

Empathetic imagination in fiction



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Alan Paton, not only through the main character but each character personally takes on the challenge of facing their problems and conquering them head on. This criticism not only explains the writer's style but a spot on criticism on the book. It perfectly describes the theme of Patron's novel.

With each character personally facing a challenge causing them to have to overcome it and conquer the fear alongside the criticism written by John Romano helps to explain how Patron's "empathetic imagination in fiction" helped to drive his novel. The main character in both books 1 and 3, Steven Kamala, faced many challenges on his journey in Johannesburg trying to reunite his family. He sets off in a journey not knowing what is in store for him in the unknown lands. While he is in some cities in Johannesburg he realizes he does not fit in with the life style there because the people living in the city do not believe much in religion but in making their own fate. This troubles Kamala greatly. In the town he is robbed due to his faith in a man that he was kind-hearted. Samos's sister faced her own challenges, unfortunately by the end of the evolve although it is unclear it seems she was unable to overcome hers which goes to show that even if someone helps you on your journey a human dilemma is never reduced even with help of others, which is described by John Romano in his review on the novel.

Samos's sister, Gertrude, was a prostitute and an alcoholic. Steven tried to help her out of it bringing Gertrude child along. And at first Gertrude was thankful for his coming, crying to Steven when asked if she WOULD like to return to the church and her faith, "I do not like Johannesburg. I am sick here. The child is sick also" Paton, 61) Kamala also visited his brother while in Johannesburg, except his brother, John's challenge, was a fight inside of

himself, and when his son was convicted of robbery of a white man, he puts faith on the back burner with what is truly right and plans to lie to the judge about his son even being there. John says to his brother Steven when asked why he would do this, “ Who will believe your son? ” (Paton, 134) Steven Kamala felt this was wrong due to his strong morals and a very strong belief in god. John then disowns his brother due to their quarrel over what is wrong and right. This is yet another challenge that Steven Kamala must face, but in the long run it all plays out and Steven realizes the fact that he can't save everyone and that if John did not want to be part of the family they didn't need him to feel complete and united.

John Romano also stated that Paton has an empathetic imagination which for the most part drives the novel. Paton has the ability to help the reader feel what the character is feeling. For example Kamala the entire time has to deal with not only the fact that his son committed murder of a white man but that he will have to lose him because his son Abyssal is facing the death penalty for his crime.

One cannot imagine losing a close family member such as a son unless it has personally happened in their family, but Paton has an amazing talent that helps the reader to be put into the characters shoes. Paton makes the reader feel sympathetic towards Kamala because Steven Kamala is having an inner war with himself. As a parent a reader might think that Kamala is thinking to himself “ is it my fault this happened? ” or “ did raise my child wrong? ” Kamala also knows that he won't be able to save his son from the life of Johannesburg.

When Steven was leaving on his journey to attempt to reunite his family he said to his wife, “-when people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back. (Paton, 39) This only makes the reader feel sorry for Kamala because when one reads this he or she finally understand how hard reuniting a family of this sort will be for Kamala. Paton, through the characters, describes the feelings so deeply so that the reader can not only try to relate to the characters but help the reader understand why they should be sympathetic towards a certain character even if the character did something wrong. This is shown in Abyssal, Steven Samos’s son, who was convicted of killing a white man.

While the reader knows that Abyssal committed a very serious crime one still feels compassion towards him because of this man’s rash and senseless decision to kill a man means that he must be killed. Abyssal now never gets to see his child born and he never gets to live out his marriage with his true love and the mother of his future child. One feels badly because these events such as long lasting marriage, child’s birth, or the rest of their life should be something a young man should not miss and due to his crime he now must miss these important events in his life.

Even the judge sentencing Abyssal realizes that he will be absent from the rest of his life when he says after the sentence “ And may the Lord bless your soul. ” (Paton, 236) The reader puts aside Basalt’s crime and instead shows empathy towards this young man, and it is Patron’s writing skill and style that makes one feel this way.