

# Pale horse pale rider essay sample

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Reading the three different novels “ Old Mortality”, “ Noon Wine” and “ Pale Horse, Pale Rider” you will learn that despite the different plots in the novels there is a common thread. The protagonists in all three novels has been challenged or locked in some way by the society but finally breaks free and live a better life the way they want to. The strong individual beats the society and its challenges.

Plot The first novel “ Old Mortality” is divided in three parts. In the first part we hear about two girls Maria and Miranda learning about their dead aunt Amy through letters, poems and stories told by their grandmother. Amy was raised to be a proper woman in a society where women had few rights. In the second part Maria and Miranda are staying at a convent, where they are raised to become real ladies. Their knowledge and information is filtered, so they cannot see the world with their own eyes. They do not get out of the convent very often, only when they have behaved well and their father comes to take them out for a day.

In the third part we only hear about Miranda. We learn that she has escaped from the convent and is now married. She is going to her Uncle Gabriel’s funeral, Amy’s husband. On the way she meets her cousin Eva who fights for women’s rights and the right for women to vote. After the funeral we learn that Miranda no longer wants to be a part of the family. She has finally escaped.

The second novel “ Noon Wine” is about a family living on a farm; a man, woman and their two sons. Their economy is bad, the machinery is broken and the woman in the house, Miss Thompson is ill. One day a man walks by

the farm and asks for a job. His name is Mr. Helton and he is determined to work hard for a low wage. Mr. Thompson the man on the farm hires him and lets him stay in a shack. Mr. Helton manages to increase the production on the farm and reduce the waste. Mr. Helton saves the farm and keeps it running for nine years. Then a man, called Mr. Hatch, turns up at the farm claiming that Mr. Helton is a lunatic who killed his own brother over a harmonica. Mr. Hatch wants to take Mr. Helton with him back to North Dakota where he escaped from a lunatic asylum.

Mr. Thompson and Mr. Hatch end up arguing and Mr. Thompson kills him. Mr. Helton runs away but is caught and later dies of injuries he suffered during his capture. Mr. Thompson claims it was self-defense, but nobody believes his story, neither the neighbors nor his family. In the end he shoots himself to prove he is innocent. The third novel "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" is about Miranda, a pacifist working as a theatre critic during World War 1 and the influenza epidemic in 1918. Through the novel we hear about several dreams and nightmares she is having about death and running away from everything. Miranda has a hard time dealing with the war and the things going on. She is in a relationship with Adam who she takes to the shows she is reviewing.

Miranda gets sick because of the influenza epidemic and is hospitalized. She is very delirious and the doctors have given up on her. However, she manages to get well and rise again, only to find her true love Adam has died of the disease, which he likely caught while tending to her. Miranda gets over the loss and lives on with her life, now that the war has also ended.

## Setting

Reading the three summaries you will learn that on the surface there are no similarities. The novels all have a different plot and they all take place in different places but in a limited time period. "Old Mortality" takes place in three different time periods; 1885-1902, 1904 and 1912. In the first time period the setting takes place in Texas. In the second, 1904, the setting takes place in New Orleans. In the third, 1912, the setting takes place in Texas again.

"Noon Wine" takes place on a small dairy farm in South Texas in 1896-1905. "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" takes place in Denver, Colorado during the influenza epidemic and World War 1 in 1918. In the limited time period the roles and norms of the society has not changed very much. This leads us to look at the protagonist. In all three novels the character has had some personal development.

## Character motivation

In the first novel Miranda's growth as person is an example of human development. In the beginning of the story she is told a lot of stories and poems, about the past and about the lives of the elder generation, by her father and the rest of the family. The stories are romantic and poetic and glorify the past. However Miranda cannot connect the romantic stories to the old paintings and objects from the past generation.

She is put in a convent by her father so she can be raised to be a proper woman. Her own opinion is irrelevant and the information and knowledge

she gathers is filtered so she cannot see the world with her own eyes, but only see what her father wants her to see. She starts to doubt her family's history and contradict everyone's view. This is reflected when we hear about her planning a "forbidden" career as a jockey.

