

Family, catharsis, and self-realization in viramontes' the moths



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Family, Catharsis, and Self-Realization in Viramontes' "The Moths" Most people believe that it is inevitable for children to grow up and be just like their parents, even though they may have disagreed with the discipline and vowed to never be like them. Naturally, the way we are raised is the way we will raise our children. It is our human nature as adults to do things the way our parents taught us, which they learned from their parents, and their parents from theirs. However, carrying traditions down the generations or not is a choice that we all make as adults.

Helena Maria Viramontes uses family, catharsis, and self-realization to show that we can learn from our upbringing and ultimately change as an individual. Viramontes' short story, "The Moths", argues that family traits, both negative and positive, are passed on naturally during childhood and into parenting. Also, the story argues that death in the family is a cathartic event when we search for emotional healing and understanding. Finally, the story argues that a tragic loss leads to self-realization, and fulfillment of our individual potential.

Viramontes' story argues both negative and positive family traits are naturally passed down simply because that is how we are raised. It's clear from the beginning that the narrator is deeply cared for by her Abuelita who had already seen her through "...several whippings, an arm broken... puberty, and my first lie", and she believes caring for her Abuelita through her sickness "was only fair" (Viramontes 1). Being cared for as a child makes her feel a natural obligation to return the same compassion and effort.

Her Abuelita passed down such a positive trait because she never gave up on the narrator and showed her that she was not alone and it's important to be kind. Although, the negative family traits also have the same effect and further signify who she is. The narrator discovered why whippings were her mother's choice of discipline as she saw "the scars on her (Abuelita) back," while undressing her dead body and realized "how little I really knew of Abuelita" (Viramontes 3).

Her Abuelita was whipped as a child, and naturally passed this negative tradition down to her daughter by whipping her as a child. The narrator suffers from her mother's whippings just like she had to making it only natural for the narrator to do the same as a mother. However, she knows she doesn't have to do the same to her future children. Viramontes' effectively uses this theme to argue that we are all raised a certain way, but also given the option to change as adults.

The story also argues that catharsis during tragedy or death begins the process of emotional healing and understanding. As the narrator peacefully cared for her Abuelita's dead body for the last time "With the sacredness of a priest," she begins grieving over losing the only person who she felt understood her (Viramontes 3). During this tense moment she is still able to find a sense of emotional healing through the process of cleaning Abuelita's body.

It's as though she is turning the tragedy's pain into positive energy and love for all that Abuelita had taught her. The pivotal moment for the narrator when she finally understands her Abuelita and her lessons unfortunately happens after she is already gone, when she says, "I heard you," to the <https://assignbuster.com/family-catharsis-and-self-realization-in-viramontes-the-moths/>

lifeless body in her arms (Viramontes 4). She knows that what happens next is only up to her. This new understanding creates appreciation for her Abuelita and gives a whole new perspective on her life.

The story clearly argues that catharsis after death ultimately leads to emotional healing and answers for personal relief. The story finally argues that tragedy leads to self-realization, and fulfillment of our individual potential. The narrator begins to cry while in the tub holding her dead Abuelita and realizes her inner “misery of feeling half-born,” growing up as the tears surround them with “circles and circles of sadness and relief” (Viramontes 4). When her grandmother dies is when she finally realizes the root of her own personal problems.

This relief brings her hope for personal change because she can now appreciate life and live it to the fullest. The narrator recognizes her potential as she cradles Abuelita in her arms “rocking [them] gently,” repeating as a mother would to console her child in pain “there, there... there, there” (Viramontes 4). She realized her purpose to care for others through this experience even though she felt that no one cared for her. This made her realize the beauty in caring for others and the lasting effect it can have, like the effect Abuelita had on her.

The story uses this theme to show that self-realization can come at any time but we have to appreciate those moments in order to fulfill our individual potential. It is evident through the relationships between the narrator, Ama, and Abuelita that family traits both negative and positive are passed on naturally during childhood and into parenting. However, Abuelita's death

puts the narrator in a cathartic event where she finally achieves emotional healing and understanding of others.

Finally it is clear that the narrator's tragic loss leads to her self-realization and fulfillment of her purpose. Yes, It is human nature to keep living how we were raised simply because we don't know any other way. But you shouldn't blame your flaws on the way you were raised. Growing up is the time you can learn and become your own person. This story shows that death in the family is cathartic to our natural instincts giving us the opportunity to analyze and understand who we are. This sort of self-realization is significant to our growth as humans, and beneficial to those we around us.