

# The novel the vow. main recurring symbol

Literature



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The Vow Introduction The main recurring symbol of the story is Dan, who becomes Luke's newfound loyal friend, causing him to forget about his pains when he shifts with his Uncle Henry and Aunt Helen after the death of his mother and his father who by themselves go to some length to make him feel at home. However, in the growing uncertainty of his fate, Luke finds uneasiness in the lifestyle that he has to pursue with his Uncle and Aunt, with a new school to go to and new people to get accustomed with. In the developing scenario, Dan, who has been Uncle Henry's dog and has grown old and weary, comes to the rescue and not only proves to be a healthy companion for Luke but also proves a symbol of affection and kindness for him, as Callaghan indicates, reigniting the same spirit of loyalty and companionship within him. Thus, Dan was seen to embody Luke's father's spirit as they shared a secret relationship unknown to anyone but them and looked after each other in the same way as family. Callaghan introduces the novel with a grim outset. Luke's father, a doctor, suffers a dramatic heart attack, as a result of which he passes away. Luke, being the central focus, is shown to be much mature for his age as he realizes what is going on; " From that time on Luke knew that his father was expected to die" (Callaghan 1947 p. 6). However, even though maturity of thought was one of his elements, he still exuded a childlike nature of getting quickly irritated by any overt display of affection. This grim outset was important as immediately brought to light Luke's inclinations to find someone to relate to, and seeing as he was already fond of dogs, Dan became the light bearer for him. As they got increasingly fond of each other, Luke was shocked to find out that Uncle Henry had plans to get rid of his 11 year old dog. Luke, however, was not prepared to lose another close associate. It is over here that that he truly felt

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uneasy and the symbolic representation of Dan as his father came into play. On Mr. Baldwin's deathbed, Luke promised to go live with Uncle Henry and learn his ways (p. 9), but he was also told that his father was not leaving him for good. He had several flashbacks from the time when his father would read him books and explain to him the ways of the world and perhaps the thought of those lingered on and got reincarnated in the form of Dan. From the very start, Dan and Luke become each other's natural counterparts. Callaghan had pointed out earlier how Luke was fond of a dog named Mike, who he remembered at the time of his father's demise; " Again Luke had the feeling that Mike ought to have been with him, that he needed Mike specially now. A dog knows how to share your bewilderment and sadness without getting in the way." (p. 11). He recognized the same gentleness in Dan at first instance and felt sorry for his blindness in one eye. His kindness was apparent when he lashed out at Sam Carter for trying to hit Dan out of the way (p. 19). Eventually, Dan's loyalty became the reason Luke could ignore the strangeness of the new house, and the aloofness he had to experience at school where students deemed him a stranger from the city. The conflict arose at the time when Uncle Henry, who Luke had promised his dad to live with, showed signs of letting his pragmatism overcome his compassion for the dog. He decided to get rid of him simply because the dog was too old and incapable of serving his duties. Keeping him did not make practical sense. This was specially affirmed when Uncle Henry tripped over him one Sunday and was immediately displeased. He decided that the best way to kill the dog was to drown him in the nearby river. When Luke discovered this, his sense of compassion for Dan ignited, an urge that was missing at his father's deathbed. Perhaps he realized now how much he missed his father after he

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was gone and did not want the same to happen to Dan. It was truly a case of realizing what you had after it was gone. Conclusion Hence, it is easy to see why Luke sided with Dan at each point of the story. He strongly believed in Dan's loyal spirit and in the climax of the story, ended up saving him from a drowning feat arranged by his Uncle. Thus, Dan's trait of loyalty translated to Luke and both catered to each other throughout the narration, much like his father would have done for him at the young age he left him. Dan was thus symbolic of his father's aura.