The family's opinion about this type of career is reflected when Miranda's father says she ought to be ashamed of herself, when she tries to practice a Jockey's riding style. Instead her father believes that she belongs in the house along with all other women. After discovering this opinion Miranda knows that she has to do everything by herself and for herself. She starts to reject her own background and makes a powerful step towards individualism. By rejecting her own background she is able to form a clear view of herself, her goals, and her future. Miranda realizes that the only opinion that counts is her own. She rejects the views other people form about her and only meets her own expectations.

Miranda escapes from the convent and ends up getting married, because she followed the women's role and tried to find her position in the world. At the end of the story a funeral causes a family reunion. Miranda decides to reject the views of her family which held her back and denied her the right to look at the world with her own eyes. She realizes that she has to experience the world on her own instead of through other people's experiences. She decides to break out of her marriage and take responsibility for her own life.

Mr. Helton in "Noon Wine" has killed his brother because he broke one of his harmonicas. Mr. Helton is then put in a lunatic asylum where he escapes. He comes to the family to look for a job. He wants to put the past behind him

and start over. Mr. Helton looks like a lacy man but he is doing all the work at the farm. He is very quiet and does not talk with the family. When the boys in the family one day play around with his harmonicas he gets very angry at them. He shakes the boys as a way to punish them. This shows just how much he cares for his harmonicas and why he also killed his brother. At this stage he has seemed like a very normal guy but this episode shows that he has still not developed so much in his time at the lunatic asylum.

At his time at the farm Mr. Helton manages to turn the farm into being productive and he reduces the waste. He helps the family by earning money for them to use on food and supplies. He clearly shows that he is trying to improve and make up for the bad things he has done in his life. He is also a role model for the boys and in the end of the story we learn that the boys have grown up and started to help out at the farm. Everything seems to be going well and Mr. Helton has showed that he has improved and started to help people. However, when Mr. Hatch comes to the farm and is killed by Mr. Thompson, Mr. Helton is caught and wounded in the struggle. He later dies of his injuries.

Mr. Helton really wanted to improve and put the past behind him. He wanted to start over on a fresh far away from all the bad memories. Eventually the past caught up with him and it resulted in his death. In the beginning of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" Miranda dreams of escaping the world on a horse, and flee from life. This element foreshadows death and the illness she will catch later on. The story is set during World War one, and Miranda believes it is the war that makes her feel as she does. She feels desperate and

hopeless, which is very well illustrated by her comment: “ There is too much of everything in this world just now. I wish I could lose my memory and forget my own name”. She wants to die and escape her desperation.

Miranda keeps all her desperation and worries to herself, and is afraid of telling the truth about her feelings. She catches the influenza and is hospitalized and is very close to die. She is travelling through clouds, and faces of the people she knows, appears clearly in front of her. She feels liberated, and the heaven she is in is described as bright and alive. When she miraculously wakes up, she wants to go back to death.

She feels that death had brought her to a more living and bright place, and that the living world seems faded and dead. But when her friends come and tell her how happy they are that she is alive, she changes and starts to appreciate life. The war is now over, which symbolizes that her depression has also gone. An example that also describes this is the last sentence. “ Now there would be time for everything”. This really shows how much she has changed, when you compare it to an earlier thought “ There is too much of everything in this world just now”. She has gone from being depressed, hopeless and tired of everything, to appreciate her life and look bright at things. This is another example of how you can develop as a person.

## Conclusion

Even though the plots are very different and they take place in different places the social norms have not changed very much in the three different novels. In the novels the protagonist undergoes a phase in which it develops

into something better. Miranda in " Old Mortality" is under strong guard of her father and she is not allowed to live the life she wants to. However, she manages to break free and in the end she can make her own choices and have her own opinions. Mr. Helton in " Noon Wine" has killed his own brother and is put in a lunatic asylum. He escapes and looks for a job at a farm. He manages to put the past behind him and make the farm productive. He helps the family but in the end the past catches up with him and it gets him killed.

Miranda in " Pale Horse, Pale Rider" is very depressed and just wants to die. She has a hard time during World War one and she does not feel like she can talk with anyone. During the influenza epidemic she gets sick and is hospitalized. She is close to dying but wakes up. She recovers and realizes that she wants to live and she looks bright at her life. All three novels are a great example of how you can change into something better as a person even though you might have done something bad or is prevented to live your own life.

In the end it is YOU who can change your own life!