

"the road" by cormac mcarthy



**ASSIGN
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Nothing could have been timelier than Cormac McCarthy's novel "The Road." The novel is not only interesting to read but also relevant to our society today. Though he has not used charts, graphs and statistical data to explain his point he has succeeded in using art to portray his message. No wonder the many awards the book has scooped since its publishing in 2006. This paper seeks to explain how McCarthy has used symbolism as a literature tool to pass his message to the world.

Symbolism by way of definition is the practice of representing real things or happenings using events, objects or relationships. The objects and events carry meaning in the happenings of the earth. These objects and events represent others by convention, association or resemblance. In the novel "The Road" Cormac has used a number of symbolisms (McCarthy 45). The main reason McCarthy used symbolism is to show the current position concerning various aspects of life including environment, humanity and effects of untamed civilization. He wanted to inform his audience the need for change and the looming danger if we do not embrace change of attitude and behavior. Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable and to ensure that it meets the needs of the present world without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The story happens after a great cataclysm wipes out most of the life on earth and its civilization. In the story we are told that of the general environment after the cataclysm. The ground is filled with ash. It is cold and dark. No vegetation covers the ground and there're very few living organism if any. "The area experiences electric storms and gray snow" (McCarthy 45). The events and happenings in this scene symbolize what is to befall the world

very soon if precautions are not taken. This is a true reflection of our world owing to the current data and situation at hand.

According to this data the world has undergone habitat destruction since man first set his foot on planet earth. But what is habitat destruction? This is the process of tearing down the natural environment making it unable to sustain the living things living there. When this is done it leads to depletion of the natural resources and extinction of living organisms. When environmental degradation occurs no life remains on earth just as in the case of the setting of Comarc's novel. Man has destroyed most of its areas rich in biodiversity (Berbault 201). Most of tropical regions and islands such as Philippines, New Zealand, Japan and Madagascar have been destroyed by human activities. Globally only 9 million kilometers squared of the tropical rainforest exist currently out of a total of 16 million kilometers squared that initially existed.

Marine areas have also suffered due to environmental degradation (Barbault 90). The places which have suffered extreme effects include the northern coastal areas of Caribbean Sea, eastern coastal areas of Africa and Asia. The northern coastal areas of South America have also suffered from environmental degradation. These coastal areas have suffered in that their coral reefs are undergoing destruction by human activities. In the United States of America not more than 25 percent of the vegetation remaining is natural. Furthermore more than a greater percentage of more than 50% of its wetlands has been destroyed in the last two centuries. If this trend continues then what comarc speaks of in his book " The road" about lack of vegetation is unavoidable.

Destruction of the areas with rich in biodiversity does not only lead to killing of the organisms present in the habitat. It also leads to reduction of the carrying capacity of these areas (Barbault 97) Furthermore the range of organisms existing in a certain habitat decreases. These increases the chances of the organisms mating with their related species hence decrease in diversification of genetics and therefore low chances of disease resistance and high chances of infertile offspring.

Another symbol that has been used in the book is the road. The writer uses the road as the title of his book. It's also clear from the unfolding of events in the novel that a lot of time is spent on the road by characters (McCarthy 67). From the novel the road used by the characters is not a smooth one. It is a dangerous road as seen by dead bodies lying on it. The road is also deserted. These may symbolize that the process to bringing sanity and ending the evils in the society is a journey. The journey is not an easy one and only few people have embarked on it owing to the desolate state of the roads. There is high possibility of people losing their lives in the course of their journey and only few people survive. This road may also symbolize a life that people decided to live whose end claims many lives.

Another symbol that has been used in this novel is the killing of snakes. The father in the novel returns home with a high fever and also experiences nightmares. At the same time the father remembers what happened one time during his youthful life (McCarthy 61). Here remembers how many snakes were killed during his youthful life. In many communities' snakes symbolizes evil. The burning of these snakes symbolizes the destruction of evil. But what are these evils in this society. The novel demonstrates evil in that

community when the boy realizes a headless burnt infant body along the road. This shows the extent of rot and violence in the community.

These scenes clearly demonstrate the rot in our current community. These are seen by civil wars, coups and border wars in many countries of the world today. Human life is not respected in the world today. Even the weakest and the innocent like infants are not spared this evil. Burning the snakes may only symbolize that the rot or the actual evil was not destroyed but just temporarily dealt with. Evil or the real problem still lives with and in us. No wonder evil has not ceased in our society long after the bill of rights and much other legislation to protect mankind have been instituted (Wannebo 94).

Conclusion

It is therefore clear that more has to be done to save humanity or else our current behaviors will lead to extinction of humanity. Governments must therefore step up their mandate and save this endangered generation of human beings and animals. Some of the policies these governments can put into consideration include enhancing family planning especially in high populated areas. This will avoid destroying more forests for settlement which is a major cause for environmental degradation. Legislations should be made to protect the natural environment from human destruction. Ways to increase agricultural output without putting more land under cultivation should be promoted. People should also be taught on the importance of protecting biodiversity and natural environment. Finally good and democratic governments should be instituted (Wannebo 97).