

Race discrimination in louisiana



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July 13, 2018

Setting and How it affects the Central Theme

The setting is very critical to create a central theme of a story. Though Bayonne, Louisiana is almost half white and half black, black members of the community still face discrimination. The author uses the setting to put the discrimination in more perspective of what the people are feeling, the setting helps the reader connect with the book, it gives the book depth and a more realistic setting. In *A Lesson Before Dying* Ernest J Gaines use these reasons to have a central theme.

The first setting is the most important and that is Louisiana. Louisiana is important because of what it has gone through. Louisiana was one of the last states in the south the end of slavery. Therefore, they discriminated against them, they were racist and caused there to be segregation. In Louisiana, African-American's were looked upon as the poor, nasty, lower class. The white people still felt as if they were still their slaves, they did not have any respect for the African-Americans living there. " Since emancipation, almost a hundred years ago, they would do any kind of work they could find to keep from working side by side in the field with the niggers." Grant talks about how biracial people that have one black and one white parent do anything from working near black people. This is because they don't want to be related to the African-American side of them due to the discrimination they face in Louisiana, even though one hundred year ago, a century ago, slavery was banned, they feel like they are still treated the same they were one

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hundred years ago. This shows how deep white peoples thoughts and actions after the African-Americans living in Louisiana.

The second is setting that is used to create a central theme is the town of Bayonne, Louisiana. Bayonne is full of discrimination, one of the central themes. This is because Bayonne, Louisiana is in the Southern side of the US, where they have not change with their thoughts about African-Americans, from the pre-civil war era when there was slavery. African-Americans are the victims of segregations in this town and many more like it. “ There was a Catholic church uptown for whites; a Catholic church back of town for colored. There was a white movie theater uptown; a colored movie theater back of town. There were two elementary schools uptown, one Catholic, one public, for whites; and the same back of town for colored.” Through this quote, Grant describes how African-Americans are treated in Bayonne. “ There, instead of houses and trees, there were fishing wharves, boat docks, nightclubs, and restaurants for whites. There were one or two nightclubs for colored, but they were not very good.” Grant also talks about how “ whites” have much better and many more recourses available to them for pursuing their passions and hobbies while African-Americans are barely able to get through just doing their normal routines.

The last and most significant setting in A Lesson Before Dying is Jefferson, in jail and at the courthouse. The jail is significant in creating a central theme because of the way Jefferson is treated there. When Jefferson was brought into the jail, his cell was apart from all the other cells of the white prisoners. The segregation is so bad in Bayonne, that white people that have committed crimes don't want a cell near an African-American. The

courthouse is important because of how Jefferson is portrayed there, and the unfairness of the court's ruling of his sentence. "Gentlemen of the jury, look at him—look at him—look at this. Do you see a man sitting here? Do you see a man sitting here? I ask you, I implore, look carefully—do you see a man sitting here? Look at the shape of this skull, this face as flat as the palm of my hand—look deeply into those eyes. Do you see a modicum of intelligence? Do you see anyone here who could plan a murder, a robbery, can plan—can plan—can plan anything? A cornered animal to strike quickly out of fear, a trait inherited from his ancestors in the deepest jungle of blackest Africa—yes, yes, that he can do—but to plan?

Gentlemen of the jury, be merciful. For God's sake, be merciful. He is innocent of all charges brought against him. But let us say he was not. Let us for a moment say he was not. What justice would there be to take this life? Justice, gentlemen? Why, I would just as soon put a hog in the electric chair as this." Jefferson lawyer who is a white male is trying to get the jury to let him go of all chargers. But his way of doing this portrays Jefferson as a poor, uneducated, black, person who is worth as much as a hog. Even though his lawyer is supposed to be on his side, he is bashing him just as much as he is trying to help. A Lesson Before Dying is a great eye opener about segregation and discrimination in the 1940s. Setting playing a huge part to make the book more engaging and connecting. I believe which helped the books central theme to show better and strong.