

The schoolboy essay



The Schoolboy is a poem written by William Blake from songs of experience. The poem narrates a young boy's perception of school and how he believes that children in school are like in prison and they should be let out in nature to be free and be happy while their childhood lasts.

History boys however, is a play by Allan Bennette which follows the lives of a class of boys who are working for exams to go to the university of Oxford and Cambridge. Both texts focus on the theme of education. William Blake strongly agrees with French philosopher Rousseau who believes that children should be free and naturally move from innocence to experience. He writes in his poem “ nor sit in learning bower, worth through with the dreary shower”.

Blake means by this that nothing in school happens naturally. Everything is taught by a book and with rules and regulations. In History boy's however, the students have chosen to come to school through their own will. They do not find it a burden.

We know this because the students throughout the play are happy apart from two crucial moments, when Hector and Irwin are sharing a class and again at Hector's funeral, other than this they are quite pleased to be in school. Another point we have to take into consideration when analysing the poem is the time period it was written in which was during the industrial revolution. During 1794 children were being forced into work and children were striped of their innocence and pushed into adulthood. This was Blake's reason for writing the poem and therefore is a negative approach to education. The History boy's however, is written at a more recent time,

where children going to school was the social norm and therefore contradicts Blake's view on comparing school to prison. The History boy's are preparing for the present or nearby future.

They believe that their youth period is time for studying and they'll get their freedom once their into university. Both texts are influenced greatly by the past present and future. In History boy's hector teaches the boys education which will benefit them in the future, whereas Irwin is only educating them for the present. Blake's poem also has a lot of reference to time “..

. in a summer morn...

summer arise... summer fruits.

.. winter appear”. The poem nonetheless, moves gradually from time through the use of seasons. Blake used summer to symbolise the present and winter to symbolise the future. Blake was trying to imply that summer was a time for nature, when children should be free and full of innocence and as nature is beautiful during the summer they should make the most of it until winter comes, when they'll have to stay in doors and therefore study.

This is very similar to the teachings of Hector. “ Learn it now, know it now and you'll understand it whenever”. Hector says it doesn't matter when you understand it because over time it will eventually come up and fit a situation you might be in that you're not in at this precise moment. Although Hector is still getting the boy's ready for adulthood, he is doing it gradually, like nature does, over time. William Blake believes this is how all children should be taught.

So that is why this poem moves gradually from season to season. In the school boy because going to school was new tradition at the time it was written, people could not appreciate its advantage. “ Nor in my book I can take delight”. People still believed in old fashion ways of teaching and thought books were not the best way to learn about life long lessons.

In History boy’s nonetheless, the boy’s acknowledge that books will help them all the time. “ Some of the literature says it will pass”. This quote was from Posner, saying that the literature in books he’s read before says his homosexual feelings will pass. This personal matter has nothing to do with Oxford or Cambridge exams yet life experiences and to deal with them. Bennette is trying to show us that no matter when or what you learn, it will always come to use during your life time.

Ultimately I personally believe that the comparisons shed a good, positive light on how we apprehend the play and Bennette’s characters. We are able to acknowledge and appreciate the significance of both texts and the period of time they were written in. The Schoolboy we learn, is more concentrating on childhood and innocence, whereas History boy’s is more about how children will help society and need to be educated to be able to give back to the community. We also have to remember that during the time Schoolboy was written the life expectancy was low and therefore childhood was shorter. This would help us understand why Blake was so adamant about children making the most of childhood.