

# Textual analysis of the man in the gray flannel suit by sloan wilson (american dr...



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Introduction:

The man in the grey flannel suit is a novel that concentrates on one man's desire to join and succeed in the material world. Based on a family of five living in a rundown house in Connecticut, the father is a World War II veteran, the wife is a stay-at home mother and the three children are forever watching television. As a public relations officer in a television based company, Tom Rath's job is to get national mental health services approved by a group of physicians. The novel is considered one of the best written about the World War II lifestyle (D. R. Peak)

Analysis:

The novel revolves around the characters struggle to find appeasement in a chaotic and material culture.

The center of this novel revolves around the theme of an American Dream. The novel talks of every United States citizen's need to win happiness by satisfying their material wants. This is despite the concept written by James Adams, America is the land in which life should be fuller and richer for everyone, depending on their ability and achievement (1931).

The Rath family is very unsatisfied with their ordinary lives, referring to it as " a thousand petty shabinesses." When Tom returns his wife Betsy wants a better life and future. She wants her husband to be the person he was before the war, a driven and ambitious individual. Her frustration is evident in her <https://assignbuster.com/textual-analysis-of-the-man-in-the-gray-flannel-suit-by-sloan-wilson-american-dream-theme/>

annoyance at mundane trivialities of life “ Barbaras got the chicken pox and the washing machine broke down.”

Despite serving his country, Tom Rath finds himself unsuccessful as far as the real world is concerned. His Harvard degree is of little consequence as his education is shunned. To keep his wife happy he applies for a job. Tom’s heart is not in what he does. He seems to have no drive to succeed in the material world. When applying for this new job the evident lack of desire is evident in his half-hearted “ it certainly sounds interesting.”

All of this changes once Tom works in his new company. The American dream forces him to become part of the rat-race that seeks satisfaction through money. The irony of this idea becomes evident when Tom Rath applies for his job for a public relations position. Rath admits that he knows nothing about the job but this idea is ignored by the employer who claims “ Who does? Youve got a clean shirt and you bathe everyday. Thats all there is to it.” This shows how skills are of no consequence in this life. It is only about presentation and how quickly that helps achieve the material goal.

Soon money seems to be the only thing on Tom’s mind. He keeps repeating it to himself “ The important thing is to make money” and “ Money, I need money”. The root of the problem seems to be the need to achieve material ends.

Constant problems faced by the Raths make them lose their perspective and imagine all these flaws as a consequence of a low income. The three children are seen as “ it took them five years to realize the expense of raising three children” as the entire joy of parenting is gone. Another problem is the run-down house which the Rath family seems to have no eagerness to fix and see it rather as a “ trap.” The enthusiasm of owning and working on their  
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personal home is also robbed by the blind need to own a beautiful home which can be bought with money and requires no effort.

However, as the story progresses certain problems seem to come in Tom's way. This includes the death of his mother from whom he inherits a depreccate house. The caretaker of the house tries to swindle it out of Tom. Though this part poses to be a mere side-plot it shows the greed that can come in pursuing the American Dream. Men will go to any extent to satisfy their needs without thinking of the effects it can have on the person they cheat. Judge Bernstein's line " If youre going to be slick, be slick in the city. Theyre not as smart there" show the greed that is absent in small towns. Sloan Wilson points to how the more one experiences, the further his desires go and his sense diminishes. This line also proves that the ordinary man with little material lust is far better off than a materialistic man devoid of better judgment.

Conclusion:

The novel ends with Tom making the important decision of rejecting a high-pressure traveling job with great pay. The concept of materialism disappears in Tom as he sees all the mistakes made by those around him. In the end, Tom Rath gives up his dream of becoming an American success and instead settles to a life where he can be with those he loves. The novel ends with Tom giving up the unrealistic and material expectations of the American dream for something far more important-his soul.

Works Cited:

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