

"the answer is no"



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"The Answer is No" Historical content is not necessary for the reader to understand the short story "the Answer is No" by Naguib Mahfouz. It is possible to understand the theme of the story without knowing the author's background or the story's historical context. "The Answer is No" is about a fourteen year old girl who gets sexually assaulted by her new tutor who is of the same age as her father. The tutor tries to convince her to marry him in exchange for her education at a prestigious College of Science. She denies his proposal and "close[s] the door forever" (Mahfouz 12). After that she tries to convince herself that "the outcome is preferable to being married to [him]" (Mahfouz 14). She grows up and must live with her decision forever because she will forever be scarred by the memory and now fears to fall in love. She was given many chances to marry again but instead she couldn't from the emotional distress. No historical context is needed in order to comprehend the story "The Answer is No" because her story is understood without it. The author purposely didn't include any names to keep the characters faceless and without personality. He addressed all the characters as headmaster, she, and he. By doing so, it allows the reader to produce his or her own interpretation on the characters. The author describes "she" as a "fourteen years of age" which is possibly the only description the reader can depict (Mahfouz 8). A teenage girl no matter the time period is still a teenage girl. By naming the character she, she becomes relatable to anyone no matter the time period. She can be a girl from Egypt or from the United states because her decisions and the choices are no different than the ones similar teenage girls have to make thought the world. "She either had to accept or to close the door forever" is a choice we must all make in our lives (Mahfouz 12). She had to choose between the educations she could have

been given and marriage, a choice most women in history had to make. Today, it can be seen in most countries as most women are continuing to make these choices. The time period has no importance to the decision she, like many women, have had to make. " She had been conscious of the critical position she was in (Mahfouz 10). Her decision becomes relatable because she remains nameless and faceless. In the story she is sexually assaulted by her teacher. He tells her to " Keep it to yourself" (Mahfouz 16). Sexual assault is still a current issue today and happens in all parts of the world. When names are read in the newspaper, it is like the characters in the story; we don't know them just their emotions that comes from the author's diction. She is not given a face, so to say, to allow her to represent all the women that have been " abused of [their] innocence" (Mahfouz 12). She avoids love she fears it. this shows the reader exactly how emotionally scarred this girl is from being sexually assault by a man " twenty-five years older, the same age as her father" (Mahfouz 8, 16). All pieces of literature have some sort of message or background information like historical context but some stories like " The Answer is No" do not need supporting any sort of historical context.. There is some evidence of the story that might show that this had taken place in Egypt when the girl was walking " on pyramid roads", however he did not include a time period. Without a time, the reader cannot know an exact cdate and time the story might be taken place. this just proves how the authors purpose was to tell the reader that the extra information is not necessary. The girl in the story can, in fact, be any girl faced with a choice that was making her " struggle helplessly in a well strung trap" (Mahfouz 12). Historical context is unnecessary for the reader to understand the overall message of " The answer is No". Although, a location <https://assignbuster.com/the-answer-is-no/>

was given, a time period was not which does not allow the reader to imagine a certain time in history. The author did not include hints to allow the reader to envision a certain era. A lack of a time period does not allow the reader to be able to pinpoint cultural ideas that might affect the characters. Therefore historical content is not needed because the author did not include any. "

The Answer is No" can be easily placed in any time period or location around the world and the overall message will still be universally understood by all.