

# Bless me ultima essay samples

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‘ Bless Me, Ultima’ is one of the most acclaimed literary works of Chicano literature. This novel as well as semi autobiography is written by Rudolfo Anaya and gives a realistic narrative of Chicano culture. The narrator is a young boy who gives a reliable and unadulterated account of his experiences, family and society. This paper intends to discuss the novel, ‘ Bless Me Ultima’, cultural values, relationships of Chicano society and several other related aspects of the subject matter.

Narrator, Antonio Marez is a six year old boy who is also the protagonist of this story. Growing Antonio belongs to rural part of New Mexico and is stuck between two different worlds. One of these two worlds belongs to his mother and her family as well as farmers while other part of the world belongs to his father and cowboys. Antonio is confused about both worlds and faces pressure from both the worlds to follow them. Even Antonio fails to decide which way to go, what to adopt and what to reject.

The book appears to be an effort of the author to discover him in the conflicts of different cultural traditions. Precisely his mother wanted to make him the priest while his father had planned for him to ride llano. While Antonio was already stuck in the conflicts of his mother and father, another conflict came before him when he entered into school. There was a conflict between Spanish and English. Antonio was again confused and unable to decide which way to head. This was the time when Ultima comes into his life who is a Curandera. Ultima is an old woman who came to live with Antonio’s family because nobody else was there to take care of her. Ultima used to work as a folk healer.

Another conflict comes into his life that was related to religion. Antonio’s

mother was a staunch catholic and wished her son to be an ardent catholic one day. Antony himself was a firm believer in catholic faith and used to listen priest's preaching very seriously. At this point of time, he was informed by one of his friend about one pagan deity, the golden carp. Antonio becomes again confused, " If the golden carp was a god, who was the man on the cross, the Virgin? Was my mother praying to the wrong God?" (Anaya 81).

Antonio faces a number of confusion throughout the book and keeps struggling to find answers. One of his friends, Florence again confuses Antonio by asking about his religious beliefs. Florence, who does not have faith in existence of god, makes Antonio mute by asking some logical questions. Florence asks Antonio " You mean I can do a million bad things and then when I'm about to die I just go to confession and make communion, and I go to heaven" (Anaya 192). Such logical questions made Antonio confused and puzzled. He appears struggling with such situations at various places.

Ultima suggests this young boy to not to get confused and to apply his brain in deciding what is right and what is wrong for him. She tells Antonio to make his own path instead of getting confused by others. Antonio, as a growing and a prudent child, follows Ultima, learns a lot of things from her starts applying the same in his life. Antonio's journey of life moves ahead and he faces a number of situations in his life where he follows and applies what he had learnt from Ultima.

Antonio is confused at several occasions but he also gets the answers of all his queries at times. Ultima suggests him to apply his own logic in order to

understand things instead of taking them as they appear. It helped Antonio and he started applying his logic to understand things. Antonio says “ From my mother I had learned that man is of the earth, that his clay feet are part of the ground that nourishes him, and that it is this inextricable mixture that gives man his measure of safety and security. Because man plants in the earth he believes in the miracle of birth, and he provides a home for his family, and he builds a church to preserve his faith and the soul that is bound to his flesh, his clay. But from my father and Ultima I had learned that the greater immortality is in the freedom of man, and that freedom is best nourished by the noble expanse of land and air and pure, white sky” (Anaya 228).

One noteworthy moment comes in the story when Antonio confronts with Anglo values in his life while he starts going to school. This was a completely different experience for Antonio and he realized that Chicano narratives were very correct in saying that going to school and especially first day of school is extremely painful. Antonio was not aware of this Anglo atmosphere and after confronting it, he realized the importance and care that he got in lap of his mother. He also sensed the importance of his cultural traditions.

Antonio felt a sense of isolation in Anglo environment and missed his own culture very caring and soothing for him. He was not comfortable with English which, according to him, is a foreign language and not his own. Antonio is not happy with Anglicization of his name which was done by his teacher.

His teacher used to recognize him as Anthony Marez instead of Antonio Marez and his name was anglicized without his consent. Antonio finds

English, Anglo environment and school as unfamiliar as well as strange at every step. This incongruity reaches at its peak during the lunch time when Antonio is mocked by others for his food and cultural identity.

The novel describes a struggle between Chicano culture and Anglo culture. Author expresses his passion for his culture at almost every step throughout the book. The novel delves into relations, religion, beliefs, with a focused perspective of Chicano culture and keeps bracing Chicano culture at everywhere. Antonio realizes the importance of his culture when he comes into contact of Anglo values. He realizes how rich, caring, respectable and comfortable his Chicano culture is where relations and values are regarded and everyone one is given due respect.

Food, living, care, dressing, religious views and respecting others that author considers as an unavoidable part of his culture are differently practiced in Anglo culture. Such descriptions and his attachment are evident through a number of incidents throughout ‘ Bless Me Ultima’. Antonio felt very awkward when his name was anglicized by his teacher in his school. When Antonio went to school, he felt very strange and sad in his school. When others make mockery about his food, his culture and dressings at school, Antonio felt very bad and also realized how rich his culture was.

After having observed, the abovementioned detailed analysis of the book, ‘ Bless Me Ultima’, it can be concluded that author is very attached to his Chicano culture. Chicano culture has been highlighted throughout the book and book also portrays the struggle between Chicano and Anglo culture. Author has successfully conveyed about richness of Chicano culture and cultural traditions that people practice in that region of Mexico.

## **Work Cited**

Anaya, Rudolfo. Bless Me, Ultima. New York City: Grand Central Publishing, 2012.