

A character sketch of winston churchill essay sample



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On a bright and sunny Sunday afternoon, the house of Chartwell stood in majesty against the cloudless deep blue sky in a slightly lopsided hill, partially covering the handsome manor with stately looking trees and other vegetation. The air was cool and damp, filled with different fragrances coming from the flower garden and the trees swayed in unison against the wind. But the pleasure of strolling outdoors at this time of the day was not for an aging man. He stood, clutching a walking stick, against a wall-length window overlooking the lush garden, mildly unmoved by the beauty of the day.

His slightly hot cup of tea gently emitted its fragrant fumes on a small table, filling the stifled atmosphere of his study. It was only a small-room, decorated with an elaborate fireplace with still a few embers in its grate, a large bookcase full of volumes upon volumes of old and slightly moldy books, and a chandelier, robbed of its former glistening glory. There were many cabinets filled with personal letters and gifts that have been stashed unceremoniously a few years back. A number of bottles half-filled with wine, cognac, and brandy stood in a distant corner. A few frames of recognition hung lopsidedly on the peeling and faded maroon wallpaper.

A framed medal, somehow distinctly placed in greater prominence among the others, glistened in gold as sunshine filled the room. Below it, it spelled, in peeling letters, *The Most Noble Order of the Garter*. These frames hung loosely above a handsome mahogany table facing the window, decorated with framed photographs which stood lonely amongst a pile of papers and discarded books. A large box of cigars lay next to the photographs with a

label 'naked' written on the side. Beside that was a silver ashtray shaped like a pagoda with a little trough on top to hold the cigar.

The carpet gave little puffs of dust whenever he would trudge the room. The room was not much of a tidy one, since he disliked having his room cleaned, only to end up dirty all over again. So, he had ordered the caretaker of the house to clean every part except for his study. He had preferred it that way ever since his retirement. While the study remained dirty, every part of Chartwell Manor is properly maintained by twenty-five men—the staff who are on duty every week.

He clearly did not sit at his desk anymore now that he was reaching the twilight of his life. But the desk and the squeaky chair that stood beside it had once become a forefront of the war, where he spent many nights formulating his thoughts and putting it to paper.

His hand ached whenever he would force himself to write. But he had faced four wars and, upon completion of his many books, he felt that he had not still expressed the real meaning of war. He could see himself pacing this study during the war, muttering to himself while he went in circles trying to think. These moments did not often lack a bottle of cognac or brandy beside him then. It was his constant companion that gave him bursts of creativity whenever he wrote; it was also his one-way ticket to sleep.

A sudden noise shook him out of his deep reverie. Footsteps can be heard just outside his study. The oak doors suddenly swung open and there stood beaming, the image of his fourteen year-old grandson, Rupert.

“ Hello grandfather! Sorry I didn’t knock,” he said breathlessly. Rupert was a mischievous but talented boy and he always liked to stay and talk with his grandfather whenever they visited Chartwell. He had a thick, golden blonde hair, cool blue eyes, and a clever grin. He was slightly tall for his age, and he was wearing a printed shirt and a jacket over it with black pants and a set of slightly faded trainers.

Winston said nothing. He merely smiled at his grandson as Rupert took off his jacket and threw it on a vacant chair. Winston’s eyes wandered on his grandson as he drew up a chair near his study and sat down, apparently expecting a story of some sorts.

“ You have just arrived, my dear boy. Why don’t you have a cup of tea before we talk?” Winston said in his deep gruff voice. His stroke had caused his slurring to worsen more than ever. But ever since, he had always managed to cope with his speech impediment even during his parliamentary days.

“ Of course! I now see you far too often and I always relieve those stories you told me, with, uh, ‘ great satisfaction’ when I was young. I never tire hearing it,” Rupert said, grinning more broadly than ever. His eyes remained fixed on the stooping figure of his grandfather, as he still surveyed the grounds outside.

His first foolish thought of his grandfather was that of an old bulldog; he had small, drooping, watery little eyes, a bushy set of eyebrows, and a wrinkly set of jowls that trembled every time he spoke. He had the look of a once strong-willed, powerful man slowly gone to seed. The aura he used to emit was slowly fading away, but he still had vestiges of power etched in his old

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face. He was wearing a casual black suit with several cigar burns on the lapel and his favorite bowler hat.

His was a balding, slightly rotund man nearing his eighties, but he still had strength to walk about the cavernous house when he pleased. He carried around his walking stick and a lit cigar whenever he did so. His voice is almost bark-like, a low deep rumbling gruff, often mistaken for grumpiness and preoccupation. But his grandson liked these qualities in his grandfather ever since he was a boy. He thought 'it best suited' him, and Winston would laugh whenever he said this during his youth. He liked his grandfather's wit, and he was waiting on tenterhooks for it to come during their conversation.

