

Literature class



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Austin Clarke's "The Motor Car" is a story about a man's journey from Barbados to Toronto. Clarke's story is humorous, but shows the differences between the cultures in Barbados and Canada. In Barbados, material objects are the farthest things from an individual's mind. Earthier topics, like rich island food, lush foliage, and tropical warmth are the major concern. However, in Toronto things like "The Motor Car" are more important (Clarke). The narrator becomes obsessed with owning a "Plymouth Glaxie" (Clarke). Instead of the laid back island attitude, the narrator soon has the rushed attitude of someone from Toronto. This short story reflects Clarke's attitude about coming from Barbados himself. Clarke was raised on the island, only to come to Toronto to find a whole new world, just like his narrator of "The Motor Car". The sense of losing oneself in a new country, which has a different culture, was one of Clarke's fears, which he expresses in this story. Unlike the narrator in "The Motor Car", Clarke managed to move and keep his traditional values.

"Hazel" by Carol Shields is a novel that any middle aged homemaker can relate with. After raising two daughters and being supported by her husband, Hazel's life is changed forever when her husband dies. Hazel felt depressed and lonely, so decided to take a job. Her mother-in-law, best friend, and daughters were appalled. Hazel's mother-in-law said "there is no need" (Shields). She felt that since Hazel was well provided for, that a job was not necessary. Maxine, Hazel's best friend, said "you're not the type" (Shields). Her daughters insisted their father would not have approved. What Hazel's family and friends did not realize was Hazel needed her job. It might have been a nothing small job, but she needed to feel useful. People need a purpose in life. Hazel just happened to find hers in a job demonstrating pots

and pans.

Alistair Macleod's "The Boat" is a story about the narrator's sorrow regarding his father's death. The sorrow expressed by the narrator was wrapped up in a boat. The boat symbolized tradition and a family bonding around working on it. In fact "Jenny Lynn had been my mother's maiden name and the boat was called after her as another link in the chain of tradition" (Macleod). The narrator relates stories from every stage of his life by remembering times in the boat. The boat is the focal point of the narrator's life. When he remembers his father, he remembers the boat. All of these good memories are associated with the boat. The boat was also wrapped in the narrator's memories of his father's death. His father was found by the rocks ten miles away from the narrator's home, battered in the sea. The narrator and his mother do not blame the boat, but the sea. The boat is portrayed as the constant in their lives, but the sea was the unpredictable force. Both the constant and unpredictable caused the death of the father. Either way by remembering the boat, the narrator could keep a piece of his father's memory alive. The memories of the boat helped the narrator deal with his father's death.

The "Resplendent Quetzal" by Margaret Atwood is a story about a struggling marriage. The marriage between Sarah and Edward once loving has grown strained. Sarah thinks Edward's hobbies like bird watching are "compulsions" (Atwood). However, Sarah is described as "bland and pale and plump and smug" (Atwood). After Sarah had a miscarriage, they two grew apart. They did not just grow apart, but became disdainful of one another. While on vacation, Sarah steals a toy figure of a baby Jesus. When she throws it into a sacrificial well they visit on a tour, Edward sees her and tries

to confront her, but fails, and the story ends. The impression of a failed marriage staggering along is confirmed by the closing of the story.

Works Cited

Atwood, Margaret. “ Resplendent Quetzal.” The Harbrace Anthology of Short Fiction.

USA: Nelson College Indigenous, 2005.

Clarke, Austin. “ The Motor Car.” The Harbrace Anthology of Short Fiction.

USA: Nelson College Indigenous, 2005.

Macleod, Alistair. “ The Boat.” The Harbrace Anthology of Short Fiction.

USA: Nelson College Indigenous, 2005.

Shields, Carol. “ Hazel.” The Harbrace Anthology of Short Fiction.

USA: Nelson College Indigenous, 2005.