

Snow falling on cedars

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



English, Book Report/Review Topic: Snow Falling on Cedars

In chapter 14 of the book, “ Snow Falling on Cedars,” David Guterson elucidates the marked developments in Hatsue’s life and it is the beginning of the events that will shape her future. On the arrest of her father she has an important exchange of views with her mother. She has tried her best to conceal her relationship with Ishmael during the past four years and thinks that her mother is a novice as for knowledge in this regard. Their love is a serious issue by racial point of view. Hatsue’s concern is about her family and her people as to what they will think about her relationship with Ishmael. For Ishmael, race is not an issue at all. David Guterson argues, “ She concealed her love for Ishmael Chambers not because she was Japanese in her heart but because she could not in truth profess to the world that what she felt for him was love at all.”(206) Even for falling in love, she articulates certain yardsticks. She is starkly uncomfortable kissing a boy who is non-Japanese, and her indecision leads her to believe later that Kabuo is the right man for her, because that would be treading the path chartered for her life by the elders.

Clash of civilizations

The problem with the relationship between Hatsue and Ishmael needs to be understood in the context of clash of two civilizations and from the point of view of the thinking process of the combustible younger generation and the traditional elders. Though Hatsue belongs to the modern generation the impact of her experienced mother is too difficult for her to contradict. She makes vain attempts to argue against her stand but in the heart she is aware that her mother possesses the true credentials of womanhood of Japan.

Fujiko supports her fully and highlights an important difference between two cultures. The issues are rather philosophical and have the direct bearing on the cultural practices of two countries. It relates to ego problems and the relation of the individual to the society.

As per Japanese traditions and value system, an individual is part of the society and an important part of the whole. An individual is therefore, subservient to the interests of the society and he has to fall in line. For America, both from political and social considerations, an individual is supreme. One will sacrifice; sever connections in any area, to protect one's own interests. This is the profound difference between the two cultures and this gap is difficult to bridge.

When there is opposition for the marriage, it is but natural that the lover affected will be torn between dual loyalties. The private world and the society to which one owns allegiance. Hatsue is torn asunder between two worlds. Guterson writes, " She merely followed her instincts did not make the kinds of distinctions having Japanese blood demanded. She did not know what else love could be... (206)" But the serious extraneous considerations interfere between her relationship with Ishmael.

The decisive moment

The bombing of Pearl Harbor divides the two nations and creates a dent in the understanding between Hatsue and Ishmael. The Japanese-Americans are going to be shifted. The confusion and pain of separation has reached its peak. A day before the event, they share an intimate moment. In the man-woman relationship from the physical aspect, it is the closest one.

Penetration during intercourse, but that is also the moment of destiny in her

life and Guterson describes that situation, “ She pulled away from him, and she pushed him. “ No,” she said. “ No Ishmael! No, Ishmael Never...He pulled himself out, away. He was a decent boy, a kind boy, she knew that...” (214) In the decisive moment of her life, she decides to go in favor of the country of her birth sacrificing her private interests.

Now, Hatsue is averse to keep her intimacy with Ishmael going. No one knows the reasons why. Is it simply because he is white and not Japanese? Is it the failure of her willpower when she needs it most? Thus, the original question remains the question without any answer till the end.

Works Cited

Guterson, David. *Snow Falling on Cedars: A Novel*. Vintage; 1st edition, September 26, 1995