Maggie: A Girl Of The Streets Hypocisy Essay, Research Paper

To Pretend to be What One is Not

One of the many themes shown in Maggie: a Girl of the Streets is that of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy occurs when one pretends to be something that he or she is not, and most people associate the word to a person that speaks poorly of something, yet commits that something him or her self. In Maggie, many of the main characters in the novel display the evil trait of hypocrisy. The trait is displayed by the characters of Pete, Jimmie, and both Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. They pretend to be what they are not.

In the beginning of the novel, Jimmie gets into a fight with his peers of the street. After the fight has progressed for some time, Jimmie’s father must spilt up the children. Mr. Johnson, who is Jimmie’s father, says, “Here, you Jim, git up, now, while I belt yer life out, you damned disorderly brat” (Crane 5). This quotes is a strong display of hypocrisy. Mr. Johnson acts in disapproval of Jimmie’s fighting. As a disciplinary action against further fighting, Mr. Johnson threatens to beat Jimmie up. To stop his son from fighting, Mr. Johnson does what he tells Jimmie not to do by beating him.

Another main character in Maggie displays the trait of hypocrisy. That character is Pete. At one point in the novel, he is sitting with his “girlfriend,” Nell, talking about how kind he is to her and all her friends. He says, “An’body treats me right, I allus trea’s zem right!” (Crane 56). In truth, Pete does not treat his girlfriends with any respect at all. Earlier in the novel, he left Maggie, his current girlfriend, basically by herself as he ran off with Nell. When he says this

quote to Nell and her friends, he treats himself as one that is loving to others and expects kindness and respect in return, when he is actually cruel and uncaring. He pretends to be something that he is not, and he later tells Nell to be nice to him, ignoring the fact that he is not really nice to her.

During the lowest point in Maggie life, she becomes a prostitute. Whenever she walks around the town, even in the poorer districts, people try their hardest to avoid helping or even looking at her. The characters think that they are too repeatable to even be on the same side of the street as her. These characters are hypocrites because they think poorly of Maggie and think highly of themselves, but the opposite is true. If they were indeed repeatable, they would see that Maggie is a poor child that needs help. They should be willing to help her not trying their hardest to avoid her.

Both Jimmie and Maggie’s mother, Mrs. Johnson, display the trait of hypocrisy. They think that Maggie has ‘gone to the devil’ because she has committed a act that others think is bad. Mrs. Johnson says, “She had a bad heart, dat girl did, Jimmie. She was wicked the deh heart an we never knowed it” (Crane 42). Jimmie and Maggie’s mother accuse Maggie of being an awful character. In fact, they are actually the ones that are awful. Because of their poor treatment of Maggie, she is forced to wander the streets alone. The pretend that they have never done anything wrong, unlike Maggie, but in truth they have committed deeds much worse. Maggie has been so neglected that she does not know what is right, and her mother’s hypocrisy makes her feel worse.

Many people can act hypocrite during some points of their lives. The most important thing about hypocrisy is that many times people do not know that they are being hypocritical. The reader can see this occurring in Maggie: a Girl of the Streets. The characters act hypocritical and not even know it, either through their words or by their actions. Most of the hypocrisy is directed towards the title character, and this causes her to kill herself in the end. Unfortunately, they do not know that they were pretending to be something that they are not.