Your Name

Instructor Name

Course Number

Date

Among Animals

‘Emu’ by Jessica Zbeida features a first-person narrative whose plot is unconventionally developed from a retrospective point of view. The story begins by describing the tragedy of the story, the uncalled feasting of the innocent emu. In doing so, the author clutters the impact of the emu’s death with insignificant background details. Examples of such clutter include the narrator’s unnecessary opinions, such as her self-held thought that "Men do love their ice chests" (Zbeida 1). Revealing the conclusion of story in the beginning, and in such nonchalant, cluttered manner, limits its tragic effect on the audience. In other words, the audience is not as sympathetic and understanding of Beth, because the emotional attachment to the emu that Beth feels is yet to be formed. Another flaw in Zbeida’s retrospective structuring is that the intended impact and underlying meaning of certain initial details are missed by the audience. For instance, when the narrator states that "I'm too angry to play along" or that her mother's face was "sympathetic," the audience misunderstands the characters of Beth and her mother because there is not any context (2-3). After the author continues with the story is attempting to rebuild suspense (and does well), she again waters down the effect of the tragedy on the audience. The traumatic moment was limited to the mere explanation: "She [Nikki (Beth's daughter)] ran to the door and yanked it open. Behind me, two shots cracked the night open” (17). After forging such a sincere emotional bond between Beth and the emu, the story begs for a melodramatic reaction and aftermath to Beth’s desperate attempt to keep the animal alive (none of which are given). Overall, the plot structure and the exhibition of the tragic effect are lackluster. Still, there are various elements in the piece that are appraisable such as the author's use of imagery for detailed descriptions as well as character development. The first-person standpoint in 'Emu' naturally collects a broad internal stance on the narrator, Beth. The characters in 'Emu' are each developed by how they relate to Beth and the plot of her story. Beth's story does not reveal any character development besides her own, which propels the narrative. Beth's interactions with the 'emu' are the most evident of a bond that she has developed with the bird. The pivotal characters in the story would have to be Beth, emu, and Lloyd. These are the most important characters in developing the plot because the whole story revolves around the actions of Beth and Lloyd towards the emu. Throughout the story, Beth tried her hardest to protect and release the emu from wherever it came while Lloyd, on the other hand, trying his hardest to get the emu in his stomach. Lloyd showed the care he had for his wife by bringing her a puppy to distract her from emu, but did not care enough to see her tears in protecting the emu (Lefer et al.).

**References**

Lefer, Diane, et al. *Among Animals: The Lives of Animals and Humans in Contemporary Short Fiction*. Ashland Creek Press, 2014.