

An analysis of greasy lake by t. coraghessan boyle



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The “ Greasy Lake” is a well versed short story written by Tom Coraghessan Boyle which gives us an account of events that take place in one night in the lives of young men that lead to a revelatory moment for them. It shows how one mistake made by the characters accelerate due to a series of bad choices and hence more mistakes follow, unwinding potential and critical consequences which accumulate to their revelatory moment. The narrator who is also the protagonist of the narration, depicts his group of friends as “ dangerous characters” who conformed closely to the bad boy image that they were so bent on portraying; “" we wore torn-up leather jackets, slouched around with toothpicks in our mouths, sniffed glue and ether and what somebody claimed was cocaine" (125) however these oblivious teenagers ignore intense symbolism that suggests otherwise.; Also throughout the story the incidents that unfold further suggest otherwise. The events unfold when the protagonist and his friends are looking for fun and excitement and mistakenly identify a car parked at Greasy Lake as belonging to their friend Tony. Deciding to play a joke on him they honk and shine lights at the other car and upon the discovery that it doesn't belong to their friend they find themselves in the middle of a fight, with a character much tougher and seemingly more bad, during which out of fear and desperation the narrator strikes the man with a iron and assumes that he has killed him. Inflamed by the almost ritualistic murder of the man the boys violently lash out on his girlfriend with the intention to rape her. They are caught in the act due to the arrival of another car and escape by hiding out in the lake where he " blundered into something. Something unspeakable, obscene, something soft, wet, moss-grown" (129). It turned out to be a corpse. Come morning the bad characters have undergone a drastic change from believing " it was

good to be bad, when you cultivated decadence like a taste" to turning down an opportunity to do drugs; " I wanted to get out of the car andretch, I wanted to go home to my parents house and crawl into bed" (pg. 120). The use of symbolism and the setting in which the narrative takes place is extensive and aids the central theme greatly. The Greasy Lake, as a critical location that provides a ideal backdrop for their revelatory baptism symbolizes their journey; " a mythic spot once known by the Indians for its clear waters but now littered with broken glass, beer cans and contraceptives" (16). Also the vehicles used by each individual are symbols in the section of the narrative that they appear in. Like the narrator drives a old station wagon that is owned by his parents to Greasy Lake hence contradicting his portrayed image as a tough guy and giving us a reflection of the true gap between his perceived image of himself, a " bad boy" and who he really was " scared and hot and three steps over the line." The events that occurred at Greasy Lake that night had brought about a transformation in the way that they viewed things; at times it was okay to be " Good Boys". Reference T. C. Boyle. The Greasy Lake.