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Subject

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Common themes

Hooks book “Bone Black” and Salzman’s book “Lost in Place: Growing Up Absurd in Suburbia” exhibit common themes of struggle, pain, insecurities and exploration of self through writing. Mark Salzman in his book Lost in Place illustrates his journey of obsession with literature that is seen as an attempt of escaping his fears or physical violence. Bell Hooks in her book emphasizes on her childhood efforts for surviving in the racist and sexist environments. It is only through her storytelling that she finds a medium of sharing her miseries with the world. She starts by portraying the black society and community of working-class where Hook is a victim of loneliness and fear. She delves into the inner darkness of her soul for expressing some brutal social issues linked with her childhood. Both Salzman and Hooks learned to transform their miserable past into words that gave them strength and power.

Hooks has used her life journey from childhood to adulthood for explaining how she builds confidence from her insecure childhood. She mentions, “pain can be a constructive sign of growth” (Hooks 103). The text depicts that through her struggles she learns to fight with the social odds and develop the strength that gives her the power to live in the world. What used to be her weakness becomes her strength after collecting her thoughts. The thoughts of the author depict that trouble are not always destructive but they also have a positive role in teaching people important lessons. The author states that she couldn't develop such potential without having a direct encounter with such events. She has used her thoughts for transforming important mythical and imaginative components into her narrative. A similar technique is used by Salzman for sharing his memoir of childhood and past events. Struggles of the author are apparent as he mentions, "I made sure that all my stretching, punching and kicking exercises hurt" (Salzman 10). This indicates that the author had constantly been in struggles that reflect a sign of building strength. Salzman was influenced by his past experiences and encounter with his family history. His efforts for learning about Chinese culture depicts that he was convinced to examine the role of race and implications on the society. Themes of insecurity are apparent in the stories of both authors because they have undergone significant pains for getting the power of sharing their feelings.

Insecure feelings are discernible in the childhood events of both authors. According to Hooks, the only thing that gives her the courage to speak for herself is her storytelling. Feelings of the author are expressed, "as I wrote, I felt that I was not as concerned with the accuracy of detail as I was with evoking in writing the state of mind, the spirit of a particular moment" (Hooks 157-158). Insecurity is visible in Salzman's childhood because he continued to find ways to impress his father. It is apparent in the text, "I wanted to prove myself by doing something my father couldn't do, but also like most boys I thought, my dad could do anything" (Salzman 11). The feelings of the author depict that he was always attempting to prove his talent which reflects his struggle for searching self. The themes of self-identity indicate that Salzman was aiming to develop the huge potential for achieving something great. These insecurities emerged due to the environmental influence because other kids were also encouraged to prove their edge.

Struggles are apparent throughout the stories of both authors. Hooks has attempted to explain her struggles by writing about racist themes. Her childhood in Kentucky during the '60s was surrounded by many racist events that threatened the life of the young girl. Her emphasis on the black community reflects her belonging to her cultural background and efforts for living with that in America. Struggles are also visible in Salzman’s story as he says, "I was seriously depressed over the pointless existence of the year, but after I'd reached the point of exhaustion and knew there was no use going any further with it, I got sick of thinking about pointlessness" (Salzman 146). The feelings transmit the themes of searching for an identity. The author struggled to find a cause and purpose of life which also depicts his concerns about finding his reality. These feelings made him restless until he was able to find any proper cause. His learning of Chinese poems reflects his desire to rethinking the world and culture. Living in a place of the multicultural region gave him the opportunity of attaining something great.

Themes of self-identity are apparent in both stories. Hooks has used these themes for explaining her state of concerns for finding her reality. She mentions, “creating the foundation of selfhood and identity that will ultimately lead to the fulfilment of her true destiny becoming a writer” (Hooks 101). This indicates that she had been worried about finding the purpose behind her existence. This can also be seen as a central reason for her inner struggles. He desires to become a writer is also linked with her aim of meeting her identity. In the case of Hooks, her search for identity is more because of her connection with the black culture because she has expressed how she felt alienated and entrapped in the loneliness. Self-identity is also discernible in the story of Salzman which becomes visible in his desire of exploring Chinese culture and writing about that. The desire of the author to learn about King fu is his attempt to exploring self-identity. His reveals that his attempts to building a connection with this new culture add to his strength and allow him to find satisfaction. Before his experience of Kung Fu and Chinese culture he kept on wandering and lacked a proper aim or direction. He mentions, "I translated a group of Tungli Shen's vernacular Chinese poems, which allowed me to meet with him once a week for a whole year and chat" (Salzman 146). This reflects the author's passion for linking him to this new language and culture for finding something worthy of living. He has explained that before his passion and interest in Chinese he was not satisfied with his life.

The way in which authors have handled the social complexities and themes of struggle exhibit similarities. They both have tried to use their childhood as a cause for reaching their independent identities in adulthood. Hooks has used her childhood pain for meeting her future goal of gaining freedom by becoming a writer. A similar strategy is used by Salzman for narrating his past events and using them a cause for future freedom. The analysis of Hook’s story depicts that pain and struggles gave her strength to grow drastically and she managed to attain self-identity. Her journey from an insecure child to a thoughtful writer depicts that she managed to use her miseries to achieve her dream. The assessment of Salzman’s story reflects his struggles for exploring self-identity by associating himself with a new culture. His involvement in learning Chinese language and Kung Fu allowed him to attain his self-identity.

The pains and experiences of struggles are memorable for me because both authors have managed to transmit their entrapped roles in childhood. By relating to different incidents of childhood they achieved their purpose of expressing their struggles. The way in which Hooks has tried to link her pain with the civil rights movement of the 60s is memorable because it reveals the feeling of a child during that period. Through her personal experiences, she has attempted to recreate the miseries of the black children due to their connectivity with different races and ethnicities. Salzman has also emphasized using his personal experiences for meeting his future dream of becoming a writer. Both authors have thus used similar themes for explaining the circumstances and events that contributed to their changing lives.

The analysis of the books portrays an important human problem of finding self-identity. Children are often entrapped in the community where they have to face different problems and social issues. I think Hooks childhood discusses the problem of racial and ethnic struggles encountered by black kids. She used her miserable childhood and experiences of racial incidents for becoming a good writer. The journey of both authors exhibits a social problem of finding the purpose of life. Most of the children lack direction and are unsure of the career they must pursue. Authors have managed to shed light on these issues by leading to a broader conclusion that kids must follow their dreams. Their desires must not be constrained by cultures or social norms. The independent choices made by both Hooks and Salzman gives them escape from the painful past. These themes are thus connected with every child who is struggling to follow his desire and explore self-identity. These problems reflect the issues faced by children in their childhood.

Work Cited

Hooks, Bell. Bone Black. Henry Holt and Company, 1996.

Salzman, Mark. Lost in Place: Growing Up Absurd in Suburbia. Vintage Books, 1995.