

The novel, the education of little tree

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The Education of Little Tree At times some story leaves us speechless and The Education of Little Tree by F. Carter is one of those marvels. An orphaned boy in his very early childhood makes us visualise through his eyes the day to day business of a Native American Family that lives amidst the Appalachian Mountains. Little Tree just after the three years of his parents death comes to his grand parents to live with them. The protagonist of the story is a so called bearer of twin genes owing to his Cherokee granny and white grand father. All of them together leaves in Tennessee backwoods in a cabin house that if called abandoned would not be an exaggeration. The silence surrounding the house and the vast emptiness that constantly swallows the surrounding seems to be a perfect place for Little Wood to learn the Cherokee lifestyle from his much senior ancestors. Little Tree's learning trajectory follows a strange path of life that encompasses superstitions surrounded by taboos, unprecedented level of violence and the ultimate destination of all the living being that is death. Most laudable of the fact is that he never stopped smiling even after all these catastrophes. The close bond and interaction that he had formed with his lovely grand parents, along with John, his friend and more specifically with Mother Nature never let him lose the way of righteous life and even if he has lost it for the time being they (Especially Willow John) have helped him to come back to the right way. All the optimum learning, leads to self understanding and sufficiency that eventually translate into environmental understanding and immense respect for the same. This is also true for Little Tree as the quote reveals " Take only what you need. When ye take the deer, do not take the best. Take the smaller and the slower and then the deer will grow stronger and always give you meat. Pa-Koh the panther knows and so must ye" (Carter 9) His

education does not stop here as the history of his ancestors reveals in front of him eventually drawing a clear link between past, present and future in terms of sustainability “ If ye don’t know your past then ye will not have a future. If ye don’t know where your people have been, then ye won’t know where your people are going” (Carter 40) It is an irony that a boy who is as unfortunate to lose his parents at five soon came within the cosy realm of his grand parents who are not only loving and caring but knowledgeable. This on one hand have provided him normal child hood and on the other the necessary lessons that are necessary to survive the bigger battles of life afterwards. It would not be an exaggeration that Little Tree through living amidst nature one day became a part of it “...as long as I live I could always come home to them [the trees, the birds, the waters, the rain and the wind], where other children would find their parents gone and would feel lonesome; but I never be” (Carter 144). His leanings also comprised of some not so glorious lessons of American history; the history of his ancestors who were forcefully out landed in those earlier days and compelled to take shelter in hills and jungles. Most astonishingly these wise words came from no other than his white grand father who condemned with great vigour the deeds of his own blood line who resorted to unprecedented destruction of natural resources, both animal and plants alike. Such sinful act of his fellow members made Little Tree’s grandfather forbid them from his own social realm, in order to join the Indian clan that eventually would help him learn their customs. (Carter 107) The novel yields laughter of joy and simultaneously makes the eyes hazy with tears and that is perhaps the biggest victory a novel can ever achieve. The readers soon get sewed with each event that touches the Little Tree and prays for his well being. He

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becomes an icon for several of us or rather a replica of our own childhood that remained tapped over years and finally breathed its shy of relief through *The Education of Little Tree*. The reader starts praying for this little boy to embrace maturity at the earliest time and their prayers are answered through some vein government vaunt that claimed that the boy is bereft of proper education and upbringing and needs to be taken into government custody to offer the same. Without any grains of doubt the decision of the government is hurt twitching but the Indian roots that is anagrammed into the heart of this little boy is sure to prevail as the winner and eventually he will come out to embrace his mother land again as a true Cherokee. The story reveals how the American Indian culture courts danger in daily life and how hard for them is to sustain their identity unaltered from the rest of the ethnic groups. In my opinion, it evokes maximum sympathy for Little Tree on one hand and on the other, in a far broader background ignites a question; how safe are the Indians are regarding maintaining their ethnic culture and sovereignty. Reference Carter, Forest. *The Education of Little Tree*, New Mexico: University of Mexico. 1986. Print.