

Analysis of conflict in jhumpa lahiri's "this blessed house" assignment

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“ This Blessed House” by Jhumpa Lahiri is a short story that follows a small period of time in the two characters’ lives. Having known one another for only four months, newlyweds Sanjeev and Tanima, called Twinkle, are finding it difficult to adjust to married life. Both have very different personalities, a theme that Lahiri continuously points to throughout the story,. Their conflict comes to a head when Twinkle begins finding Christian relics all over the house. Sanjeev wants to throw the relics away, but Twinkle collects them on the mantle and shows them off at every opportunity.

As a character, Sanjeev is unadventurous and exacting, while Twinkle is free-spirited and does not care for the fine details. The root of the conflict between Jhumpa Lahiri’s characters Sanjeev and Twinkle in “ This Blessed House” is the clashing of their two very different personalities in a situation that forces them together. Of Sanjeev and Twinkle, Sanjeev is the one with the personality that craves order. Jhumpa Lahiri spends a great amount of time showing the reader just how much attention Sanjeev pays to organization and neatness.

The reader is introduced to Sanjeev as he kneels “ on the floor, marking, with ripped bits of Post-it, patches on the baseboard that needed to be retouched with paint” (Lahiri 53). A reader could take this seemingly exacting science of marking parts of the floor that need a touch-up as a normal activity for new owner of a home. Later in the story, however, Lahiri writes that Sanjeev organizes “ his engineering texts from MIT in alphabetical order on a bookshelf...” (Lahiri 54) and works his way “ methodically through the major composers that the catalogue recommended...” (Lahiri 60).

Suddenly the innocuous Post-its and methodical way in which Sanjeev places them over the rough spots in the floor seem like an attempt to fix every small imperfection. Sanjeev keeps his life as orderly and precise as possible. He tries to control his life by controlling the things around him, such as arranging his books or following a list of composers, instead of choosing names at random. Twinkle, in comparison to Sanjeev, is very much a free spirit. While Sanjeev has only been married once, Twinkle is on her second marriage, and the first was to an “American who had tried and failed to be an actor” (Lahiri 57).

Twinkle married an American, one who didn't even have a real job; this is unlike the more traditional Sanjeev who married an Indian woman the first time. At one point, after finding Twinkle in bed in the middle of the afternoon, Sanjeev remarks, “They didn't bother her, these scattered, unsettled matters” (Lahiri 56). While Sanjeev marks places on the floor that need to be re-touched, or organizes his books just so, Twinkle does not see small details as something worth her undivided attention.

She is “content yet curious” (Lahiri 56), and finds her curiosity sparked by a growing collection of Christian relics ??? statues, posters, lawn ornaments ??? she finds in the house. Sanjeev does not understand why these items are of such interest to Twinkle, because they are both Hindu and he finds no meaning in them himself. Twinkle sees something in them, however; perhaps just as a collection of interesting looking curios or as a symbol for something more. However, the important thing is that Twinkle can find interesting in something that really has no point in her life.

Twinkle's ability to find interest in non-useful items and Sanjeev's inability to understand that is the root of the conflict between the two. Sanjeev, stuck in his need for everything to be neat and have a purpose, is at odds with Twinkle and her seemingly uncontrollable unpredictability. Sanjeev himself says that "[Twinkle] was like that, excited and delighted by little things... It was a quality he did not understand. It made him feel stupid, as if the world contained hidden wonders he could not anticipate, or see" (Lahiri 57).

Sanjeev does not understand why Twinkle finds delight in little things that have no meaning, and Sanjeev used to understanding everything. Twinkle also won't listen to Sanjeev when he asks her to throw away the relics, and this causes resentment between both of them. Sanjeev makes Twinkle cry and Twinkle causes Sanjeev to think for a moment about pictures of other perspective brides his mother had sent him in years past. Both Sanjeev and Twinkle are trying to adjust to living with not only someone they barely know, but someone with whom they have very little in common.

Understanding is the key in any marriage, and neither of the pair understands why the other one thinks and acts as he or she does. This leads to a push-and-pull conflict of interests and also resentment. Inability to understand something leads to conflict, and in "This Blessed House" that fact does not change. Twinkle and her whimsy do not fit into Sanjeev's orderly life; he is not able to understand why Twinkle does the things she does. For her part, Twinkle is constantly pushing Sanjeev's limits, refusing to stay within his comfort zone.

She does not want to be limited any more than Sanjeev wants to be stretched. Two very different personalities are forced together, and there is a constant struggle between Sanjeev and Twinkle as one personality wars against the other. If the main point of the story is that Twinkle is collecting Christian relics, the relics only stand for the real conflict: two very different personalities who are trying to live together. Works Cited Lahiri, Jhumpa. "This Blessed House." Nash, Julie and Miller, Quentin. Connections. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2009. 53-65.