"Ah," Winston exclaimed softly while clutching his back, "age has it ways... Come, let us take a seat outside, the weather is favorable now after a few weeks of rain," he said, as he beckoned his grandson to get him a cigar before he stood up.

A veranda lay just outside of his study, with small steps leading to the garden. A marble coffee table stood in between two comfortable chairs. He would often come outside before sleeping whenever he would smoke his cigar and drink his brandy. He grunted loudly as he sat down and took the matches and cigar from his grandson. He said nothing afterwards but he continued to light his cigar and began to emit small clouds of smoke with great gusto into the clean air; a small mound of ash fell from the embers and onto his burnt lapel. He paid no attention to it.

Puzzled, his grandson moved forward to brush off the ash that was threatening to burn his suit. Winston had already consumed half of his Cuban cigar and was rummaging in his pocket for a second one but found none.

“ Why do you keep smoking that stuff? It’s bad for you, you know” Rupert said. He was always concerned for his grandfather. He had always smoked his cigar ever since his trip to Havana a long time ago. He would smoke them during the morning, before and after lunch, during afternoon tea, and even before going to sleep. He always accompanied his cigar with a glass of champagne or rum.

“ It’s one of those things that you can’t simply remove from yourself anymore. I consider it as my basic rule in life. During one of our dinners after the second war, I even asked the king of Saudi Arabia if I were to be allowed to smoke before and during the luncheon. Naturally, I did,” Winston chuckled.

His grandson smiled faintly, apparently still not comfortable with the idea of cigars.

“ But I smoke cigarettes, how come you don’t allow me to?”

“ Because your parents don’t allow it,” he grunted. “ And those things are going to kill you if you have one too many,” he said.

He gazed at his grandfather with complete reverence. He had already been bald and aging, but he still emitted an air of energy. He still wrote long letters during the night and would often read till four in the morning, waking up only five hours after. He was always energetic and engaging whenever he
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would host his dinner parties. And whenever the family visited Chartwell, he was always jovial and ecstatic to see his grandchildren.

“ I have a good life, my dear boy. Brandy, cigars, good food, good company... Though I wouldn't dream of putting them into order, cigars always come first,” he laughingly said, now chewing on the end of his tobacco.

Rupert said nothing but instead took a sip of tea from his grandfather's unused cup.

“ I never run out of things to do here. I read and write all the time and sometimes a have a go at painting. But what I enjoy the most is dining, especially with friends and family.”

“ Yeah, I remember those dinners. I once saw Charlie Chaplin when I was six,” Rupert said.

Winston gave a grunting laugh. “ Ha! Charlie. Good chap. I once asked him what character he was doing in a movie next. He told me he was to do Jesus Christ. And do you know what I said to him?” Winston asked.

“ What's that?”

“ Have you cleared the rights?”

They both laughed, Winston choking slightly as he puffed another while Rupert was barely suppressing from laughing with mirth. Still laughing, Winston rang the bell that was in his pocket and asked for more tea. In a few

minutes, the small table was supplied with a kettle with hot water, a variety of tea leaves, a bottle of Hine, his favorite brandy, a few biscuits, and another cigar.

“ So, m’boy, what do want to hear?” he grunted, taking a match and lighting the cigar.

“ I’ve heard a lot of stories about what you did for England during the two wars you were on and the many speeches you gave. But I would like to hear the story on you and how you think.” he said, his grin fading as he sat down on the opposite chair. The look gave him an air of maturity, which Winston accepted as a signal to talk to him seriously. He was already grown-up, he said to himself.

“ But there are many stories about how I think and what I did for England,” Winston said grumpily. “ Do you want to hear them instead?”

“ No, I would like to ask questions as we go along. I wish to become an orator like you. Many people don’t have that kind of gift,” he grinned again.

“ Bah! An orator. It’s just another way of saying words in a more powerful way. You have to have conviction, m’boy! When you speak, you cannot mean the words you say if you don’t believe it,” he grunted, his slurring more pronounced than ever.

“ Right, so you cannot speak when you do not advocate a certain issue?” he asked.

“ Certainly you can speak m’boy, and to say something what you truly think and feel, people would often take that as honesty!” Winston replied.

“ But grandfather, you are known for your speeches during the second World War. There are now books about you apart from the ones you have created. They concentrate mostly on phrases like ‘ I have nothing to offer but blood, sweat and tears,’” he said, trying to imitate his grandfather’s gruff voice, “ and ‘ I leave when the pub closes’. The last one is my favorite,” he laughingly said.

Winston chuckled merrily and choked slightly as he puffed his cigar, leaving a considerable amount of ash in his jacket.

“ Yes, I do believe I remember saying that,” Winston said, still chortling.

