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## **Tell Me A Riddle by Tillie Olsen:**

This story was written by the author during the time where the wave of feminist movement had the highest influence in the society. These feminist movements concerns how the women view themselves as well as how the society views them. This story outlines the perspectives from mothers . This therefore leads to the theme of the story where the mother despises her own life and the life of her daughter who went through a painful stress experience. The story also shows the life of a merchant who was is an alcoholic who is undergoing healing from the death of his wife. This therefore sets up a theme of the story where most of the issues are based on how women view themselves and at the same time how the society views women. This story therefore demonstrates how the women treats or regards themselves with respect to different events and relationships in life. The theme of the story therefore revolves around feminism in the society. The gender conflicts and issues are also portrayed on how they affect the life of the whole family. This story also helps how the male dominated over women in the society. The story how Eva is suffering from the painful experiences subjected to her by her husband David. It is clear that Eva is being molested without consideration of her qualifications in life.

Dramatic irony has been used in this story to portray the role that Eva played in giving birth to her children as well as raising them up. She sacrificed a lot in order to be a mother of her seven children but it seems that her sacrifice and learning is not recognized by anyone. Her sacrifice and the role she played in mothering her children was taken for granted. It is therefore ironical in that she expected her efforts to be appreciated and recognized

but no one took them into consideration. Vivi tried to thank Eva for her sacrifice of doing so many things but Eva on the other hand felt that Vivi should have done those things and this made her more resentful. It is also ironical that Eva sacrificed a lot of time in learning but she is still struggling with the menial and repetitive tasks. It seems that her efforts in learning are not appreciated due to the fact that she is a woman. This irony therefore helps to bring out the way the women are treated in a negative manner irrespective of their achievements in life. The irony also helps to elaborate the struggle and suffering the women pass through in the society. It is also ironical that Eva thinks that she is now full of experience after mothering all the children but it seems that her age and mothering of children is not appreciated or recognized by David.

In the context of characters, Eva is the main character in this story. Eva is a wife to David in a marriage of forty seven years. In this story, the couple is old and all their children have grown up and left their home. David therefore wants to sell all their property in order to migrate to a retirement community. David wanted to sell the house without consulting Eva and this shows how the male dominates over the female or women in the society. Eva played an important in raising the children and she now wants to stay peacefully in her own home but it seems that David is not giving her peace to say since he wants to sell the house without her consent. David is not taking into consideration the fact that Eva played a role as a mother and she needs to be listened to. The treatment of Eva by David therefore shows how the women are mistreated in the society since there are not consulted on matters pertaining to their families. It is clearly seen in story that the efforts

of Eva in raising up the children are not recognized and she is still mistreated even at her old age. The struggles that Eva went through in life shows the painful experiences that women are subjected to by men.

David is a husband to Eva in the story. He demonstrated the male dominating attitude towards the women. This is shown by the kind of names he used to refer to her wife Eva throughout the story. David referred to Eva as Mrs. Take it Easy and Mrs. Enlightened. He also refused to give attention to his wife Eva concerning selling of the house. He went ahead to sell the house without the consent of Eva. He also used sarcastic names in order to show Eva that he never wanted her ideas, needs or wants. He considered his needs and wants only to be important while neglecting those of her wife Eva. This shows how the men treated themselves to be superior to women. David therefore represents the male who dominates over women and deny them of their rights and freedom in life.

In conclusion, this story elaborates the struggles that women pass through in the society due to the male dominance. The male dominates in decision making leading to conflicts in marriage and the family issues. The story therefore shows how women view themselves and how the society treats them with respect to the roles they play in the society.