

1 Literary Analysis of “What You Pawn I will Redeem”

Literary Analysis (Draft) of “What You Pawn I Will Redeem”

4 I have chosen prompt number 4: “in some stories, characters come into conflict with the culture in which they live.”

Introduction and Thesis

In Sherman Alexie’s short story, “What You Pawn I Will Redeem”, the main theme is survival and making the most out of the situation. **Human sometimes have a need to feel whole. The battles we fight are often our own inner demons, Jackson Jackson is battling mental illness and alcoholism while he is fighting to keep a hold of his cultural heritage by trying to recapture a piece of his family history** The first person account of homeless life in Seattle shows the reader new ways of building relationships and making every day count, despite the circumstances.

 **Literary Analysis**

Sherman Alexie attempts to help the reader understand contemporary Native Americans’ lives, as Grassian (2005) confirms. The self-reflection is sometimes ironic, and the author is using strong words to highlight the issues that are often neglected by politicians and the society. As Alexie (2003, p. 169) puts it:

“Homeless Indians are everywhere in Seattle. We’re common and boring, and you walk right on by us, with maybe a look of anger or disgust or even sadness at the terrible fate of the noble savage. But we have dreams and families.”

The author also attempts to fight the stereotypes associated with Native Americans: being lazy, useless, having no culture, and not ready to assimilate in the American society. As Grassian (2005) puts it,³ Native Americans suffered from cultural colonialism from the time when Europeans settled in their land. It is extremely challenging for the tribes to preserve their cultural

1. This approach does not align with the task of the assignment. Please see the sample paper for guidance.

[Elizabeth Skwiat]

2. Remove the headings. Instead, use topic sentences, transitional language, and cohesive paragraphs to organize your discussion.

[Elizabeth Skwiat]

3. puts it,

Vary your word choice to avoid redundant words and phrases. *[Elizabeth Skwiat]*

identity, and they are often torn between the life at the reservation settlement and the “outside” world, consisting of mainly American culture.

Alexie, however, is not only a literary writer, but also has a strong sociological approach towards representing the lives and struggles of minorities in America. Hossain and Sarker (2016) write that the main approach of Alexie’s literary and poetic work is social realism. The authors define realism as a literary style that “R an endeavor to portray life as it is. It shows life with reality, omitting nothing that is ugly or painful and idealizing nothing” (Hossain and Sarker, 2016, p. 384).

1. The discussion strays from the topic at hand. Be sure to stay focused and to work at developing your argument.
{Elizabeth Skwiot}

Alexie connects with his heritage through storytelling: all his novels and short stories are built on this theme. He uses the common stereotype of Americans to identify his culture, stating several times that Indians are great storytellers. The storytelling is what Indians are good at, and remembering is a way of survival for them. He, however, reflects on history and uses sarcasm when talking about the injustice done to his tribes. When telling the story about his grandmother who was a nurse in a military hospital, he quotes the Maori soldier: “How we brown people are killing other brown people so white people will remain free” (Alexie, 2003, p. 171).

2. What is the significance of the information you presented? How does it relate to your thesis or the central point you are trying to make?
{Elizabeth Skwiot}

3. Do not end a paragraph with a quotation or paraphrase; rather, add a concluding statement.
{Elizabeth Skwiot}

Conclusion

The despair of the history makes the deviant behavior of the heroes depicted by Alexie more acceptable, and understandable in context. Native Americans have no place, no representation, and are considered to be inferior. They faced military and social oppression for hundreds of years, and all their stories talk about hopelessness and lack of opportunities. The self-destructing life of the hero in “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” is put in the context of

⁴ postmodern society: the strong stereotypes that are applied to “brown people” in America, and they often internalize the stereotypes, like Jackson in the story: “Yeah, we Spokane, we’re

4. Your conclusion does not establish closure. How might you bring resolution to the topics discussed in your essay? *{Elizabeth Skwiot}*

passive, you know". (Alexie, 2003, p. 173). His only way of connecting with his roots is to retrieve his grandmother's regalia. As he states: " I knew that solitary yellow bead was part of me" (Alexie, 2003, p. 174).

References

Alexie, S. (2003). What You Pawn I Will Redeem. *New Yorker-New Yorker Magazine Incorporated.*, 168-177.

Grassian, D. (2005). *Understanding Sherman Alexie*. Univ of South Carolina Press.

Hossain, M. A., & Sarker, S. A. N. (2016). Sherman Alexie's Literary Works as Native American Social Realistic Projections. *European Scientific Journal*, 12(11).