

Hero theme



?? For students, reading literature is enjoyable and delightful as a way of learning something new, on the condition that a complete understanding of what is being read is gained. Thomas C. Foster™'s *How to Read Literature like a Professor*, which is described as a lively and entertaining guide to reading between the lines(), can help students to actually understand literature. Foster™'s book gives a guide to literature by providing different themes, which is a key point to comprehend the purpose of a written work. Among them the themes of weather and violence are common in literature work, and often appear together to form symbolic meaning or greater depth of the works. Foster states that weather is never just weather(), and it will serve as a plot device, signals or symbols in the works. As for violence, he believes it is a symbolic action which makes readers sense greater weight in works.

Foster™'s themes of weather and violence are used in the following three stories *The Princess Bride* by William Goldman, *The Story of an Hour* by Kate Chopin, and *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini in similar ways such as plot device and symbolic action, differing in ways such as foreshadowing tragedy and a hint for something happening beyond the surface. Weather is a common setting in a story, but it always means something more. Weather is never just weather. It™'s never just rain.

And that goes for snow, sun, warmth, cold!() The weather is brought for special reasons, and usually it is a plot device. In *The Princess Bride*, the winds that constantly whistled during the dinner that held in the Great Hall of Lothar™'s castle is one great example. At the beginning of the dinner, Goldman brings the wind into the setting, and then the strong cross wind, and finally the gusty situation which everything is flying including Princess

Noreena™'s hat. All these prepare for the roaring of Prince Humperdinck. Chopin and Hosseini depict some weather-like conditions in their works as well. In *The Story of an Hour*, Mrs.

Mallard stared out the open window and feels the the delicious breath of rain(); in *The Kite Runner*, the descriptions of snow the fall of darkness when Amir go to find Hassan after the tournament serve in a similar way. Each of the weather setting mentioned above can be seen as a plot device, but the function of the weather is more than that. The wind, rain and snow have different meanings in the settings. Goldman uses the wind to foreshadow the accident: revealing the fact that Princess Noreena is actually bald, and follows on the wrath of Prince Humperdinck. In *The Story of an Hour*, Chopin™'s description of the scenery after rain is restorative: the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life, the bird™'s singing, and the delicious breath of rain().

It is the sign of spring and hope. With this symbolical meaning, the rain is the sign of Mrs. Mallard™'s hope, freedom and new life. In Hosseini™'s *The Kite Runner*, there are many scenes with snow. Snow means as much as rain, as Foster says: you can do just about anything you want with snow, and the one illustrates above is cold and suffocating. The descriptions of snow after the tournament create the atmosphere of suffocating despair. The place that Hassan is blocked by Assef: The narrow path; one side to a snow-filled ravine; other side stood rows of snow-burdened cypress trees; (77); and when Amir meets Hassan, he pretends he hasn™'t seen those tiny drops that; stained the snow black (86).

Snow, with darkness, creates a cold and desperate background for the tragedy of Hassan and the break of his friendship with Amir. The three works have another similarity: the authors include the theme of violence which is indispensable in illustrating the themes of the stories. Foster states that the literal violence encodes a broader point about the essentially hostile or at least uncaring relationship we have with the universe. In *The Princess Bride*, the man in black fight with Inigo and Fezzik, and the battle of wits with Vizzini are events to show the bravery and cleverness of the hero, and make the main character Westley heroic, and his quest for true love wonderful in an adventure story. In *The Story of an Hour*, Mrs.

Mallard™s sudden death implies that the theme of this story is searching selfhood in marriage life. Hosseini, likewise, uses the theme of violence in *The Kite Runner* as the cause of Hassan™s tragedy, which also leads to Amir™s betrayal and life-long guilt. Violence is everywhere in this book, and almost every crucial plot that concerns the theme of the story relates to violence.

However, the main characters in these three stories are affected by the violence differently, and each of stories has a distinct interpretation of violence. Westley, the hero of *The Princess Bride*, is killed by Prince Humperdinck, but later is brought back to life by Miracle Max. It is from the necessities of plot, and his back to life, which reminds readers of Jesus Christ, foretells that he will succeed in the quest of true love. There is another reason for violence to exist in this book: it is an adventure story. Just as a detective novel is scarcely lack of death, fight, fence, or duel is

integrant in an adventure novel. It brings excitement, uncertainty and tense situation which are the basic elements of adventure.

