

Analyzing 'the rocking horse winner' and 'rules of the game' literature review ex...

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



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Compare and contrast

The following short stories have been analyzed and compared in this essay: ‘The Rocking Horse Winner’ by D. H Lawrence and ‘Rules of the Game’ by Amy Tan. As the very titles suggest, these stories are in strong connection with games. But when one goes through the story, it becomes evident that these are actually manifestations of the strong emotions a player and his folks have for the game and especially, victory. Also, these stories teach that being too passionate about victory or glory of triumph can be derogatory for mental peace as well as overall quality of life.

‘The Rocking Horse Winner’ has been narrated in third person. It was not only effective but also necessary because the story conveys the obsession of a son trying to bring money to her mother secretly. Her mother believed her husband (Paul’s father) to be unlucky. He wants to prove that they too can be lucky enough to be rich. A narration in first person could limit the elucidation of what the different character thought and went through. So, D. H Lawrence has very rightly used third person for the story. On the contrary, ‘Rules of the game’ explains how a young girl perceives her life at the Chinese town in America, learns to master chess and everyday faces the

strange behavior of her mother which she quite disapproves of (Amy Tan, 1989). So, the choice of narration in first person by Amy Tan is appropriate as readers get to know the story through Waverly Jong's eyes.

In both the stories, there is an emphasis on how the protagonists are fervently involved to excel at their game- Paul in first story through faith, intuition and observance and Waverly in the second story through her curiosity, diligence and practice. And it is a significant point of contrast that the mothers in both stories have a direct role to play in the lives of the young gamers and are they key factors in the development of the story. Paul in 'The Rocking Horse Winner' wants to keep winning at the race and aide her mother financially. He is insanely involved in his game to stop the cruel whispers in his house saying- " There must be more money! There must be more money!" Waverly in ' Rules of the game' is on the other hand, very uncomfortable with the way her mother tries to be vigilant while she practices and keeps advising her on chess without actually knowing much about the game. Finally, her mother's tendency to endorse her to fame through her daughter's success irritates Waverly and she ends up misbehaving with her mother.

The dialogues have been very poignantly used in both the stories. The young Paul who was initially not taken seriously by Uncle Oscar greatly impresses him with his wise words like " I only know the winnerThat's Daffodil.", " I should if it was my own fiver," etc. He beams with confidence every time if tells about the winning horse, his partnership with Bassett and his plans. ' Rules of the game' too makes great use of its fewer yet powerful dialogues to show how the mother of Waverly has conservative yet mystic notions on

rules to win and survive. Dialogues like “ My mother would proudly walk with me, visiting many shops, buying very little” (165) and “ Why do you have to use me to show off? If you want to show off, then why don't you learn how to play chess?” (166) show how uncomfortable Waverly was with her mother's attitude. It also shows that how she ended up misbehaving with her mother in frustration.

As a matter of fact, both stories conclude with a rather unhappy ending. The very nice son in ‘ The Rocking-Horse Winner’ who tries to stop the whispers in his house, grows so obsessed with his game that he collapses to it one night and dies. In ‘ Rules of the Game’, the protagonist Waverly is left with a disturbed relationship with her family in the end which is shown by shut doors and no warmth left in behavior of her folks (Quizlet).

It depends on reader on how he/she takes these stories. In a personal opinion, these stories seem to impart a social as well emotional lesson to the readers. Paul, in first story, sees a discontented mother and poverty. If the mother could show some positivity and tell her son to be happy with what they have, the boy could have lived a normal life. But the mother boldly called her husband to be unlucky and filled his young brain with a wrong notion- luck brings money. In the second story, the way Waverly's mother is trying to advise her daughter on tactics of chess was not fair enough. A mother always wants to encourage the child but here, the mother seems passionate to make her daughter more and more successful and wanted to use her as a path to fame and respect. There is nothing bad in expecting good work from children but telling everyone on street about the daughter's victory is immature.

The impact of society on both Paul and Waverly too makes for a discussion. If Paul's mother feels ashamed of being poor, it somewhere relates to the society which is good at respecting the rich and ignoring the poor. Same with Waverly, everyone appreciates the successful people which add to the desire of fame in Waverly's mother. The bakery on the ground floor endorses Waverly's trophies next to its cakes when she becomes famous. If society could behave normally with rich and poor or brilliant and mediocre, in the same way, many lives can be improved.

A very important question here is the how the individual identity of these two protagonists, Paul and Waverly gets formed in the story. Sadly, it's the wrong notions fed into the young Paul which leaves him wanting to earn money insanely. It's not his own thoughts which shape his identity. Opposite to that, it's the curiosity as well as desire to learn and outshine in Waverly which makes her a champion.

Conclusion

'The Rocking Horse Winner' and 'Rules of the Game', both are very well-written stories meant to deliver many social messages. The difference in wealth should not become a means to judge our position in society. Parents should always teach and encourage their kids to learn well, be positive and keep the mind calm. Emotions for a game or fame can be dangerous when it crosses the normal levels of addiction and gets affected by the greed to make money.

References

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