

# A passage to india essay 3

Literature, Russian Literature



A Passage to India In this excerpt from the novel A Passage to India, the author explores several themes through the use of figurative language, linguistic features, and literary devices. One theme is the triviality and evanescence of mankind's order and plans when juxtaposed with the splendor and immutability of the universe. This comparison draws attention to itself when the narrator begins his description of the sky: " Some kites hovered overhead, impartial, ...and with an impartiality exceeding all, the sky"(39) The chauvinism that is expressed in this scene is in direct contrast to the meaningless and unimportant conversations being held by the attendants of The Bridge Party. Here, this description of the sky and its immensity occurs right after Ronny ends his condescending analysis on the uselessness and paltriness of the non-British people assembled at the tragically named " Bridge Party". The " Bridge Party" itself is a horrible misnomer for this awkward social gathering in which the bridge itself is nonexistent, as neither side trusts the other enough to even attempt a casual conversation, let alone build a bridge! This misnomer doubles as a pun, for Bridge is a card game that is played among the high aristocracy; it has no place in a colonial city in rural India. Yet, the narrator deliberately uses it to draw attention to the segregation mankind imposes upon itself and distance itself even further from the impartial beyond. The kites hover above mankind for they do not seek to create schisms and factions in their society. The sky's " impartiality exceeds all" because it is one with space; it is constant throughout and completely incorporated as one unit into this universe. All this goes on above man's world, yet he continues to criticize and conquer his fellow man in an effort to gain supremacy over all men.

What is the value of domination over such a partial aspect of this universe? As the author contemplates the transcendence of the universe he abruptly switches to an incredibly mundane conversation held by the guest: "...more impartial even than they? Beyond which again... They spoke of Cousin Kate"(40) This example of Bathos once again proves the narrator's point and elucidates even further the triviality of the ongoing dialogue. The impartial skies and space serve purely to show the absurdity and pettiness of the conversations and divisions at "The Bridge Party", and to contrast the values held by guests at the party with the impartiality of the universe. A major portion in this excerpt is the personification of everything that was dysfunctional about the British Empire in Ronny and the hosts of the party. The glaring faults in the British Empire were seen by all, but admitted by few. The snobbish behavior exhibited by the hosts and the dismissive manner in which the locals and anyone of social ranking lower than theirs is discussed is appalling. This fault revolves around the hierarchical nature of power in British colonies and the influence of higher authorities in relegating or promoting people in a social class below their own. This introduces into the plot a theme of toadying. The Indian man who wants a favor goes to the British man, while the British man goes to his superior, and so on. All that this does is hollow out the system and erase any concept of mutual respect among the classes, instead introducing contempt and patronization. This is shown here: "Isn't that so Mrs. Turton?" "Absolutely True," said the great lady... assured of her approbation, Ronny continued. "(39) This incredible exchange epitomizes the point the author tries to make: Ronny derides the locals and legitimizes his behavior by seeking and obtaining the agreement

of a woman of a higher class who wasn't even interested in the conversation in the first place. Another hole in the British Empire that is explored is false love for the empire, which is here personified, tragically, by Ronny. "Ronny" is a hypocorism: it is a term of endearment given to loved ones and people you are close to. The fact that he is referred to as "Ronny" by everyone at the party indicates the hollowness of this "love". This love refers to the love between the locals and the crown' although the locals cooperated to some extent and adopted British customs and clothing, their trust and love for the British Empire was still grounded in fear. These among other weaknesses of the British Empire portrayed through personification allow the reader to look beyond the given text and gain a deeper understanding of the subtext in this excerpt. This excerpt obviously contains more meaning than that which can be gleaned with only a cursory glance. Its themes are concealed beneath a layer of dialogue and reveal much about the circumstances of the characters in it. In his novel *A Passage to India*, E. M. Forster uses a wealth of linguistic features stereotypes, to justify the meaningless attempts to bridge the cultural gaps. In the Bridge Party that takes place at the start of the novel, the reader is introduced to some of these prejudices and cultural misunderstandings that are formed with the fusion of these two divergent cultures. Using the characters of Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested, Forster demonstrates the differences between the attitudes of the English who have lived in India for an extended period of time and those who are newly arrived in India and tend to have a more sympathetic, unbiased view of the native Indians. The Bridge Party also poses the question of whether it is possible for an Englishman and an Indian to ever be friends, at least within the context of

British colonialism. In the social gathering varied British views are expressed concerning their views on Indian inferiority.