

Ptsd in the red convertible by louise erdrich

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



“ I did not ask for the things that i’ve been through, and I certainly did not ask my mind to paint and repaint the pictures in flashback form.” Although the author of this quote is unknown it sheds light on the truth about post traumatic stress disorder and shares feelings of Henry, a character in “ The Red Convertible,” who also struggles with PTSD when he arrives back home. With Erdrich’s writing approach, honesty and reality, and the truth about post traumatic stress disorder, this is a very likable story as well as a great read for anyone wishing to gain a better understanding of PTSD.

To begin with, “ The Red Convertible” is a short story by American-Ojibwe author, Louise Erdrich. The short narrative is a realistic, thought provoking story which starts with brothers Henry and Lyman purchasing a red convertible together. In this story Erdrich uses several different methods that can be used for creating tension. She begins the story with, “ I owned that car along with my brother Henry Junior. We owned it together until his boots filled with water on a windy night and he bought out my share” (417). Here she starts by hinting about what happens at the story’s end, creating intrigue for readers. This was a great use of words as little strain is happening within the next few pages. However, good imagery and action continue to make reading move quickly. Tension picks up again when Henry comes back from war; the story is soon following the Native-American family’s attempts to deal with repercussions of the Vietnam War once Henry arrives back home. When Henry returns from Vietnam he’s traumatized and distraught. Lyman tries his very best to get his brother back, even vandalizing the car which at this time seems to become a symbol that mirrored Henry’s condition. To end the story Erdrich uses careful dialogue

and a powerful image when Henry drowns in the river and Lyman lets the convertible slide into the water after him.

In addition, complete honesty and many underlying thoughts continue throughout the story. "The Red Convertible" is not only a good read but also has many underlying factors such as how PTSD is felt by families of the victim, not just how the person with PTSD feels themselves. This can be a refreshing difference to most stories containing PTSD. Even deeper within, underlying thoughts show relations to native Americans living in modern times and how families really work. Many opinions can be formed around the story's name itself, "The Red Convertible." Along with the stories underlying thoughts it is also full of utter honesty. A great example of this is simply the ending of Henry drowning. This may make a sad story to many readers, but to those who know about PTSD it is very realistic. When Lyman states "He says in a normal voice, like he just noticed and he doesn't know what to think of it. Then he's gone" (423). Henry had given up on his own life when just moments ago he seemed to be doing much better. A person with post traumatic stress disorder can appear perfectly fine in one moment, then the exact opposite within seconds.

Finally, not everyone has witnessed and/or understood the whole truth of how PTSD can affect a family; this story does a great job of showing the honest reality of PTSD in a family. Many stories take PTSD lightly, trying to show happy outcomes that veterans can have. Unfortunately, in reality that is not always the case. More often than not, PTSD is an awful disorder that changes families lives. Such as when Lyman states, "When he came home,

though, Henry was very different, and i'll say this: the change was no good" (419). Erdrich also shows what families have to go through. " Once I was in the room watching tv with Henry and I heard his teeth click at something. I looked over, and head bitten through his lip. Blood was going down his chin" (420). Most people may think this was simply a dramatic detail but for families living with PTSD, these become details of daily life. The Department of Veterans Affairs released its analysis of Veteran suicide data for 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. After adjusting for differences in gender and age, they found that risk for suicide was 22 percent higher among Veterans when compared to U. S. non-Veteran adults. " Unlike the physical wounds of war, these conditions remain invisible to other military members, to families, and to society around them. All three conditions affect mood, thoughts, and behavior; yet these wounds often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (US Department of Veteran Affairs).

Erdrich's writing approach along with the reality and truthfulness about PTSD make this story very likable as well as a great read for anyone wishing to gain a better understanding of post traumatic stress disorder.