

Human beings in a temporary matter novel

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The Nature of Human Beings

Throughout the course of this semester my perspective on what the nature of human beings is has changed drastically. At the start I believed that the nature of human beings was to find ways to improve their lives and survive. After having read and analyzed the short stories of several authors throughout the semester I am now convinced that the nature of human being is to learn valuable lessons from one another and from struggles they encounter that will lead to a better understanding of each other, themselves, the difficult nature of life and its value.

In Jhumpa Lahiri's "A Temporary Matter", a husband and wife decide to ask each other questions and to give completely honest answers. The truths that unfold from this experience seemingly bring the two closer together. However, the husband ultimately discovers that "she had spent these past evenings preparing for a life without him." (ATM, 18). The husband learns that sometimes situations can be deceiving, the whole time he thinks the experience is bringing them closer together but in reality his wife has decided to leave him. From this difficult situation the husband has the opportunity to reflect upon his past decisions. The husband gets to see from both perspectives how the truth can hurt people because he has received and told truths that caused sorrow to the person hearing about them. In addition, both the husband and the wife learn from the death of their unborn baby that life comes with many sorrows that are beyond a single person's control. All of this as a whole shows that the nature of being human involves

learning from both personal problems as well as observing or even sharing the struggles of another human being.

In “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros the main character is put in a situation that shows her what injustice is. The girl’s teacher forces her to accept that she is the owner of an ugly sweater and is forced to put it on. This situation is very upsetting and unfair to the narrator because she knows it is not hers. After the event the true owner of the sweater is found out but no one in the class is ever told that it didn’t really belong to the narrator. This is when the narrator learns what injustice is first hand. To learn that life is sometimes unfair for no apparent reason is something that all humans learn eventually. More specifically she learns that life can be unfair about even the littlest things, the ownership of an ugly sweater is not important to the grand scheme of the narrator’s life. In addition, the narrator learns about how identity can be everchanging. Throughout the story the narrator comments that it’s not her age that defines her rather it’s the sum of the experiences she’s acquired throughout her years that define who she is. With that she comes to realize an important lesson about the nature of humans that is our identities are ever changing and developing as a result of the experiences we have. The more time we spend alive the more experiences we learn from, the narrator realizes this saying that “If I was one hundred and two I’d have known what to say when Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk.” (E, 6). The narrator’s experience in this story goes to show that the nature of human beings is to learn from the difficult situations they encounter and that even at a young age humans can learn about the sometimes cruel nature of life.

Jack London's "Love of Life" shows how the nature of humans is to learn from their struggles through the journey of a man that turns into a fight to survive. In the story the man is abandoned by his fellow traveler after he sprains his ankle. He then has to go on by himself and barely survives; he is clinging to his last bit of life by the end of the story. From coming so close to death and seeing his fellow travelers corpse, it becomes easy to see how valuable human life can be. What the man learns through this struggle through the wilderness is willpower and perseverance. The narrator notes that "Yet the life that was in him drove him on. He was very weary, but it refused to die" (LOL, 8) showing that the man discovered his limits and what he is truly capable of. Pushing yourself to your limits and succeeding is something that all people do at times in their life; this quality is part of what makes us human. Through this short story London also shows the value of human life despite the inherent hardships that come along with it.

In the short story "Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" by Jhumpa Lahiri, the character Mr. Pirzada has to endure the struggle of worrying about the safety of his family in his home country while he is working in the United States. This struggle of his is observed by the narrator, who was a child at the time, because Mr. Pirzada would always come to their house for dinner and to watch the news throughout his stay in the United States. Through observing Mr. Pirzada worrying about his family the narrator begins to show a lot of empathy for him, she says she "prayed that Mr. Pirzada's family was safe and sound. I had never prayed for anything before" (MPCD, 24). The lesson that the narrator learns about being empathetic towards people in unfortunate circumstances is a valuable one. Empathy shows that one is

conscious about the struggles other human beings are going through and can be a feeling that leads to a bond between humans. The narrator says “ I knew what it meant to miss someone who was so many miles and hours away, just as he had missed his wife and daughters for so many months” (MPCD, 28) showing that by the end of the experience she had learned to relate to what Mr. Pirzada was feeling the whole time he was in the United States. The narrator’s development to show empathy and obtain a greater understanding of how another human feels strengthens my belief that the nature of humans is to be able to learn from difficult situations that occur in life and from the struggles of others around them.

In conclusion, these short stories have changed my perspective on what the nature of human beings is over the course of the semester. From these short stories I learned that the nature of human beings is to learn valuable lessons from one another and from struggles they encounter that will lead to a better understanding of each other, themselves, the difficult nature of life and it’s value. Lahiri conveys to readers through her short stories that in life things are not always as they appear to be and that life is inherently filled with difficult situations. Additionally, she makes the point that people can learn from struggles other than their own and can learn from sharing a struggle as well. London’s short story “ Love of Life” made the point of the value of life and how humans have an immense amount of willpower and determination to keep living despite the inherent struggles that come with it. Cisneros shows readers how humans learn through bad experiences that occur in life and more specifically the unfairness of life and that people’s cumulative experience define them. Overall these stories all share the message that

naturally humans can learn from any difficult experience and that these experiences lead to a greater understanding of oneself, the nature of human life and it's value.