

Essay by Samploon

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Analysis of The Sisters Short Story by Pauline Smith

Introduction

This essay critically analyses The Sisters short story by Pauline Smith. The purpose is to discuss the literary devices used by the writer, Pauline Smith. The essay focus on two literary devices. Firstly, it will focus on the structure of the story, which include; setting, structure and plot development, characterization, narrator and point of view. Lastly, it will focus on the literary and language concepts (diction, tone and style).

Title

The title of the story "The Sisters" indicates that the focus is on the two sisters, Marta and Sukey, who are devoted to each other.

Themes

- Greed and how it affects people's lives

Burgert de Jager's obsessive greed to keep his lands and to have water to irrigate the land blinds him to the effect of his actions on his daughters. Jan Redlinghuis's greed to possess Marta and to display her around the district in the end killed both her and him.

- Powerlessness of women

According to Van Niekerk (1990:19), men's urge to have power over women and land by means of possession and exploitation. In the story, the power of men is shown in the way that Burgert de Jager used Marta, as a pawn in his battle to keep his lands. She had no power over her fate, and she got married off to Jan Redlinghuis. Marta had no power to stop Jan Redlinghuis from parading her and boasting to everyone that her father had sold her to him.

- The power of love between sisters

Sukey was prepared to sacrifice herself to Jan Redlinghuis in order to save her weaker sister, Marta from marriage. Marta tries to comfort and reassure Sukey that she is ready to accept her fate.

Analysis of the Short Story

Setting

- Little Karoo, near Oudtshoorn, neighbouring farms, Bitterwater and Zeekoegatt in vicinity of the Platkops.
- Even though there are few descriptions in the story, we know that Little Karoo is a very harsh and drought-stricken world.
- The water rights from the Ghamka River.

Structure and Plot Development

The complication in the story arises from the fact that Burgert de Jager has tried for many years to get water from Ghamka river through a neighbouring farm owned by Jan Redlinghuis and has spent a great deal of money on legal fees. He is so obsessed with this that he does not notice how it is affecting his wife, who dies in his "bitterness and sorrow".

The conflict between the two farmers creates the tension in the story. Burget de Jager eventually owes Jan Redlinghuis so much money for allowing the water to pass through his farms that he is forced to make a deal with him (Redlinghuis will either marry Marta or take over the Burget de Jager's farm). This tension rises in the story when De Jager decides that Marta must marry Jan Redlinghuis to save the farm.

The story reaches a climax when Marta becomes weaker and weaker fr

Questions From The Sisters By Pauline Smith

Harold Scheub



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