

"bittersweet": a
summary central
character conflict
p.o.v. setting
language tone ...

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" Bittersweet": A Summary/Central/Character/Conflict/P. O. V. /

Setting/Language/Tone Analysis in Alice Walker's " To Hell With Dying" Alice Walker's " To Hell With Dying" is a short story about the close encounters the protagonist, Mr. Sweet, faces with death and the impact he leaves on the friends that love him unconditionally. Mr. Sweet is a diabetic, alcoholic guitar player that lives down the road from the narrator and her family. He is dearly loved by the family and regularly comes to visit and play his guitar. The narrator and Mr.

Sweet have a special bond of mutual admiration. Mr. Sweet often has what they refer to as his " revivals" where he comes close to death but the narrator miraculously saves him time after time by kissing and tickling him. When the narrator moves away to study at a university, she gets a call to come home to revive Mr. Sweet once again. She rushes home right away, although this time she is unable to save him. Her father gives her Mr. Sweet's guitar that Mr. Sweet wanted her to have. She believes that she has failed because she is unable to save him and that his death is her fault.

The narrator concludes the story with the realization that Mr. Sweet was her first love. The author suggests that death can only be prolonged for so long, and that sometimes it is hard to accept the fact that every life must one day come to an end. Mr. Sweet is an eternal character that can be seen as compassionate, sweet, and playful. It's no coincidence that the author chose his name to be " Mr. Sweet" to characterize his sweet nature. The narrator describes Mr. Sweet in that " toward all of us children he was very kind, and had the grace to be shy with us, which is unusual in grown-ups".

His playful nature made him an ideal playmate for the kids. The narrator describes " his ability to be drunk and sober at the same time made him an ideal playmate, for he was as weak as we were and we could usually best him in wrestling, all the while keeping a fairly coherent conversation going". He showed his compassion to the narrator when he would call her princess and made her " feel pretty at five and six and simply outrageously devastating at the blazing age of eight and a half". Mr.

Sweet comforts the young girl about her peculiar hairline that some people call her a monkey because of. The conflict within the story involves the narrator's difficulty accepting Mr. Sweet's death and letting him go. Every time Mr. Sweet is having one of his episodes, the narrator's father calls for the young girl to come and revive Mr. Sweet, saying " These children want Mr. Sweet! " She " would kiss him all over his wrinkled brown face and tickle him so that he would laugh all down his stomach" and this ritual would almost always bring Mr. Sweet back to life.

The narrator and her siblings grow so accustomed to these occurrences. They think Mr. Sweet is eternal and will never die. They think " that if our father had been dying we could not have stopped it, that Mr. Sweet was the only person over whom we had power. " When the narrator comes home years later to revive Mr. Sweet, this time she is unable to do so. She believes she has failed and that his death is her fault. The narrator soon realizes that she can no longer prolong Mr. Sweet's death and she must accept the fact that she has to let him go.

The first person retrospective point of view helps the author enhance the central idea of the story. Since the narration is told directly from the narrator's point of view, it helps enhance the reader's awareness of her emotional connection she has with Mr. Sweet. Mr. Sweet " would shake his white head and run a scratchy old finger all around my hairline, which was rather low down, nearly to my eyebrows, and made some people say I looked like a baby monkey. " This comforting helps the narrator gain confidence in herself and enhance her personal bond with Mr.

Sweet. The change of perspective of the narrator towards the end of the story shows how the narrator has grown up and now looking back on her childhood memories. Although she is no longer a little girl, Mr. Sweet has had a major impact on her life, so much so that she is having trouble letting it go. First person narration also conveys the sad and sympathetic tone of the story. This tone helps to portray Mr. Sweet as a compassionate, lovable man who the narrator and her family will miss dearly. They describe Mr.

Sweet as " like a piece of rare and delicate china which was always being saved from breaking and which finally fell". This comparison to a piece of china helps portray how special Mr. Sweet truly is to the family. The narrator concludes the story realizing Mr. Sweet to be her first love. This conclusion helps convey the sympathetic tone of the story because the reader can relate to the sorrow and pain one feels when losing someone they love. The author uses the setting to convey meaning, also. The story takes place in the rural South. Mr.

Sweet "lives down the road" from the narrator and her family in "a very poor shack" on a "neglected cotton farm". The most significant use of setting the author uses to convey meaning is at the end of the story. The narrator is studying at the university in Massachusetts and comes home when she hears of Mr. Sweet's sickness. She describes Mr. Sweet's house as "more dilapidated than when she was last there, barely a shack, but it was overgrown with yellow roses". This description of the house helps the author give sympathy to old Mr. Sweet.

The overgrown yellow roses around his house represent the joy and friendship Mr. Sweet shared with the narrator and her family. After Mr. Sweet dies, the narrator "could catch the fragrant delicate scent of tender yellow roses". When this happens, the narrator is accepting Mr. Sweet's death and realizing that the friendship and love she had for him will reign on forever. The author's use of language helps to convey the central idea of the story and emphasizes the other elements of fiction as well. Mr. Sweet's character is revealed by the author's use of descriptive language. The narrator describes Mr.

Sweet as "constantly on the verge of being blind drunk, for he brewed his own liquor and was not in the least a stingy sort of man...always very melancholy and sad...and he'd dance around the yard with us, usually keeling over just as my mother came to see what the commotion was." Since Mr. Sweet's character is thoroughly revealed, the reader suspects that the narrator views Mr. Sweet as someone she truly cares for and spends a lot of time with. This care the narrator has also makes the reader feel a deep

sympathy for her loss. The author's use of subtle symbolism also adds to the overall theme of the story.

The narrator describes Mr. Sweet's white hair and beard as "her special treasure" and would look forward to "burying her small fingers into his wooly hair". Mr. Sweet's hair is symbolic because the narrator finds fascination in Mr. Sweet's hair as he makes her feel better and comforted about her own hair as well. Mr. Sweet helps the narrator with her self esteem issues and the narrator helps Mr. Sweet feel wanted and keeps him from loneliness. This symbolism adds to the central idea because the mutual comforting between Mr. Sweet and the narrator is what the narrator is having trouble letting go.