

An analysis of fallen angels by walter dean myers essay

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An Analysis of Fallen Angels by Walter Dean Myers As with many novels about the Vietnam War, *Fallen Angles* is a somewhat jaded look at the war through the eyes of a soldier. As well as questioning the motivations for going to war in the first place, the novel examines the tense racial relations which occurred within many army units. A common theme of the book is the pain that a combat soldier goes through, and yet also the comradeship with others that will pull him through, if he is lucky enough to survive. In many ways it might be regarded as a novel about all soldiers in all wars. The novel deals with people who have been disenfranchised, both within their home of America and eventually in Vietnam. Thus Richie Perry does not volunteer to go to Vietnam out of any noble or broad motivations, he goes because he sees he has no prospects in his home town of Harlem, and at least the army will take him out of this environment.

He is poor with nothing to do: ideal material for the army, When Richie arrives in Vietnam he is very innocent, both as to why America is involved in the war, and to the part that he will play within it. He says that he is "ready to stop the North Vietnamese from taking over South Vietnam. . . I didn't really feel gung ho or anything, but I was ready to do my part." (Myers, 1989).

Like many other soldiers in many other wars he soon discovers that this approach is not really relevant. He will be lucky (along with his comrades) in simply being able to survive the war. Triumph is found within survival and nothing more. Soon a more practical approach comes to dominate his mind, such as "there's only two kinds of people in Vietnam .

. . people who are alert twenty-four hours a day, and people who are dead.” (Dean, 1989). In many ways the experience of this young man within way might be regarded as similar to that described by an earlier author of another war, in this case Remarque within *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Richie states that when a fellow soldier dies, “ part of me was dead with him.” (Remarque, 2005). While far fewer men died in the Vietnam War than in the First World War there is a similar sense of the hopelessness and dehumanization that occurs when men are fighting a war without apparent reason (Wiest, 2003).

The racial tensions between the soldiers that have essentially been brought over from America eventually diminish in the face of the constant threat of death. The fact that they are fellow Americans is not really important either, it is just the fact that they are soldiers trying to look out for each other and trying to survive. Racial differences become quite meaningless within that situation.

Bibliography

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