
Assessment of the Character of Sylvia in Sarah Orne Jewett's, a White Heron

"A White Heron" by Sarah Orne Jewett tells a story of a young girl named Sylvia who came to live with her grandmother in the country. She meets a young ornithologist hunter seeking to find a rare bird called white heron he has heard has been spotted in the area. He tells Sylvia and her grandmother that he is willing to give ten dollars to anyone who could lead him to it. Sylvia has seen the heron before. However she is challenged with whether or not she should tell the hunter she saw the bird. Jewett's literary works show the comparison of social values between country and city, the erosion of country life caused by industrial development. And "A White Heron" typically shows the conflicts between several values: human and nature, country and city, male and female, adult and child. And the most important conflict is between human and nature.

In "A White Heron" Jewett emphasizes that life is equal no matter what kind of species it is. From the beginning of the story, She already depicts the picture of human and nature living in harmony. Jewett writes, "She was not often in the woods so late as this, and it made her feel as if she were a part of the gray shadows and the moving leaves." And also in the story, it looks like that the plants and animals can understand human thoughts. Jewett uses "she" as a pronoun for the old cow instead of "it". In the story the great pine tree is like a guardian angel of Sylvia, since "the tree stood still and frowned away the winds that June morning while the dawn grew bright in the east." The writer points out that the symbiotic relationship between human and nature is obviously the right way for both of them.

The young hunter is a conqueror for both young girl and forest, a typical symbol that human society threaten the nature. His arrival disturbs the peaceful life of girl and forests. Jewett writes, "Oh, no, they're stuffed and preserved, dozens and dozens of them." His shotgun represents aggression, rob and strong power of male. Industrial development forces people away from nature and chase the money and power. However, the cow of the girl represents the nature, harmony and peace. The name Sylvia gives us a clue to the relationship between the girl and nature. Sylvia means forests or woods. The ways they love birds is totally different. The story exhibits male identify with industrial development and female identify with nature.

"A White Heron" indicates that nature plays an important role in the growth of young child. Sylvia becomes kind child that loves nature and have moral standard. Jewet writes, "she had never seen anybody so charming and delightful; the woman's heart, asleep in the child." Admittedly, the image of the young man stands for the perfect man image—he is young, handsome, wealthy, well-educated. And he awakes the love asleep in little Sylvia. However, after climbing up to the top of pine tree and observe all the vast and brilliant world, morality deep into her heart awakes. Finally, she withstands the test of money and love. The whole process of climbing the pine tree is also the process of growth and self-awareness.

"A White Heron" is a story that discussed about power of choice and what is better for life over all. It makes people feel how a part of your life that you had wished to live has been taken away how much you have been deceived by the modern world and its scheme of values. Briefly, through the development of industrial revolution, more and more conflict has occurred. The writer wants readers to find the balance between human and nature after reading the story.

eduzaurus.com