

Odour of chrysanthemums essay sample



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In literature, foreshadowing is a warning or indication of a future event. Foreshadowing can tell you the possible outcome of a work of literature. In D. H. Lawrence's "Odour of Chrysanthemums," he uses the literary technique of foreshadowing to hint to the reader of the tragedy that Elizabeth Bates will soon learn happened to her husband Walter Bates. Throughout the story we follow Mrs. Bates at home with the children and gain knowledge of statements, descriptions, and objects that foreshadow Walter Bates' death. The first time we see foreshadowing is when Mrs. Bates is looking for her son John, who appears out of the bushes.

John is wearing "...trousers and a waist coat of cloth..." which appear to be "...cut down from a man's clothes" (Broadview). This could foreshadow that in the future John will have to take over the role as the man of the house when his father dies. Also while the Bates' are at the dinner table we learn that John is sitting "...at the end of the table" (Broadview). In most families the man of the house usually sits at the end of the table to indicate his role in the household as the caregiver and protector. The second example of foreshadowing is when we meet the Bates' daughter Annie.

She comes in from outside "...dragging a mass of curls, just ripening from gold to brown..." (Broadview). Mrs. Bates is described earlier as having "...smooth black hair..." whereas Mr. Bates "...was blond..." (Broadview). Annie's hair changing from blond, which represents her father, to brown, indicating her mother, foreshadows that in the future Annie's affections are going to be shifted towards her mother than her father because of his death at the coal mines. After everyone comes home except for Mr. Bates, the

children begin to ask their mother where their father is and when he will be home.

The angry Mrs. Bates tells the children that their father is probably drinking and “ he will come home when they carry him” (Broadview). At the thought of her husband coming home drunk and dirty, she says that he can “...lie on the floor...” because he will more than likely be “...like a log” (Broadview).

Mrs. Bates’ comment on how her husband will be coming home drunk foreshadows how Mr. Bates will come home from the accident and how his body will appear physically. After Mrs. Bates has put the children to bed and her husband has still not returned, she starts to get angry and very upset.

She starts to sew and stitch to get her mind off of her husband. While sitting in her chair “...her anger is tinged with fear” (Broadview). Even though Mrs. Bates is angry that her husband has yet to come home, she is beginning to worry and fear that something has happened to her husband. This foreshadows her husband’s death and her fear that something bad has happened is right. Once her fear that something has happened to her husband has gotten the best of her, she takes off for the neighbors’ house to see if they have seen Mr. Bates around.

Mrs. Bates goes to the Rigley’s house to ask Mrs. Rigley if she has seen Mr. Bates. Mrs. Rigley has not seen Mr. Bates, but she offers to go get her husband to see if Mr. Rigley has seen Mr. Bates. Mr. Rigley arrives and worries that something has happened to Mr. Bates because the other miners left him alone to finish a job, so Mr. Rigley rushes Mrs. Bates home so he can go check on his workmate. On the walk to Mrs. Bates house, Mr. Rigley warns

her to watch out for the “...ruts in the entry...” because she could fall and accidentally hurt herself (Broadview).

Mr. Rigley warning Mrs. Bates of the accidental harm that the ruts in the ground could do foreshadows Mr. Bates’ accidental death in the mines. The last and most important point of foreshadowing is the chrysanthemums. Annie finds chrysanthemums in her mother’s apron and says, “ Don’t they smell beautiful! ” (Broadview). Mrs. Bates proceeds to tell her that they do not smell good to her and they were there “...when I married him...” (Broadview). Mrs. Bates feels that the day she and her husband got married was not a happy day, because “ there had been nothing between them...” (Broadview). Then Mrs. Bates goes on to tell Annie that there were “...chrysanthemums when you were born...” (Broadview).

Mrs. Bates did not have the children with Mr. Bates because she wanted the children, but instead had the children to please her husband. She follows with “...the first time they ever brought him home drunk, he’d got brown chrysanthemums in his button-hole” (Broadview). The thought of her husband going out drinking instead of coming home to her and the children was upsetting to Mrs. Bates. All the past events that Mrs. Bates told the children about were all when something bad had happened to her, and also where chrysanthemums were present, showing that when chrysanthemums are present something bad usually happens.

At the time when Mrs. Bates found out about her husband’s death, chrysanthemums were placed in the parlour in a vase and had been in her apron from earlier that day. The chrysanthemums being present

foreshadows that something bad is going to happen to Mrs. Bates, which ends up being her husband's death. Throughout the entire story different statements, objects, and descriptions foreshadow the death of Mr. Bates. The "...deathly smell of chrysanthemums..." foreshadowed Walter Bates' death, and should have been a clue to Mrs. Bates that something bad had happened to her husband when he did not come home that night (Broadview).