

Lu xuns diary of a madman literature review

[Countries](#), [China](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The story “diary of a madman” was written by Lu Xun and was first published in 1918. It is a political allegory that largely criticizes the traditional Chinese system of governance. The story is written from the perspective of an insane man who is of the opinion that everyone is against him and even plots to eat him (Lyell, 35). The story is highly symbolic and was instrumental in the modernization of the Chinese culture. This paper presents an analysis of the madman in the form of his fears, paranoia and obsessions. The madman who is also the dominant character in the story helps bring out the themes of the story.

The madman was transfixed and absolutely sure that all the people that he met, saw and knew were planning to eat him. His paranoia overwhelms him and he experienced terrible thoughts and feelings that even children plan to eat him. In order to overcome the feeling he goes ahead to research about cannibalism. He is not successful and all he finds are the words ‘Confucian, virtue and morality’ (Lyell, 35). As he reads on the pages fill up with the words “eat him”. The research helps the man to prove that the society in which he lives has endemic unfairness and is what would commonly be literally called “a-man-eat-man society”.

The madman is critical and thoughtful of his actions and his conduct. He in one instance he asks his visitor, “Just because it’s always been that way, does that make it right?” (Lyell, 34) This shows that he wishes people to be thoughtful of their actions and to avoid doing what is wrong simply because everyone else seems to be doing the same thing. The madman views the people in his society as crowd pleasers who are afraid to confront what they know is wrong.

The madman quickly was highly sensitive and judgmental. He takes an innocent walk on a street where he believes that everyone he meets has a vendetta against him. A relative who understands the man's mental condition whisks the man to from the street and locks him in a room. The madman spirals downwards to extreme paranoia and he begins to strongly believe that everyone plans to eat him.

The madman represents a part of the changes and the spirit of progress and reform at personal and social levels. He provides readers with a window through which they can see the true state of China in those days. All the other characters in the story are a part and parcel of the long-held moral system making them blind to the inner-workings of the society (Lyell, 36). The madman serves as the moral conscience by labeling the evils the society that surrounds him. He is also accommodative of other people as he tries to understand why people in his society hold such destructive beliefs.

The man was confident of himself. He viewed himself as being clever for unraveling the schemes people had to eat him. He even questioned several of the people he knew planned to eat him including his brother, friends and neighbors. The madman makes reference to the Zhao family dog and how menacingly the dog looked at him. The author could be comparing the Chinese people to the ferocious image of the dog which the mad man used to describe neighbors as having " protruding fangs" (Lyell, 36).

The people who knew the madman saw him as being insane but in the context of the story, the man was seeing and confronting the very truth that people fear to address. The character that saw the world as it ought to be

seen was seen scoffed at, ignored and threatened. The madman's family members are the first to segregate him and place him in isolation. They are not ready to listen to him and this angers the man to become even more paranoid of the people in whose company he should at least be seeking solace. He for instance concludes that his older brother ate their baby sister. The madman suspects that he might also have eaten his sister unknowingly and that their mother failed to discover the act or she feared to speak of cannibalism because it was not appropriate to speak of such acts in those days (Lyell, 36). He also suspects the doctor who is supposed to treat him of plotting to eat him.

Finally the system of "cannibalism" overtakes the man and he is compelled to conform to what the society deems as sanity. By so doing he becomes blind to the "cannibalism" he previously saw in the society. Prior to giving up on his mission, he tries one final moment to change the people from cannibalism by stating, "Save the children". This plea could have been fueled by the madman's belief that he together with his brother ate their baby sister. It also implies that the man's true agenda was to change the society around him and make it responsive to the innocence portrayed by children.

Works cited

Lyell, William on Lu Xun Diary of a Madman. 1990. Retrieved 25 April 2013 from: <http://www.library.eiu.edu/ersvdocs/4611.pdf>