

The simple gift by steven herrick

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Steven Herrick promotes the idea that physical security means little compared to the sense of Belonging that can be found within strong, genuine relationships. Primarily, Herrick cleverly demonstrates the importance of connections between people in his verse-novel “ The SimpleGift” by focusing on three different perspectives; Billy Lockett, Caitlin and Old Bills. The protagonist of the short story “ On The Sidewalk Bleeding”, Andy, is similar to Billy Lockett in the sense that they are both young men who crave belonging. The

In contrast to his previous experiences, Billy finds a true, genuine connection with Caitlin and Old Bill. The ‘ Old Bastard’ – his father, is exposed as an abusive figure early in ‘ The Simple Gift’ when Billy describes the wind and rain hitting his face like “ the force of a fathers punch”, subtly demonstrating the violent memories of an abusive childhood. The technique of hatred language and profanity assist in the characterisation of Billys father.

However, the mellow bond between Billy and his new found relationships is revealed in the poem “ Simple Gift” from the perspective of Old Bill – “ I hadn’t thought of anything but how pleasant it was to sit with these people and talk to them.” All three characters demonstrate an eagerness to help one another, creating a positive vibe for the reader.

Achieving a sense of connection with others can be both dangerous and risky, however, the desire for acceptance is overpowering. This perspective is represented in the poem ‘ Champagne Billy’ through Billys eagerness to leave the physical security of his childhood home, in pursuit of a fresh beginning. Old Bill may even be recognised as a temporary father figure in substitution of Billys real father. For Andy [On The Sidewalk Bleeding],

acquiring a sense of worth meant possessing the identity of a gang member, and therefore putting his life at risk from the beginning. This supports the assumption that victims of alienation may be sent into a state of rebellion, affecting the outcome of their search for acceptance. In Andys case the outcome was fatal.

‘ The Simple Gift’ conveys the idea that exclusion can occur to people of a diverse mix of gender, social status and age. For example, Billy may be described as a homeless, yet street-smart teenage boy searching for a new life to overwrite his troubled upbringing. Caitlin is portrayed as a smart, wealthy teenage girl who is discontent with her superficial lifestyle, and therefore escapes in the company of genuine Billy. And Finally, Old Bill is homeless, however chooses to exist that way as he still dwells in a state of anguish over his deceased loved ones and cannot tolerate living in a home he once shared with them as a family.

The Structure of a free verse novel allows for the expression and characterisation of multiple individuals. Steven Herrick has demonstrated this in ‘ The Simple Gift’ by incorporating a series of first person, free verse poems into each chapter, revealing the thoughts, emotions and motives of his characters. Character development is significantly evident in this form of text, and displays the growth in maturity for all three protagonists. This is also apparent in ‘ On The Sidewalk Bleeding’, where Andy shows indication of maturity, even in his final moments before death.

Herrick cleverly incorporates his own personal experience into ‘ The Simple Gift’, therefore increasing the authenticity of his verse-novel even further.

According to his the authors biography, events such as travelling in a speedboat on top of a train, accommodating himself in an abandoned railway carriage in Ballarat, gaining assistance from a friendly train guard in Queensland and Fruit-picking were all real occurrences during his adolescence.

' The Simple Gift' is a unique text that conveys the elements of belonging appropriately through its use of detailed characterisation; shown first person from the perspectives of three diverse individuals. The suggestion that a sense of connection can only be discovered upon gaining a genuine acceptance for ones true identity from others, is powerfully demonstrated in both the free verse novel, ' The Simple Gift' and short story, ' On The Sidewalk Bleeding'.