

# Symbolism in a lesson before dying by Ernest Gaines



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A delightful novel diverts and amuses the reader wanting them read more and more till they know each and every detail in the book. *A Lesson Before Dying* is a tale set in the town of Bayonne Louisiana in the late 1940s. *A Lesson Before Dying* is a heartwarming tale of injustice acceptance and salvation. *A Lesson Before Dying* is written by a stupendous novelist named Ernest J. Gaines and is one of those terrific and outgoing novels. Not only does Gaines simply enlighten the reader but he moreover entertains his effective storytelling. His usage of symbolism voice and stylistic devices keeps the reader fascinated to the very last page.

Firstly, Gaines is effective as a storyteller because of his use of symbolism in *A Lesson Before Dying*. The first symbol that is very appealing in *A Lesson Before Dying* is the hog. During the hearing in court for the robbery and the first-degree murder, Jefferson's lawyer tries to prove him innocent by dehumanizing and criticizing his intelligence. Jefferson's lawyer does this by arguing that he is incapable of murder because he does not have, modicum of intelligence (Gaines, 9). Although it is very disrespectful to do so, Jefferson's lawyer compares him to a hog, Why, I would just as soon put a hog in the electric chair as this (Gaines 10). This statement.

Another symbol that appears in this story is about food. The narrative of food was used as a way of conveying love and attachment by the author. In the novel, when Grant discusses with his aunt about eating at town, he states, Nothing could have hurt her more when I said I was not going to eat her food (Gaines, 21). Moreover, while Jefferson is imprisoned, Miss Emma fetches his desired choice of cooking so that she can convey and express the kindness and affection towards him. The refusal to eat by Jefferson really hurt Miss

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Emma's feelings, and it was very agonizing for her to hear that from him, even after she was trying to do something positive. At one point, Grant tells Jefferson to eat for Miss Emma, to prove that he still admires her. Along with the symbolization of love, food also signifies the mercifulness and sympathy portrayed by Jefferson. When he gets called a hog, it makes him sensitive, and he is a little setback by it, even declining to eat. In the novel, he rejects the offer for food and tells them the food is for them, That's for Youmans (Gaines 67). With the realization of himself and the moral outlook of his sympathetic side, he finally agrees to eat.

The last symbol in this story is connected to the notebook Grant gives Jefferson after numerous efforts to achieve some type of communication grounds by Miss Emma, Grant, and the Reverend Ambrose. He writes all his views and feelings and ponders the thought of life's existence and the demise of the world. At one point, during his reflection in his notebook to Grant, he states, it look like the lord just work for white folks (Gaines, 186). Jefferson talks about the prejudice, but also recognizes his purpose in life and the consensus of his new found of pride. The notebook also illustrates the union and friendship established with Grant and Jefferson. By writing to Grant, Jefferson ultimately undertook Grant's counseling and support by showing that in his brief time as friends, he truly transformed. These three instances used by Gaines through the narrative show the effective use of symbols that construct the story.

Furthermore, Gaines is a compelling narrator with a lot of consideration to the utilization of his voice. Gaines uses voice through the way he composes.

The use of slang in a specific time in history instead of proper English  
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pronunciation, Gaines precisely conveys how the individuals talk, I didn't raise no hog, and I don't want no hog to go set in that chair. I want a man to go set in that chair. Mr. Henri (Gaines, 17). Another way Gaines is a compelling storyteller is due to the voice utilized as a casual voice. The complete twenty-ninth chapter is told through Jefferson's journal, corresponding to Grant, to pass on the times before Jefferson's demise. Because of these methods of storytelling by Gaines, it showed his effective utilization of mixed and clever use of speech methods in his writing.

The last method Grant uses to successfully portray the narrative is the use of different figure of speeches such as the use of metaphors, often to provide emphasis, expression, and clarity to the aspect of the story. The first method utilized is reiteration, as such during the first meeting between Grant and Jefferson, he says, You know what I'm talking about, don't you? his eyes said. They were big brown eyes, the whites too reddish. His eyes mocked me. They were big brown eyes, the whites too reddish (Gaines, 59). The final use of figurative speech is paradox. When Grant portrays Jefferson's tribunal. he says, I was not there, yet I was there (Gaines, 7). Given the circumstances, Gaines utilizes numerous proficient complex gadgets to express his story in a viable way.

To sum up, Gaines adeptness to successfully write a narrative through symbolism, voice and other figurative speech devices shaped it into an inspiring and touching story. The narrative of A Lesson Before Dying is an expressive and informative interpretation of Gaines mind that will intrigue and move any reader.