

Shiloh by bobbie ann mason

Literature



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Shiloh by Ann Mason Leroy Moffitt, who is the narrator in Shiloh, possesses qualities which are stereotypically feminine including sentimentality and sensitivity which cause him to be a man in three dimensions rather than a masculine stereotype. He has a deep affection for his wife, grieves his son, smokes marijuana, and doubts himself. He is Mason's male point of view experiment, and succeeds in being so because the author treats him as an opportunity to access the mind of a man. He has a major effect on how the reader understands what is happening because the characters in the book are seen through his eyes, rather than objectively (Wilhelm, 1998 p21).

Norma Jean goes through a transformation in his life from a housewife who is stunted to a woman walking towards full independence (Wilhelm, 1998 p20). She takes a traditional role of femininity in the beginning by maintaining her home. Norma, as we can tell from the story, is confused and mired in self doubt. As she goes to night school, she does essays on casseroles, which shows her former self as a housewife. When she intends to leave Roy, she confusedly remembers when her mother found her smoking and claims to not want to be treated anymore as a child.

The story is set in Shiloh, which according to Leroy is more like a park rather than the golf course he envisioned. The setting furthers the story as it was the scene of a battle during the civil war. It is also the spot where Norma tells Leroy that she intends to leave him. When he claims that he wants to start over, she responds that they already did. This shows conflict.

In this case, conflict stems from Leroy wanting to settle down and build a log cabin while Norma envisions building up herself with a new image to overcome dependence on her mother and husband. In the end, she walks away and when Leroy follows her, she lifts her arms. This leaves the reader

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wondering if she was exercising or gesturing at him.

Shiloh by Ann Mason shows the effect that gender roles have on everyday lives of simple people. While Leroy is struggling with his feminine qualities which his mother in law teases, Norma is struggling to break the female stereotype and become more independent.

Work Cited

Wilhelm, Albert. *Bobbie Ann Mason : a study of the short fiction*. New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1998. Print