

Unredeemed captive

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The Unredeemed captive The Unredeemed Captive, by John Demos, is a narrative story beginning on February 29, 1704. On this morning, the Colonial New England massacre took place resulting in about 48 casualties and about 112 were taken into captivity and taken to New France (Canada). Reverend John Williams and his family were among the captured victims. Demos continues on with the novel in a narrative form allowing the reader to follow the story of Eunice, a daughter of Reverend John Williams, and the hardships she faces. Demos chose to organize the novel chronologically as Eunice's life progresses as a captive. By writing in a narrative style, the reader is better able to follow along and get what feels like a first hand look into different arguments that Demos proposes at this time. Demos incorporates other sources in his novel such as John Williams' published autobiographical accounts of the capture, Eunice's letter written shortly before her 75th birthday, and a few other personal documents, but the base of the story, Eunice's story, is assumed by Demos. Since there is no actual, tangible, documentary of Eunice, Demos is forced to assume her story based on documents that he has regarding accounts of her family members, and other captives at this time. He (Demos) takes on the persona of Eunice, turning into a detailed journey of the unredeemed captive. One argument that Demos makes in the novel regards the Puritan ideas surrounding "redemption". Since Eunice was taken captive at the young age of six, her loyalty to her religious beliefs and her complete understanding of the Puritan ideology was still being established. Eunice was not sold to the French as a captive, rather the Kahnawake Indians took her under their wing. Eunice remained with the Indians and overtime, she lost her ability to speak English,

and she was also baptized into the Roman Catholic faith. As she progressed through her childhood, into adulthood Eunice adopted the Indian way of life and ended up marrying an Indian man. When Eunice's father, Reverend John Williams, of the Puritan faith, found out about his daughters new lifestyle he was heartbroken to say the least. As long as she was not of the Puritan faith, John Williams considered her "captive". I believe Demos sheds light on this topic to argue the strict nature of the Puritan faith. The fact that John Williams is aware that his daughter is of good health but yet still deems her "captive" due to her new religious lifestyle shows that the Puritans stay loyal to their faith and if someone goes astray they aren't shunned; however, they are looked at as in-need-of-help. Eunice does not agree with the stereotype placed on Indians as "savages" just because they are not of the Puritan faith and that only further tempts her to adopt the Catholic lifestyle even more. I believe Demos is successfully able to promote Eunice as a character who understands that it is not morally sound to discriminate this group of people simply for their religious beliefs. Another argument that Demos sheds light on in the novel is between the French and the Puritans. The French seem to accept the Indians and their Catholic beliefs while the Puritans discriminate. I think Demos is trying to emphasize the importance of religion to the Puritans to the readers of the novel. The Puritans are discriminating not only towards the Indians but also the French solely because of their difference in religion. As Eunice's story continues and she is reunited with her brother after 36 years, her brother is still trying to push the Puritan lifestyle on Eunice, her husband, and their three children by asking them to permanently move from Canada and be part of the Puritan lifestyle in which they (Stephan and his

family) live. I think the point that Demos is trying to drive home throughout the novel is that this is one account of a family that was ripped apart due to religious differences. All members of the family became physically freed from captivity, yet the family was unable to reunite without attempted persuasion regarding religion. The sad tragedy of the family being torn apart was only further saddened by the permanent separation that took place. Demos effectively delivers the story of Eunice and her family to the audience. He is successfully able to relay to the the reader underlying facts about the Puritan religion and the way the religion was looked at in this time period. As a reader, however, I began to look down upon the Puritan ideologies only because I didn't think it was fair for people who devote so much to their religion to be as discriminatory as they were depicted. I caught myself favoring the relationship and the religious ideologies of the Catholic Natives and Frenchmen. The only barrier I found with the points Demos was trying to present was the way the novel was written at times. For example, the alternate sources that were incorporated by Demos in the novel often through me as the reader off guard and I found my self re-reading. Demos indented the text when switching between sources which I found to be confusing at times. I enjoyed learning about the Native religion and I found myself appreciating it more than others focused on in the novel. At first, in the beginning of the novel, I was skeptical of the Indians after the raid and massacre. I was sure I wouldn't agree with any possible motives they would have and that their religion had to be barbaric. Upon further reading however, I was able to obtain more information and develop a respect for their religion and way of life. I think Eunice was also able to find that respect

also even though at a young age it was all she knew. She was old enough to realize that her father and eventually her brother were wrong in trying to “save” her from her own religious ideas. There was nothing wrong with the religion she had adopted and they were wrong in trying to force another one on her. Ultimately, I believe the themes of Demos novel were appropriately depicted for his targeted audience and I enjoyed following the story of Eunice. Even though Demos struggles to provide historical sources that add facts to the novel, the story line takes the reader on a journey of courage and heartbreak that sufficiently describes the hardships along the way for the unredeemed captive.