

# Oranges are not the only fruit compared with empire of the sun essay sample

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One obvious difference is that war is not present in “ Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit,” whereas in “ Empire of the Sun” the war between U. S. A and Japan rages on towards the closing stages and is central to the plot. A significant part of Jim’s childhood is spent as a prisoner of war, and “ Empire of the Sun” is a first-hand description based on the experiences of Ballard, who was interned from 1942 to 1945 in the same prison camps mentioned in the book. It is a sincere and moving account of what it was like to be a boy in Japanese occupied Shanghai at war time.

In 1941, China has been at war with Japan for four years. Jim lives with his parents in the International Settlement of Shanghai, where about 30, 000 British and American citizens lived . A typical eleven-year-old, he sees the world as made for his own enjoyment. Ballard presents him as a boy who has it all; he is the privileged young son of an English business executive, enjoying a good education, clothes and his passion for airplanes. Day and night, the boy dreams of flying. He knows the names of all the airplanes and can spot them by their silhouettes.

When they fly overhead in Shanghai in the last days before World War II breaks out, they may be a threatening omen for his parents, but for him they are wonderful machines, free of gravity, free to soar. Ballard captures the imagination of a young boy very well. This is in contrast to Jeanette, in “ Oranges” who does not seem to have any specific ambition others than the ones her mother forces her to have. Winterson’s picture of childhood is less exotic. Jeanette does not lead a luxurious lifestyle like Jim’s family.

She doesn't have many material possessions and lives in an average terrace house, Jeanette, throughout the novel suffers mental anguish; Jim also suffers this same anguish as neither character is truly free. Both characters go through very different things. Jim seems, on the surface, to have it all and lose it. In contrast, Jeanette doesn't seem to have anything to lose other than her place in heaven, or so her mother would have her think. In the typical style of children; Jim adapts to his situation as most children do, however traumatic. Jeannette eventually overcomes her trauma and finds herself.

Both authors skilfully present the trials and tribulations of childhood. Both protagonists are forced to grow up faster than children should; both characters have very difficult journeys. His journey takes Jim from abandoned sectors of Shanghai, to vast Japanese internment camps full of death and disease; this is what the book is all about - a young boy coming of age - similar to "Catcher in The Rye." Jamie is transformed from a child who, in late 1941, is naive about how horrible war is, into Jim, a young man in 1945 who has lived nothing but war for four years.

In contrast, Jeanette goes through more of a mental journey. She learns to be her own woman and to decide what is right and wrong for herself.

Winterson captures this just as effectively as Ballard captures Jim's development. A major difference between the novels is that God plays a very important role in "Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit," but not in "Empire Of The Sun"; which focuses on the prisoners-of-war who seem to have lost their faith. However in "Oranges" Jeanette could be seen, metaphorically, as a

prisoner too. Her “ prison” is mental in the main, but during the exorcism episode she is physically restrained.

In essence, God, or a specific interpretation of God, is the reason Jeanette is discriminated against. Homosexuality is against Jeanette’s religion, and her Church considered it an “ unnatural passion,” an evil. In contrast, God has no real presence in “ Empire of the Sun. ” perhaps because the prisoners have seen such evil in the camp that they feel that God has left them. The lack of religion in “ Empire” is important; the absence of faith compounds Jim’s isolation. Giving Jim God to talk to would give him a companion; this is not what Ballard wants to do. He wants to convey that Jim feels abandoned by everyone, including God.

Both writers use language skilfully, Ballard to indicate Jim’s state of mind during the early days of his isolation from his parents. When he first returns to Amherst Avenue Jim clammers into the backyard and views the beginnings of decay unemotionally. He is able to live there happily for a number of days, and sets out again as if on an adventure. The writing is flat and matter-of-fact. Winterson also uses language in an effective way to constantly describe Jeanette’s state of mind. Both authors create a bond between the reader and the character; both novelists do this in an effective way.

Winterson creates sympathy for Jeanette; Ballard also creates the same thing; we feel sorry for Jim in his struggles. The language both authors employ reminds us constantly, that the main characters are just children and should be treated better and cherished. Jim’s age is completely irrelevant, as

far as the Japanese are concerned. He is from the West, therefore is an enemy. Similarly Jeanette is seen by her mother to have "evil" in her because of her life style choice. Both are treated badly by adults.

Both authors use the title in their language to convey the story. In "Oranges" the mother says: After all," said my mother philosophically, "oranges are not the only fruit" Ballard doesn't mention the title directly put it is referred to as it is the Japanese flag. It has a picture of the rising sun on it. Ballard does make reference to the sun however in a very effective way: "They were sitting on the floor of a furnace heated by a second sun" This is a very powerful and evocative image. "Oranges" offers a complicated narrative structure disguised as a simple one and has a very large vocabulary. Winterson claims this is experimental. Ballard doesn't make the same claim, it is chronologically straight forward.

