

The similarities and differences between billy cart hill and remembering aunt mar...



' Unreliable Memoirs' (by Clive James) and ' Remembering Aunt Marie' (by Grace Nichols) are both popular autobiographies written by well-known authors. We were asked to compare two random autobiographical extracts from the books and discuss the language, narrative structure and content of each. Billy Cart Hill, from the book ' Unreliable Memoirs' is one of many of Clive James' memories of growing up in Australia and getting into trouble. Remembering Aunt Marie is more descriptive but is just as amusing.

Remembering Aunt Marie is Grace Nichol's memory of how she almost got into trouble by stealing her Aunt Marie's rosary, but luckily escaped by playing on her Aunt's Catholic faithfulness. In Billy Cart Hill, there is a woman, Mrs Branthwaite, who has a perfect garden which James describes ' like the cover of a seed catalogue,' so when James makes a train of ' Billy Carts' and they destroy the poppies by crashing into them, Mrs Branthwaite has to be taken away, speechless, by two police officers and the children scatter in all directions. Alternatively, Nichols's story is of her strongly religious Aunt Marie, who Nichols persecuted by stealing her rosary, to see the effect it had on her Aunt. Nichols narrowly escapes getting into trouble by throwing the rosary down at Marie's feet as if God had put it there. Aunt Marie vows she will never come back to Nichols's mother's house - ' I am not coming back to your house. I am not coming back.

Let the Virgin Mary be my witness. ' But in the end she only stays away for a week. The basis of both stories is childhood innocence, - James didn't know that the super-cart was going to crash into Mrs Branthwaite's garden simply because he was a child. Nichols didn't know what her Aunt's reaction would be and was curious to find out. I think James's story is much more graphic

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and gives a better description to the reader even though Nichols spent more time trying to describe the scene. I think this is because James uses exciting words like ‘disastrously’ and ‘skidded’ unlike Nichols’s description where she doesn’t use any outstanding words.

The language used in Billy Cart Hill is significantly more exciting than the plain descriptive language used in Remembering Aunt Marie. Clive James puts rhetorical questions and suspense to good use in his book, he uses them so well that they create an exciting sense of tension, – ‘Why did I ever suggest the Irene Street turn?’ and ‘I should have left it at that but got ambitious.’ I think these sentences make the reader wonder, what’s going to happen next? Likewise Grace Nichols also takes time to build up suspense – but in a different manner, ‘I got the chance one day...

‘ Nichols uses a lot of description, which makes the reader ask, what is it building up to? Also she uses certain words like, ‘impatiently’ and ‘rushed,’ this creates tension as well. Another technique Clive James uses is personification. At one point in the story he uses it to describe how the long train of carts swung round and scythed the poppies, ‘The monster lashed its enormous tail.’ I particularly like this description because I can imagine it well. Alternatively, Grace Nichols does not use such mature language, perhaps because she is trying hard to tell it through the eyes of a child, as a child would not use that sort of language.

This is another difference between the two extracts – Billy Cart Hill uses much more sophisticated language than Remembering Aunt Marie. Both authors make good use of hyperboles as shown in James’s extract when he

uses, ' Extending her empire,' to describe Mrs. Branthwaite's garden, and Nichols uses hyperboles when her Aunt says she is never coming back again but the following week she comes back. The two extracts have a fairly similar narrative structure. James's extract quickly sets the scene and then starts building up tension.

The story reaches the peak of excitement and then tails off. The same happens with Nichols's extract only in Nichols's she spends a longer time describing the characters and not so long building up the tension. In conclusion, despite the fact that both extracts are popular and high quality, I prefer Billy Cart Hill (by Clive James) to Remembering Aunt Marie (by Grace Nichols). I like Billy Cart Hill because I feel more drawn towards his style of writing; I think this is because he uses a larger range of language skills such as similes, metaphors and hyperboles, while Remembering Aunt Marie uses straightforward language skills which are still enjoyable but not as exciting. My preference is also due to the narrative structure and content of the two extracts, – Billy Cart Hill goes almost straight into the main story whereas Remembering Aunt Marie takes a long time to set the scene very descriptively.

Also, I think James has chosen to talk about an exciting subject, which I would rather read about, because although I can relate easily to Remembering Aunt Marie, I do not think she has chosen a very interesting topic to talk about. However, Billy Cart Hill does have some flaws, one of them being, that because he describes the poppies so carefully from the first paragraph, you know what's going to happen – the poppies get destroyed!