Analysis Of A Short Story Essay, Research Paper

ANALYSIS OF A SHORT STORY

The Rocking-Horse Winner by D.H Lawrence is a reflection of society s materialism, the search for material happiness leaving on the side the real matter of life. People are looking for happiness in the wrong place.

This is the story of a family who pretends to have a life full of luxury while their income is low and their debts are high. Paul, the older son of the family, after seeing to the importance of money and luck in his mother s life, discovers that he is not as unlucky as the rest of his family. His luck helps him to predict the winner of horse races. For a time Paul gets money as a gambler thanks to Bassett, the gardener, and later on with the complicity of his uncle, who is curious about his nephew s abilities. The winnings were given to Paul s mother to pay debts, but she found the money wasn t enough to keep up their social status. Paul feels the need to win one of the three big races. He found himself worried when the two of the races came and he didn t know the winner. Finally, Paul predicts the winner while riding his rocking-horse. During the incident, Paul gets sick and dies. The story ends with some lines that make the reader wonder about the real meaning of life.

The author presents an impartial omniscient narrator. He knows the character s thoughts and ideas but does not judge them. The story doesn t present a lot of details or development of the characters or settings. The reader doesn t know anything about Paul s siblings and father, and only at the end of the story is the name of his mother revealed. These facts contribute to the story s message giving the impression of a tale or fable. They prepare the readers to expect a moral, and challenge them to find a meaning in what seems a magical unrealistic story.

The characters of the story are not completely developed. Only their desire for luck and money, which might represent society s desire, is known about them. Lawrence s time was characterized by fake high status, which covered poverty with expensive luxuries, a fact that is still found nowadays. The importance of deep matters, such as family relationships, love, or so-called matters of the soul, has been changed by the false pursuit of happiness through having superficial things. This materialism is what Lawrence wants to point out.

The narrator uses the adjectives beautiful and handsome to refer to Paul s mother and father. These adjectives are a representation of another false place where people look for happiness. A beautiful person is considered lucky and deserving of anything he wants to get, and for some people it is almost impossible to think that beauty is related to unhappiness or dissatisfaction. These characters, in spite of their beauty, are unable to be satisfied and happy.

In the first lines of the story, Lawrence shows the irony of life by presenting a woman who in spite of her beauty and advantages is still unlucky. This irony is a sign of personal dissatisfaction; people are looking further for things that might represent their happiness. The continuous search for something to fill them is a continuous encounter with emptiness.

Paul s mother, who according to the narrator has a great belief in herself , doesn t find this confidence useful because she considers herself unlucky and empty of the fake happiness she is looking for. This discontent is what keeps her trying to be the first in something, when she already is a good mother in other people s eyes, This fake love is a lack of feeling toward her children, a lack that she doesn t understand. But toward the end of the story, the mother s heart grows curiously heavy because of worrying about her son, who is going through a difficult stage trying to find out the winner of the race and provide more money for his mother.

The reader doesn t know with certaints the reason for this change, or if it is sincere, but it is a clear example of the blindness of the mother. While expecting something that is far away from her reach, she does not realize that the love of a family is there, ready to be nurtured. It is possible that she realized this fact, although it was too late. Her desire for luck took the life of her son.

A phrase that goes along the story is the whisper of the house: there must be more money . At the beginning, this is a whisper in waiting for money to cover the family s debt, but later on, when Paul s mother receives five thousands pounds from her son s gambling, the same whisper turns into ambition. The whisper is louder and intense, not asking for help anymore, but asking for more of this drug called money. Ambition is never satisfied. Once the mother gets what she wants, her desire grows; it keeps growing along with the whisper of the house, which in a sense is the representation of the family s desires.

Through the story we also see that the luck so desired by everybody is not as perfect as they expect. During Paul s gambling, his luck to guess the winner is limited. Sometimes he is not sure about the results. Of three chances he had, he lost two of them. Luck is considered a permanent gift from heaven, an easy way to resolve problems, or to explain our mistakes. Luck is the result of a series of factors. Luck means to be prepared for opportunities, and being prepared implies working hard, having faith, and persevering.

In the last paragraph, Lawrence ties all the signs of greed and ambition in a phrase said by Paul s uncle: poor devil, he is better gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner. These lines infer that Paul is better out of a place where the appreciation of material things is valued over everything else. Paul is better out of a life where winners are those who have all the possessions they want, and even then those possessions are not enough.

The insatiable thirst for power and gold is the main disease in society. Important things are left on the side, and usually appreciated too late to repair the mistake.

People sacrifice every moment of their existence. The beauty of a rainy, cold day is ignored by the urge to go to work to a hated place just because of a good salary. The beauty that surrounds us in the world doesn t require any sacrifice, and it lasts longer than the biggest of the fortunes.