted girl. As the story progresses, Amy begins to show that she has the imagination to fall in love, but towards the end, the imagination isn't enough to stop the fear that kills that love. All through Amy's character development, Conrad eludes to how Amy may not be as simple minded as one might believe. In the beginning of the story, Kennedy describes Amy as "' very passive'" but with "' enough imagination to fall in love'" (2). He gives a clear picture of Amy when he tells about how kind she is to animals, but also how she panics when Mrs. Smith's parrot is attacked by the family cat. He says that, for Mrs. Smith, "' this was another evidence of her stupidity,'" but he also talks about how her imagination gives her a kind heart. Kennedy says that "' the only peculiarity I perceived in her was a slight hesitation in her utterance, a sort of preliminary stammer which passes away with the first word'" (2). Conrad suggests that Amy is a much deeper character than what Kennedy is first describing. Kennedy tells several stories of Amy's day to day life, and in each one, he refers to Amy's imagination being the cornerstone of her ability to fall in love. At the same time, each story shows another level of Amy, again, indicating that Amy has many more layers than what Kennedy first indicates. As Kennedy describes Yanko and how he finds himself in the village, he also shows Amy beginning to come out of her shell. He tells about the morning after Yanko comes to the Smith's and how Amy loses sleep thinking of Yanko. Without the fear the other town's people are showing, she takes Yanko bread and is also able to see the attractive man under the filth he has accumulated during his voyage (8-9). The passive and

obedient girl from the beginning of the story starts to fade as Amy and Yanko's marriage draws closer. Kennedy says that: "' when she heard him in the gloaming whistle from beyond the orchard a couple of bars of a weird and mournful tune, she would drop whatever she had in her hand - she would leave Mrs. Smith in the middle of a sentence - and she would run out to his call. Mrs. Smith called her a shameless hussy. She answered nothing at all to anybody, and went on her way as if she had been deaf"' (13). This is not the response expected from the Amy that is first described. Kennedy also talks about how the town's people warn Amy against marrying Yanko and the strong possibility that he may turn on her. Still, Amy follows her heart and, not only marries Yanko, but also has a son with him. The birth of her son would be the demise of her relationship with Yanko. Yanko sees their son as someone that he can teach his heritage to, someone that he will be able to communicate with in his own language. Because he is excited about the idea of having someone that he can talk to, Yanko begins to talk to their son in his native tongue. He also sings some of the lullabies his mother sang to him when he was a baby (14). Because of the thoughts that Amy's parents, and the town's people, planted into Amy's mind, she interprets this as Yanko turning on her. This idea causes Amy to misread a lot of Yanko's actions. The first sign of this is Amy taking the child from Yanko as he sings him a song from his home. Her paranoia becomes so bad that she is too afraid to get close to him while he is sick, out of fear that he may try to harm her or the baby. Because she can not understand his cries for water, when he gets up to try and get a drink himself, she becomes so frightened she runs out of the house with the baby leaving Yanko to die. After his death, Amy returns to her

old self, never speaking of Yanko again. This story is the epitome of how love can turn a life around, but how the inability to communicate can destroy that same great love. Falling in love with Yanko is the turning point in Amy's life that allows her to feel and live. Had Yanko been able to express his need to teach his son about his heritage, Amy would have been able to see that his intentions were not to hurt her, but to raise his son to be someone that he could relate to. Instead, two people in this story lose love and life, one literally, one figuratively. Works Cited Conrad, Joseph. " Amy Foster." Short Stories. September 2000. 7 October 2007.