

”mrs turner cutting  
the grass” and ”the  
purple plieus” essay  
sample



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Prejudicial judgements are the central point which both stories concentrate on using comedy. 'Mrs Turner Cutting the Grass' and 'The Purple Pileus' are both written in different historical and cultural backgrounds. Mrs Turner and Mr Coombes are both victims of prejudicial judgements. Other characters in the story and the reader itself have judged both characters harshly. Carol Shields uses comedy to examine the nature of prejudicial judgements.

Whereas using comedy, H. G. Wells explores the main character, in order for us to mock them. Both stories use comic elements to manipulate the response of the reader towards the characters. This is a key technique used in both texts to influence our thoughts. The stories are similar in that each plot develops from people conflicting views of each other.

As we begin reading "Mrs Turner Cutting the Grass," we see her as a comic character, who appears to us as a unique yet amusing character to us. We start off laughing at Mrs Turner, but when her history is exposed, we are no longer laughing at her. We sympathise with her. Carol Shields uses comic elements to achieve a serious effect. However, when we have more knowledge on Mr Coombes domestic history is exploited we mock him. Carol Shields uses comedy to challenge to our prejudices. She wants us to laugh at the Mrs Turner then think why are we laughing at her. H. G. Wells uses comedy to emphasise our prejudices and reinforce our prejudices.

In both "Mrs. Turner Cutting the grass" and "The Purple Pileus", there are characters that show pity for the central characters. For example, the professor who meets Mrs Turner certainly pities her for her lack of class or taste, and lack of knowledge about temples. He makes his feelings known publicly and makes money from the consequent poem that follows. We feel

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superior to both characters that are why we mock them. The high school girls are reassured that they are apart of the society because they haven't got " cellulite thighs" just like the professor believes he is intelligent because he can distinguish a " Buddhist temple from a Shinto shrine"

Shields exploits stereotypical judgements right from the beginning. In the opening paragraph, Carol Shields describes Mrs Turner as a " sight". This is a slangy phrase, not a compliment. It is a negative thing yet we find it funny although it is unconventional. Then Shields goes on to say how Turner " climbs into", which in other words means, struggles because she is fat. She " wedges" her feet into shoes; again, this means she struggles, probably because the shoes are too old and small. The adjectives Carol Shields uses to describe Mrs Turners gives us clues, that eventually builds up to an image of Mrs Turner in our heads.

We see the relationship between Turner and the neighbours amusing. " concerned about the killex that Mrs Turner dumps on her dandelions". We understand that the sachers are very environmentally friendly; they see Mrs Turner as an eco-vandal. The neighbours are not ignorant of the problem caused, however they do not do anything in order to help or resolve the problem, which makes them jusyt as bad as Turner if not worse. " But we and...proceed as it should". We find their perverse way of thinking acceptable, funny even. The Sachers see Mrs Turner as naïï½ve and do not want to be friends with her; they feel superior to her and believe they belong to a higher class. The serious point Carol Shield is trying to get across is that, everyone is intolerant with certain habits and lifestyle. We make snap

judgements about people whose lifestyle may not be similar to ours. The <https://assignbuster.com/mrs-turner-cutting-the-grass-and-the-purple-plies-essay-sample/>

Sachers make prejudicial and stereotypical judgements about Mrs Turner, even though they don't even know her.

The high school girls see Mrs Turner as a stereotype of what they will be like when they are older. " It makes them queasy; it makes them fear for the future". Mrs Turner not covering her cellulites surprises the high school girls, because the girls know they wouldn't go out in public revealing their cellulites when they get to her age, they believe that Mrs Turner shouldn't do that either. Especially as the girls are " intimate with the vocabulary of skincare". The girls also find this shocking, Mrs Turner doesn't know who ' Neil Young' is. " The High school, just around the corner from her house happens to be the very school Neil Young attended as a kid". The point Carol Sheild is trying to put across is that this women is so ignorant she doesn't even know " folk-rock recording Neil Young" is. We find her ignorance very funny. Although we do not realise that not everyone past middle age knows the current great popstars. If we asked Mrs Turner when she was younger who the greatest popstars were, she would probably know. The attitudes the high school girls and the sachers have towards Mrs Turner are very prejudicial. The sachers believe that Mrs Turner does not fit into the society because of her lack of knowledge. There judgements are based on her physical appearance and lifestyle.

When Mrs Turners history is exposed we are stunned, we realise Mrs Turner has done more in her lifetime than most people, " Girlie got caught.... married, man named Gus Macgregor", this is the first surprise we get about her history. As soon as we realise what she did, our views about her change drastically. Considering that this story was written in 1970's we realise that <https://assignbuster.com/mrs-turner-cutting-the-grass-and-the-purple-plies-essay-sample/>

going off with a married man is something that rarely anyone would do in a society. As they will not be accepted.. However, Mrs Turner is ignorant of what others think of her. As we read on the more attentive, we are towards Turners character. " She met a man named kiki in her first month in New York and moved in with him". The fact that Mrs Turner has a relationship in itself is a big deal, because of racial divides. etc.

