

# Sunday in the park



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the short story, " Sunday in the Park" by Bel Kaufman, a mother and father are relaxing at a park on a Sunday afternoon with their child, Larry, who is playing in the sandbox. Everything was seemingly peaceful until another child playing in the sandbox throws sand at Larry. Larry's mother tells the other child not to throw sand and to her surprise the child's father encourages him to continue throwing sand. The mother was rendered speechless by the father of the child's lack of empathy, and so the father of Larry, Morton, decides to step in.

When Morton tries to reason with the other father, he goes threatened with "You and who else? "(Kaufman 1) Feeling intimidated, Morton decides to retreat with his family. The mother criticizes Morton for being weak and not being able to stand up for the family and his son. Enraged and embarrassed the father complains about the mother's way of disciplining the child and tries to take it upon himself to properly discipline his son. The mother not wanting him to scold or discipline their son in anyway, threatens him with the same threat that the father of the other child said.

Throughout this short story, the tone of the story changes a couple of times. " Sunday in the Park" starts with a very cheerful, calming moment when the family is relaxing at the park. When sand is thrown at Larry, the story becomes very tense. The jumpiest moment of the short story was when the other father and Morton " looked at each other nakedly". This was when Morton has to decide whether he was going to fight or flight. Ultimately he chose flight, and retreated with his family. When the family is retreating the tone of the short story, turns accusatory and shameful.

The mother and Morton start to argue as of result, and they try to put the blame on each other. " Sunday in the Park" ends very suddenly and in a shocking matter. The mother says to Morton, " You and who else? " (Kaufman 4). This line is significant because the other father said the same thing to Morton to scare him off. " Sunday in the Park" is a short story that has a lot of imagery and symbolism that is caused by the author great description of characters and settings: " The swing and seesaws stood motionless and abandoned, the slides were empty, and only in the sandbox two little squatted diligently side by side" (Kaufman 1).

The quote here proves his the amount of description the author puts into the story. From this one sentence I can get a vivid image of how this scene looks like. The reason why imagery about the setting is really strong in this short story is because, there only is one setting in " Sunday in the Park. " Kaufman really wants the viewers to understand the environment the characters are in. The author chooses to put a lot of imagery because it will help the reader feel more connected to the story and see the images the author is trying to convey.

The most prominent theme that one would think is present in " Sunday in the Park" would be the idea of standing up for what you believe in. The mother in this story stands up for her own beliefs despite being up against a really menacing person, but when she is unable to do so, her husband Morton, steps in attempts to back his wife up. This relates to the other theme that is present in " Sunday in the Park" which I personally think is more important. This short story reverses the stereotypical gender roles, where the men are supposed to be the protectors of the family.

However this is contradictory because Morton was ultimately unable to stand up to the other father, and had his family retreat. Kaufman illustrated the Morton was weak, and timid, which are not qualities of how a protector should be. Culturally, women would ask the men for help when they need it. For example when the other father was rude to the mother “ she glanced at Morton” (Kaufman 2) for help because he was the man of the family. In addition, when the mother of Larry was trying to find the parents of the other child, she almost automatically looks for the mother of the other child first.

Universally, it is more likely for a woman to stay home and take care of the children than the men. After failing to find the mother of the other children, Larry’s mother immediately scans the park for females, she notices “ two women, and a little girl on roller skates [and then notices the] man on a bench a few feet away. ” (Kaufman 1) Today, people associate parenthood with a female, very rarely are men mentioned when speaking about parenting.