

A review of anayas doa sebastiana

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A Review of Anaya's Doa Sebastiana Doa Sebastiana is one of the short novels that composes Rudolfo Anaya's *My land sings* Story from the Rio Grande. Also known as *La Comadre Sebastiana* or *La Pelosa*, Doa Sebastiana personifies death in New Mexican culture and is mainly placed in stories to help children understand the role of death in life. We will see how Anaya uses Doa Sebastiana to criticize the Catholic Church and convey moral values.

While Baltazar, the poor woodcutter, hides in the mountain to eat a chicken that he has just stolen, Jesus and the Virgin Mary appear and ask him to share his food with them. He strongly refuses explaining that they have always been unfair to the poor by giving everything to the rich. But when he is asked by Death itself, represented by Doa Sebastiana, the woodcutter accepts stating that she has always shown equity. The woodcutter openly denounces the Catholic Church's failure to help the poor as exposed in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* "For a poor man to openly chastise both Jesus and the Virgin Mary for failing to be equitable comprises a stunning class-conscious critique of Christian hypocrisy and the Church's complicity with the rich" (Vol. B, 665). His action is not defined by greed, only by a will of fairness as we understand that Jesus and the Virgin Mary are the representations of the rich that they have supported and Doa Sebastiana the poor always left apart. It is even more stunning as we recall that the chicken was first stolen. Anaya not only describes the Church as being socially unfair but also as a beneficiary from evil acts that it should condemn.

As a reward, Doa Sebastiana gives Baltazar the power of healing with the

<https://assignbuster.com/a-review-of-anayas-doa-sebastiana/>

only condition that if the woodcutter sees Death at the head of the bed of the person who is supposed to heal, he shall not heal him. Both Death's gift and its drawback emphasize the idea that Death is fair and as it strikes each and everyone of us can not be infinitely stopped.

The woodcutter's healing abilities became to be known and he was asked to heal the richest man in town in exchange of an important sum of gold. Heath Anthology defines the new responsibility of Baltazar " As a curandero or folkhealer he assumes a revered position in traditional Chicano society, a position he must not abuse for material gain. When he does, the results are grave." (Vol. B, 665) Approaching the bed, he saw that Death was standing at the head of the bed. Baltazar recalled the pact made with Doa Sebastiana but he also considered that healing this man would be highly profitable for him so he broke his promise. Doa Sebastiana who originally came to take the rich man decided to trade the woodcutter's life against his. Doa Sebastiana offered Baltazar this gift to remain fair as he believed she was. Keeping his promise while using it is the continuity of the fairness they both shown.

On one side, keeping promises is an important lesson for children who read this short novel as well as the importance of Death and its fatality in their life. On the other side, adults could see that we can easily commit the very same mistakes that we used to blame. As Baltazar receives the power of healing, he goes and heals the richest man, even if it is forbidden, only for the sum of gold that he is supposed to receive, and this despite of Death's warning and his repugnance of the Catholic Church help to the rich. Anaya is very subtle because as he criticizes the Catholic Church, he also gives us the ground for understanding : we are not greedy because we possess, we are greedy because we are able to have more.

<https://assignbuster.com/a-review-of-anayas-doa-sebastiana/>

Doa Sebastiana is an excellent short novel because it offers different levels of reading attainable at different stages in life. Even if you do not agree with Anaya's position on Catholic Church, you could still find his work interesting for the moral values that he defends. Finally as a child or an adult, you should ask yourself this obvious question : If you had been the woodcutter, what would you have done