

"the pieces of silver"
by karl sealy essay
sample



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“ The Pieces Of Silver” by Karl Sealy Essay Sample

* Karl Sealy’s title can be viewed as both childish for the children’s perspective yet mature from an adult’s perspective.

* The childish view includes the notion of the Pieces of Silver being related to Pirates of the Caribbean or pieces of treasure.

* The adult view however includes the notion that the pieces of silver can be related to Judas who betrays Jesus in the bible for 30 pieces of silver. Karl Sealy sets up from the outset that money will be handed over as a betrayal.

* Both of these views together illustrate the concept that the story will contain a childish and mature perspective to life between the children and adults. Although the adult world seems like the most mature way of interpreting the title, Karl Sealy endeavours to increase the children’s role in society by giving them an aim.(The pieces of silver)

* Language

* In the first line, Karl uses the phrase “ pall of silence” which can be interpreted as a reference to a coffin covering. He uses the bell as an enemy to the children because when it rings, a pall silence settles over the noisy playfield. He is showing that the children suddenly stop being happy and stand in silence as if it was death.

* In line 3, Karl says that the children are “ reluctantly playing games of cricket and pickups were abandoned.” Their reluctant behaviour shows their

fear towards socialising and that they are not enjoying the cricket games.

The word "abandoned" suggests that the boys are scared and are panicky.

* The children "slithered down from the old tamarind tree on the school grounds" or "dropped quickly from branches making haste to clear their mouths of the green acid fruit they had been enjoying." The children's haste indicates their fear towards the consequences of what could happen by their teachers if they were not quick. The word "slithered" refers to snakes which are religiously portrayed as bad creatures in Adam and Eve.

* In line 47-48, Karl Sealy describes the boys as delivering their hands into their pockets emphasising fear and discipline and the notion that the boys would love to contribute but in some cases can not for no fault of their own.

* He describes the boys "in the lower classes" which is a very effective pun. This phrase can be interpreted as the lower classes in school or possibly the lower social classes in that they cannot afford the simplest of things. This phrase makes the reader have compassion upon the boys.

* Another example of his use of puns is in line 52 when Karl Sealy describes an A4 sheet of paper as a "foolscap sheet" of paper. On this sheet of paper, the names of boys who had contributed to the retiring head's money. The use of this word is very effective because the writer is implying that the idea is foolish and unfair.

* A regimented/military like/ordered school

* Karl Sealy describes the school as assembling "in ranks" before they could "file" into the school. The children are being compared to soldiers who are expected to act like adults and let go too quickly of their childhood.

* There is an element of fear and discipline portrayed.

Inversion Of The Norms

* "The schoolmaster did not order the school to be seated as was the normal custom after prayers." This quotation is very effective because it confirms that the school was regimented but Karl Sealy is trying to build up tension by changing the norms. This quotation makes the school's order break down. Ironically, in the proceeding part of the story, the school's order does break down when the children can not afford the money for Mr Megahey's leaving present. (Line 42-43)

* Comparison between the teachers and students

* There is a clear inversion of the social norms. In paragraph 2, the boys are "waiting for inspection", glancing "apprehensively" (worriedly) and the reader is given a clear description of the boys' level of poverty.

* Karl Sealy describes the boys as having "dusty, naked feet" portraying the notion of the boys as being helpless and in need of basic clothing.

* Many of the boys tried to "feverishly" make their nails "presentable". This shows the strong idea of the boys being dirty for no fault of their own but even so, they endeavour to make themselves look good in front of the bullish members of staff out of respect.

* Karl Sealy contrasts the teachers' appearance and behaviour in paragraph 3 by describing them as a "leisurely bunch" who were "laughing, joking" in "quiet voices" as they "sauntered towards the boys". The notion of the teachers being a leisurely bunch clearly demonstrates the issue of discrimination. The children are quiet, shy, neglected and poor whereas the teachers are friends, they are happy and laughing. This shows an inversion of the social norms.

* In paragraph 4, the "stout" and "pompous" acting headmaster is described. There is a strong connotation of the headmaster as being fat and therefore rich. The headmaster is portrayed as abusing his power.

* His job title as "acting headmaster" further explores his abuse of power. He is acting better than what he really is and he should not deserve the role of headmaster because he abuses his role and fails in creating a happy atmosphere for the children to live in knowing their poor quality of lives at home.

* The headmaster can be seen as an unnecessary character because he is acting.

* At this point in the text, the narrator does not give us the head's name which can be symbolically seen as depersonalising him because of the fact that he is an unnecessary character in the school. i. e- taking away his identity. Ironically, in most cases the head teacher is described as the most important person but here Karl Sealy chooses to invert the situation.

* The acting head does not quite fit the hierarchy.

* Fear And Discipline

* " Three strokes with his cane of plaited tamarind."

* This quotation is very significant because the cane is made to look pretty by being described as " plaited." This is referring to the fact that the teachers are better/ prettier than the students. It is ironic that the students are actually getting hit for not looking pretty (presentable.)

* The use of the word " tamarind is very effective because at the start of the novel, the author describes the " old tamarind tree" as being one of the children's only sources of fun. Karl Sealy uses this clever technique to show that the children's only happiness is being turned against them. i. e-They are loosing the little they have.

* After the inspection the boys " filed in quietly." (line 27)

* This confirms the school as being ordered and regimented.

* The first words of the headmaster are " Shun".

* This word is an abbreviated version of attention and it can also mean to be pushed away from a community.

* The word's abbreviation makes it sound more aggressive and monosyllabic.

* The entire school of boys flung their hands to their heads when the headmaster starts talking giving the notion of fear, discipline and respect as well as the notion of the children trying to protect themselves.

* Line 48-moist fists shows fear.

* The Children Are Portrayed As Better Than The Teachers

* " The schoolmaster announced a hymn and emitting an untrue faltering note invited the scholars to take it. The boys rendered a rich improvement of the sound."

* This quote emphasizes that the boys have got the potential of doing better than the teachers. There is also a concept of the children outnumbering the teacher and therefore rendering a rich improvement of the sound. The acting schoolmaster's untrue faltering note is very ironic because there is a notion of him as acting untruly. He makes unnecessary comments and is not needed in the school community.

* Teachers Like Children Only By How Much They Offer

* " No commendation seemed due to the donor of threepence. A sixpence was held up between forefinger and thumb of the receiving teacher and displayed before the class, while the name of the boy who had presented it was repeated some half a dozen times."