

The analysis of two literary works essay



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In this paper I would like to analyze the novel *The House on Mango Street*, written by Sandra Cisneros and the short story *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry. In particular, it is necessary to discuss the themes, explored by two authors.

It seems that these literary works show how love of one's family can help a person overcome many of his/her difficulties, like poverty or inability to raise one's social status. The importance of family is one of the main issues, present in each of these works.

The characters of O. Henry's story live beyond poverty line: James and Della have "one dollar and eighty-seven cents" at their possession, and they have to save money on everything in effort to make ends meet (O. Henry, unpagued). The same thing can be said about Esperanza and her family, who have to sleep in a single room. However, one should not assume that such poor living conditions force them into despair or egoism.

In *The Gift of the Magi* both James and Della are ready to make sacrifices for one another. As a matter of fact, they lose something that is most precious to them: Della decides to cut her beautiful hair, while James decides to sell his watch.

One cannot say that Esperanza is similarly devoted to her family but she also feels that even if she becomes successful, she would return to the family that she left behind (Cisneros, 111).

When speaking about the family life of the characters, one should mention that both authors give a very detailed description of the places in which they

live in. For instance, O. Henry accurately depicts the furnishing of the department, rented by Della and James. From this description, one could easily understand that this family is not very wealthy, to say the least.

Nonetheless, Della never blames Jack for it.

On the contrary she does her best to make her husband happy even despite the fact that she has to humiliate herself by wrangle over ever purchase with grocer or butcher (O. Henry, unpagged). Similarly, in the *The House on Mango Street* women also do not criticize their husbands, even though their families have to huddle together in a single room (Cisneros, 3).

For example, Esperanza's mother gave up virtually all her ambitions in order to raise children: she turned to a traditional housewife. The thing is that neither Della nor Esperanza's see themselves as victims of their husbands.

Finally, we need to say that love of one's family gives characters hope for a better future, maybe not for them, but at least for their children. Esperanza's mother cherishes the belief that her daughter will grow into an educated and independent person.

In her turn, Della hopes that in the future they will be able to get out of poverty. This examples show that love of one's family really helps a person find better qualities within oneself. Probably, this is the main idea which the authors tried to convey to the reader.

Despite their overt differences in style, narrative mode, and structure, *The House on Mango Street* and *The Gift of the Magi* has a certain common

feature, namely, the idea that the family unity is one of those things that can always support people especially at the time of need.

Cisneros. Sandra. *The house on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 1984. Print.

O. Henry. *The Gift of the Magi*. Available at: http://webhome.auburn.edu/~vestmon/Gift_of_the_Magi.html