

Critical analysis of 'petrified man' critical thinking example

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



Introduction

The ' Petrified Man' provides a broad perspective over which some issues can be drawn. The characters in the narrative establish the themes that form the basis of understanding of events, behaviors and various dimensions of the story. The short story is a conversation between two individuals Mrs. Fletcher and Leota. All the actions can only be evaluated and analyzed from the lenses of the conversation the two individuals have. The setting colloquy is a small town in America. The discussion between the two main characters is the perfect device that captures the pretentiousness and banality of human encounter.

Welty defines the life of a town in the southern region in the US. The text bears the authenticity of the reputation of the setting of the story and extrapolates the beauty of the environment by providing the audience with features that authenticate the propositions. The author employs tactile, olfactory and visual images that put the audience in an environment that is characterized by serenity and beauty. Leota's conversation with the other people in the narrative aids in extracting the facts about her and the other characters. Welty employs substance and style to the environment to present to the reader the experience through the conversations that are held. It is imperative to note that the title character does not appear as an individual, and neither does he become the discussion between the characters in the beauty parlor.

While Mrs. Fletcher is having her hair treated by Leota, a discussion ensues that bring into perspective the essence of the conversation. Even though the dialog is polite and guarded, the women reveal the extent to which they are

conflicted. Welty intelligently exposes the drama and conflict that are neither violent nor armed, but guided by events that almost break the two individuals apart.

The character and demeanor of Mrs. Fletcher is seen when she throws the first salvo by intimating that on her previous visit, she did not get the treatment that she deserved. Mrs. Fletcher posits that her hair fell out because of the poor treatment. The reply that Leota presents to Mrs. Fletcher is a manifestation of the deep misunderstanding that exists between the two women. When Leota submits that the cause of hair falling is as a result of Mrs. Fletcher's pregnancy, she makes a mockery of the situation without giving an expert opinion that is relevant to the concerns of the latter. The fallout that emerges after the submissions by the two individuals in a manifestation of poor relations that is inherent between Leota and Mrs. Fletcher.

First, Leota does not exhibit professionalism when she states that the falling of the Mrs. Fletcher's hair is because of her being pregnant. Such an insinuation is a show of disrespect and immaturity in the sense that Leota does not take into consideration the challenges that come with pregnancies. Hair can only fall out when an individual has a chronic illness. Essentially, Leota seems to suggest that a pregnancy is an illness. However, Mrs. Fletcher overreacts and blows the issue out of proportion by becoming defensive. When Leota's friends begin to gossip about her, Mrs. Fletcher starts to hate on them, even though she has never met or seen them in real life. She employs the services of a fortune teller and Leota's friend to know about the friends. Such propensities make her develop a negative attitude

towards everyone associated with the Leota. Mrs. Fletcher does not analyze and evaluate the situation before making decisions.

One of the themes that are presented by Welty in the story is that of the unknown. The novelty of the unknown is projected throughout the narrative. Mrs. Fletcher and Leota are both fascinated by the events that are unknown to them and only depend on gossip and fortune tellers to influence them in a particular manner. Leota is obsessed with one her friends Mrs. Pike. Leota has a desire to share herself and the past with Mrs. Pike. The unknown tendencies are propagated when the two women visit the freak show, and their main intention is deriving satisfaction by extracting significant components of the virtual or metaphysical universe.

The obsession with the unknown compels Leota to start visiting the fortune teller as a consequence of understanding her future. The fixation with the unfamiliar makes Leota develops a propensity of the extracting mystery out of other substances. The theme of the unknown is also manifested by the behaviors of Mrs. Fletcher, especially when it comes to interrogating and developing a negative attitude towards people she has not even seen. For instance, she begins to hate Mrs. Pike, a friend to Leota even though she does not know her. Moreover, Billy Boy a son to Leota's friend exasperates Mrs. Fletcher. The characters in their respective personalities can be defined as being anxious about the future and the things that are not known.

Essentially, the anxiety explains why Mrs. Leota has a belief system that is skewed, and an authenticated. By stating that hair fallout is as a result of pregnancy is an extreme mode of thinking. Such individuals may not have a proper foundation in their lives because they are detached from the present

realities and only focus on the unknown.

Friendship is presented in the narrative as one of the most fundamental components that revolutionizes relationships between people. At the beginning of the story, the fragility of friendship between Leota and Mrs. Fletcher is evident in all dimensions. They do not get along and neither do they confide in each other. The complication in the completion in the relationship forces Leota to seek friendship from Mrs. Pike. Leota and Mrs. Pike establish a solid relationship to the extent that they begin to venture into other fields that are previously unexplored in other engagements. For instance, it is through the friendship of Mrs. Pike that the two begin to visit the fortune teller and become obsessed with the past.

The warm relationship between the two blossoms and gets warm through the various stages of life. However, the friendship between the characters is determined by the loyalty that is manifest among them. For example, the absence of loyalty and viewing others with contempt suffocates the friendship between Leota and Mrs. Fletcher. The narrative intimates the essence of friendship, determined by loyalty and the confidence levels. As the fortunes change for Mrs. Pike, the friendship between her and Leota quickly cools. Ideally, the concept of friendship has loose structures and is determined by certain elements that do not necessarily have critical importance to an individual.

The test of friendship is determined by how individuals can manage and go through tough situations and emerge from them victoriously. The friendship between Leota and Mrs. Fletcher fades under flimsy circumstances effectively ending their commitment to one another. When Mrs. Pike

establishes herself as a prosperous person, their friendship abates.

' Petrified man' is indicative of a society where the place of women in the society is highly elevated. Men are pushed to the periphery, and the women are the dominant group. The women are the breadwinners while the male counterparts do not have a steady income generating activity. For instance, Mr. Pike and Fred do not have any job to the extent that their wives have to engage in entrepreneurial activities to ensure survival.

Conclusion

The narrative is a representation of a social setting where relationships and mode existence is determined by some factors. Friendship is a key component though it is not lucid because of the inherent misunderstandings and change of fortunes. The ' petrified man' is a projection of the elevated social status of women in the setting. Conventionally men are supposed to be breadwinners, but in the narrative women are influential personalities. Moreover, obsession with the unknown is fortified because it is seen as a way of extracting meaning of mysterious objects and doing an inventory for the future.