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Analysis

The novel, Past the Shallows, is a moving piece of art. In this novel the teenage voices of three brothers are invoked together by the author. The first character is Harry who is the youngest of all three. The theme of isolation and tragedy is clearly evident from the representation of this character. Harry is a sweet little boy who is greatly neglected after the mother of these boys has died.

Harry has to suffer a lot and bears the brunt of his dad’s anger. *“They wash up in the surf sometimes, the lost ones.”* This quote has the technique of foreshadowing and is metaphorically referring to Harry himself. The themes of death, love and family invoke emotions in the readers.

The relationship between siblings and strangers prevails as the only remaining positive link between the characters*. “And if you didn’t know better, you’d think that no one lived here anymore. That all these places were abandoned. But people were in there somewhere, hidden and burrowed in. They were there.”* The technique of this quote is to hint towards the changing nature of human condition and its persisting qualities.

Multiple tragedies and a cruel behavior from his father broke Harry’s courage and he felt isolated from his contemporaries a million times throughout the plot. *‘I’ll never be a fisherman,’ Harry said.* The author is trying to hint towards despair and the spirit of giving up. An in-depth reflection of this quote portrays a violent outcome of a traditional masculine expression.

The novel is hard-hitting story and is concentrated on the lives of Harry and his brother Miles. More often than not, Miles shoulders the responsibilities which his siblings don’t bear. He wants to grow up to be a craftsman and also loves to surf.

Miles was terrified that just like his grandfather this water will surround him completely and he will not be able to live his life up to a certain potential. This is evident from the quote,

*“Water that was always there. Always everywhere. The sound and the smell and the cold waves making Harry different. And it wasn’t just because he was the youngest. He knew the way he felt about the ocean would never leave him now. It would be there always, right inside him.”* The writer is trying to show Miles felt about the water and this quote is all about persuasion.

Miles also had a sense of wry humor about him because he was forced to grow up quickly and also had to do things to lighten up the mood.

*“What should I find?” he asked.*

*“A shark egg.” Miles said.*

*And there was silence.*

The author also showed the internal struggle of the character of Miles when he had to finally accept that he had to fill the gap of a dead relative.

*“First day of school holidays. First day he must man the boat alone while the men go down. Old enough now, he must take his place. Just like his brother before him, he must fill the gap Uncle Nick left.”* The author is trying to adapt a tone of utter despair and hopelessness in this quote in which he has succeeded as well.

The third character of this novel who has proven to be instrumental in reflecting the experience of isolation is Joe. Joe is the eldest of three brothers and escaped when he got the first chance, leaving his two brothers. The plot tells the readers that Joe is forced to take care of his brothers and he follows the footsteps of his grandfather to learn the skill of carpentry.

*“Out past the shallows, past the sandy-bottomed bays, comes the dark water—black and cold and roaring. Rolling out an invisible path, a new line for them to follow.
To somewhere warm.
To somewhere new.”*

This quote directly refers to Joe at as the novel concludes when he talks to his younger brothers about the places that they would visit.

The intricate inclusion of these characters chiefly allowed the experience of isolation to create a heart-wrenching impression on the readers.