

Sweet potato pie by eugenia collier

Literature



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Sweet Potato Pie by Eugenia Collier

“ Sweet Potato Pie” by Eugenia Collier tells a huge story in only a few pages. It really shows the reader a glimpse of the life of a family of African-American sharecroppers in the early part of the 20th century. It shows how hard and difficult their lives were but it also shows how they stuck together as a family through love. The mother and family work unbelievable hard for their children; the older children basically have to raise the younger ones because there is no one around.

One of the most striking characters in the story “ Sweet Potato Pie,” is Charley, the oldest brother of the narrator. It is clear that as a child the narrator worshipped his older brother upon whose shoulders he often sat looking out on the world. Charley is a bit like a God to him and incapable of doing anything wrong. Charley cures Buddy’s stammer and encourages him to go to school to make something of himself. It is this spirit of self-sacrifice that makes the family a successful one, despite the terrible poverty they live in as sharecroppers.

The symbol of the piece of pie and the bag it is in is very important to the story. As Buddy grows up and becomes educated and important, he sees his family change and he becomes different from them. When he tries to go into a hotel carrying a piece of pie in a bag, his brother stops him and tells him he is now too respectable to carry a paper bag into a hotel: he has to act the part. Once again we see Charley’s spirit of self-sacrifice: he is willing to accept and emphasize the differences between the two men even though it must be painful to his own pride. The paper bag represents the difference between the two brothers.

The theme of this story is family and the sacrifices family makes. Another

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theme is poverty and how it can divide families. What is nice about this story is that although poverty and education divide the family, the family in the end still cares for one another. The brothers still recognize one another despite the differences between them.

“ Sweet Potato Pie” is also the story about the changing fortunes of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance and the Second World War. It shows how increasing opportunities allowed people to get ahead and start making money. It shows how families changed but did not break.