

Aspect of human experience essay

Literature, American Literature



Several works of American literature reflect different aspects of human experience throughout history. Other literary works may have one idea or theme throughout the book, while others combine several themes together. Writers use different literary devices to express their messages and capture the attention of their readers. This essay shall focus on death as an inescapable human experience.

In a short story, “ An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce presents the death of the most pivotal character, Peyton Farquhar. Peyton denies reality of death as a way of postponing it. He goes into a dream whereby he escapes away from death when the weight of his body snaps the rope. Peyton also swims to a safe ground under heavy gunfire where he returns to his farm.

This is rather a short dream, but to Peyton, it takes several hours when he is escaping from reality and enemies. Bierce notes that we should embrace death since it is an inevitable part of human existence instead of escaping from it. He considers death a dignitary, which should be received by formal manifestation of respect, even by those familiar with him. Peyton had even tried to destroy a bridge in order to stop his capture.

Death is inevitable. It finally comes. Peyton mind wondered from fantasy to reality. He thought of his wife, kids and his plantation. He then felt a stunning blow, a blinding white light, and then darkness and silence. Peyton was finally dead. His dead body swung beneath the timber of the bridge.

Bierce uses several stylistic devices to capture the theme of death in his short story. He uses foreshadowing technique (Casson, 2000). This shows how Peyton escaped death when the noose around his neck snapped. He then swims to safety amidst heavy gunfire. This escape is a dream. At the end of the story, the narrator reveals Peyton's death, which happens almost instantly.

Bierce uses dream to present human beings attempt to escape death. This is dream within a dream device (Sylvan, William & Cain, 2007). Peyton dreams that he has escaped the union forces. He further moves into a daydream where he sees the beauty of nature and freedom. This is a fantasy of human beings to think that they can postpone their death.

The author also employs the use of irony. Peyton has slaves in bondage, which are his source livelihood. Ironically, he ends up in bondage. Peyton learns that bondage is scary just like death. He discovers that and attempts to escape from it the same way he tries to escape death. Bondage and death are alike.

William Faulkner is a writer best known for his exploration of moral aspects of history. In this short story, "A Rose for Emily", he presents the changing times and death. Faulkner presents death in the story through death-haunted life of Emily. Emily dies a slow death.

The story compares her to drowned person who has been in the water for too long and has turned pale. The narrator also refers to Emily as a spare skeleton to imply that she is already dead but still on her feet.

Emily tries to deny death. She is constantly in a bizarre relationship to dead bodies of her previous lovers. She refuses to accept death by clinging to her late father's body only to end up giving it reluctantly.

Emily also refuses to acknowledge the death of Homer, though she was responsible for his death. She kills Homer so that she can permanently have him. Homer's body is lifeless, which makes them far apart. Emily is trying to join life and death.

Finally, Emily dies. The residents of Jefferson have a chance to access her house. The house is just as mysterious as the owner. Mystery and death are both scary. We should accept the mysteries as part of life. Like Emily, everybody has secrets. We act in mysterious ways we can neither understand nor explain just like Emily.

William Faulkner uses death as a symbol of passing times (Sylvan, William & Cain, 2010). Emily represents the Old South. Upon her death, the remnants of the Old South also die likewise to the old men in uniforms who are about to die.

People fear death. Jefferson townspeople do not want to lose the history of the past, but the townspeople must accept changing traditions and embrace modernity.

The gold head of Emily's cane, tarnished toilet, and Homer's corpse represent deteriorating age and, finally death. The author also symbolizes death through the use of dust.

The author associates Homer's dead body with dust in the house to symbolize death. It creates a horrible scene in the house. Dust creates an atmosphere of mysteries surrounding Emily's life. Mysteries surrounding Emily's life and house symbolize death.

The authors of the two short stories demonstrate that death will always triumph no matter how hard we try to escape it. Death comes to people in different ways: slow or fast. Peyton Farquhar meets his death through hangman by the bridge but tries to escape this through fantasy while Emily dies a slow death. People should simply embrace deaths and mysteries as an aspect of human life experience.

Casson, A. (2000). English Literature and Composition. Indianapolis: Cliffs Notes.

Sylvan, B., William, B., & Cain, W. (2010). Literature for Composition: Reading and Writing Arguments about Essays, Stories, Poems, and Plays (9th Edition). London: Longman.

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