

Childhood as depicted in three essays thesis

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



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Literature is universal. In modern societies, literature refers to the art of the written works that includes poems, short stories and novels. Literature reflects life. The themes usually portrayed in literary pieces are life, death, sickness, and survival. Literary pieces are written for children and adults alike. The manner by which the story unfolds in a literary piece signals whether a story is written for a child or for adults. This essay talks about the differences between how childhood is constructed in literature intended for adults and how childhood is constructed in literature intended for actual kids. Using the works by Williams Carlo Williams, Ernest Hemingway, and the Rocking Horse Winner, this essay asserts that the images presented and authors' narration in short stories indicate whether the story is intended for children or adults.

Themes

“ The Use of Force” by Williams Carlos Williams, “ Indian Camp” by Ernest Hemingway, and “ The Rocking-Horse Winner” by D. H. Lawrence are all about death and how a family deals with it. The “ Use of Force” is about diphtheria causing death in children and shows an impending death for the pretty Mathilda. The “ Rocking-Horse Winner” ends with the death of the young boy Paul, while in the “ Indian Camp” a young boy named Nick witnessed the death of an Indian father.

Characters

Children’s literature appeals to children because its characters are usually children or talking objects/animals. In the stories we mentioned above, the main character is a child (Mathilda, Paul, or Nick) and he/she interacts with another family member or with a trusted outsider. Mathilda has her father and mother with her. In Paul’s story are his mother, father, and uncle. In the case of Nick, his father and uncle were with him. The outsiders of the family but occupy key roles in the stories were the doctor in William’s Use of Force and the family gardener Bassett in Lawrence’s Rocking-Horse Winner. In Hemingway’s The Indian Camp, the uncle of Nick was the Indian family’s trusted outsider. The stories developed between the interactions of the main character and their trusted outsider. The family members’ characters give the reader an idea of how the problems came about.

Family relationships

The conflicts in the stories for children usually touch their relationships with their parents or siblings. In Use of Force, it is only implied. The manner by

which the child is held seems to suggest that parents can physically hurt their children, although there must be a higher good, or it should only be because it is a means to achieve something better, like becoming cured from a disease. In *Rocking-Horse Winner*, the relationship with Paul and his mother is not a very positive one. Yet, despite this, the young Paul loved his mother dearly and wanted her to be happy and have a better life. The *Indian Camp* shows a positive relationship between Nick and his father. Here, Nick was able to openly ask his father questions about life and death. In this story, there is also a constant flow of information from the father to the child which Nick also positively responds to.

Images in the stories

In modern times, children's books and stories are written with a specific age range in mind. Thus, picture books and familiar activities (naps, dinner time, family visits) are the usual topics in materials for babies and very young kids. The images that are formed from the way an author describe a scene can be traumatic for a kid who is not ready for such a scene yet. From the three stories, the *Rocking-Horse Winner* is the most child-friendly story. *Indian Camp*, despite its light tone gave a vivid description of the dead man. The graphic description of the room and other things inside the camp are not suitable for younger kids as well. However, among the three, it is the *Use of Force* that has disturbing images that are not at all suitable for children. The images that come to mind from the doctor's thoughts are too violent and are not appropriate for children's young minds.

The difference in how literature is constructed

The manner by which the author describes the situations, the images he/she uses, and the words he/she allows the characters to express all contribute to making the story appropriate for children or not.

Formation of values

The Rocking-Horse Winner shows that a person's character is shaped by how he/she is molded in childhood. In this story, even the house speaks, as it constantly whispers there is a need for more money. There are no scenes where children are happy or are laughing. Right from the start, there was an emphasis of a mother's cold-heartedness. Something, that is felt by everyone including the house. The child Paul, then becomes consumed with gaining money for his mother. In contrast, the Indian Camp, shows a positive relationship between the child and his father. There was a flow of communication as presented by the dialogues between the parent and child. Thus, even if the topic was death, the story still leaves a positive feeling on the reader because of the lightness in the relationship between Nick and his father.

Perspectives of an adult

The Use of Force is not a good material for children. It speaks too much of violence. The things that goes through the mind of the doctor are very explicit. The themes presented are too complex for young minds. If used in children's discussion, there has to be a clear explanation that would justify why it was necessary to force open a persons' mouth. Discussing the context

is very important to prevent the notion that violence is acceptable as long as the means justify the end.

Conclusion

The image of childhood is different when a literary piece is written for children or if it is intended for an adult audience. The Rocking Horse Winner shows that family constantly beset with the need for money during childhood can lead to gambling. In the Use of Force, the image of childhood here is parents doing everything, even physically hurt their children, to be able to prevent death. Hemingways' Indian camp, may present an image of death, but the images it gives can still be consumed by older children because the general tone of the story is a positive one. Indeed, how the author tells the story can determine whether it is for children or for adult consumption only.

Works Cited

Hemingway, Ernest. Indian Camp. Retrieved from .

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