

The secret life of bees



The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd: An Analysis The novel evolves around Lily Owens, a 14 year old girl, who is searching for the love of her mother, Deborah. The setting of the story was in South Carolina in the year 1964 which marked the beginnings of the civil rights movement. Her father, T-Ray, a peach farmer, was indifferent and unsupportive of her needs. She runs away with her nanny and housekeeper, Rosaleen, who she looks up to as a mother figure, never leaving her until the end. The story relays meaningful events, as both Lily and Rosaleen, lived with the Boatwright sisters at Tiburon. The unfolding of occurrences at the household of the Boatwright sisters and the community of worshippers of Our Lady of Chains, the Black Madonna, accorded opportunities for Lily to find what she was looking for.

The primary character and narrator of the story is Lily, who was searching for answers regarding her mother's past, prior to the event of her death. The struggles she was subjected to encompasses theories of psychosocial framework delving into concepts of trust (in oneself and in T-Ray), guilt (due to the death of her mother), isolation (feeling alone and lonely), role confusion (her perception of being a girl and not acting like one) and feelings of despair (due to the loss of Lily's mother). The story evolved in finding solutions to her dilemma through the assistance of a group (the Boatwright sisters and the community of worshippers) who were instrumental in giving her the much needed support and love, as well as the answers she was looking for. Her experiences of living and working with bees gave her the strength to accept the things that she could not change (being abandoned by her mother, the way her father treats her, racial inequalities, among others) and the resilience to accept what she has (her talents in writing,

taking care of bees, being in love with Zach despite racial differences). The lesson of learning to accept the need to reveal the truth, despite its painful memory, as she revealed everything to August set her free and provided the impetus for understanding the facts about her mother's abandoning her and T-Ray. This enabled her to move on and to actually forgive his father and to open herself to the love that Boatwright sisters and the community of worshippers give her.

The Secret Life of Bees presented an analogy between Lily, as a bee, in search of her mother (the Queen). The secret she kept from the Boatwright sisters, though not immediately revealed, has caused her fear, anxiety and insecurities with regard to her relationships with August and with the rest of the sisters. By experiencing a series of events, her emotional status was strengthened giving her the capacity to acknowledge the need to reveal her secret. Her life manifested the need to go through the stages of Erikson's psychosocial development: hope (trust in her parents love and support), will (doubt in herself as the cause of her mother's death), purpose (guilt feeling and self-identity crisis), competence (reliance on Rosaleen), fidelity (role confusion and searching for answers in life), love (her feelings for Zach and for the sisters), care (realization of her ability to love and be loved), and eventually, wisdom.

The story was effective in presenting an appropriate example for depicting that people need to experience a variety of challenges to develop skills, knowledge and abilities which would assist them to develop and cope with the next stage of development. Upon learning how to address the challenges, one would be capable and equipped to handle situations of the same kind anytime in the near future. The story of Lily is a story of triumph

against adversities and the need to search for answers would have to be made by the individual, despite the pain it could cause. By conquering one's fear in life, one is ultimately set free to experience joy, love and peace, as naturally as life accords.