

# Interpreting literature- tom bailey "the grace that keeps this world" essay sample...

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## **Interpreting Literature-Tom Bailey “ The Grace That Keeps This World” Essay Sample**

Tom Bailey had established a structure for his novel “ The Grace That Keeps This World,” that always makes the reader truly read between the lines.

There are many ways that readers of this novel could go about interpreting the literature. I am going to focus my paper on a certain aspect of the structure of the novel. While reading this book, I noticed how Bailey had used the main characters’ viewpoints to tell the story to the readers. I admire how the novel was very well-written and structured. I will interpret my paper on the meaning that I got out of the novel by “ reading between the lines.” The main characters; Gary, Gary David, and Kevin, make a personal journey throughout the novel and deal with their own struggles just to try to find themselves.

Gary, father of Gary David and Kevin, has a struggle throughout the book dealing with feelings. He tries to keep control of himself throughout the novel which in the end, ends up in irony when he “ loses control” and makes a huge mistake by killing his own son. At the beginning of the novel, Gary is trying to come to terms with Kevin, his youngest son. In a perfect world, Gary would like to see his sons carry on in Gary’s footsteps but he realizes that Kevin does not want any part of it. Kevin wants bigger and better things but Gary just does not understand why he wants to be so different. His eldest son, Gary David, and Kevin are hardly alike. Gary David is following his fathers’ footsteps by being a forester but Kevin on the other hand; is going to college and is dating a girl from New York City, named Jeanie (Bailey 43). It

seems that each time Gary attempts to see eye to eye with Kevin, that Kevin just cannot be mature about it. He feels that if Kevin truly wants his father to see him as his own person then he needs to step up and act like an adult and act more maturely than he has been. Trying to come to terms with Kevin is just one of Gary's many struggles that was noticed throughout the novel.

Another struggle that Gary faces is how he tries to get his sons to understand his love for them. Since Gary has raised his children with a tough attitude, he feels as if he is not good at showing affection for his sons. He thinks he portrays his affection and appreciation in a different non-verbal way. Hunting is his way of showing the boys that he loves them. Spending time with them in the woods and doing work together satisfies him. Although it is hard for Gary to straight up tell Gary David and Kevin that he loves them, he truly does and he just wants his boys to see and understand that.

Finally, after handling his struggles, Gary realizes that while he is feeling guilty about his time in Vietnam, the real gift that came of it was being able to feel the pleasure of having his two sons to love and appreciate. He came to this realization when he almost manages to convey his love for his sons by telling them, but in the end was not able to utter those words. So he just talks in his head and makes that realization that he does, in fact, love his two sons and says to himself that he would not be able to live without the boys (Bailey 222). He just wants them to realize his sincerity without him having to tell them verbatim. These were only a few struggles that Gary faced throughout the novel, but these are also the ones I feel were most important

because they resulted in the character making a realization about himself, which, all in all was a journey.

The next character that had to make a journey to find himself was Gary David. Gary David knows that he wants to follow his father's footsteps. He knows that it will satisfy his father and make him proud. Also, he enjoys working as a handyman and a forester. He is not continuing his education at a college or institution, like his brother Kevin is. His father wants him to marry a girl like Anne Marie Burke (Bailey 44) and have a child and name him Gary. However, Gary David faces a struggle that he probably wish he could just have avoided but you cannot avoid feelings. He is in love with Officer Roy, whom does not get along with his father. Officer Roy wants to catch Gary Hazen lying about filling buck tags and such. There is definitely tension between Officer Roy and Gary Hazen, which makes Gary David's struggle even harder. But, Gary David comes to realize that he wants to be his own person. Sure, he will still do what his father does and work as a forester, but he also knows that he wants to marry Officer Roy. Although Gary David dies unexpectedly at the end of the novel, his love for Officer Roy is presented by the ring in the box that was placed upon his bare chest. I feel that this is a symbol of not only his struggle throughout the novel but also how he chose to be his own person and make the decision to marry her.

Finally, Kevin Hazen is the main character whom I believe holds the most struggles but has the best journey to finding himself. At the beginning of the novel, all Kevin knows is what he doesn't want, not what he wants. There is a strain between Gary and his son Kevin because Kevin feels like he has to

reject everything his father says in order to become his own person. Kevin does want to have his dad accept him as an adult who can make his own decisions, like going to college and not going hunting, but Kevin definitely goes about this the wrong way. When he was supposed to be helping his father and his older brother, Kevin was in bed with his girlfriend Jeanie. She told him she did not want him to go hunting so he decided he would tell his father that very day. He showed up hours late to help his family and was also very unprepared which angered his father (Bailey 27). He also did not prove anything to his father when he displaced his anger from him onto gunning the truck and it ending up getting stuck (Bailey 45). This struggle of getting eye to eye with his father and being his own person is definitely a long-term struggle throughout the book.

Another obstacle that Kevin faces is how he wants to get an education and go hours away to college but finds out his girlfriend, Jeanie, is pregnant. He freaks out in a way and thinks he is going to have to give everything up. When the accident in the woods happens, Kevin finally realizes that he needs to save his father. He comes to the realization that his father does love him and he wants to do whatever he can to save him and honor him (Bailey 254). After the accident, it may seem that Kevin is defeated but we should not interpret it that way. Kevin " returns home" to his family but in fact does not give up everything he wanted. His father actually encourages him to go to college and get an education. By the end of the novel, we see all three characters have grown and made their journey to finding themselves. Gary realizes his love for his sons and his family and how no matter what, he will

always love and support them. Gary David chose to be his own person and despite the tension between the love of his life and his father, he chooses to marry her. Finally, Kevin Hazen “ comes home” to his family and matures very much by the end of the novel. We see these characters grow step-by-step and by pushing through and over-coming their struggles in a long journey; they find themselves.

#### Work Cited

Bailey, Tom. *The Grace That Keeps This World*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006. Print.