

Hiroshima by John Hersey Book

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August 6th, 1945, is marked as the worst day in the history of the human race when the first atomic bomb was dropped, wiping away an entire population and all for the sake of terrorizing one country. The book to be critically analyzed is Hiroshima, written by John Hersey. It represents the non-fiction literary genre, and the main theme of the book is the impact of the nuclear bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in the year 1945. The present paper aims to critically evaluate the themes that the author has used in the selected book while also commenting on the author's use of facts and figures to support his argument.

The selected books begin with the event that took place in August 1945 in Hiroshima. It happened at the same time as World War II, which highlights the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima was a result of the war between Japan and America. What had initially seemed like an ordinary bomb was soon discovered to have been something far worse than that, as the chemical gas that emitted from it had left its mark on generations to come. The number of people that were killed during the period of mere seconds was far greater than anyone could ever imagine. With the onset of the bomb's impact, the whole city had been wrapped in fumes that killed anyone in its range. Old and young alike had been a victim of its effect, and there were dead bodies to be seen everywhere. Medical assistance could not be provided to the citizens as the doctors, too, had been either killed or were too injured to do anything to save the people who were in need of help. The horrors of the incident did not end that day; instead, in the coming months and even years, both doctors and researchers witnessed symptoms of abnormality due to being exposed to the radiation. The effects of the exposure included wounds that could not be healed and the fluctuation in the count of white blood cells, which was followed by other problems like hair fall, skin diseases, and deformities in newborn babies.

The insight provided by the author about the event of Hiroshima is realistic in nature as the author has covered every point in the book from the moments before the attack to the time after the chaos had been wrecked on the city. I would recommend this book to all the people in my circle so that they can get an insight into the historical event that plagued Hiroshima because the book provides more information on the incident that can be found elsewhere. An interesting fact mentioned by the author is that only six people survived the attack on Hiroshima, and out of those six, two of the survivors lost their lives due to being exposed to radiation. The book presents some major key points about the event of Hiroshima, especially the impact that it had left on the Japanese people, and continues to do so even after so many years have passed. The thing that I find most interesting about this book is the in-depth details that the author has added, which help paint a realistic image in the reader's mind. The survivor's description of what their day had been like seems unreal as it went from being normal to horrifying in a few minutes' time.

A crucial point mentioned in the book is that Hiroshima had not been under any raids throughout the

war, and the rumors about America having saved something special for this city came true as soon as the atomic bomb was dropped. The point of focus shifts from one character to another in this chapter, as in the beginning, the Reverend is highlighted. The Reverend, having acquired an education from America, fears for his life but still proves himself loyal to his country by organizing an air raid defense. He misses the impact of the bomb due to being occupied with moving away from his acquaintance's luggage outside the city. One would call it a miracle, seeing how he would have been a victim of the attack as well if not for the task he was occupied with. The book gives the reader a look into the lives of ordinary people who had been unaware of the impending attack on the city.

The author presents ordinary elements in his narrative to authenticate the narrative. At the same time, the author also presents another common element that ails each of the characters: the confusion that follows after the atomic bomb drops on the city. The author also highlights how the people had been waiting to hear some warning sounds, sirens, or plane sounds so that they could take the necessary actions during those moments. However, the atomic bomb had been a surprise attack to keep the people from fleeing the city. The image of the bomb's first impact has been described as "a noiseless flash" that was bright enough to blind anyone who dared to look at it, and in a few moment's time, everything had been leveled, including buildings, homes, trees, poles so on and so forth. The following lines show the condition of the people at the moment of the attack,

"The eyebrows of some were burned off, and skin hung from their faces and hands. Others, because of pain, held their arms up as if carrying something in both hands. Some were vomiting as they walked. Many were naked or in shreds of clothing. On some undressed bodies, the burns had made patterns—of undershirt straps and suspenders and, on the skin of some women (since white repelled the heat from the bomb and dark clothes absorbed it and conducted it to the skin), the shapes of flowers they had had on their kimonos." (Hersey)

Nothing was left in the city that could be distinguished as having any form before because the bomb had melted everything in its range. The techniques employed by the author highlight the intensity of

the scenario so that the readers can get a glimpse of the horrifying attack on Hiroshima, as can be seen from the following lines,

“The bomb had not only left the underground organs of the plants intact; it had stimulated them.” (Hersey)

Aside from this, the author has used irony in the book to highlight that too much education and knowledge can be harmful, as can be seen from the example of the atomic bomb that had been used by American troops as a strategy to show strength and also to take control of the war by weakening the other side. The following lines present a true depiction of what happens when people gain too much knowledge and use it for wrong means,

“There, in the tin factory, in the first moment of the atomic age, a human being was crushed by books.” (Hersey)

The attack on Hiroshima terrorized the whole nation as Japan’s attention was diverted to saving any survivors while they could, which gave the American force a chance to strike the army on the battlefield. The reader is left with mixed feelings after reading all the gory details about the people who had been left disfigured as the skin had melted off from their bodies, and most of them had died instantly after inhaling the gas. In addition to the horror that is left inside each of the readers, there are moments where it becomes hard to believe that a nation could do this to another without any sympathy for the defenseless people.

A fact that is hard to digest while reading the book is the number of people who died in this attack. The author has made use of the death statistics to intensify the situation so that the readers get a glimpse of the true event. Not only did the author give the ratio of the dead, but he also mentioned the number of wounded people. This point authenticates his argument and gives accuracy to his depiction. Aside from this, the author stayed focused on the six survivors throughout the book so that the readers would not get sidetracked while reading the book, and the event would present itself in a chronological manner. The characters present the image of Hiroshima after the attack, and it is presented in the form of cries for help as the characters yell out in pain, “Tasukete kure!” The trauma that has been inflicted on these people is simply unimaginable. The description of the city is unbelievable, as everything had been left in ruins. The author also highlights why people could not be saved when they most needed medical assistance and states that most of the doctors had also become victims of the explosion, which limited the aid that could be provided to the grief-stricken people.

In conclusion, the book presents a realistic picture of the events in Hiroshima and relays to the readers the horror that had been brought to the people of Hiroshima after the explosion had taken place. The techniques employed by the author also help the readers in getting the details of the event. The use of irony depicts human nature that is focused on getting power by any means possible, even if it means destroying a whole city and killing thousands of people. The book has been helpful in pointing out the consequences when a nation takes it upon itself to show others that it is superior in all aspects.

Works Cited

Hersey, John. Hiroshima. Vintage, 1985.