

Analysis of paul beatty's "white boy shuffle" essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Analysis of Paul Beatty's "White Boy Shuffle" Essay Sample

There are just some things that distinguish the good authors from the bad ones. Those things include character development, language choice, plot development, and making a story relate to everyone. Because Paul Beatty has all four of these in his book, "The White Boy Shuffle", he must be classified as a good author. Now I realize he has other books and they could all be horrible, or even better than this one, so you can't base talent of an author on one book (if that were the case and you based my skills off of this paper you would assume I am horrible, which I like to think I am not). But for the sake of making my life easier I am going to base Beatty's talent off of this one book.

The biggest thing I noticed from this book is the character development. This book is based on the character Gunnar Kaufman's life, so of course character development is needed since everyone changes drastically from elementary school to adulthood. Beatty, though, almost turns that development into an art form. Every event that happens to Gunnar adds to his personality in the book and affects his actions for the rest of the story.

Now the development of Gunnar is great but what was the development of his childhood friend Scoby. "I'd never seen Scoby mad about anything. I knew he was agitated about the upcoming game, but I didn't know what to say to him. He was always the one that dispensed advice and remained in control...Scoby's eyes reddened and he started to sniffle. He was cracking under the pressure. Watching his hands shake, I realized that sometimes the

worst thing a (guy) can do is perform well"(P. 117-118). This was a huge turning point for the characters, another strong development they had because Gunnar was forced to become the strong one, which he wasn't used to, and Scoby was finally showing a weakness to him.

Scoby seemed to keep changing throughout the story and, as the quote shows, his actions really affected Gunnar and vice versa. Reading about how the two friends develop individually and as a pair was very interesting. My favorite connection between the two was when they were high school basketball stars. At first Gunnar was the star of the team and Scoby was kind of forced into the side kick position. Those positions really didn't fit their personalities at all, which made it kind of ironic. But just weeks later the positions switched and it seemed like they actually learned something from the experience, they came to respect the other's personality more. It kept me reading because I was always curious how each would react to situations.

I was really impressed with the language choice in this book. This book is very multi cultural and spans from the black ghetto to the rich white neighborhoods. What makes it stick out are Gunnar's own observations: " It had been a long time since I'd communicated with white people who weren't athletes or police officers, and here were goo-gobs of them...you never forget how to raise your voice a couple of octaves, harden your r's, and diphthong the vowels: ' Deeeewwuude. Maaaaiin. No waaaaaeeey'"(p. 155). I really enjoyed the choice of words for people from each cultural place. Beatty definitely gave the people from the ghetto a little gangster talk and people from the rich places had a real distinguished " I-am-better-than-you" tone. Beatty does use a lot of language that could be deemed as offensive <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-paul-beattys-white-boy-shuffle-essay-sample/>

but I think it really helps the book establish itself. He was trying to show racial diversity and get the reader into the head of a young, black kid from the ghetto and sometimes language like that is needed to really understand the situations and thoughts of the characters.

This book moves fast and I like that, it never really stalls anywhere or get boring. In 200-some pages it covers about 20 years of this guy's life so it really needs to move fast just to get through it all. Yet, it said what it needed to say, I never felt rushed through anything either. As the book moved at a gradual pace, the plot was gradually unraveled too. Starting from the first page, the plot begins. The plot is his life; it has to start on the first page. But the road to where he ends up in life really starts on the first page, everything he does throughout the book sets up where Gunnar is going to end up as an adult. It all connects perfectly and you get a very just ending that makes sense and makes you rethink everything that happened in the book. I love it when an ending makes me do that so that I can see how it all connected.

If you cannot find a way to connect to this book, then you have been living in a hole your whole life. Gunnar lived in an all black neighborhood, an all white neighborhood, and a multi cultural neighborhood, I am quite sure almost all of us can relate to one of those. And if not, Gunnar also had a point where he couldn't get a girl if his life depended on it, then he could have any girl he wanted but couldn't find " the right one, and he ends up happily married. Again, we all have faced one of these situations. Gunnar is also an athlete, poet, and an academic genius. He seems like a great human being but Beatty found a way to make him all of this yet still a normal guy that really seems nothing out of the ordinary. Anyone in this world could find a way, one <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-paul-beattys-white-boy-shuffle-essay-sample/>

way or another, to relate to Gunnar or one of his unique friends. Many times through this book I said to myself, "Wow, I know exactly how he feels."

Events such as his first experience at a new school, going to basketball camp, or getting picked on by the neighborhood bully are all very common and happen to everyone. Gunnar doesn't live a life that all of us would live, but aspects of it are very ordinary and are experienced by everyone.

When it comes to weaknesses of this book, it is very hard for me to find any. One that kind of sticks out in my mind is the beginning of the book. It moves very slowly and gets a little boring. For a while Gunnar tells about his whole family, all the way back to his great-great Uncle, the stories don't have much to do with the book and make the reader lose sight of what the book is actually about. Also, there are certain parts of the book that I wish would have been explained more in-depth, such as why he married a mail-order bride (if you want to know the whole story behind that you have to read the book). Though there are few weaknesses they still make a big enough impact for a reader to notice.

If you look past the few weaknesses, Beatty uses those four strengths to make this book very entertaining. It encourages me to read more of his works but I wonder if these strengths are consistent in his writing or not. If they are I have a feeling I have found an author to add to my top ten list that consists of four authors right now. If that confuses you remember I said not to judge my abilities on just this one paper.