

“The Lives Of The Dead” Story Analysis

Posted on May 13, 2020

From the title, “Lives of the Dead,” I expect a story that speaks of spirits, of persons who died earlier in life and are said to be in a spirit trying to explain to a loved one what life is on the other side after death. When I read the first paragraph, I expect to see a man who has gotten involved in killing people, and these people come back to haunt him and speak to him after they die. I tend to think that Linda, Ted Lavender, Kiowa and Curt Lemon are among the people who came back to the narrator in the form of spirits after dying to speak to him. I expect the narrator to give a story on how he has interacted with spirits and what they have told him about [the lives of the dead](#).

After the first events of interaction with the characters, I’m expecting to read a story in a war setting. I hope to see people fighting, killing each other and perhaps with one person being spared by death amidst all these scenes to narrate the story in the end. As the conflict unfolds, I get to realize that it is only a person that is trying to recapture childhood memories (O’Brien). He is trying to explain what a story can do to the emotions and imaginations of a human being. The story depicts how the narrator believes that stories can make things real and how writing can keep Linda (a young girl that the narrator loved in his childhood) alive (O’Brien).

The characters at the beginning of the story are in a war setting that seems horrific. As the story unfolds, it takes us back to the early childhood life of O’Brien. The characters change. The story now has O’Brien, Linda, Nick Veenhof and O’Brien’s parents as the main characters in the story. The setting of the story is taken back to childhood life and school life. It is considered to narrate a young boy (Tim) who loves a young girl (Linda), but the girl eventually dies of a brain tumor (O’Brien). The scene of the dead man at the beginning of the story reminds O’Brien of Linda. The manner in which his companions relate to the dead man as if he is alive makes him believe that he can as well keep Linda alive through imagining and behaving as if she is alive. He thinks that he can speak to her in his mind and picture her doing things as if she were alive. In some instances, Tim visualizes her as walking down the aisle and, at other times, asking questions. The plot of this story is complicated, but yet still it can be summarized. It is not easy to recognize the genre of the story as, at some point, it speaks of real-life events, and at other times it speaks of imagination (O’Brien).

The story is a first-person narration in the past tense. I get to understand the thoughts of some characters especially when Mitchell Sanders is trying to imitate what Ted Lavender used to say when he was alive (Mifflin). The main characters in the story are Tim and Linda. The protagonist happens to be Linda, while Timmy is the antagonist. The other characters, such as Nick Veenhof, Tim’s parents, Ted Lavender, Mitchell Sanders, Rat Kiley and Curt Lemon, only come in to build the story and make it more understandable. The narrator in this story is a character in that very story.

The story has two settings. One set is in Tim’s childhood life, which revolves around school life and their home, while the other environment is on a war ground where Tim is trying to recount his

childhood experience (Mifflin). The story moves back and forth and does not have a direct flow. It has interjections that give more understanding of the story itself. It alternates between the two settings. The story has fictional prose with simple sentences. It has a sad and nostalgic tone as Tim wishes that Linda could be alive. He resolves to make her live in his imagination. It does not use images, symbols or figures of speech.

The story majors on the theme of death. It explains the effect that death brings to the lives of their loved ones who were left behind (Mifflin). For instance, Tim still remembers Linda and their life together in their childhood despite the fact that he is now an adult. Even after those many years, he still wishes that Linda could be alive. The actions of those around him and the death of other people around him always bring back the memory of Linda (O'Brien). The story also highlights how our character and behavior can wound those around us. Our words can bring bad memories to those around us unknowingly.

Works Cited

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