

Culturalist views of john updike in his writings

Society



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Two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and staff writer at the New Yorker, John Updike focused on societal lifestyle, and with just a pen and paper he painted pictures with his words. For five decades, Updike crafted fictional novels outlining the behaviors that faced the middle class within the 60's and 70's. His stories took an unfavorable approach to how social life took place, and showed the covetous state of men that drove them to adulterous tendencies. His collection of Rabbit novels, his most famous, ended up winning many awards for best fiction movies. Mainly, his views focused on sex, death, and religion of the middle class which progressed to show how people focused on materialistic things, and forgot about their faith and morals. As a result, in most cases he would use these themes as one.

He liked to use the middle class because the constant clash of extremes from both sides of mass norms and countercultural tendencies. When Updike was asked what the purpose for his stories were he said this, " My only duty was to describe reality as it had come to me — to give the mundane its beautiful due. " This " beautiful due" is credited for many national scholar awards and the front cover of Time Magazine. Most of his fiction books outlined characteristics that he claims he experienced when he was young growing up in the middle class. For this reason, he clearly uses his own experiences, to bring out what people went through while growing up in middle class families. This is most notable in his book called The Centaur; his recollection of his childhood as he viewed his father. He clearly outlines that, the fear the middle class people face make everything they commit themselves into feel meaningless, hence it brings them closer to God. He outlines this the same way it used to happen for him in middle class of 60s

and 70s. Examining his stories in depth to find the underlying meaning people can see how Updike viewed the world focusing in on this materialistic way.

In his short story "A&P" Updike exposes the effects of counter culture through a boy named Sammy. Sammy a male grocery store clerk is mesmerized when three scantily clad women in bathing suits walk into an A&P. This is particularly interesting because of the fact there is no beach nearby. Sammy being somewhere middle to lower class sees the girls as rebellion with economic privilege, something not available to him. Stoskie is a fellow co-worker married with kids hoping one day to become a manager, this is the normality for what a boy Sammy's age should look forward to. Sammy sees this a future as one he does want for himself. The manager comes to berate their under clothed mischief and are denied service. Sammy makes the broad decision to quit his job breaking free from regular traditions and not following as a "sheep." When Sammy leaves the store in pursuit of the girls his is disappointingly surprised that the girls are gone. Sammy is left jobless and left socially alienated. This materialistic action taken by Sammy to make him quit his job and give up his life for someone's has never met shows how Updike viewed the world in this way. The strong irony and values shown in this story show not only how Updike viewed culture, but also the consequences that could be associated with it.

Another story that Updike displays his culturalist views that shows men adulterous tendencies is "Wife-wooing." He shows this idea though how the protagonist views his wife in different situations. The story begins with a man by a fire with his kids eating take out. He talks extraordinarily about his wife <https://assignbuster.com/culturalist-views-of-john-updike-in-his-writings/>

and how after 7 years, he still finds her desirable. When they go to bed, he wants to be sexual with his wife and he lets us know how he's seeing his wife in her under pants " underpants, untangling your nightie; oh, fat white sweet fat fatness. " Instead, she reads a book about Richard Nixon. When they wake up, he changes his views on her. He views her in an ugly way because he didn't get what he wanted " In the morning to my relief, you are ugly. " These quotes show clearly how Updike shows his cultural views and middle-class behaviors.

In conclusion Updike's views on culture are shown in his writings and will live on for many generations. His work was full of great views that needed to be shown as they occurred to the middle-class, outlining mostly the problems that they faced. His unique way of viewing life was like no other, he exposed all sides of the middle class. Updike portrayed American middle level people as with many problems, losing faith, greatly endorsed in sex and facing problems they had.