Back in the 70's, it was not common to have a relationship with some one of a different race. Living with someone and having a baby outside marriage was a big deal. Mrs Turner was always the odd one out, and stood out. Her fascinating experiences are all based on her ignorance of what other people thought of her. Mrs Turner was very erratic and lived for the moment.

However, when she meets Gordon Turner she settles down. "...finally the little house in River Heights just around the corner". We realise this is the house she is living at right now. Mrs Turner was very happy and settled until Gordon dies. Carol Shields even makes his death to be an amusing event. We don't feel have condolences for the death of Mrs Turners husband, we actually laugh.

When Mrs Turner travels to New York where she meets the professor. He makes the same joke as the sachers and the high school girls, about Mrs Turner and her lack of knowledge, but unlike before we do not join in with the joke and laugh. Instead, we think because she doesn't know much about temples or dates it is not right to laugh at her. The jokes and humour based behind the professors are vastly based on superiority. " People laughed out loud when they heard it", the " undergraduate" students also laughed at what seemed to them as Mrs Turners ignorance. The students know nothing

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about mrs turners background yet they think its acceptable to make prejudicial judgements about her. The students and the proffesuer are ignorant of any real sense of who Mrs Turner really is.

In the last paragraph we are given a bit more idea about Mrs Turners personality. " She waves to the high school girls", " hollers hello to sally and Roy" Mrs turner is far less ignorant than these characters, she doesn't make snap judgements about these characters, like they do about her. The fact that she says Hi to them shows that she is friendly and not judgemental. She does not realise about the prejudicial judgements people make. " All she's ever done is live her life", Mrs Turner has lived her life the way she wanted to. Is that such a crime? She is not obsessed with living up to the standards the society has set-unlike the sachers.

" Oh, what a sight is Mrs Turner cutting her grass and how like an ornament, she shines". The story ends exactly how it begins. Carol Shields refers to Mrs Turner as a " sight" right in the opening paragraph and calls her a " sight" in the closing paragraph. But at the end of the story we see the " sight" as a positive term, mainly because we know more about her background and history. " an ornament she shines" this is certainly praising her.

As the reader finishes reading the story, some may even envy her, who at first felt superior then her, as mrs turner has done so much in life and experienced so much, that she realises that prejudicial judgements don't mean anything. Carol Shields achieves what she set out to do with the story, she wanted to expose our prejudices, and then wants us to think about why

we are laughing at her, and why we reach to certain judgements about people.

We also feel sorry for her, as she had been judged so harshly throughout her life. Nevertheless, there is more sympathy towards her than Mr Coombes. Mr Coombes is being laughed at, because of his actions and what he doesn't do, whereas Mrs Turner is being laughed at because she is ignorant of what people think of her. She has been ignorant of what people think of her. She has never fit into the society and has always been peculiar. One of the points Carol Shields emphasises at the end of the story is that all Mrs Turner has ever done is live her life to please her self. She is being laughed at because she does not show off, not because she " doesn't know". The point that she " doesn't know" is subjective. The only thing that Mrs Turner probably does not know is what the society thinks of her. Carol Shields wants us to explore our inner prejudices; she uses comedy to expose our prejudices and judgements, whereas H. G. Wells uses comedy to develop them in order for us to mock Mr Coombes. H. G. Wells does what Carol Shields isn't doing or what she thinks is wrong; making prejudgements.

Both writers go back in time, which gives the reader a exploitive view of the protagonist. Both stories use similar techniques, but in contrasting ways when Carol Shield does this we sympathise. However, when H. G. Wells does it we laugh at Mr Coombes. The different cultural and historical Settings of the stories influence the authors' ideas and attitudes towards the main characters.

When Purple Plieus took place the world was known as a 'mans world', but the fact that a woman controlled mr Coombes seemed comical. H. G. Wells explores the nature of prejudice through violence and slapstick comedy. In the Purple Plieus, the reader is invited to mock all the characters. Everyone is a target for humour. We don't like any of the characters in purple Plieus. Both stories are written in a contrary style. Carol Shields uses comic element in the beginning of the story in order for us to mock Mrs Turner but by the end of the story we sympathise with Mrs Turner and realise she hasn't had an easy life, yet a fantastic life. In contrast, H. G. Wells starts creating sympathy for Mr Coombes in the opening paragraph, before we realise why he is in so unhappy. "sick not only of his own existence but of everybody else's", we realise that Mr Coombes is suicidal and we feel sorry for him.

When H. G. Wells gives a description of Mr Coombes, we create an image of a comic character just like we did with Mrs Turner. Both authors do this in the same style using selective adjectives. H. G. Wells describes Mr Coombes as a "little man". This instantly creates a picture of a weak, feeble little man. "His appearance his wife said once in the dear dead days beyond recall - before he married her, that is - was military", we realise two points when we read this, that before Mr Coombes and Mrs Coombes got married they got on well, and now both see each other as a disappointment. "she called him 'a little grub". Calling someone a grub is not a very nice thing to say, especially to someone your married to; yet, we find this funny. "It wasn't the only thing she called him either" we assume that the other adjectives Mrs Coombes used to describe Mr Coombes weren't anything positive.



