

The bread of salt essay sample



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Every early morning, a young boy of fourteen has already got used to his routine of buying pan de sal , wondering what gives it flavor and shape. His usual daydreaming of being “ destined” for Aida, his romantic interest, makes him more competent in the field of academics and music (playing violin). The boy thinks that the money he will eventually earn from playing the violin capacitates him of giving her a brooch and stationery as an expression of his unspoken emotions. Together with the Saez’s band, he performs in the asalto for Don Esteban’s twin daughters, wherein Aida perceives him sneaking some sweets into the packet under his shirt. As speechlessness and embarrassment ascend over composure, the warmth of feeling he has for Aida vanishes. One understands that life is about embracing reality and realizing that not all dreams come true, as the young man is awakened to what he has to accept. N. V. M. Gonzalez gives readers a picture of a young boy who is fond of daydreaming or fantasizing.

The boy, having an intense adoration towards the Old Spaniard’s niece, assumes that the latter also holds romantic interest in him but tries to be discreet. As the boy visualizes himself being a genius, world-class violinist and certainly winning Aida’s “ hand”, the author makes the readers see a character who imagines delightful events in an extremity to the extent that he almost finds it real. The astute reader observes the suggestion of conflict between what exists in the mind and what actually exists. Metaphors are creatively used to add color and meaning to the story. The lines “ I wondered if the sea wind carrying the stragglings notes across the pebbled river did not transform them into a Schubert’s Serenade” (personification), and “ Neither by post nor by hand would a reply reach me.

But no matter; it would be a silence full of voices.” (oxymoron) suggest the intensity of affection the boy has towards Aida. His whimsical imagination of being with the beloved, strengthened by some metaphorical statements, shows how much he is into her. The images of light and darkness are meaningfully used to represent the main character’s realization towards reality. The line “ With the napkin balled up in my hand. I flung out my arm to scatter the egg yolk things in the dark...” signifies the boy’s real-like dream of having a romantic attachment with Aida cannot anymore take place as the ardor vanishes. He eventually bids “ goodbye” to an almost impossible dream. Analogously, the line “ Farther away glimmered the light from Grandmother’s window, calling me home.” is an implicit but clear representation of the young boy who is about to accept the awakening truth.

The use of symbols works well in “ The Bread of Salt”. The main character, who thinks of giving Aida a brooch, signifies his intense thought and assumptions toward a person who is not very close with him. At the beginning, the mention of the masses’ staple food (pan de sal) which has the size of the boy’s little fist and has a pair of lips convulsed into a painful frown symbolizes the main character’s immaturity and absurdity of his many romantic assumptions and fantasies with a girl he barely knows. Appearing at the end, the line “ It was not quite five, and the bread was not yet ready.” implies the boy who has been unprepared to accept reality, since he is just chasing dreams and living in fantasies. This also suggests that time, along with the dynamics of real-life experiences, dictates maturity. The young boy wanting to buy with his own money some bread (pan de sal) to eat on his

way represents the main character who is about to accept the truth that not all dreams and aspirations are meant to take place.

The matter that makes the story complete and substantial is the conveyance of social implications evident in the Filipino culture and ways of life. Usually, social differences dictate the harshness and bitterness of reality. The young boy visualizes and assumes that he and Aida would be romantically together, but their difference in social status could be a hindrance, more strengthened by the fact that they do now know each other well. The near end of the story depicts the boy putting some sweets in several sheets of napkin paper and sneaking these in the packet under his shirt. The main character feels embarrassed as the girl perceives the act and is willing to offer him a big package, if he has just waited until the party is over and the guests are already gone.

His lapse of ethics and Aida's " somehow insulting" statement towards him suggest the materialization and fulfillment of his dreams almost, or absolutely impossible. The short story also shows how some Filipinos make their class known in social gatherings, where one tries to equate or even predominate whatever others display, thus it manifests the explicit value of social impression. The idea is clearly depicted and extracted from one of the lines, " The local matrons, however hard they tried, however sincere their efforts were bound to fail in their aspiration to rise to the level of Don Esteban's daughters." The essential detail that the reader fails not to observe is the way the rich people treat those who are, in great distance, inferior to them - master-servant relationship.

As the story portrays, the two servants are barefooted so that only the slightest scraping can be heard as they bring out a gleaming harp from the music room. The servants' "social inferiority" is emphasized. This short but meaningful detail may or may not be unjust, but it definitely gives readers a picture of the great difference of two "worlds". Indeed, N. V. M. Gonzalez's "The Bread of Salt" encompasses the essential factors a good literature must be. The ablaze application of literary elements and the infusion of the story's social value make the whole of it reflective, fruitful, and worth-to-read.