

Discussion of the Characters in David Foster Wallace's "Good People"

- **Synopsis**

- David Foster Wallace's "Good People" describes the predicament of a dating Christian couple that engages in premarital sex and the lady becomes pregnant. They are torn between having an abortion and keeping the baby (Mays 149-155).

- **Characters**

- The author examines the abortion issue using an interesting choice of characters. Lane A. Dean, Jr. and Shari are two young Christian friends, who have dated for a while. They are staunch Christians but still end up engaging in premarital sexual relations.
- The main characters in the story are the stereotypic opponents of abortion being staunch Christians and also educated to the college level. The complexity of the issue of abortion is depicted in the mental conflict experienced by the characters.
- Lane is the main character. He and his girlfriend Shari pray together over the phone when they are physically apart although they pray in coded language indicating that they are uncomfortable with their religious inclinations. All the events are described in Lane's perspective, including the last part where he imagines what Shari would have to say about the impending appointment for abortion.
- Pastor Steve and the church members (152) are passively used to portray an intolerance of sexuality and the rigidity of rules in the church community.

Significance of Setting in Literature

- **Definition**

- The time and place where the events in a story take place (157).

- **Types of Settings**

- The time setting of a story can be during the author's lifetime, in the past or even the future. The story can also take place across many time periods, whereby it can be categorized into general and particular periods. A general time setting refers to the scope of the story while a particular time setting specifies the timeline when a specific event, featured in a story took place.
- A story can also be set in a single or in multiple locations. Physical settings can be real places or fictional based on what effect the author intends the story to have. Some stories can also be based on locations that cannot practically exist in the present or foreseeable future.
- Similarly a setting can be described vaguely or vividly depending on the effect that the author wants the story to have on the audience. Folk tales are set in vague places and timelines where the author can state "once upon a time", or "in a deserted village". In such stories the setting is unimportant thus the author intends the audience to feature on the other aspects of the story and the theme.
- The vivid description of the setting in a fictional work is crucial for character development and setting of the theme. The author gives the example of *Gone with the Wind* as one of the novels that would lose thematic clarity without a detailed description of the setting (159).

- **The Importance of Setting in Fictional Stories**

- The setting is as an important aspect of the story as characters and plot. The author uses the setting to mold the readers' mood and help them to understand the story in the intended context.
- The author also uses the setting to develop the characters and to modify their behavior.
- Authors also use the setting to develop various themes in their work of fiction.
- The setting can also be used to challenge the prior perceptions of a reader when an author deviates from the traditional knowledge and the known history.

Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog"

- **Setting**

- The novel is set in two locations. The author uses the setting as an imagery to show the emotional experiences of the characters. The first setting is in Yalta, a holiday town located in Southern Ukraine. Gurov, the main character, meets Anna in Yalta and falls in love with her. The time is described as the onset of the spring season, the weather warm, and the flowers are blooming, perhaps to symbolize the inception of new relationships. Gurov is described as a relaxed place where "one did not know what to do with oneself"(165).
- The relaxed, carefree, holiday mood depicted in the setting allows for Gurov and Anna to engage in an extramarital affair. The two of them meet at the beach which is well described through sounds and smells. The two

characters are key to the sights and smells; since they hear "the chirrup of the grasshoppers" and Gurov "smelled the moisture and the fragrance of the flowers" (168) when he kissed Anna. The place loses its appeal when Anna leaves and Gurov experiences "a cold evening" and decides to leave for Moscow.

- Setting is used to portray the mood back at Gurov's home in Moscow when the author states that it was "in its winter routine" (171). Unlike the warm weather, outdoor activities, light, and fun in Yalta, Moscow is cold, and most activities are carried out indoors. Gurov is bored with the routine and misses the spontaneity of Yalta. Gurov is also lonely and thus misses the love and companionship of "the lady with the dog".

Summary of the Use of Setting in Judith Ortiz Cofer's "Volar"

- The story is about a young girl whose family migrates to America. The young girl and her mother share similar dreams which the author symbolizes as "valor", a Spanish word that means "to fly". The author uses the story to describe many immigrant's dreams to make it in America and the elusiveness of their dreams. The general setting of the whole story is vague. The readers only know that the events take place in America during the great migration period. Perhaps, the author chose to leave the setting vague to emphasize the human emotions in the story and to give a general overview of the society. The particular settings in the story are described vividly e.g. the flight from the roof top (197).

Critique of the "Sample Writing: Essay"

- The essay describes the use of setting in Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog". The author describes the time settings in detail citing numerous parts of the story to support his points.
- The author, however, does not discuss the spatial setting in detail.
- In essence the author fails to identify the important role that both the space and time setting play in bringing out the story's main theme.

Discussion Questions

Did the physical attraction or religious inclinations prevailed for both heroes? Discussion of the Characters in David Foster Wallace's "Good People"

How the setting of the meeting place influenced feelings between Anna and Gurov? Were their feelings strong enough to break up with their relatives? Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog"

Does the author compare being truly free to human inability to fly and highlights the elusiveness of the dreams when the desired goal is reached? Summary of the Use of Setting in Judith Ortiz Cofer's "Volar"

Works Cited

Mays, Kelly J. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. Eleventh. W. W. Norton & Company, 2013. Print.