H. G. Wells has deliberately left it to the readers' perception of what else his wife calls him. The sympathy we had for Mr Coombes in the beginning of the story is now turning in to laughter. The differences between the images of Mr Coombes and Jennie are funny. H. G. Wells again does this deliberately to create an image in our heads of a 'beastly' and a 'big noisy girl' whereas Mr Coombes is a "little grub". Both characters clearly don't like each other, due to their differences. Mr Coombes didn't like the fact Jenny played music on Sunday, though there was not much he could do to stop her. We don't like any of the characters in the story, but we laugh particularly at Coombes. Coombes is not taken seriously by any of the characters in the story and the reader itself. "He turned his head. 'Sunday' he said over the collar in the voice of one who warns", the comedy here is that Coombes does not get the reaction he wants. Jennie and his wife see him as a joke. They enjoy annoying him, "after the departure of Mr Coombes, Jennie discontinued playing", this clearly implies that the reason Jennie played in the first place was to annoy Mr Coombes. Coombes wants Jennie to be reasonable, and to cooperate with him. "What's wrong with my playing now?". Mrs Coombes is also getting tired of what seems as Mr Coombes "whinging and whining". She practically tells her to ignore Coombes "Never mind 'im. You go on Jinny".

The more we are told about Mr Coombes and the history of his domestic life, the more it adds to the mockery. We find his non-alcoholic and strict way of life absurd. The effects of the narcotic were quite amazing, and have turned Coombes into what he always wanted to be; the man of the house. "There is no time like the present for a rash resolve, why not here and now". The

thought of Mr Coombes actually taking drugs in itself was unusual. Mr Coombes is a representation of a wimp, a person that will never do anything inconsistent. He does not seem as the ' sort of person' that would take drugs to solve his problems. Yet, the fact that he is so upset that it drives him to do is comical. We don't realise what a serious issue Mr Coombes domestic life is, we are ignorant of the way Mr Coombes is being treated. The evidence for this is that we just laugh. " he was no longer dull-he felt bright and cheerful" the effect of the narcotic takes place immediately. Coombes is pleased with the effect of the drug "...with an agreeable smile", this is the first time Mr Coombes is happy.

The reader assumes that is the first time Mr Coombes has probably smiled since the " dear dead days". He had completely forgotten his problems, he didn't even realise that he'd been so tedious. " he had been a dull dog an enemy to merriment; he would make up for it", H. G. Wells puts us in suspense the reader doesn't know what Coombes is planning to do, yet we believe what ever he do will me amusing as we see Coombes as a clown. To a certain extent the reader is right, we find it largely absurd the way Coombes makes an entrance, and the way he behaves in a violent manner. " over went the tea-table with a smash as Coombes clutched him by the collar and tried to thrust the fungus into his mouth", if something like this really happened at our presence we would not have found it funny. However, the violence in this story is slapstick and by that H. G. Wells portraits Mr Coombes as a clown.

Character perceptions are a key point in both stories. The main characters in both stories are not exactly what they appear as in the beginning.  
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Alternatively, what we judge them to be. By using comedy the writers are successful in making the characters seem deceptive. "... enjoying both his cigarette and the prospect of an argument", when Clarence first has an encounter with Mr Coombes, he believes Coombes is at a lower level than himself. This makes Clarence feel superior to him. In addition, in physical appearance Clarence is described as 'lank young man', the fact that he is taller than Coombes, makes Coombes feel at no-authority. However, after Coombes takes the drug and goes home, Clarence no longer feels at power, "Clarence approved himself a coward".

After his little performance, we realise Coombes is a little hypocrite in the story. His wife has taken him seriously and gives Coombes the respect he believes he deserves. All the same, the reader still sees him as a slapstick comedian. At the end of the story, Coombes has an attempt at dignity. He lies to his brother so his brother admires him for what seems as Coombes' authority. "I was a bit too easy and loving", Coombes was more of a pushover than a loving husband, but he's too ashamed to say it to his brother. He plays the sort of man, he wishes he always has, even before the drug. "We 'ad a...pitched into them". Coombes is telling the truth, just not the whole truth. That's what makes it so humorous. "I dessey they're sent for some wise purpose", Coombes believes that pretending to be sexist makes him look like a real man with authority.

Just like 'Mrs Turner Cutting the Grass'. Purple Plieus ends with the author using same sort of adjectives to describe the main character, but with an extra positive adjective. H/G/Wells describes Coombes as a 'little man' in the beginning, and then at the end calls him an 'absurd little man'. Absurd is the <https://assignbuster.com/mrs-turner-cutting-the-grass-and-the-purple-plieus-essay-sample/>

key word here. This is exactly what we think of Coombes at the end of the story. Just like we think Mrs Turner is an 'ornament'.