

# “Puppy” by George Saunders: Response Essay

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“Puppy” is a short story written by George Saunders. The story revolves around two leading female characters who are struggling to bring up their children in the right way. These two mutually exclusive female characters belong to suburban and rural families. Though these two mothers share the same problems in terms of their kids. However, they both live in different circumstances with different lifestyles. The life of both mothers revolves around their families. These two focal characters are Marie and Callie. The story is divided into equal sections, which shed light upon Marie and Callie’s perception of their own lives and the opinions of their families, especially their sons. The sons of Marie and Callie exhibit behavioral disorders and create exponential difficulties for their mothers. This response essay tends to unveil the narrative style used by Saunders to create the parallel perceptions of Marie and Callie. Additionally, this essay will also focus on the whole story and how it entices the readers to perceive these characters.

“Puppy” focuses on the perception of two mothers, Marie and Callie, and their lifestyle. The story is narrated in the third person, and the narrative reflects the perception of the two leading characters. The story starts with the perception of Marie. Marie lives in a suburban area with her family. Marie’s son Josh tends to exhibit violent behavior. However, Marie has controlled his son by making him habituated to a video game. Marie has suffered neglect and rejection from her family, which has a great effect on her lifestyle as a mother. Marie is going to buy a puppy from a lady in the rural area with her children. The name of the woman from the rural area is Callie. When Marie reaches Callie’s house, she gets to view the opposite perspective of Callie’s life. Callie’s son also suffers from a violent behavioral disorder. Callie gives him medicine and ties him up with a tree for his own good. Callie has so many animals around her. Callie’s husband loves to kill animals, which is why Callie is selling off her puppy. When Marie sees Callie’s son tied to a tree, she perceives it from a different perspective. Marie jumps to an abrupt conclusion and judges Callie as a negative mother. She views it as child abuse. After viewing this scene, Marie goes into flashbacks, and all the memories of her childhood trauma and neglect by her family come into the limelight. Marie refuses to let Callie buy the puppy and leaves Callie’s house, criticizing her. Callie goes out of the house and abandons the puppy in the cornfields to die.

Though the problems of Marie and Callie are the same, they perceive and act differently according to their perceptions and circumstances. Saunders profoundly envisages the two different perspectives on the same problem. This problem is related to the violent behavioral disorders of their sons. Saunders entices the readers to analyze the characters of Marie and Callie and unveil the significant gap between their perceptions and their actions. Marie and Callie love their sons, but Callie’s methods of nursing his son are questioned by Marie and society. However, after reading the full story and

viewing Callie's poor circumstances, Marie's judgment is not accepted. Callie's fight against her financial problems, her husband, and her violent son requires empathy and understanding.

Saunders uses his narrative expertise and techniques to create significant distance and tension between the two mothers, Marie and Callie. The writer uses narrative techniques like circumstantial details and flashbacks to explicate the parallel differences between Marie and Callie's perspectives. The writer uses third-person narration to reflect upon the point of view of both characters. Furthermore, he occasionally jumps into the minds of the characters during the narration to provide an insight into their point of view. The narration focuses on the internal thoughts of the characters to provide their perceptions of the characters. The writer uses imagery and symbolism to reflect upon the internal thoughts of the characters in the story. The following literary excerpt from the story validates all these points: "The brilliance of the autumnal sun on the perfect field of corn put her in mind of a haunted house—not a haunted house she had ever actually seen but the mythical one that sometimes appeared in her mind" (Saunders, 31).

Saunders creates a significant distance and parallel relations between Marie and Callie with the assistance of his narration. Marie belongs to a wealthy family living in a suburban area. Marie has all the luxuries and perks of life. Therefore, she can have a positive parenting technique to manage the behavioral disorder of her son. Marie's past and neglect trauma by her parents play a significant role in her present life. Marie's quick judgment of Callie's parenting towards her son reflects upon the modern theme of society. On the other hand, Callie is from a poor and rural family. Callie is in desperate circumstances, in which she does whatever it takes to save her son. However, her parenting methods of tying him up are not applaudable. However, given the circumstances, the readers have sympathy towards Callie.

In a nutshell, it can be analyzed that Saunders uses such a narrative style to focus on the gap between the perceptions of Marie and Callie. Saunter's direct narrative style allows the reader to have a direct relationship with the characters' minds and deduce their own perceptions. The writer provides an open platform to encourage the readers to analyze these two lifestyles and perceptions beyond the apparent circumstances. Marie is trying to give all the love and care to her children, which she did not get in her childhood. Callie is doing her best to take care of his son, hoping that he will live a normal and better life in the future. It can be easily deduced that both mothers are trying their level best to nurture their children in a better way.

## Works Cited

Saunders, George. Tenth of December. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. Print