

# The effect of humour in galloway's the cellist of sarajevo

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People of all ages and cultures respond to humour. Riddles and jokes have been told for centuries to make light of situations and to make people laugh. Humour is the tendency of particular experiences to provoke laughter and provide amusement. People are able to be amused, laugh, or smile at something funny, and therefore they are considered to have a sense of humour. To find something humorous depends on the person and their taste in humour and there are many instances when humour does not result in laughter because of the mood of the surroundings or the context.

Humour is an emotion that enables us to experience joy even when faced with adversity. It can be seen that in Galloway's *The Cellist of Sarajevo*, humour is used in a dark way to lighten the mood. This is done so that the readers have glimpses of light in a dreary time. Humour helps people, in this case the characters, carry on their lives in times of adversity. Galloway uses the lives of Kenan and Dragan to exemplify how humour, in the slightest form, can make a dreary day a little more pleasant. Through examining the life of Kenan, a middle aged man, it will be proven that humour has an important role in his daily life.

Kenan has the duty of carrying canisters to the brewery to bring clean, filtered water for his family and Mrs. Ristovski, the neighbour. Before the war, Kenan was a clerical assistant at an accounting firm. His journey to the brewery is very risky because at any point he may be shot; therefore, humour has a huge impact in the way Kenan presently lives his life. Before Kenan leaves his house his wife and him joke about their clothes: " Would

you like me to get you some shoes?... No, she says. But I'll take a hat if you have time...

Of course, he says. I would assume you would like mine? " (Galloway, 26). At a time of war, fancy clothes will not benefit either of them, but he leaves his wife in a good mood. Amila and Kenan use light humour to make a dark situation a little easier to bear. Another example in which Kenan uses his humour to make his grey, dreary journey a little more pleasant is when he walks across an older man fishing for pigeons: " How's the fishing today? Kenan asks, ... They're biting well, the man says, ... Do you need a licence this time of year? he asks, smiling so the man understands it's a joke" (Galloway, 64). Seeing the man fishing for pigeons was a brief distraction for Kenan and also a window of hope; with seeing the man, Kenan felt that if he could finish his mission of collecting water for his family, he could also fish for pigeons to help his family. The humour is light; it makes the reader pause, and makes the characters forget about their surroundings and just smile. Kenan made slight of the situations he faced so that he can smile, and make it seem that life will carry on with the war.

Just as Kenan used humour in his life, Dragan, previously a baker does the same to fill the void of his missing son and wife who left on the last bus to Italy. Dragan now lives with his sister and her family, and to have his space he goes to collect bread from the bakery for the family. While on his journey he has seen many men and women running to cross roads so that the snipers have less probability of hitting them. Dragan likes to see the running

as a game: “ The man runs in a straight line. He’s fast. A new world record? Maybe.

Perhaps they will have to notify the people at Guinness” (Galloway, 230).

Dragan uses sarcasm to make an almost dangerous situation seem funny since the civilian has survived. Dragan likes to see things for what they are, and to make the most of a situation. There is no need to focus on the bad when there is also much to be grateful for. Just like Kenan, Dragan does face a lot of danger and hardships with dealing with the loss of his family, but his humour and sarcasm seem to help him push through and carry on with his life.

Dragan uses his wit to make it through the tough and challenging times, especially since he has no one by his side. Although Galloway's *The Cellist of Sarajevo* is about a devastating, tragic time in history, he manages to use humour in the characters to lighten the mood of the book. By examining how Kenan and Dragan use humour, it has been shown that humour assists in fighting adversity. No matter what situation the character was faced with, they still had their humour, and as long as their sense of humour was alive, their sense of hope would live.

As the humour helps the characters in the novel, it also makes the readers have something to tone down the darkness and despair of reality of the war. All persons are different and have appeal to a different sense of humour, but as long as there is something to put a smile on one's face, then there is something worth fighting for. Works Cited Galloway, Steven. *The Cellist of*

Sarajevo. Toronto, Vintage Canada, 2008 " Humour. " Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. Wikimedia Foundation, n. d. Web. January 30, 2010