Another effective technique Winterson uses, which Ballard does not is humour. During the opening pages the reader is presented with descriptions of the mothers lists. Another part which many would find funny is Jeanette's mothers note "Dear Jeanette, We have gone to hospital to pray for Aunte Betty. Her leg is very loose" This almost seemed like Winterson is saying how pointless religion is. However, a similarity between the novels is that the main characters are able to overcome adverse situations in life through the presence other adults, who were important to them.

This is presented as part of the experience of childhood; for example, Jim confided in the Doctor on several occasions, which helped him overcome

fears, and for the first time Jim felt truly free. He also teams up with American street hustler Basie and his sidekick, Frank. As Jim runs errands for Basie, he learns the politics of their Japanese captors and the nearly animalistic way of surviving the harsh conditions; he merges these "skills" with his intellect and natural survival instincts. Jeanette receives more support from minor characters, such as Elsie, in the struggle to find her own identity.

Both authors explore how children naturally lean upon adults in times of crisis. Despite the support they receive, another similarity between the two protagonists is that, to a large extent, they are alone; Jeanette's mother doesn't agree with the lifestyle Jeanette wants. Jeanette is told that homosexuality is a sin; therefore, like Jim, she can not share her feelings with her mother, or with God. Both Winterson and Ballard, have isolated the central characters of their novels; their isolation eventually helps them both become strong and makes the novels more appealing.

The central characters in each novel share other similarities; again, they are connected with childhood. Jim is very impressionable, as is Jeanette. At first Jim is impressed with the Japanese planes and their technology; but when he sees the Americans bombing the Japanese airbase his opinion sways. He is totally won over when he sees the "second sun." a wonderful description of the atomic bomb which was dropped on Japan. Jim is very impressed with such power. Jeanette is impressed with different things and people, especially with Elsie, a member of the church whose "sin is the same as Jeanette's.

This line I think is a very effective one from Winterson. It conveys the attitudes of the time and confirms Jeanette's sexuality; it also reveals Elsie's sexuality, all in six effectively arranged words. Adult characters play a big part in the lives of the main characters in both novels similarly. Jeanette has her mother and Elsie. Jim takes advantage of the support he receives from adults in the prison camp over a three-year period. He runs errands for Basie, continues his education with lessons from Doctor Ransome and tries to keep up the fading spirits of Mrs. Victor.

At the same time, Jim feels superior to these adults - after all, he is the only one who really understands the courage of the Japanese kamikaze pilots. Another similarity is the fact that both novels explore the protagonists' confusion. Jim, at the beginning, likes the Japanese. This is not a normal attitude of a western boy whose country is at war. It may, however, reflect his naivety and age. He doesn't understand what the war is about. Jeanette is confused too; her religion is at odds with her personal feelings. She is told from infancy that what she thinks is good, is bad, but it's never really explained to her.

What adds to the confusion is that there are no grey areas in her version of Christianity, only absolutes. The main theme in "Empire of the Sun" is the loneliness of Jim. In contrast, the main theme of Winterson's novel is the conflict between good and evil. This is also a minor theme in J. G Ballard's "semi auto-biography." It is not God who has said Jeanette is "evil" or is "sinful," it is God's followers. Winterson targets the narrow-minded attitude of

the faithful. Linked with this is another key theme of “ Oranges”; love cannot be denied regardless of gender, religion or attitudes.

Another comparison between the novels is that the titles of both are very important to each story. The title J. G Ballard, chooses “ Empire of the Sun” is very fitting, both with the Japanese flag design and, very cleverly, with the “ second sun” Jim sees; the sun is clearly symbolic. Similarly, in “ Oranges” the Oranges have symbolic meaning. In each chapter, the author cleverly inserts the fruit as a means of evaluating events and connecting them; for example, when Jeanette was in hospital, her mother would send oranges for her. They are an apology for her never being there for her daughter.

As Jeanette and her mother never saw eye to eye, it is hardly surprising that Jeanette says she is willing to do any other job rather than sell oranges.

Oranges also represent heterosexuality, Thus, “ Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit” implies that there are other choices. Towards the end of the novel when the mission has a good supply of pineapples her mother says “ Oranges are not the only fruit” at this stage we realise that more is being discussed than a choice between two types of fruit; her mother is accepting that Jeanette has made a choice about how to live her life.

The structure chosen by each author emphasise the differences between the two novels; and the key theme of religion is reflected in the structure of “ Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit” as well as in its content. The chapter titles are all named after books from the Bible; for example, chapter one is called “ Genesis” and it marks the beginning of Jeanette’s story. In contrast, the



structure of “ Empire”, is very different. Ballard makes “ Empire,” organising the novel in chronological sections.

Another difference is that Winterson inserts fantasy episodes, which reflect Jeanette’s experiences and imagination, alongside the more conventional narrative. Ballard does not choose to do this; taking on the role of omniscient third person narrator he relays Jim’s story in a clear, uncomplicated way. Winterson, in contrast, opts for a first person narrative, which is effective in creating a bond between Jeanette and the reader.