

The analysis of kaiser and the war by simon j. ortiz



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Simon J. Ortiz is a Native American who was born on May 27, 1941 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He belongs to the Acoma Pueblo tribe. He is considered as one of the most respected Native American writer. He grew up in the Acoma village of McCartys and spoke his native tongue of Keresan with his family. Ortiz's father was a railroad and a wood carver. As a member of the Acoma Pueblo tribe, his father was tasked to preserve the tradition and religious beliefs of the clan (Wiget, 1994, p. 115)

Simon J. Ortiz went to the McCartys Day School and then to St. Catherine's Indian School in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In school, Native Americans were prohibited to speak their native language. Ortiz had a difficult time assimilating with the new culture he was exposed to. He began to write in his diary his experiences and create short stories. He channeled his energy to read books (p. 117)

While studying away from his family, Ortiz can't bear his loneliness and returned to his hometown. He enrolled at the Albuquerque Indian School. The school is a vocational school which taught the students plumbing and mechanics. Ortiz learned metal and woodworking. After graduating from Grants High School in Grants, New Mexico, Ortiz worked at Kerr-McGee uranium plant. His experience at the mining plant inspired him to write his work, " Fight Back: For the Sake of the people, for the Sake of the Land" (p. 123)

Through an educational grant, Simon J. Ortiz was able to attend Fort Lewis College and he majored in Chemistry (p. 125).

Simon Ortiz's Career Path

Ortiz served the U. S. Military for three years. Fresh from the army, he enrolled at the University of New Mexico. He pursued his passion for writing and he was able to write his life experiences as a Native American. In 1968, he became a fellow at the University of Iowa. “ In 1982, he was made an editor at the Pueblo of the Acoma Press. In 1988, he was tasked to be an interpreter for the Acoma Pueblo tribe and the following year Ortiz became the First Lieutenant Governor for the clan” (p. 130)

Throughout the years, Ortiz was recognized and given numerous awards for his literary works. He received the Pushcart prize for his work “ From Sand Creek: Rising in This Heart Which Is Our America”. He was also given the Lifetime Achievement Award for his work “ Returning the Gift” (p. 133)

Literary Themes

Simon J. Ortiz presented issues common to people particularly the plight of his Acoma Pueblo tribe. His work discusses themes of “ alienation, colonialism, Native American struggles, the environment and the effects of technology” (Native American Literature, 1985, p. 178)

“ Kaiser and the War”

We can not divorce the life of the author from his art because his life experiences have a profound influence on his literary works. A case in point is Simon Ortiz’s short story, Kaiser and the War.

The story revolves around a man who had little knowledge of the English language; Kaiser, the protagonist opposed the idea of being enlisted in the U. S. Military Service. As a result, he escaped to the Black Mesa Mountains while being pursued by the county sheriff and the draft board agents. As I

see it, Kaiser avoided the draft because he feels that the war is senseless. Like most Native Americans who mostly lived in their communities, he does not feel an affinity towards mainstream America. So, why would he go to war? His flight for avoiding the draft is the only way he could free himself from the dictates of the American

society. It is a sense of freeing himself physically and spiritually.. It is also a way of expressing his desire to return to his roots and his essence as a human being. His escape to some extent provided him the option of dealing with his chaotic life. However, Kaiser's escape did not only alienate him even more from the society; it also alienated him from his family. Finally after years of hiding, Kaiser surrendered and he was sent to jail for escaping the draft. After serving his time in prison, Kaiser becomes isolated from society. From this experience, Kaiser succumbed to depression. He was unable to keep his life together after what transpired. He failed to reunite with his family. In the end, he lived alone and died a broken man.

The themes of alienation and separation surround the story. In the Norton Anthology of American Literature, Nina Baym, "implies that this theme represents the Native Americans' struggle", (Baym, 1997, p. 2778). The story also include events that transpired in Ortiz's life like his childhood experiences in school where he had limited knowledge of the English language and lastly, his enlistment to the U. S. Military. The tale appears to link the past and the present with regards to feelings of alienation and separation (Encyclopedia of American Literature, 1998, p. 858).

The Economic, Social and Political Conditions of the Native Americans Today

Towards the 21st century, the themes of alienation and displacement thrive in the Native American communities. They are always dealing with issues and struggling to keep up with the changes in the American society.

Many Native American tribes seek to be recognized by the government. There are currently ' 561 Native American tribes recognized by the U. S. government. These tribes are designated to have their own form of government, to enact laws, to establish tribal memberships, to issue license and regulate activities" (The U. S. Relationship to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, 2005).

Today, Native American Indians continue to be a part of the American landscape and in the U. S. economy. Native American tribes established their own governments that offer services in law enforcement and disaster management. Most of the Native American tribes have their own legal system to settle disputes (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2006).

Gambling has become a big industry for the Native Americans. Most casinos operated by the Native American governments are seen profitable and has encouraged business diversification (Columbia Law Review, 2006).

Sadly, most people are unaware of the plight and struggle of the Native American communities. For many Native Americans they still believe that they are still outsiders in the country and many feel that they are mistreated by the general public.

Simon Ortiz used his own personal experiences from to shape his story. He tried to reach his audience by exposing the issues that surrounds the Native American community and their continued plight. His works reveal that the

Native Americans want to restore their sense of “ self” in order for them to fight for their rights and preserve their way of life.

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