

Maggie: A Girl Of The Streets By Stephen Crane

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Thesis Statement

This essay will account for the theme, relationships, and the cruel reality of poverty examined in Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl on the Streets*.

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets was a short story by Stephen Crane. From this perspective, one accounts that growing up in a brutal urban environment can have multiple outcomes in society because some people can end up dead. Some people can get out of that situation and become successful. This short story is about a young girl named Maggie who grows up in the lower Manhattan tenement district, known as a ghetto for its dangerous environment. Maggie herself grew up in Rum Alley with her abusive and alcoholic mother Mary and her brother, Jimmie. Jimmie used to be protective of Maggie when they were kids, but once they both grew up that changed completely and he did not care for her as he should have. They both had a little brother, Tommie but he died, and years later his father died too.

Maggie's Family Environment

Her mother, Mary was a horrible mother to these children because she was almost never sober and had no patience for them either. An example would be when Maggie accidentally broke one of her plates in the kitchen, and "Good Gawd," she howled. Similarly, the death of Tommie, for example, was described as insignificant and also dull because they just put him in a white coffin, buried him and everyone moved on. These violent outbursts that Mary had caused her youngest son to die which is why she is also responsible for Maggie's outcome.

Jimmie was the whole character that, throughout the novel, Maggie genuinely cared about. When they were kids, she always complained about Jimmie fighting the other kids all the time, which showed that she cared about him. This is a perfect example of how Maggie showed concern for her brother's well-being. She also tries to make him realize the consequences of his actions even though he does not seem to care. Maggie was very scared because whenever Jimmie would get into trouble fighting, they would all get in trouble, especially since Mary, their mother drank all the time. Her drinking always led her to have a violent attitude towards her children and her husband as well.

Character Development and Poverty

As the years progressed in the story, the reader can see the changes each character takes and how they adapt to their environment. Mary was similar because she was a drunk who everyone in the police department knew and was always in court. Mary would still make up excuses and apologies to justify her actions, and everyone already knew how she was, and it was not a surprise to see her there at all. This particular passage describes a young woman who is the complete opposite of the environment surrounding her. The reader can also speculate about a bright future for her because, unlike Jimmie or Mary, she has the potential to succeed (Simoneaux). She got a job at a factory making collars and cuffs where she worked all day and went home at night. She is a decent woman at this point in the story, so it is shocking to see what happens to her in the end.

Pete's Role in Maggie's Tragedy

Jimmie and Mary are not the only ones who are responsible for Maggie's death; Pete is also accountable for this tragedy because he took an interest and decided to pursue her. Their relationship affected her because she ended up developing feelings for him. Pete was a bartender who was friends with Jimmie, and his confidence and self-possessed behaviour were why Maggie found him so fascinating. Maggie then started worrying about her house's state, which had never been an issue before until Pete began to pursue her. A lambrequin was known in the 1890s as a short curtain, which Maggie hung over the stove in her kitchen (Simoneaux). Pete, however, did not show much interest in her house at all he was just interested in Maggie. Things took a different turn when the family found out about their relationship.

On one of Mary's drunken evenings, she finds out about Maggie's relationship with Pete but does not approve of it. She immediately started cursing Maggie. Just like that, her mother told her to leave the house and go with him. This is another example of why Mary is ultimately responsible for Maggie's death in the end. Her lack of compassion and love for her daughter led to a horrible outcome for Maggie.

Jimmie who was supposed to be her protector and defender did the exact opposite of what any brother would do and took his mother's side. He was so angry that he cursed Maggie. He even went to the bar where Pete worked and fought with him. At this point, even the neighbours noticed that Maggie did not come home and started to gossip about her. (Saja, 2012). These thoughts show that he is supposed to hate his sister just like his mother does, but on the inside, it seems he starts feeling a bit of regret that does not last very long. Jimmie's ego blinds him from doing what is right; which is defending his sister against his mother and everyone else. This is the reason why he is equally guilty as his mother over Maggie's death.

Pete is now all Maggie has; she has no one else to turn to for help or a place to stay ever since her mother told her to leave the house and not return. Unfortunately, Maggie's relationship with Pete

changes when he meets up with an old friend (Utami). Pete, of course, is very confident and cares more about looks than personality, so as soon as Nellie puts Maggie's looks down, he loses interest. He felt embarrassed when someone would laugh at his taste in women and he would make excuses and say those women were only temporary. Pete at this point had no consideration towards Maggie and did not take responsibility for whatever could happen to Maggie. Pete not only ruined her relationship with her family, but he also destroyed her reputation. Everyone was talking wrong about Maggie, not just her family but also her neighbours.

Maggie attempted to return home, but could not because she was rejected by her family and neighbours and had no choice, but to wander the streets. Pete no longer considers Maggie respectable to be involved with, so he saves his dignity by pushing her away. This is towards the end when the author starts to refer to Maggie as that girl instead of using her name (Crane, 2006). He does this because since Maggie is left wandering the streets and with nowhere else to go, she has no choice, but to prostitute herself to survive. One evening, as she was wandering the streets she was killed by a man who was following her. This horrible fate is what became of Maggie.

Soon everyone in the tenement found out about Maggie's death and started feeling sorry for her and that she was finally going to a place where her sins would be judged. Everyone told Mary that she should forgive her child for being so sorry. This idea was ironic because it should have been the other way around, and everyone who misjudged Maggie should apologize. Maggie became a prostitute because her family and Pete who was the primary cause of her despair turned their backs on her. She had no choice, but to do such things to survive otherwise she would have died even sooner in the story. This was unfortunate for Maggie because she did not deserve to suffer; initially, she had mass potential. She would still be alive if she had gotten out of Rum Alley. It is also ironic that Mary is the one who says she will forgive Maggie in the end. It is she who should be asking for forgiveness and blaming herself for her death. Jimmie should have been a better brother, taken her away somewhere, and not left her on the streets. Pete should never have laid his eyes on Maggie if he had known she would not be important in his life. These people are all equally guilty of her death, and nothing will change that.

Conclusion

At last, one concludes that it can be complicated to succeed in an environment where there is constant crime, death, and violence. Reading this short story made me see the harsh reality of what happens to most people who live in tenements like these. It made me appreciate the place I live in more, and the wonderful parents brought me up, and I did not end up in the streets like Maggie. There are exceptions for people who live in a similar environment to Maggie's and still work hard and succeed in life, so there is always hope. This, of course, can be hard sometimes, but not an impossible thing to accomplish. If someone has a dream and is devoted to performing and working hard, they will eventually reach their goal. This short story motivates me to do better for myself and not settle into the environment of my town. Aiming high in life to have a better future is always important.

Works Cited

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