White Fang Essay, Research Paper

Sybolism in White Fang

"Classic" – a word misunderstood by many people around the world, mostly those of a younger generation. It is surprising how many people believe that the word "classic" means "old" or "boring". This is just not the case. In actual fact, the label "classic" given to books means "of the highest quality," or "of enduring interest and value." Books with this label are the best there is. Every word is carefully thought out and made interesting for the reader. Symbolism, meaning and detail are all applied effectively to keep the book an on-going page-turner. Such a fine example of this is Jack London?s White Fang.

A very wonderful tool to an author is the use of symbols within a story. One of the more common symbols throughout short stories and novels ultimately refers to the bible and religious history. In most, if not all stories have the relationship between good and evil ? heaven and hell. Whether implied or not by Jack London, White Fang is full of many interesting biblical symbols. The character Beauty Smith, for instance very simply put symbolizes Satan. This man, this creature so vile as to subdue yet another victim (White Fang) into his ever-growing underground slavery prison camps. The greed for money and profit is the only need for this "prison camp"; the dog-fighting gambling is their prison cell. A comparison between the bulldog Cherokee and death itself can be made. Once death has you, there is no way of escaping. When Cherokee had White Fang gripped between his jaws, "There was no escaping that grip. It was like Fate itself, and was inexorable," (London 139). Surely enough, God (Weedon Scott) came along and saved White Fang from the grips of evil. The cold-heartedness of evil can be overcome with the heat and light of good. The care and kindness of such like Weedon Scott for all existing creatures alike. Many other symbols deep within this novel lay rest assured, but it is hard to catch them all in such a detailed book as this.

With a closer inspection and a deep analysis of a novel, many small but nonetheless important meaningful things can be revealed. London has managed to intricately design a perfect novel full of deep meaning and symbols that can only be done in a short story. But a novel, with so many pages and pages of detailed work, it is so hard to keep up with all the things that lay undiscovered within. The characters in this novel have meaning and much irony to it. Weedon Scott has meaning to its name. The word "weed" means a worthless person. So in fact, Weedon Scott means a worthless person. But the irony here is that Weedon Scott symbolizes God, and God definitely not worthless, but rather all mighty and powerful. Also, Beauty Smith has some meaning to it, as well as some more irony to its name. Beauty of course means elegance and pretty. But in this story he is portrayed as a "beast" and symbolizes the Devil. White Fang is more of a contradiction to itself. White means "pure" and "honest" while as the word Fang means "the long perforated tooth of a poisonous serpent." This could mean that this soul is lost and wandering, being influenced by everyone. But in the end, the fang dulls and the hate and evil is removed by the caress of Weedon Scott, God. Small details like this make the book more interesting to read and makes the reader think.

The other thing that makes this story so successful and effective is the style Jack London uses. He uses a lot of detail and descriptive words which help aid the symbols and meaning embedded in the novel. Personification, metaphors and similes all throughout the novel, brilliantly placed and inciting vocabulary keeps this book hard to put down. Also a lot of well thought alliteration words are used to give it that enjoyable reading feeling. Furthermore, the character?s style of speech is, for the most part, slang with kind of an accent, which gives the characters a more realistic vocabulary. An example of this is in the beginning of the novel when Henry says to Bill, "Shut up your wishin? an? your croakin?. Your stomach?s sour. That?s what?s ailin? you. Swallow a spoonful of sody, an? you?ll sweeten up wonderful an? be more pleasant company," (9). London does a really nice job with the style of writing and the characters? attitudes and tone of voice.

A word, exclusively for books that are among the best masterpieces of their kind ever written that passed the test of time ? classic. Symbolism, meaning, detail and every little thing goes carefully into thought by the author before it can be even considered one of the very best. When you pick up a book, don?t assume it is a classic just because it is "old" or "boring". When publishers label a book "classic", they really mean it. Just remember, a shelf with "classics" is like buying candy from the candy store, you?ll always know its gonna be sweet.