

Guests of the nation

Business



Frank O'Connor's "Guests of the Nation" is a short story that gives a sarcastic story of the two English soldiers Belcher and Hawkins who are held hostage by the guards namely Noble, Bonaparte and Jeremiah Donovan of the Irish Republican Army in retaliation to the imprisonment of Irish soldiers by the English Army are destined for an execution should their army kill the Irish prisoners as they had threatened earlier on. Belcher and Hawkins are eventually executed when the news went viral that Irish prisoners of war had been shot dead by their English captors. The central idea in the story is that the universal cords of friendship supersede all odds unite the perceived enemies even at the times of war. Characters drawn from both sides of the opponent Irish and English army strike a rapport and cordial relations at first sight against the anticipated hatred and cold shoulder that would otherwise emanate from their armed conflict in the battle ground. Hawkins, Belcher (English soldiers) and their Irish guards: Donovan, Noble, and Bonaparte emerge to be good friends despite the forthcoming execution.

Bonaparte is the central character in "The Guests of the Nation" as depicted by the author Jack London. Bonaparte is the most instrumental character throughout the story. The young Irish soldier cum narrator character is round and dynamic in the settings of the story. He is the only character through which the audience can learn the unfolding of events in the story otherwise no one would have had such an opportunity to learn of the chilling and terrible story about the struggle of Irish soldiers against the English soldiers during the historic Irish War of Independence. His revelations of the cold-blooded executions of the war in his communications with the old lady gives

readers get first hand information about all the rudely shocking violence that Hawkins and Belcher.

Bonaparte is the most dynamic character in the story because combines both traits of tenderness and firmness. He is a strong sympathizer of the two English soldiers Hawkins and Belcher in the wake of their captivity. He shows them mercy and tender care and seemingly would wish that the two got released safely. He later on appears firm on the imminent execution of the two soldiers following the killing of the Irish soldiers held captive by the English Army. Secondly, Bonaparte appeared naive and inexperienced at the beginning of the story but later appears authoritative and experienced. He confirms to Hawkins their execution plans, “ I mean it chums, we are shooting you in reprisal.

” London uses three methods of indirect characterization for the character Bonaparte, words, thoughts and actions. His firm and strong personality is revealed on his confirmation to the Hawkins and Belcher that they are set for an execution on the face “ Chums, we are doing it.” Similarly, active involvement of Bonaparte in the actual shooting of their English captives along Donovan implies inherent boldness. Finally, his thoughts, as a narrator of the story, are tender and full of sympathy for the captives. In his feelings for the captives he writes, “ Everyone seemed to love including the old woman.” Even though Hawkins is a minor character in the story, he is round.

He influences the unfolding of events in the story as depicted by London in the story. The young English soldier is highly sociable and outgoing; he is

very friendly to everyone around him including the Old Woman in whose cottage they were held captive. He does not allow nationality and race to define his limit for friendship, and his conscience is clear at all times. During his subsequent conversations with the Irish guards, it becomes apparent that he shuns the British plans to have the Irish captives killed. The other flat and static characters featured in the story include Feeney, old lady, Donovan, Belcher and Noble. Noble is yet another flat and static character in the story.

The young volunteer soldier has devoted much of his life to guarding the Briton hostages. The staunch Catholic is honest and straight forward in his dealings with the captives, for instance, he does not let himself cheat them with a false shift in the dawn of their execution, but prepares a grave for them within the bog. His love and affection for Belcher and Hawkins does not change even to point of their execution in the bog. He adamantly refuses to take part in the shooting of his English friends. His loyalty to the Irish Army and British friends is astonishing.