

Second half of the third life of grange copeland essay



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While the first portion of Alice Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* focused on introducing the reader to the struggle of the title character, the later part does much more to develop the characters and show how they are making their way through the struggle. Like with the majority of Alice Walker's works, the second part of this book continues to touch on some very important and often under represented racial themes as it speaks to the pronounced struggle of both Grange Copeland and the members of his family. Specifically, the last half of the book introduces the reader to Ruth and her situation, Brownfield's internal struggle to gain meaning, and the change in Grange Copeland's outlook on racial relations. One of the most important themes that the reader is introduced to in this part of the book is the change in Grange Copeland's attitude in regards to all white people.

As was discussed in the previous paper, Copeland gained a stiff appreciation for the way that things had to happen between white people and African Americans during that time. His boss stripped him of his manhood, for all intent and purposes. In the beginning of the book, this made Grange take his anger out on those people around him. Later on, after he has moved up to the North and realizes that there is racism there, as well; Grange turns his hatred to all white people. Instead of being a beaten down man like he was in the early part of the book, Copeland becomes a person filled with rage, ready to take it out on any and all of his white brethren.

This is primarily prompted by a situation that occurs when he tries to help a young woman. Seeing that Grange had something of a tender heart, he was anxious to help a young lady who had just been left by her man, who was a soldier. When she rejects his heartfelt attempt to help, Copeland sees his

mood change to a fit of rage. Even when he tried to do everything right, he still was not received with any more kindness by white people. The plight of Grange Copeland opens an interesting door into the life of Brownfield, who the reader is introduced to in the early part of the book. Brownfield is guilty of murder, but it is what happens shortly after this experience that makes him an interesting character.

Brownfield does not want to repeat the life of his father, who ran out on the family after being stripped of his manhood. He is certainly a character who had to endure much heartache and abuse, but he does not cope with it nearly as well as his father. Brownfield clearly knew the consequences of his actions, but he did not care. Simply put, he was not going to be trampled over like his father had been in a similar situation. Instead, it occurs to him that one way he can escape from his life is to kill and head to prison. Though prison is not something that anyone necessarily likes, it gave him an avenue to get out of the county and do something different.

The irony of Brownfield's situation is that the more he tries to run away from his father's ways, the more he jumps into a life of chaos. He makes decisions which he hopes will give himself more control over his situation, but in the end, these decisions end up stripping the control he had hoped for. He effectively gives away his life because of what his father had done to him by leaving the family and taking up residence with Ruth. The relationship of Grange Copeland and young Ruth is something that drives the action in the last half of the book. By the time he meets Ruth, Copeland has already run through an entire laundry list of different emotions. On one hand, he finds it

extremely difficult to let Ruth in on his many lives, even though he does try to do some explaining and some teaching.

Copeland has gone from being beaten down to rising up in anger. Though he feels like what he has done was something that had to be done, he is truly just ruining the lives of the people who are around him. Ruth is a project for Grange Copeland, as he tries to be her shield against the difficult world. In a way, it is his chance to make right some of the things that he had messed up previously.

It was his opportunity right some of the mistakes that he made with Brownfield and show to himself that he is a new person. Ruth is one of the key figures in the last part of Copeland's journey - a time when he makes it a point to find some sort of redemption and admit to some of his mistakes. Originally, Grange Copeland sets out to instill his hatred into Ruth. He wants her to feel the rage that he feels for white people and have the fear that he holds for life.

Copeland finds this to be much more difficult than he had originally imagined, though. He figures out that he has this sort of compassion and unconditional feeling for Ruth that he has not ever known. Because of that, his heart will not allow him to teach anything of hate to Ruth. Grange has gone through life and battled against it, so he knows some of the struggles that are in front of Ruth and in front of the others that come to him.

He wants to protect them all from it, because he knows about the depravation and the toll that it will eventually take on their soul. He eventually finds that trying to take care of this is nearly impossible, though.
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The second part of this Alice Walker book wraps up the racially charged themes that are presented in the early chapters. Grange Copeland goes through a long journey and he finally finds its completion in that portion of the book. Though he never really finds the happiness that he had been looking for throughout the work, he does take the chance to make some reconciliation with himself and also pass on his knowledge to some of the people around him. Copeland grows up a lot over the course of the work, and that is no more evident than when he sits down with young Ruth to let her in on what he has learned.

He came to realize that his protection would not be enough for either her or any of the others, who would have to go out and face the mean world on their own if they were going to survive.