

Analysis of the text up the down staircase essay

[Environment](#), [Air](#)



Bella “ Bel” Kaufman (born May 10, 1911) is a Russian-American professor and author, best known for writing the 1965 best-seller *Up the Down Staircase*. Kaufman was born in Berlin, Germany, where her father was studying medicine. Although born in Germany, her native language was Russian. She was raised in Odessa. She emigrated to the United States in 1923 at the age of 12 with her parents, moving to New York City, where she first began learning the English language. At the age of 18 she attended Hunter College in New York, from which she received a BA degree, then pursued a Master’s degree at Columbia University.

She then began work as a teacher in various New York City high schools, along with working part-time as a writer. In 1965 she published the novel *Up the Down Staircase*, which became an enormous success, remaining on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for 64 weeks. In 1967, the book was turned into a film of the same name. In 1979 Kaufman published a second novel, *Love, etc.*. She has since then written various short stories. She has also continued as a teacher and lecturer. She continued teaching in NYC for over 20 years, according to Pearson Education.

Kaufman has written, “ I do not like writing; in truth, I hate writing, and would rather do anything else. But the joy comes when, almost in spite of myself, I come close to what I want to say. A sentence or an insight leaps from the page. ” The story revolves around Sylvia Barrett, a young idealistic and very talented English teacher at an inner-city high school who hopes to nurture her students’ interest in literature and tries to teach her students not just to read or retell something but to think first of all.

She faces with the indifference of her students, and the incompetence of many of her colleagues. And Sylvia writes to her friend about all the difficulties she has and how she gets over the obstacles. The author's message in this text is that in any situation a person may find a way to attain his goal or as it said in the text "hitch your wagon to a star". The story presented in a form of a letter from a high school teacher Sylvia Barrett to her college friend Ellen.

Sylvia writes about school life and complains that conditions into the public high school system do not change and that advice given by professors of how to teach "not the subject but the whole child" is rather useless and there are only few teachers in this school who work their magic in classrooms. The letter can be divided into: salutation, the body of the letter and there is no final part what means that there is no conclusion. So, the author attempts to make the readers think themselves.

The main character of the story is Sylvia. She may be considered as a very creative person as she offers her pupils' different types of class work completely non-typical for the school she works at; an example of it is listening to a Shakespeare's sonnet. There are speaking names in this story such as Mr. Winters (one of the four season). First of all, it shows the attitude to him and his theory (he doesn't want to recognize alternative ways of teaching). Also this name reflects that he is severe, strict and has no emotions.

And throughout the year everything is in harmony. Another speaking name is Mr. Bester. His name forms of superlative degree "best" plus "er" - the

ending of comparative degree. It means that he is better than the best. It is obvious that names in the story sound critical. The author expresses his attitude through the names showing the position of Sylvia among the teaching staff. A lot of colloquialisms indicate that the text is written in the informal style.

There is a first person narration interrupted by dialogues; interior monologue is also presented. Rhythmical effect proves that Sylvia is busy throughout the whole week which demonstrates by using parallel constructions. There are lots of colloquial words that are typical for a letter. To show the dynamics of the discussion and the pupils' excitement as a reaction to the problem touched the author employs repetitions and parallel constructions (for example: " no, no some said...no, no, others cried...").

There are also such stylistic devices as, for example, ellipsis (for example: " hard to say"), metonymy as well (for example: " Admiral Ass"), antithesis (for example: " improved conditions – greatly unimproved" or " physically mature – poor intellect"), speaking names, allusion (for example: " cardinal sin"), abbreviations (for example: " FTG – Friday Thank God" uses to strengthen the importance of the weekend) and irony (ironical about the Teaching Administration). As for the title words " up" and " down" are antonyms. It can be interpreted in three ways. The first one is that the pupils try to go up but fail due to teachers.

The second interpretation is that according to Sylvia's ranking system some teachers are best or " up" and others are not or " down". And the last one is that the final goal means " up" and everyday routine means " down". In

conclusion, “ Up the Down Staircase” is the funny and touching story of a committed, idealistic teacher whose dash with school bureaucracy is a timeless lesson for students and teachers concerned about public education. Bel Kaufman lets her characters speak for themselves through comments by students and notes between teachers evoking a vivid picture of teachers fighting against all that stands in the way of good teaching.