

The country husband

Countries



Literally Essay The Country Husband We all make choices in our lives. We choose who we will be, what we will believe and what social norms or values will guide our everyday lives. In making these choices, particularly about our value system, we do not question whether these choices (our value system) will be tested and found faulty because of our ever changing circumstance. In the story The Country Husband, Francis Weed found himself questioning his value system as dictated by his suburban living.

Francis Weed, after a traumatic life event, became temporarily dissatisfied with his superficial world of social clubs and high society (suburbia) and acted to rebel against it. However in his fight, he realized that he needed the very thing he hated and resolved this conflict with distractions, unrequited love and woodworking. We all belong in a community in which our membership should mean we agree with the values/standards of that community and our participation is a choice. In this story, Mr. Weeds participation in his community appears to be forced

After an alleged emergency plane landing, Mr. Weeds returns home to his family and community where his ordeal is ignored. He attempts to share this ordeal with his wife in stating, " [I] was nearly killed in an airplane crash, and [I] don't like to come home every night to a battlefield. " (Cheever, pg 65) Instead of inquiring about the accident or showing some degree of sympathy about his accident, Mrs. Weeds responds by stating that " He doesn't come home every night to a battlefield. " (Cheever, pg 65) Mr.

Weeds ordeal is ignored because it does not have a place in his suburban life in the community of Shady Hill. It neither adds to nor takes away from the

values of this community and therefore it has no relevance. It appears that Mr. Weeds begins to question the values his community places on him and the consequence endured if they are violated. Thus, he recalled the war in Vessey, a day in which a woman who was socially humiliated for some apparent indiscretion for which her head was shaved and she was made to walk the street naked. He believes that woman who serves him dinner is the woman " punished at the crossroads, (Cheever, pg 67) but he know it would have been " a social as well as human error" to share this story at the dinner table because talk of war and trouble of the world was " unseemly and impolite" (Cheever, pg 67) in Shady Hill. Mr. Weeds understood the tenuous nature of his standing in his community/family but he no longer wanted to be a part of it. Mr. Weeds saw how pretentious his life had become and in his first act of rebellion was to fall in love with the baby sitter, Ann, which was an awesome slap in the face to the norms and values of his community.

As he stated, there was no history for Shady Hill of such " turpitude...they had not even been a breath of scandal. " (Cheever, pg 71). But, Mr. Weeds imagined loving the babysitter and the ruckus it would cause, if he were caught taking advantage of the baby sitter. The mere thought however filled Mr. Weeds with so much energy/life that as a result of this newfound freedom, he impulsively purchased a bracelet for the baby sitter who seems to regard him only as an employer. Further, his escape from the pressure of conforming leads him to kiss this girl in the presence of the social misfit. In this new state of mind, Mr.

Weeks finds courage and is finally able to say what is on his mind. He is temporarily able to free himself from the constraint of civility and express his

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innermost thought to the leading member of the Shady Hill society by stating to her that she should paint her windows curtain black and shut up. The feeling of being “ deliberately impolite” made Mr. Weeds feel wonderful. (Cheever, pg 70) Francis has arrived another moment of truth when his wife Julia decides she is going to leave him because she cannot stand by and watch him destroy their social position that she has worked so hard to gain within Shady Hill.

He confesses to her by saying Julia, I do love you, and I would like to be as we were-sweet and bawdy and dark-but now there are so many people. (Cheever, pg77) It seems at this moment with everything he has gone through that he has accepted his life and realizes his wife needs him and he needs her. He makes an appointment to see a psychiatrist where he is advised that he should take up woodwork as a hobby. Perhaps this is an outlet where there are no boundaries and he is free to create whatever he likes without having to fit into a standard.

There comes a point in everybody’s life where we reflect on the values we adopt in becoming a member of a community and sometimes we are not satisfied with the decisions we make. I am sure for that when we initially decide to become a member of a community we do so with the hope that as we grow and our needs change, our community will reflect our new needs and growth. Mr. Weed’s community did not foster change and could not allow him to grow. He found himself trapped in the values of his community and his only escape was within his imagination.