

Inequalities in the
social class structure
in the stolen party, a
short story by ...



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“The Stolen Party” is, unfortunately, a story without a happy ending. Much like works such as *The Great Gatsby* or *1984*, the lack of any definitive victory for the protagonist helps to drive home the point. The title of the story is only truly important after reading the last three paragraphs, in which Rosaura is paid for simply being a waiter at the party, and is given neither a gift nor the recognition of being Luciana’s friend. She is simply another maid for Senora Ines- and that is all that invitation was for. She may have had the time of her life at that party; been made a countess, seen the monkey, had the attention of every boy and girl when she got to hand out the cake- but in the end, it was as though none of that mattered, because her true image in the eyes of Senora Ines had destroyed everything joyful that party had built up within her. The party, in this context, had been stolen from Rosaura by the ignorance of Senora Ines.

The behavior of Senora Ines is an excellent example of someone restricted to a perspective that only views people by class. Being in the uppermost class, she can only see Rosaura for what she is in the most general of terms, a poor young daughter of a maid. Rosaura is more than this, and reading from her perspective we understand that- but in a very socially stratified society such as this, what you are born into is something you simply cannot escape. The lower class can, in some manner of speaking, coexist with the upper class. Though, by Senora Ines actions, we can deduce that in the end it can be two wildly different incentives for such a society to function as such.

At the party, Rosaura is practically interrogated by Luciana’s friends, being asked how she could possibly know Luciana and just what exactly her mother does, and only shown respect when she either holds the cake or

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when her pseudo-employer Senora Ines is using her for more menial labor (which Rosaura mistakes for friendly assistance and rewards for good behavior). So, within this society, the poor are only respected when there is a gain for the upper class- something not uncommon in social stratification. Essentially, the rich do what they must to remain rich, and the poor continuously struggle to either just get by or to somehow beat the odds and pull ahead. Rosaura does a little of both, unwittingly serves the rich in staying satisfied, and desperately dreams of becoming what she is currently serving cake to. Her mother is a hardened, angry woman- and as the story progresses it becomes more and more clear why that is.

Social class structure is the key point to this piece, the theme of which being that you will always be what you started as. It's driven in by Senora Ines' behavior at the party, the tasks Rosaura performs, the crushing truth in the final three paragraphs, all of it. The story through and through is one in which a lower class girl strives to be accepted in the eyes of the upper class, but just when she thinks that is what she has earned, it is made clear that all she is to them is the daughter of a maid, born to pursue her mother's footsteps. This event may have changed Rosarua, forever distorting her perception of both her class and Luciana's class. She could go on believing that Luciana is her friend, she could even still want to be someone better than her mother, but she could also be skewed by Senora Ines' treatment- forever resenting the upper class and viewing her station in the social ladder as a permanent status. She may end up trying less hard in school, not searching hard enough for a job, or may choose to live by her mother's side for as long as she can- because now it would seem her mother was right, you

can't trust the rich. Inversely, though, this could have a positive effect. There are those who see their circumstances as too much to endure when they see there's something better, and sometimes those people chase that better life. Rosaura could be one of those people who escapes the poverty stricken class she comes from, and could eventually find herself accepted at these kinds of events, perhaps in a future where her past is obscured by her success.

The inequality of this society's (and really all societies) social class system is deeply rooted in the basis of human behavior. There's a natural drive for people to take advantage of one another if it keeps them on top, and there's always a need to be better than what you started with. This point is expressed by a certain balance described in the final sentence: "As if the slightest change might shatter an indefinitely delicate balance." This quote is almost disturbing in how true it is. The balance here, is an equilibrium maintained by keeping the lower class where they are. After all, were it not for the extortion of lower classes and the excessive tokens given to those better off, families like Luciana's probably would not be where they are in the story. Since Rosaura's mother was a servant, it was as though Senora Ines couldn't see her as anything but a servant. She actually goes as far as to call her "my pet", just demeaning her to the point that she might as well have called her "help" throughout the affair. Conflict theory might be the best way to explain this behavior- the perspective through which the elite manipulate the poor and weak.

Through this sociological perspective, it can be inferred there is some sort of esoteric knowledge amongst the upper class in this story's society: the

underclass are tools. Rosaura hasn't seen enough of the world to understand <https://assignbuster.com/inequalities-in-the-social-class-structure-in-the-stolen-party-a-short-story-by-liliana-heker/>

this, which is why she adamantly refuses to accept it from her mother and violently reacts to the first child who treats her like a secondhand tool of the household. It's a foreign concept to her that she could be treated that way, and she doesn't even realize the magnitude of her treatment until the very last straw, when Senora Ines shatters the illusory glass of this poor young child. Rosaura had established an alternate explanation for how she was treated all through the day, because in her own mind she wanted to see that her mother was wrong- that she could escape the stigma of being poor. The child she kicked in the shins was, in Rosaura's mind, just a mean person. This is why the monkey was the first focal point of the story, why she was so proud to tell her mother she had been called a countess. It's also why her mother flinched and hesitated when Rosaura was to be given something. Her mother grew up likely the same way as Rosaura herself did, with dashed hopes of escaping a label that distinguishes one so far from others. When Senora Ines displayed her true nature and her honest view of Rosaura, she did it without any remorse. She acted as though her usage of a child who simply wanted to fit in and have friends was to be expected when dealing with her class- after all, she's the daughter of a maid, and treating her like she's anything better than that would break the delicate balance that holds a society like this together. It's delicate in the sense that some people like Rosaura go their entire lives believing they can escape poverty, only to die without understanding they never truly progressed in the eyes of the elite, and that they only served to perpetuate a society that stacks the odds in the favor of those who cheat.