“ Yes, but grandfather, the thing is,” he said suddenly serious. “ Although you were pretty much on oration, most people did not believe your warning before world war two started. I thought oration was supposed to convince people with the way you speak,” he asked.

“ Indeed my boy. They branded me as a warmonger. But warmongering was never my intent. I have merely warned them of the looming danger, nothing more or less. But it was a time where another war is not ideal. People hated the idea of war. It was devastating that many lost their families. I said my warning in hopes of reconciling differences in a diplomatic manner without having to resort to conflict.

But they believed that by choosing to be ignorant, they can hope to avoid it,” he said, his tone suddenly changing. “ But ignorance is nothing but short of <https://assignbuster.com/a-character-sketch-of-winston-churchill-essay-sample/>

stupidity. Is it better to remain ignorant while the fighting ensues under your nose?" he asked, more to himself than to his grandson. " You have to know in order not to remain ignorant up to the last minute." he said.

Silence fell between them. Nothing could be heard except for the gentle rustle of the trees and the faint chirping of the birds, the sound muffled by the cold wind blowing by. Dark gray clouds started to loom overhead.

Winston looked up dreamily as far as his neck would permit while his grandson continued to stare at his grandfather, waiting for a response he was longing to hear.

" They did not want to believe that the *Anschluss* was already an imminent threat during the time," Winston replied, as he looked down and puffed on his Cuban cigar. " I would have liked to believe that I was doing them a favor, to warn them of the dangers of an impending war. I have seen too much and my experience has taught me that it was better to stop it before it happens. And for the purposes of my monologue, you have always known that I did not favor the *Anschluss*. I was against it by all means necessary. I even have to make a terrible decision near the end," he sighed. His voice was mingled with suppressed fury and sadness.

Rupert was all ears. He waited with bated breath, clinging to his grandfather's every word.

" Dresden..." Winston began. Saying it caused much stress on his old face. " I will never forget it. Even miles apart, I could picture it in my mind. Women and children screaming, bodies burning and piling up while Allied bombers continued to deliver hell," he said softly. " Terrible...terrible."

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“ In any eventuality m’boy, even if it is war, no matter how justified it is, even if it is a military advantage, taking the lives of fellow human beings is a terrible crime; thousands lose their lives...”

With a sudden stroke of pride, Rupert took a bold move and said, “ But the bombings were supposed to shorten the war, didn’t you say? Dresden was just a small, undefended city and was used by the Germans as a rally point for supplies. To bomb it means the war will end quickly and morale would be low. And the Russians needed the help,” he said quickly, almost trembling.

“ War is not a pretty thing,” he said, suddenly stern, his jowls jiggling as he spoke. Military advantage did not justify the act of murdering innocent lives. It was a clear advantage to end the war quickly, but it cost thousands of innocent lives. We intended it to be as a demoralizing act, to bomb its industrial facilities and to discourage people from winning, nothing more. But I regret that I have considered my decision to be of military advantage.

I regret it now, but I did not regret it then. I regret the fact of war and the insurmountable fear it inspires to people. I regret that war destroys lives for both sides and in the end, neither can declare victory, for the losses on both sides are great. But I remained against any form of supremacy or oppression that threatens freedom. I ought to be punished for the wrongs I have inflicted upon them, even after the apologies I have given them.”

“ But grandfather! Surely, you can’t think that! You are a wartime hero! If the bombings haven’t been carried out, the war could have lasted longer! And, whatever happened to Coventry? That was as horrible as Dresden!” Rupert exclaimed.

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“ My dear boy! These things happened during the war! Human consciousness alters whenever they feel that their freedom and country is in peril. Things change during the course of war and it is better to think of the welfare of innocent people than deciding who lives or dies!”

Silence. The wind began to grow stronger and colder. The trees rustled loudly and there was a hint of thunder in the air. Winston looked enquiringly at his grandson. He was still young after all.

“ Everybody does not want war, yet we still resolve problems by showing who has bigger guns than the other. The greatest wars are all about love. In this case, love for the country. We may try and hide it with noble causes but in the end it remains such a great travesty of human act. Nothing can serve as a proper justification for waging war. It’s just horrible,” Winston ended.

The wind calmed itself suddenly and raindrops began to fall in earnest. Because of his bulk, Rupert had to help his grandfather to get up from the chair and into the house. The butler knocked softly on the door and announced that dinner was ready. Winston, apparently unaware of the conversation that ended abruptly, said, “ Ah, dinner. Now, watch your old gaffer how he throws parties!” Winston laughed, ruffling Rupert’s hair.

Grinning, he let his grandfather trudge towards the door. The man behind the legend, he said to himself...

“ Grandfather, may I come again during the holidays?”

“ Of course you can m’boy! We’ll have another chat...” Winston said, smiling at him.

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