

Watership down by richard adams

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Watership Down By Richard Adams The novel Watership Down by Richard Adams, like Edmund Spencers The Faerie Queene, is an allegory. Watership Down also embodies many romantic ideas. Fiver, a rabbit who sees visions from Frith, represents the turn toward imagination that occurred in the Romantic period. The rabbits in the novel also value freedom and rebellion against tyranny, two important Romantic ideas. Many of the rabbits that left the Sandleford warren were unhappy with authority there, and the Watership Down warren helped the rebellion against Efrafa. Hyzenthlay, a doe in Efrafa, questions authority and longs for freedom from tyranny. She embodies the individualism valued in the Romantic period and, like Fiver, sees visions from Frith. The rabbits in the novel search for better ways to live- another important Romantic idea.

Fiver leads the search. I know what we ought to be looking for a high, lonely place with dry soil, where rabbits can see and hear all round and men hardly ever come. Wouldnt that be worth a journey? (Adams 48) Watership Down is an allegory, a story in which the characters, settings and events stand for abstract or moral concepts (Sime 1189). The different warrens in Watership Down represent different types of government. Efrafa, a warren run by General Woundwort, is a totalitarian government where the military class rules and the others are oppressed, much like the Khrushchev era in the USSR.

In The Faerie Queene, each main character represents a heroic quality. In the epic poem of knights, dragons and ladies, each part represented a heroic quality that embodied a noble person. During the Romantic period, people turned away from the emphasis on reason and artifice. The Romantics

embraced imagination and naturalness. (Sims 630). Fiver, a rabbit from the Sandleford warren, is an example of this Romantic philosophy in the novel.

Fiver has an uncanny sense for danger- a psychic sense that the other rabbits do not possess. He speaks of one of his visions, I know theres something unnatural and evil twisted all round this place. I dont know what it is, so no wonder I cant talk about it. I keep getting near it, though.(Adams 102). Fivers sense of danger proves accurate.

He predicted the destruction of the Sandleford warren, imagining The field! Its covered with blood! (Adams 21). This prophecy was later fulfilled when Holly and Bluebell came to Watership Down and told how the men destroyed the warren. Fiver embraces these visions, even in the face of other rabbits that tell him he is not thinking logically. Fiver values his individualism and visions. The rabbits of Watership Down, like Romantics, believed in individual liberty and sympathized with those who rebelled against tyranny. (Sims 630).

The rebellion that the rabbits supported came from the tyranny in Efrafa. Holly learned of Efrafa on his arrival, You cannot call your life your own (Adams 245). The rabbits in Efrafa are marked, and depending on the mark, have certain feeding times and are only allowed above ground at those times. Blackavar, an Efrafa rabbit, had been caught trying to run away from the warren. (Adams 248). Blackavars ears were ripped to shreds as punishment. (Adams 248).

Holly and the other Watership Down rabbits were sniffing at him; absolutely horror-stricken. (Adams 248). Strawberry supports rebellion from Efrafa.

There are rabbits there whod be the same as we are if they could only live naturally, like us. Several of them would be glad to leave the place if they could. (Adams 265).

Hyzenthlay, a doe in Efrafa, longs for individual liberty and freedom from tyranny. Upon meeting her, Bigwig hears her poem, which, like romantic poetry, spoke of personal experiences and emotions (Sims 630). Bigwig also sees her emotions in her poetic gaze. She turned to him a look of such wretchedness, so full of accusation and suffering, that it was all he could do not to beg her then and there to believe that he was her secret friend and that he hated Efrafa and the authority which he represented this does gaze spoke of wrongs beyond her power to express. (Adams 331). Hyzenthlay had told Holly of her attempt to leave the warren.

This doe rebelled against the tyranny of General Woundwort. Romantics were often looking for better- that is, happier, fairer, and healthier- ways to live. (Sims 631). The rabbits were also looking for a better way to live. A few of the rabbits who left the Sandleford warren did so, not because of Fivers warning, but because they were not happy with life at Sandleford. Bigwig leaves the Owsla by rebelling against the Threarah. I told him that a strong rabbit could always do just as well by leaving the warren.

Lettuce-stealing isnt my idea of a jolly life, nor sentry duty in the burrow. (Adams 29). At cowslips warren, the rabbits thought they had found a better place to live when they saw the carrots available daily. Hazel remarked What

a Country! What a warren! No wonder theyre as big as hares and smell like princes! (Adams 99). Fivers better place is Watership Down, a high, lonely place with dry soil, where rabbits can see and hear all round and men hardly ever come. (Adams 48).

Although the rabbits have a different idea of a better place, they all constantly seek a better place to live, better things to eat, and better government. Watership Down mirrors many Romantic philosophies. The ideas of freedom and rebellion against tyranny are themes that run throughout the book, just as they were present throughout the Romantic period. Fiver and Hyzenthlay represent the individualism and imagination that were valued by Romantics. Watership Down also functions as an allegory representing different qualities in humans and different forms of government. The importance of Romantic ideas and their relevance in the modern world is shown in Richard Adams 1972 novel, Watership Down.

Bibliography Adams, Richard. Watership Down. New York: Avon Books, 1972.
Sime, Richard and others, Eds. Elements of Literature. Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1997.