

# Critical lens essay with 1984



Martin Luther King Junior stated that, “ The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. ” In other words you never really know a true person until they are put in an unwanted, hard situation. A person could state their values and opinions, but you can never really truly know how they feel until they are put in a hard “ live or death,” situation. If a man stays true to his values in a time of conflict, then you could truly say that he is a good man inside and out. In *Snow Falling on Cedars* Kabuo Miyamoto, and in 1984, Winston Smith can both relate to this quote, but in very different ways. I very much agree with what this quote is saying.

Anyone can speak and agree, but when it comes to actually acting on your beliefs, that’s the hardest part of all. In the novel *Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson, there are several character that can relate to this quote, some of them did not stay true to the person they claimed to be and other did hold on tight to their beliefs. One of the characters that did stay true to himself in times of hardship was Kabuo Miyamoto. Kabuo is a Japanese American, who even though has Japanese in his blood, is an American. He is a man who always tries to see the best in people. He is a man of tradition and his word. Kabuo, doesn’t care about race or gender, he’s truthful and just. He’s not interested at acting a certain way or caring what people think of him. Kabuo Miyamoto does what he thinks is right. In the novel he pledged his allegiance and loyalty to the United States. He was not Japanese in nationality he was American. He went through many challenges in his life. There were three significant inconvenient challenges he went through during the course of the novel. These are, being in the internment camp and war, a situation with his family’s land, and lastly the murder trial. Throughout all of

these he stayed true to himself and he stood strong in “ times of challenge and controversy. ” The novel was set during the time of Pearl Harbor and when all of the Japanese American’s were sent off to the internment camps. In this situation where race is a huge factor, there was several times when Kabuo could have went back on his values and started hating the US, holding grudges or even going against the country, like becoming a spy of some sort. Yet he did not, in fact he still pledge his loyalty to America, because he was, in his mind, alway an american. He fought in the war against the enemy, even though they looked like him. He held his values about race and loyalty to his heart and did not stray. “ It was necessary to demonstrate his loyalty to the United States: his country. (92) The next hard time in Kabuo Miyamoto’s life was when he returned from the war and he wanted to get his family’s land back so he could live his life doing what his father did. Carl’s (the murder victim and owner of Kabuo’s old land) mother was very prejudice and sold the land without even mentioning it to Kabuo. Kabuo naturally did get a bit angry at the news. Mostly he wanted to find a way to get his land back, he moved to the next option. Even though Kabuo was finding it difficult to get his land back, he did not alter his values. It was an inconvenient situation, but he stayed calm and politely tried to get back what was rightfully his. In the end he did and it was mostly because he was patient. When Carl’s wife asked why he wouldn’t give Kabuo the land Carl replied, “ It comes down to the fact that Kabuo’s a Jap. ” (297) Even though race was a bit of a factor when Carl was deciding wether or not to give Kabuo the land, Kabuo did not yell about his race being the reason why he hasn’t retrieved it yet. He just hoped that Carl would do the right thing. Kabuo believes in equality, and he never let go of that belief. Another

instance was that of his murder trial. Inside he believed he was jumped at being the murderer because he was Japanese. He could have once again “rebelled,” and started hating his town and his country, but he still kept his values. He told nothing but the truth, he did what was right and told the court the whole story exactly. You could see his kindness when he helped out Carl at sea. ““ You’d do the same for me. ’ ’ I might do the same for you,’ said Carl. ”” (404) Even though he had a sort-of feud with Carl over his families land, he would always put helping out someone in need over silly family feuds. According to Martin Luther King Jr. these hard situations are when you see a person’s true opinions and you can see if he is truly a good man, and Kabuo Miyamoto definitely is. In the novel 1984 by George Orwell the character Winston Smith along with most of the character in this novel were completely opposite of Kabuo Miyamoto. Winston Smith was an employee of the Ministry of Truth, where he altered the past to match the future. He lived in a brainwashed world and he was soon realizing the absurdity of the society. He has values that were opposite of the society. Winston wanted to think differently, he believed Big Brother was bad and in fact hated him. He believed that The Party was evil, and he believed in true love, he believed in the past before the revolution. Winston held true to these beliefs in his save convenient life, but as soon as he was faced with his biggest fear, all of them went out the window and he became one of the small, ordinary individuals living in the brainwashed society. His main difficulty was his whole life living in a world of irony, hate, violence, and control, and his second difficulty was trying to break out of the thoughtless society. For much of the book he did stay to true to his beliefs and tried his best to go against society. He loved Julia and would have continued living life

on the bad side. Yet when he was found out by the thoughtpolice he no longer had any values. He was strong for a short period of time during his first couple torturing sessions, but it did not last. When he came to a test on whether  $2+2=4$ , which is the truth, or  $2+2=5$ , which is what the government wanted, is when he started swaying from his original values. “ “ How many fingers...? ’ ’ Four! Five! Four! Anything you like. Only stop it, stop the pain. ’ ’ He soon was convinced of anything the government would say. He was in a very challenging situation, and he failed himself and his values. Once he did find his values again one night in his cell, “ “ What are your true feelings towards Big Brother? ’ ’ I hate him. ’ ’ (309) it quickly escaped his thoughts when he was faced with an even bigger challenge of having his face eaten by rats. He betrayed his love for Julia and once and for all lost all of his beliefs. He became another mindless person in the society and no longer had any thought of his own. He was a puppet for the government. Winston Smith was completely opposite from the beginning of the novel. Although he was stating his hate for Big Brother weeks earlier, He soon changed all of his values because he went through a horrible situation. “ He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother. ” (326) Winston Smith would not be considered a good man inside and out. If he was, he would never had failed his values and caved into the brainwashing government. If he was a good man he would have been the first in the society to die as a heretic. A person who is really good inside and out not only talks about the right values when times are good, but they hold true to those beliefs when times take a turn for the worst. Guterson and Orwell both created many characters that relate to this quote. Kabuo stays a good man throughout all of his hardships in life, while Winston betrays them the

moment times got too hard. A good man should stay true to himself in times of connivence and challenges. It is one of the most important qualities a person should have; stay true to your beliefs or else whats the point in having them.