

# How does guterson present ishmael essay sample



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BUSTER**

In Chapter four Guterson gives us an insight to the character of Ishmael Chambers. He reflects on the death of Carl Heine and also looks back to his past which is brought on, because he grew up with Carl, "... remembering Carl Heine from highschool. They had both graduated in '42. They had played on the football team together". Guterson presents Ishmael as intelligent, "... five hundred pages about chasing a whale? - but as it turned out, it was entertaining. He read the whole thing in ten sittings in his booth... , yet paranoid about what the islanders think about his amputated arm, " He was keenly aware of his pinned up sleeve, and it troubled him because it troubled other people. "

This suggests that Ishmael is sensitive and understandable, and because his arm bothers other people (and he is fully aware of this), he feels like an outcast within the community. Ishmael is insecure because of his arm, however he does not want any sympathy, " He sensed their need to extend sympathy to him, and this irritated him even more. The arm was a grim enough thing without that, and he felt sure it was entirely disgusting".

Guterson presents Ishmael as a dissatisfied man, who likes to be alone, " It was not in him to drink beer and shoot pool. His more natural domain was in a high-backed booth near the read or Day's Restaurant on University Way where he sipped coffee and read his history. " I believe that one of the reasons why he feels so isolated is because of his experiences at war; none of the other islanders can relate to how he is feeling or what he has been through. After the war Ishmael changed and he is aware of this although he can not prevent it from happening, " His cynicism - a veterans cynicism - was a thing that disturbed him all the time".

After the war, Guterson presents Ishmael as a disturbed man as he can not forget the horrendous images he has witnessed, " People appeared enormously foolish to him. He understood that they were only animated cavities full of jelly and strings and liquids". Ishmael has no pity towards the islanders and their ignorance. Guterson presents Ishmael as a good man deep down, " The strange thing was. he wanted to be like everyone. He just couldn't find a way to it", who has the same characteristics as his father.

" He loved mankind dearly and with all his heart, but he disliked most human beings... ou're the same you know. You're your father's son. " Towards the end of chapter four, Guterson shows just how much of an outsider Ishmael is on the island when he interviews other fisherman for the " Island Reviewer". Ishmael is described as " not being part of this fraternity of fisherman" because of his arm, and because he is a journalist, yet he gains much respect of the gill-netters because he is a wounded war veteran, " On the other hand, he had the advantage of the prominently wounded and of any veteran whose war years are forever a mystery to the uninitiated.

These latter were things that solitary gill-netters could appreciate and offset their distrust of a word shaper who sat being a typewriter all day. " When Ishmael interviews the Gjorvaag he becomes bitter towards Ishmael saying, ' " Fuck you anyhow, Chambers! " ' Ishmael also understands that Gjorvaag disapproves of journalism from his sarcastic and aggressive reply, ' " Well what's she going to say?... What can she say? Jesus Christ! " ' The storm is significant in relation to the character of Ishamel Chambers.

The phone in his office was dead, however, and gave him back only a hollow silence”, which signifies that during the storm Ishmael is helpless and has no control. Guterson uses words such as “ dead”, “ cold” and “ phantom limb” which indicates to the reader that Ishmael’s amputated arm is aching and that the cold weather is forcing him to remember his past, when he fought in the war. The courtroom and the storm are similar, however Ishmael does not understand why everybody is more interested in the weather, rather than a murder trial.

Weather of this sort overwhelmed absolutely everything, so that even when a man stood trial for his life it was no doubt the destruction of docks and bulkheads, the trees fallen on homes, the burst pipes, the standard cars, that would most interest San Pedro’s citizens. ” The reason for this is because the weather involves the islander people and their lives which, they find to be more interesting and intriguing. They find Kabuo fascinating, although they do not understand him. The islanders have no control over the weather but they believe that they all know what the outcome of the trial will be.

