

Cormac mccarthy's all the pretty horses: literary analysis

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What happens when you venture into the wild west with your greatest pal by your side? Probably nothing you expected! In Cormac McCarthy's award winning novel, *All The Pretty Horses*, John Grady Cole, sixteen, sets off on an adventure with his friend Rawlins and comes back a man. This story is full of action, life lessons, and a proper depiction of the midwest in the 1950s. According to the nine yardsticks McCarthy's *All The Pretty Horses* is a perfect example of a great read.

The first yardstick is Clarity. Sometimes a book can be too hard to understand and you need a thesaurus to read it, not this tale though. Cormac's style is fairly easily understood with very little confusion to be seen. The only thing to bark about is his lack of quotation marks for speech, This seems to be a recurring thing in his novel's through so we'll let it pass. There is a bit of spanish but what little there is it is very small words that a quick search on your phone can help you figure out. for example a little bit after they meet Blevins, a mysterious character not to be trusted, the following exchange happens,

" Que vale? he said

They Shrugged

Es Mucho Trabajo, he said.

Bastante."

That is about as hard as it gets so if you know a little spanish then you should be all set.

Yardstick number two is Escape. This book drops you right into the “cowboys” and “indians” era of Mexico and western America, I could almost feel the dry heat and tumbleweeds rolling around in the dirt against a red and orange sunset sky. In the very beginning of the book, right after his grandfather's funeral, I saw this passage which reminded me of the classic west,

“ At the hour he'd always choose when the shadows were long and the ancient road was shaped before him in the rose and canted light like a dream of the past where the painted ponies and riders of that lost nation came out of the north with their faces chalked and their long hair plaited and each armed for war.”

This passage just paints an image so clear in my head as if I was right there with the main character experiencing it with him. It didn't matter that i was in a car when I read it I felt like i was trotting along on a spotted horse in Mexico somewhere.

The third yardstick is reflection of real life. Personally I think this book does a phenomenal job of capturing what real life is like. It takes a young man and puts him through the not so average coming of age tale. It starts off with a loss or change of way of life that leads him to taking his life into his own hands. As he ventures out into Mexico with his friend he learns lessons of love, loss, and even reality. He goes into the world a boy and comes home a man. An excellent passage I noticed towards the very end of the book was this one here,

“ The desert he rode was red and red the dust he raised, the small dust that powdered the legs of the horse he rode, the horse he led.”

This passage wraps up the book in a way that is almost inspiring. It's realistic in the way that a boy can venture out into the world and come back not riding his horse, but leading it.

Artistry in Details is our fourth yardstick. This was the highlight of the book for me. From the very first page this book pulled me in and despite the opening scene being a funeral it was beautifully written. The small details painted a clear image in my head and made me see exactly what was written, if I closed my eyes I was right there. One of my favorite parts of this book is on the very first page starting with the very first words,

“ The candle flame and the image of the candle flame caught in the pier glass twisted and righted when he entered the hall and again when he shut the door. He took off his hat and came slowly forward. The floorboards creaked under his boots in his black suit he stood in the dark glass where the lilies leaned so palely from their waisted cut glass vase,”

It just sets you in this somber scene, something that makes you feel what you are reading and a lot of this book is just like this. Scenes that if you were standing in would make you sit back and just think.

The Internal Consistency of this book is very easily seen throughout the book and the changes the main character goes through happen in a very convincing way. The changes the character goes through make sense

because of all that he goes through, he falls in love with a woman only to be rejected in the end, he is beaten and stabbed in prison, his father is gone, his grandfather is gone, his mom is up to god knows what, and even his friend leaves. He realises the real world and what it really is. The beginning of the book even directly parallels the end, they both start and end with funerals and sunsets. Thinking back on the passage from the end of the book here is the sunset scene from the very beginning,

“ He rode with the sun coppering his face and the red wind blowing out of the west. He turned south along the old war trail and he rode out to the crest of a low rise and dismounted and dropped the reins and walked out and stood like a man come to the end of something.”

The Tone of this book is almost somber, it's realism and almost whimsical at the same time. While it realistically portrays what the wild west is like it also has passages that make you think it's almost something from a movie. The main character leaves his hometown hoping for a classic good prevails over evil adventure but comes back knowing there is a little evil in everyone and the west is not what he thought it would be.

“ He said that those who have endures some misfortune will always be set apart but that is just that misfortune which is their gift and which is their strength.”

This passage is a great lesson that the book teaches and I feel like it appropriately catches the feeling I'm trying to express about the book's tone.

Emotional Impact is the seventh yardstick. The emotional impact that this book left on me was strong and kept me striding through the book. I could not put the book down because I felt myself getting emotionally attached to the main character. When he was forced to be in prison and he was beaten I was so enraged I wished I could have jumped into the book and strangled everyone myself! When Alejandra rejected his love I was so sad, I wanted them to be together and once again I wanted to jump into the book and shake her. " Are you mad??" I would shout at her. Even the lessons in this book I connected with,

" The closest bonds we will ever know are the bonds of grief. The deepest community is one of sorrow."

For many people this book may not connect with their personal beliefs but for me it connects pretty well. It challenges and stretches the boundaries of what is considered morally right nothing is ever black and white and there will always be a gray area. A quote I really like from this section is this,

" Every dumb thing I ever done in my life there was a decision I made before I got me into it. It was never the dumb thing. It was always some choice I'd made before it."

This quote makes me chuckle a bit because it is so true! Many bad things that happen are just triggered by earlier mistakes and further proves my point that there is always a gray area.

Finally, and last but not least, we have significant insights. This book focuses a lot on the psychological insight and what humans are like when they are forced into situations which affect their behavior. It works to reveal what life was really like in the 1950's. At one point our main character actually ends up killing someone after being forced into a situation where he had to. Many passages in this novel tell us that life can be cruel like this one here,

“ In the end we all come to be cured of our sentiments. Those whom life does not cure death will. The world is quite ruthless in selecting between the dream and the reality even when we are not.”

This quote further proves the reality vs. romanticized west.

All The Pretty Horses by Cormac McCarthy is my idea of a perfect yardsticks classic. McCarthy will be taught to our kids for generations to come and these are exactly the reasons why. I thoroughly enjoyed this book down to it's very last page.