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AP Literature

Term Paper

In the Hero's Journey, the main character, the hero, receives a calling to go out on his journey. At the end of his journey where the hero finally returns home, he comes back with a new sense of knowledge and understanding of the differences between the world he lives in and the world he left behind. Many heroes in the past can directly fit this mold; however, this does not always happen for the contemporary hero. Although they may go through challenges and difficulties, they might not always come back with a newfound knowledge or as a better person. A Prayer for Owen Meany describes the journey of a young boy and his call from God. In The Reluctant Fundamentalist, a Pakistani man's culture clashes with that of the United States after the attacks on 9/11. The poem Another Time tells of the evil and lies that are being told in his country during a time of war.

A Prayer for Owen Meany by John Irving mainly focuses on the journey of personal faith. Owen receives his call when his parents tell him at a young age that "he was born unnaturally... Like the Christ Child" (545), and sets out to fulfill God's plan for him. Throughout his journey, he speaks with Reverend Merrill in order to gain advice on what he should do. Owen's size presented him with his greatest obstacle, causing him to be ridiculed, and unable to get into the army and fulfill the dream he describes to have happened when in Vietnam (481-482). In the Arizona Airport, Owen faces his final obstacle as he has to rescue the Vietnamese children in the bathroom, however, he does not live to come home like the typical hero. He receives a medal for his bravery, but he also receives a sense of fulfillment of his call,

and, before dying, recites, “whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die,” (626). In Moshin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist, a realization of the clash of different societies occurs. It begins as Changez lives in the United States and receives a job opportunity, his call, at Underwood Samson in New York City. His mentor, Jim, encourages him to strive for the American definition of excellence, telling him that being hungry is “a good thing in my book” (9). Just as the regular world seems to be working out, the attacks on 9/11 occur and Changez realizes that he can no longer fit into the society of the United States because of his race. Testing his strength, a man came up to him, “pressed his face alarmingly close” to his, and called him an “Arab” derogatorily (117) because of his race. Changez comes into realization with Juan-Buatista that he was “a servant of the American empire” (152), then deciding to return home with his new understanding of who he wanted to be and that “something of us is now outside, and something of the outside is now within us” (174). The speaker in Another Time by W.H. Auden never directly receives a call to go on any type of journey, but focuses mainly on the problem of evil and wrong-doing in his country. He observes the people on the streets and sees the wrong that consumes the world because of the war. His greatest goal is “to undo the folded lie” that the authorities have told to the world and is called to question “who can live for long in an euphoric dream: out of the mirror they stare, Imperialism’s face, and the international wrong”. Instead of going out on a quest, he questions the world and war. Because of his being an orphan, he only possesses his voice and wants to use it in order to make a difference in the world.

A Prayer for Owen Meany demonstrates the best view of faith. Owen dedicates his entire life to fulfill the destiny he believes God laid out for him, making every act he does have something to do with the final act of his faith. Although his ending did not end up exactly how he expected it to, he knew that it was all in God’s hands and allowed whatever was going to happen

to happen. He let God use him how he believed he needed to be used, dying a martyr and as a savior to the Vietnamese children in the airport. Owen views war as a way of being patriotic to his country. Although he never directly says he enjoys the fact of war, he sees it as a way of supporting his country and essentially as a way to fulfill his call from God. Owen's beliefs about faith and war are the strongest.

While Owen's view of faith demonstrates his love of God along with search for fulfilling his ultimate purpose in life, Changez in The Reluctant Fundamentalist struggles with the rejection he receives from America after 9/11. The attacks sparked an intense feeling of patriotism to his own country, causing him to become extreme in his views of the war and religion. His journey takes him through the battle of finding knowledge through oneself instead of relying on faith in God. Both of these views deal with the theme of exile; Owen being shunned from his own society because of his difference of social standing and Changez being persecuted for the difference of ethnicity. Owen's physical disfigurement caused his exile while Changez's race was his deformity. These deformities were the reasons for the criticism and caused them to respond differently. The speaker in Another Time believes that the evil in the world, especially in his own country, resulted because of war. His journey of seeking to find himself for fulfillment causes him to feel lost and solitary in the big city. He craves to use his voice to undo the lies that he claims are being told to the world compared to Owen Meany, who wants to use his voice, which proves to be striking in comparison to other people's, to tell his opinions as well. Each of these heroes have some sort of journey they must embark on as they try to find themselves to have some type of meaning in their lives.

The view of faith and war that believes in living life for an ultimate purpose and supporting their country in a way that demonstrates patriotism without being too extreme creates

a distinct difference of principles compared to other views. The view of The Reluctant Fundamentalist falls short of having something to really believe in. Changez believes strongly in his country and even though he claims to love America, he becomes a radical in his beliefs toward the country. Even though he stands to be the hero in the story, it never becomes concretely known whether he portrays good or evil. Because he tells the entire story, his voice becomes the only one heard; causing confusion on what type of person he truly makes himself to be. The speaker in Another Time sees the world as an evil place, causing him to have absolutely no hope for there to be any type of goodness out there. This pessimism shows that he contains no belief of something bigger than himself and that there will never be any type of redemption from this world. Owen throughout A Prayer for Owen Meany contains the most constant beliefs. He dedicates his entire life to the fulfillment of his call and spends his journey along with every step and struggle to get to his final goal. He demonstrates the best view of living life to its fullest potential, despite his deformities and setbacks. In order for a belief to be really worth it, it has to be worth dying for, which Owen demonstrates all the way to the end of his life when he gives his life for what he believed to be God's calling for him.

Owen, Changez, and the speaker of Another Time each contain their own belief about the world, living their lives accordingly. Changez's extremeness after 9/11 causes him to feel like an outcast in a world that used to feel like home. The speaker in Another Time searches the world to find himself, observing others and never really coming to any type of conclusions besides the fact that the world contains so much evil as a result of war. Owen seeks to fulfill his lifelong destiny despite his disfigurements and differences. Hamid in The Reluctant Fundamentalist uses the common knowledge of 9/11 along with the stereotypical assumptions of people from Pakistan in order to tell his story. Auden, on the other hand, focuses mainly on the universal

belief that war encompasses evil. In order to fully comprehend the beliefs of Owen, Irving relies on the fact that some type of understanding of Christianity exists. Every hero must go through their own journey, struggling through their own tests, learning along the way, until they finally are able to come home with a new understanding about the world they live in.