Guterson highlights how small the island is when he says, “ It was as if they had been waiting all along for something enormous to enter their lives and make them part of the new. ” Again, Ishmael is presented as an outsider as he does not behave the same as the other islanders. Although Kabuo is married to Hatsue, he is insignificant to Ishmael. Guterson shows this during the storm when he says, “ The snowfall obliterated the borders between the fields and made Kabuo Miyamoto’s long-cherished seven acres indistinguishable from the land that surrounded him.

Here, Guterson is saying that the storm has covered all of the land, and on the surface it is all the same. The seven acres are symbolic of Kabuo and Carl Heine/Ishmael and the fact that it is separated, is insignificant and really does not matter. Although Ishmael doesn't understand why somebody would kill another human being over land he tries to make sense of it, " He had been to war, after all". In the novel, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, Ishmael has a childhood relationship with Hatsue, a Japanese girl.

In Chapter twelve Guterson describes an event involving Ishmael which the reader does not necessarily need to know and also may find embarrassing to read, " He would think about Hatsue while he touched himself. He would shut his eyes and lean his head against a tree; afterward he felt better and worse". This is extremely personal and it builds up Ishmael's frustration towards Hatsue. I think that Guterson has chosen to write about this, because it highlights how much he is infatuated with Hatsue, and the extreme's that he is willing to go to, to wallow in her.

Choosing to write about this in the novel, also accentuates her innocence as she has no idea that Ishmael is doing this. In the following paragraph, Guterson undermines Ishmael, " It did not seem so far fetched to him". Ishmael says, " He liked to think about being with Hatsue in some place like Switzerland or Italy or France". Ishmael is being vague and knows that these places are far away from reality.

He knows that he could never get to them even if he did have Hatsue.

Guterson presents Ishmael as whinging "... is suspicion that he loved more deeply than she did nevertheless remained with him, and he worried about it

perpetually". Ishmael believes that he loves her more than she loves him, and because he "worried about it perpetually", this is indicating how desperate he is, to have Hatsue's love and that it is his constant source of paranoia. However, Hatsue makes excuses and Guterson decides to explain different things through Ishmael's point of view, therefore using no words of Hatsue, "Hatsue denied that this was so and explained to him that her emotional reserve was something she couldn't help".

Guterson does this because it shows that Hatsue is less emotionally involved with Ishmael, than he is with her, and it also appears to be less powerful than what it would, if they had been her own words. Ishmael finds it hard to believe, that (although Hatsue and he are close), she finds it easy to abruptly ignore him and treat him with coldness, "How was it possible for her to feign such coldness without feeling it at the same time?" In the novel, Ishmael and Hatsue lead a "private life" as the Japanese community within the island would disapprove of their relationship, but Ishmael is desperate for Hatsue to love him.

Ishmael pleads with Hatsue and tries to disregard what she says, "Don't pay it any mind", when she calls their relationship "evil". "She repeated that it made her unhappy to deceive the world". Here Guterson tells the reader, that Ishmael is losing the argument. He presents Ishmael as naive and ignorant towards the prejudice that the islanders have towards the Japanese. The war is slowly becoming a reality to the islanders, yet Ishmael chooses to ignore it.

Guterson makes Hatsue more aware of the real world, then Ishmael. I believe that Guterson has done this is because, Hatsue is looking for excuses to finish her relationship with Ishmael, but he is engrossed in her and refuses to face reality, " Yet sometimes at night Ishmael Chambers would lie awake because there was a war on in the world. He would turn his thoughts toward Hatsue and then keep them there... " I believe that in the novel, Guterson presented Ishmael as a compassionate character before he went to war.

This is demonstrated through the meetings he has with Hatsue in the Cedar tree and love he shows for her. Throughout the novel, Guterson presents Ishmael as a man who still struggles to cope with his feelings about Hatsue and understand why she had abruptly finished their relationship although it was a long time ago. However, when Ishmael goes to war and witness' some traumatic things he appears to lose apart of him. Ishmael becomes isolated and believes that nobody can relate to him, therefore he prefers to be alone.