
Cannery Row By John Steinbeck: The Character Of Doc

In the novel "Cannery Row," John Steinbeck tends to make the readers comprehend that the novel's attitude towards one of the main characters, Doc, is acceptance, kindness, and forgiving despite what errors people may do in Cannery Row. Doc's character is the proprietor and dealer of the Western Biological Laboratory. Doc is rather small, for he is rough and well built and when the angry him comes out he can be very vicious. He has a beard and his face is half Christ and half satyr and his face says the truth. It is stated that he has helped many women out of one trouble and into another. Doc has the hands of a brain surgeon, and a cool warm mind. He can kill anything for need, but he could never hurt a feeling for satisfaction.

Doc became the source of science, philosophy and art. He would listen to any strange things and change it for you to a kind of wisdom. Doc's mind had no outlook and his compassion had no warp. He could talk to children, tell them very sincere and intense things so that they understood. Doc lived in a world of excitement. He is very lustful but very gentle. Everyone who knew him was grateful to him. "And everyone who thought of him thought next: I really must do something nice for Doc" (29-30). This information and quote is significant because it begins by telling the readers a little background about Doc and directly makes it clear that Doc is the one person who you can always turn to and count on. As Doc may be the most popular and cherished character in the book he is also very lonely. Though he spends most of his time in the laboratory, collecting sea creatures or listening to music, he was a ". . . lonely and set-apart man" (96). Which brings us to introduce Frankie, Frankie is an eleven year old boy with large eyes and dark hair who mysteriously appears at Doc's laboratory. When Doc asks Frankie some questions about himself he simply tells him that he lives up the hill, does not go to school because they don't want him there and that he comes to the laboratory because he doesn't hit him or give him a nickel.

Meaning his so called "family" abuse him or sometimes give him a nickel to go away. Doc takes the boy in and starts to take care of him, though Frankie is a boy who mostly doesn't know how to do anything Doc teaches him how to do things around the lab such as, measuring fish, but Frankie can't seem to do anything right and when this occurs he crawls in the excelsior box and doesn't come out all afternoon. "But Frankie was a nice, good, kind boy, He learned to light Doc's cigars and he wanted Doc to smoke all the time so he could light the cigars" (). He also loved the parties that Doc had, he would sit back and listen to the conversations people would have. But one afternoon while a party was going on Frankie grabbed a drink and took it over to a lady sitting on a chair, Frankie will never forget how the lady smiled and thanked him and how Doc said that he was a great help to him, that made Frankie's confidence boost way up. "She took the glass and said: "Why, thank you," and she smiled at him. And Doc coming through the door said: "Yes, Frankie is a great help to me" (57). Though sadly when the next party occurred and Frankie tried to do the same thing he accidentally dropped the drinks in front of Doc's guests. After this incident Frankie ran upstairs and into the cellar. Doc went after him to check up on him but when he heard him whimpering he went back down and thought that there wasn't anything he could do to help him. This is a great example of Doc's personality, he took the boy in because of his great heart but not only because of his compassion but because he too needed the company. Doc tried to help Frankie feel confident about himself. In contrast, when Frankie later on reappears in the novel, Frankie hears about the party and tries to rob a

beautiful clock to give it as a present but he gets caught, the police call Doc and Doc tries to bail him out but the police say he's not allowed to, when Doc asks Frankie why he did that Frankie simply says, I love you, Doc runs away without giving Frankie a response which makes the readers think that Doc is afraid of getting too close to people or to even be loved.

Doc was not a medical doctor but everyone in Cannery Row considered him as one, he was the closest thing to a doctor. During the influenza epidemic, Doc was the man of the year, the whole town went to Doc to be examined or cured. "It was not his fault that everyone in the Row came to him for medical advice. Before he knew it he found himself running from shanty to shanty taking temperatures, giving physics, borrowing and delivering blankets and even taking food from house to house where mothers looked at him with inflamed eyes from their beds, and thanked him and put the full responsibility for their children's recovery on him" (93). Once again Doc is shown as the person who can always be counted on. Doc helps the townspeople of Cannery Row when they need medicine or medical advice. Every family in Cannery Row depend on Doc to be cured or at least be told what is wrong. Jumping into Doc's first and second party, Mack and the boys create both parties. The first party resulted as total disaster due Mack's childish and non thinking brain. When Mack and the boys achieve hunt frogs they later on exchange the frogs for their own needs, needs for the party such as liquor and steaks. When they decide to start the party at Doc's without Doc actually being there they start to get carried away by the thought of Doc being there and getting surprised by his surprise party. But the hours pass and Doc is nowhere to be found but Mack and the boys don't seem to care about that they are just enjoying themselves without recalling who the party is really for.

Later on things take a quick turn, some of Doc's belongings end up being broken, some of the frogs jump out, and Doc's home is somewhat destroyed. When Doc arrives the next morning he takes a look around and feels very angry right away, when Mack comes out and tries to explain what he was trying to do Doc immediately starts punching him, Mack just lets himself get beat but Doc is so angry that he yells at Mack to punch back, "Put up your hands. Fight, you son of a bitch," Doc cried, and he hit him again and heard the crunch of breaking teeth" (123). But after all the punching and yelling Mack sincerely apologizes to Doc and says that he will pay for everything he destroyed, and Doc being the nice guy he always is tells him it's fine, he doesn't have to pay anything, Doc insists that with all the punches he gave him it's all cleared up. On their second attempt the party turns out as a success. Mack and the boys thoroughly think this one out, before they organize the party they think to themselves what type of party will be this one. Mack discretely asks Doc when is his birthday, Doc says October 27, and that is where Mack and the boys get the idea of throwing him a surprise birthday party. But since everyone in town was practically invited, everyone was talking about it so Doc heard about it and for that he went home and hid anything that could be broken, he knew that it was for him but he acted as if he didn't know when he showed up at the party. The party resulted with people eating, drinking, and bringing lots of gifts for Doc.

Including a patchwork quilt, twenty-five-foot string of firecrackers, a big bag of China lily bulbs, connecting-rod and piston from a 1916 Chalmers, and many more gifts. As everyone arrived they all had their food and drinks, the town laughed and spent a good time. In sum, then, the party was a nice, Doc ends up playing music on his phonograph and later on reading a poem, everyone was excited and glad to be part of Doc's party. The point of these two party scenes are to signify the meaning of Doc's person, as said in the beginning of the book "I must do something nice for Doc" the town ended up showing an appreciation birthday party for Doc and all of his kind actions he has done. Ultimately, then, my goal is to demonstrate that Doc's actions

show a pattern of kindness, forgiving, cherished, respectful, and extraordinary. Since Doc's actions always seem to end up pleasing someone, making them feel better about themselves or about a situation. No matter if you've done something wrong, Doc seems to always end up forgiving all things. Doc is strangely the definition of a person who you can walk over and they will still forgive you and give you another chance.

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