

We look after our own
essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Some stories are meant for entertainment, others to educate but Kath Walker's, *We Look After Our Own* is written to draw change and develop an understanding of a darker side of life in Australia. Written in a time when change was dawning and aboriginal rights was touchy subject, Kath Walker gave an insight into the life of an aboriginal through the story. She showed the battles they faced to gain minimum services and how they were treated like second class citizens. Kath Walker shows the difficulties of being aboriginal through this story.

Kath Walker's story embraces some of the topics that people ran away from in the 1950s and talks about them openly and truthfully and this is what makes the story so rivoting. Subtlety, simplistic nature, and depth are key element of the plot in *We Look After Our Own*. The subtlety is personified by the way the writer indicates something but doesn't make it blatantly obvious, an illustration of this is the heritage of Mrs Edwards, the writer gives small clues to tell us that Mrs Edward is Aboriginal like " *We Look after our own,*" but she doesn't state that Mrs Edward is Aborginal, she leaves that to the reader to infer.

The simplistic nature of the story refers to the smooth way the plot moves without many twists or turns, it is like a wave rolling smoothing onto shore but then the end is like the crashing of the water on the sand. This simplistic nature is embodied by the chronological movement of the story from a day in summer to Good Friday to Easter Sunday. It is also embodied by the simplistic nature of the happenings of the story, a father's ailing health and a daughter's (Mrs Edwards) heartache at watching her father, her fathers is

turned back at a nursing home on Good Friday because of colour and then in the end her father dies.

The depth talks of the hidden meanings in such a simple plot, this is typified by the use of Mr Knight as a name indicating a knight in shining armour or the drying lake indicating the loss of rights for aboriginals. The plot could be improved with a more suspense, more moments where Mrs Edwards doesn't know where to turn, where she feels helplessness. With irony, illustrations of the characters, depth and development the characterisation of We Look After Our Own is something special.

The irony in the characters is especially indicated by the use of a nun because a nun is expected to be holy, the epitome of goodness and yet even she was racist to Mrs Edward. The illustrations of the characters are include such examples as the name Mr Knight suggesting a knight in shining armour or the nun hiding behind a veil, in a literal sense the veil of clothing and in a meataphoric sense the veil of society when she denies that she is racist.

The depth and development of the characterisation is epitomized by the how much we learn about Mrs Edwards through a small moment in her life, her hard working nature embodied by her father when he is describing his daughter, her caring nature epitomized by the way she looks after her father and the way she reacted when she found out he was dying, her determination illustrated by her unwillingness to send her father to the nursing home, her pride typified by how proud she is to be aboriginal when she quotes “ We look after our own.

Her tolerance exemplified by the way she reacted when turned back by the nun, when she quoted, “ And may god pity you sister. ” Mrs Edwards slowly moves from an unknown woman to someone we care about, someone we feel for and someone we admire due to the development in character. The setting of We Look After Our Own sets an atmosphere of hardship and difficulty. The hardship and difficulty is personified by the setting of the story in the 1950s during the easter holidays at the peak of the heated argument about aboriginal rights in the Australia.

The hardship and difficulty is again shown by the setting in the drought with the drying lake and the dying flowers almost exemplifying the lack of opportunities for aboriginals and almost their loss of rights in their own country. Aboriginal rights, loss, tradition, racism, equality and hardship are all themes in We Look After Our Own. Aboriginal rights refers to aboriginals not being able to use basic public services because they are aboriginal an example of this came in the story when Mrs Edwards was turned back at the nursery home.

Loss refers to losing materialistic good and live in this case it refers to live, an example of this came when Mrs Edward’s father died. Tradition, is like culture something that your race, religion or people do, in the story it was aboriginal looking after their own. Racism refers to being prejudice against you for your race, religion or colour this occurred when Mrs Edwards was turned back at the nursery home. Equality is shown because that is what the story calls for.

Hardship is exemplified by farming in the drought and living in the drought. We Look After Our Own is told from the view of the writer/narrator/onlooker. The story is written in the past tense. The language used is mostly modern English. Conventional grammar and punctuation is used. The story is told from a combination of dialogue and narration. The story is mostly made up of short sharp sentences to create suspense for example 'The sky was devoid of clouds.

She gently touched her father. He seemed to be in a sort of coma. " At the start of the story when Mrs Edwards father was thinking long sentences were used to create a reflective atmosphere for example 'Smelling again the sweat of horse, saddle, mingling again with his own human sweat. ' The language used in the story is strong and meaningful like the story itself for example 'devoid of clouds. ' The use of metaphors, similes and symbolism was very limited in the story.

A flashback was also used in the story at the start when Mrs Edwards father was thinking, it instigated smoothly from past to present through the triggering word of "now. " Therefore it can be said with the utmost confidence that We Look After Our Own works well and serves its purpose. It shows people what Aboriginal people faced trying to endeavor for the basics of life. We Look After Our Own exemplifies the tragedy of life as an Aboriginal and the need for change in Australia in the 1950s and as a result it can be said that the story works as it should work.