

Struggle Fear and Helplessness in Fiction

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Thesis statement: As the desire to change one's reality involves struggles, the characters of the fiction entrap themselves in trepidation and helplessness.

Truman Capote's book "Jug of Silver" (1945) and Randall Kenan's "The Foundations of The Earth" (1992) represent a conflict between man and self. The conflict is apparent in Capote's narrative as he recreates the social realities of the world, depicting the unfair role of people. Kenan also illustrates the conflict that prevails in society in the form of social norms and constraints. In both fictions, the boys attempt to take a role that provides them with an escape from their miserable realities. Appleseed's determination to win the money reflects his concern for changing his life, while Edward's motivation demonstrates his desire to attain personal desires. Throughout the stories, the young boys are entrapped in the social realities that result in their unhappy states.

Truman Capote in the fiction "Jug of Silver" Appleseed in the fiction sets strikingly unlikely odds for himself. The central characters exist in a state of trepidation where they fear the outcomes. The author tells the story from a young boy's perspective, depicting how he relies on simple things. Appleseed in the fiction plays an innocent young boy who attempts to rive out his blue by thinking about winning the jar money. The situations portrayed by Capote are not simple, as the main character finds himself entrapped in anxiety. He believes the only way that could bring him happiness is through winning the money.

Randall Kenan in "The Foundations of The Earth" uncovers the conflicting realities of choosing between social constructs and personal desires. The story highlights the difficulties faced by an African American gay as he fails to confine himself to the social construct. The author captures the survival of the homosexuals in intimidating conditions, resulting in their trepidation and tragedy. Edward encounters conflict due to his homosexuality and his connections to African-American descent. The author portrays that survival with the rejection of society's norms is not simple for the people. Edward and his grandmother, Maggie, face difficulties due to the homosexual lifestyle boy. The problems of racial and sexual orientation are visible in the fiction. Maggie finds herself in a conflicting situation as her religious beliefs make it difficult for her to accept the sexual orientation of her grandson.

Through the inclusion of ethos, the author builds emotional appeal for the readers. Capote uses simple settings to convey the feelings of a young boy as the story revolves around Marshall's game. Money plays a significant role in Appleseed's life due to his deprivations. Appleseed is aware of his reality, apparent in the comment; "the only person who appeared not the least touch by this heat warming atmosphere was Appleseed. He went about his declared business of counting the jug-money with great, persistent care" (Capote 87). The reason why Appleseed visits the store daily is to bring change to his life. The readers identify the state of the young boy who needs help due to his non-

existent opportunities for survival. Kenan, in the story, incorporates ethos to evoke readers' emotions as he represents the miserable state of the young boy. The boy is unable to accept social constructs of gender, leading to his destruction. Ethos is visible as the author states, "while Gabriel sat there with a look on his face with somewhere between peace and pain" (Kenan 110). The quote expresses the difficulties and inner conflict of the young boy. The grandmother questions her upbringing as she is unable to accept the homosexuality of her grandson.

Money remains crucial for the young boy as he believes it will allow him to escape poverty. Capote, in the story, conveys the theme of poverty and deprivations that entraps Appleseed in a hopeless situation. The young boy struggles for a win, "there you could see him plain as day sitting at the fountain with his forehead puckered and his eyes fixed forever on the jar" (Capote 87). The portrayal of the settings exhibiting the extremely poor conditions of Appleseed and his sister displays the conflict. The desire of Appleseed to win the game reflects his concerns about overcoming his poverty. Due to poverty, the money becomes a dream for him, visible in his determination to win the game.

The game also displays the conflict between hope and demise. In a trepidation state, the young boy can only think about solutions to get rid of it while he remains unsure about the outcomes. The author tries to highlight the simplicity and innocence of the poor boy who believes that winning money will allow him to overcome his deprivations. He focuses only on the jar money and considers it as a fortune. Edward also appears in trepidation as he is unaware of the outcomes. Though he chooses a different sexuality, he doubts about his future. He is well aware of social norms that restrict him from taking a role outside the male gender. The fiction represents the helpless state of the young boy, "Edward has been living with another man all these years" (Kenan 112). The role that Edward chose for himself was not free from the difficulties as it influenced his entire life. He aimed to escape the social sanctions and attain freedom. The young boy was unable to accept society's constraints, which motivated him to act differently.

Capote, through the character of Appleseed, conveys the central conflict apparent in the class differences. The story displays Appleseed and his sister as the poorest while the townspeople enjoy the privileges due to their better financial conditions. Conflict is also apparent as the boy needs to work after school for survival. "he's a small puny and high-strung, and he always wore the same outfit, a red sweater, blue denim britches and a pair of man-sized boots" (Capote 89). Through the presentation of the character, the author conveys the miseries encountered by the young boy. The settings of the story draw the reader into central conflict, where they explore the tragic realities of wealth and poverty. Appleseed is in need of money but that does not come easily, he struggles to win it. Conflict is visible as the townspeople do not offer help to Appleseed and his sister, irrespective of their extreme poverty.

The only hope that he could see was the winning money. The boy has only one concern: coming up with the correct amount of money, as he sees it as the only hope. He goes through nervousness throughout the process of winning the jar money. Conflict is visible in the fiction as Edward needs to

make a choice. Social constructs minimize the role of self portrayed in the character of Edward. Kenan portrays the theme of a socially constrained society where the young boy fails to survive, leading to his death. The role of society is apparent as Kenan mentions, “the depression had come with the death of Edward, though its roots reached farther back, to the time he seemed to have vanished” (Kenan 111). The society rejected him due to his choice of homosexuality. The young boy faced difficulties in accepting society’s norms, which resulted in his isolation and destruction. The author confers the idea of limited life choices available to young people. The inability of Edward to play the role of the perfect male resulted in his demise.

The authors develop emotions of sympathy by portraying the helpless states of young boys. The story of Capote also builds sympathy for the central character by highlighting his actual state of helplessness. The young boy believes that he is lucky due to a caul that he was born with. He also plays the role of innocent and ignorant as he believes that his luck will allow him to win the money. Through emotions of sympathy, the author convinces the reader of the miserable conditions of the children. It becomes prominent in the text, “Appleseed himself was a sorry sight. He cried though he was mortally wounded”(Capote 92). Living in the deprived conditions was not easy for the young boy as he had dreams of changing his reality. Kenan, through his fiction, tries to promote emotions of sympathy as he portrays the miserable state of the child. Sympathy is visible in the comment, “I don’t think I could be so calm if my grand boy has had died so young” (Kenan 112). The comment provokes emotions of sympathy as the young boy becomes the victim of social constraints. The readers learn about the repercussions and the limited roles that society assigns to the people.

Inner conflict remains visible throughout the stories as the characters try to change their social realities. Capote, in his fiction, portrays the difficulties encountered by young boys due to their desires to attain their dreams, apparent in the character of Appleseed. Kenan, in the story, uncovers the adversities of social limitations that restrict young people from living a life of their choice. The desire to take a role outside society’s norms leads to the destruction of the character. Unhappiness in the stories is an outcome of class differences.

Work Cited

Capote, Truman. *Jug of Silver*. Creative Education, Incorporated, 1986.

Kenan, Randall. “The Foundations of The Earth. 1992.