Mentor/Protege Relationship Essay, Research Paper

Danny Frank Myth and Mind 413 Final, Part 1 Mr. Rosenberg East vs. West; The Mentor/Protege Relationship Mentors have been instructing their proteges since the dawning of time. From father to son, and mother to daughter, legends and skills have been passed through the generations this way. Yet, the way information is passed tends to differ from one culture to the next. This can clearly be seen when comparing the literature of eastern and western cultures. Siddhartha, by Herman Hesse, and The Woman Warrior, by Maxine Hong Kingston, show how in the eastern cultures, mentors teach their proteges by simply telling the what is the right way, while Iron John, by the Grimm brothers, and Into Woods, by Bill Roorbach, show how mentors lead by example in the western cultures. In Siddhartha, the young Siddhartha and his friend Govinda meet a wise spiritual man named Gotama. Gotama teaches the boys of the Buddha and the four truths. While his language at times my seem mysterious and poetic, Gotama is plainly reciting what he has found to be true in order to educate the boys. While in the end it is only Govinda who takes Gotama+s word to heart, both boys clearly understand the ideas that he was trying to teach. The Woman Warrior also illustrates this bluntness between teacher and student. When Maxine was a child, her mother cut her tongue. Maxine thought this had to do with a Chinese proverb that said |a ready tongue is an evil tongueX. Yet, when asked, Maxine+s mother clearly explains that her tongue was not cut to keep her quite, but so that it could be freed and able to learn other languages. Without a hitch, Maxine understood what her mother was trying to teach her. While mentors and proteges of the east seem to be very clear in their relationship, in the west their link seems to be a bit more |unspokenX. In the Grimms+ fairy tale Iron John, a wild man of the woods, Iron John, takes a young prince under his wing. In order to teach him that to rise to the top, one must first hit rock bottom, Iron John instructs him to make sure nothing falls into his golden pond. The boy fails at the assignment, and Iron John kicks him banishes him from the comfort and safety of his forest home. Later, the boy finally rises to marry the daughter of a wealthy king. The boy never knew that Iron John kicked him out of the forest in order to reach his true destiny, because Iron John never came forth and told him. Yet, the end result would have still been the same anyway.

Another example of unspoken mentoring can be seen in the case of Bill Roorbach. In his essay, Into Woods, Roorbach describes how his love for carpentry and other skilled trades conflicted with the expectation for him to go to college and succeed. The basis for his love of carpentry stemmed from working alongside his father. Although actually an oil company executive, when at home Roorbach+s father spent his time as a fix-it man. Instead of having the desire to become a wealthy businessman, Roorbach learned to become a carpenter by working with his dad, even though it was never something the two talked about. In this way, Roorbach+s father set an example that Roorbach followed for years to come. Clearly, the eastern idea of the mentor/protege relationship is easier to understand. By coming out in the open with the ideas needed to be learned, the mentor can efficiently communicate what it is that the protege must learn. However, the western style of subversive mentoring could possibly be better in the way it disguises the actual lesson. Otherwise, the student might not want to follow along with what the teacher has planned. Either way you choose, the end result will most likely be the same, so it seem that the defining factor of the Mentor/Protege relationship comes from whichever culture is represented.