Also, it is the violence of the Prince here is the sign of evil, as Weller Embler explains that A sign usually has but one meaning to the observer he also says that there may be several meanings in it, but in the true symbol all meanings converge to stimulate a unified emotional response in the observer. Though no single meaning is attached to the symbol, still it cannot by its nature represent! . Mrs. Mallard™s death is not about plot advancement or basic requirement of certain genre of literature. This tragedy reveals the theme of women™s hopeless struggle of freedom and selfhood in that specific time. When the sadness is released, Mrs. Mallard feels that something is coming to her, and gradually she realizes that she would live for herself (), and the possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being(). So she keeps whispering Free! Body and soul free! ()to remind herself that she has jump out of the constraints of being a wife, and the constitution of the patriarchal society.

The death of her husband frees her, refreshes her and gives her a new life. So when she descends the stairs with her sister, there is a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory (). This is the process of gaining a new life. However, the unexpected appearance of her husband kills her instead, which demonstrates the difficulty of Mrs. Mallard™s marriage life, a representative of the wives at that time. Through the portray of Mrs. Mallard™s reaction to her husband™s death and the abrupt death of herself, it can be sensed that the long

suffering wives, both in mind and body, are long attempting to regain their self-consciousness. It is not a successful attempt obviously, as Per Seyersted summarizes it as an extreme example of the theme of self-assertion.

The violence in *The Kite Runner* has something similar to *The Story of an Hour* that the theme is revealed through the violent act. But there is something more. Foster says that in fictive universe, violence is symbolic action (). The violence that Amir and other characters suffered has some historical and cultural meanings.

David Brion Davis in his *Violence in American Literature* states that there can be no doubt that the treatment of violence in American literature reflects certain historical conditions and circumstances (29). The violence in this story reflects the Afghanistan history which makes readers feel the deeper sense in it and that there is something happening beyond the surface.

Besides, with the depict of violence, all the complexities about Amir™s life-long struggle, his twisted friendship with Hassan, the origin of self-reproach, and the process of redemption are combine together. It is through the fight with Assef that Amir has found the peace of his heart: I don™t know at what point I started laughing, but I did. It hurt to laugh, hurt my jaws, my ribs, my throats;for the first time since the winter of 1975, I felt at peace;my body was broken;but I felt healed. Healed at last (312). *The Kite Runner* is an extraordinary novel about friendship, betrayal and redemption under a broad historical background, but none of this can still be authentic without the theme of violence. The themes of weather and violence are depicted in each of these three stories to advance the plot and highlight the theme.

The point to discuss weather and violence together is that they have similar functions in literature, and more importantly, they can work together as a literary device such as foreshadowing. Weather, especially the severe one, such as the strong wind in the dinner in the Great Hall in *The Princess Bride*, foretells a worse turning of plot, often violence. Also the snow in *The Kite Runner*, together with the tragedy of Hassan and the betrayal of Amir, gives readers a feeling of cold and suffocating. In conclusion, both themes of weather and violence are used in *The Princess Bride*, *The Story of an Hour*, and *The Kite Runner* for plot devices, foreshadowing and theme-telling.

In the stories, weather serves as plot devices and foretells the violence about to happen; and the theme of violence highlights the core meanings of the stories and deepens the weight of the works. Nevertheless, each story gives the themes a different interpretation. In *The Princess Bride* the wind foreshadows the roaring of Prince Humperdinck, and advances the plot of Buttercup being the bride, which is amusing. The fence, fight, and death in it help constitute the hero Westley, and nothing really dreadful happens.

In *The Story of an Hour*, the hopeful scenery after rain shows the new life of Mrs. Mallard, and the sudden death implies the fail attempting of women's selfhood searching. In *The Kite Runner*, the snow has the function of foreshadowing tragedy, which is heavy, ice-cold, and frustrating. The violence in this book is symbolical, with historical and cultural meanings. Overall, Foster's themes of weather and violence can have same or similar meaning in literature, but distinctive messages can be sent through the different plots and settings of the stories.