

Journal 11

Linguistics, English



America by Arthur Schnitzler Summary The narrator recounts on how he left his home country with a hope of having a better future in the US. He remembers how happy they were with Anna when they decided to leave for America since they had heard good news about the country. However, on arrival, he realizes that his dream city was different from what he had imagined. He asserts, "...I'm in the false America and dreaming about my sweet, fragrant America over there" (Schnitzler 157). Once he was in America, he discovered that he knew nothing about the city and did not even know how he could contact Anna or send him a message. Therefore, the story is more of a man who is excited that he is going to be happy in a foreign land and reclaim the happiness that his country had denied him. However, he recognizes that it was a dream and America was not as great as he had imagined.

Contrast of the Words that the Narrator associates with America before and after his Arrival

There is an immense contrast between what the narrator imagined and what he found out once he arrived in the US. There is a recount of how he and Anna were excited at first on realization that he was to leave for America. Therefore, he asserts,

"...She looked up again and laughs, something new, she whispers, as if amazed, I hold my lips firmly pressed behind her ear. Then I say smiling, yes we have discovered something new! She bursts out laughing, and like a child she calls out happily, " America""". (Schnitzler 156-157).

It is obvious from the above quote that the narrator was having a flashback on how happy they were before commencing their journey to go to America.

However, the happiness was short-lived since the readers get a different tone once the narrator lands in the foreign country. He confirms, "...and now I'm standing in the middle of a large, cold city...a pain, a madness comes over me that something irrevocably has been lost" (Schnitzler 157). It is ironic how he believed that America would be his source of happiness only to realize that it was far from what he had imagined. He had left his homeland, lost his friends and family, and did not know any means in which he could communicate with them since he did not know anything about the US.

The contrasting images reveal that the narrator's view of the US had changed. The country in which Anna had boasted about, telling people, "... Hey, we're going to travel to America today!" (Schnitzler 57) was nothing but an illusion. His arrival was crowded by too much negativity; hence, it is likely that he would have a hard time adjusting in the new city. The different images also shows a man who was apprehensive and views America as a country that stole his happiness and everything that he used to know under the illusion that it was a great nation. Therefore, it is obvious that he thinks of America negatively and as much as the people he left behind thought that he was privileged to travel, he felt lost.

The narrator had a confused state of mind, from one that is ecstatic to one that feels cheated and anxious. Before leaving for the US, he thought that he was the luckiest man. However, upon arriving, he realized that the city was cold, lonely, and he knew nothing about it. His view of America and the state of mind are significant since they are the climax of the story and they determine how his future will be in the US. They also help the plot to unfold as they set a different tone; hence, giving the readers time to reflect on what

went wrong and how the narrator could have avoided such confusion, loneliness, and anxiety. For instance, the narrator could have done more research about the US and not necessarily base his opinion on people's belief that America was a land of meat and honey. Therefore, he would have had an easy time dealing with the cultural shock.

Work Cited

Schnitzler, Arthur. "America". In Spack, Ruth. *Guidelines: a Cross-Cultural Reading/Writing Text*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.