

Griffins text essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Truth about “ Our Secret” Susan Griffin’s main focus in her essay “ Our Secret“ is on Heinrich Himmler’s life. She hopes to better understand how people come to be who they are as a product of childhood and adolescent experiences. Through this process she hopes her readers can become conscious to the truths of their upbringing and not only find their true identity, but have the strength and courage to change their destiny. Griffin is ultimately interested in finding her own identity but has been oppressed by her grandmother to not search inwardly.

She therefore uses Himmler as a mask by examining what experiences shaped him as a child to understand what may have molded her. Griffin concentrates on connections between people, childhood, and objects to Heinrich Himmler’s life to better understand social and personal identity, and oppression. Although Griffin writes an excellent account on the connections and metaphors that define Himmler, she leaves the reader feeling lost and unfulfilled by her lack of connection to her own personal search for identity. By focusing on Heinrich Himmler’s oppressed childhood Griffin can more easily avoid the realities of her own.

Griffin touches on her own oppression when she says “ When at the age of six I went to live with her, my grandmother worked to reshape me. I learned what she thought was correct grammar. The manners she had studied in books of etiquette were passed on to me, not by casual example but through anxious memorization and drill” (307). Through this quote Griffin is proposing a connection between Himmler’s father, Gebhard’s, oppressive behavior and her grandmother’s.

Griffin hopes to show a connection to modern day upbringing, that although it is not as off the wall as Dr. Schreber's child rearing method, it is still extremely oppressive and unnecessary. This is a perfect example of the in home oppression that most children must endure and don't even realize that it is happening to them. Griffin's use of this quote awakens the reader to the emotional effects that an oppressive upbringing can still have on children today. Although Griffin is tapping into her childhood experiences, she lets on no emotion of how the oppressive behavior of her grandmother effected her. She lacks the ability to show how these experiences have made her who she is today, and instead allows these intense memories to simply be another connection to a man that her readers have no personal connection to.

Griffin's search for her own identity gets lost in her vigorous examination of Himmler's. Griffin is speaking about Himmler's hunt for an improved social identity through his study of Adolf Hitler when she says, " He finds he shares a certain drift of thought with this man. He is discovering who he is now, partly by affinity and party by negation. In his picture of himself, a profile begins to emerge cast in light and shadow. He knows now who he is and who he is not" (314).

The quote is referring to Himmler and his longing to become part of the elite and accepted. He is doing this by looking at Adolf Hitler and what qualities and ideas he has, and taking these ideas and adopting them as his own. He is also figuring out who he " is not", or rather should not allow himself to become If he wants to be accepted. Griffin is using the same idea as Pratt of the contact zone to show that Himmler is trying to adopt the ideas of the oppressors or the social hierarchy in order to be viewed as an equal to them.

This quote supports her thesis that through this ideological connection between Heinrich and Hitler, Heinrich can find his social identity and break out of being oppressed by those who are “ more manly” than he is.

Although this is a key moment in Himmler’s search for identity, as a reader we are not merely interested in Himmler’s personal story. The author fails to finish off the great thought with a connection to her own life and search. Just as she has Himmler examine Hitler to find his path, in writing this essay Griffin is looking at Himmler’s journey to in turn evaluate her own. This quote would perfectly tie back to the author and therefore be relatable by the reader if she would tie up her loose ends. The reader is left confused as to why she doesn’t elaborate after this key point and wondering if the author even realizes that she and Himmler are going through the same process.

Griffin’s essay had amazing potential to draw on the experiences of a man who’s life went astray to find out why this happened, what personal connections and lessons the author has derived from this examination, and what the reader could do to negate these possible effects in their own or their children’s lives.