

# Analysis of "through the tunnel" by doris lessing

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The prose "Through the Tunnel" by Doris Lessing is about a young English boy, Jerry, who is on a holiday with his mother and it talks about his longings to go to the bay instead of the beach he knows very well of. He faces an internal conflict on whether he should stay with his mother or follow his desire to go to the bay.

Likewise, Jerry's mother also faces an inner conflict between her sense of duty and her sense of giving way towards her son. The theme of conflict is seen through the use of setting of time and place, as well as the characterisation of the two protagonists. With the use of places in setting, we are able to see both physical and emotional conflicts in the prose. The conflict experienced by Jerry on whether he should go to the bay can be seen when he is described to be "at a turning point of the path" of the bay and the beach. The fact that he is standing at a turning point signifies that there is a choice he can make to choose which pathway he wants to follow. This also directly shows the physical conflict in the two venues which are directly opposite from each other.

Additionally, the description of the two places, are vastly different from each other. The "wild and rocky bay" suggests danger and a sense of excitement where "the crowded beach he knew so well" suggests a sense of boredom and it also gives a sense of reluctance and dread to go to the beach.

Therefore, when these two descriptions are placed right next to each other, it creates a stark contrast and this juxtaposition emphasises the physical conflict of the two places. We can also see the conflict of Jerry through the location of his mother, who "walked on in front of him" away from the bay. The significance of her location is to show that Jerry needs to follow her to

the " safe beach" instead of the bay as he is obliged to follow her due to his " contrition" even though he strongly longs to go to the bay. With the use of characterisation, Jerry's body language shows us his his inner conflict on whether or not he should go to the bay on his own.

He is shown to be always hesitating on his thoughts of action and his eventual actions are the opposite from what he really wants, therefore, showing a conflict between what he wants and what he actually does. For example, he is seen to stop walking, letting his " mother [walk] on in front of him" as he contemplates if he wanted to change his direction and go towards the bay which he longs to go. However, he eventually hides his desire to do so and ran back to his mum, showing a conflict in his actions. Additionally, he is seen to "[look] back over his shoulder at the wild bay" and constantly " thinking of it" even as he plays on the beach. Therefore, his thoughts clearly highlights his sincere longing and desire to explore further from the " safe beach". Secondly, we can see the conflict experienced by Jerry's mum can be seen when she faces a dilemma on a sense of duty or desire as well as her conflicting actions at first and in the end.

Initially, when she felt that Jerry might be longing for amusements she had " been too busy or careless to imagine", she " frowned" and " looked impatient". This shows us that as a mother, she does not want her son to do things out of the usual " routine" they do due to her fear and worry over her son's safety and her sense of duty. However, on the second day, when it was time for their " routine of swimming and sunbathing", instead of getting Jerry to follow it, she asked him if he was " tired of the usual beach" and whether he " would like to go somewhere else". Furthermore, she allowed him to

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have the freedom he desired when she tells Jerry to “ go straight back to the villa” when he was done playing. This clearly contrast her initial reaction towards exploring new places as she not only suggested to Jerry to explore new places, she even allowed him to go on and place in the “ wild-looking place” on his own. Therefore, from this we are able to see the conflicting actions of Jerry’s mother from the start to the end.

In conclusion, with the use of setting and characterisation, we are able to identify Jerry’s inner conflict, the physical conflicts in space as well as his mother’s inner conflict and actions.