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English 112

Assignment #1 Literary Analysis

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**The Choices We Make**

Life is a combination of all the choices that you’ve made. What you don’t know by Lulu Wang, Redeployment by Phil Klay and A Good Man Is Hard to Find by Flannery O’Conner are short stories with many commonalities. Each of these authors used character vs self and or character vs character conflict to express the theme of life choices.

What You Don’t Know by Lulu Wang is podcast about Lulu Wang and her family who live in the United States.. Lulus’ grandmother Nai Nai who lives in china. is diagnosed with stage four cancer and given three months to live. Her family decides it is best for not to know that she is sick. Even though the doctor let her family know that choosing to not hospitalize her would irresponsible.They plan a fake wedding reception as way for them to get their last goodbyes. Her family decided not to tell Nai Nai for multiple reasons. They thought Nai Nai would live longer if she didn’t know and the stress of knowing would aid her in dying faster. Also her father would not be able to care for her if he did tell her due to the distance of him being in the US and her being in china. They also felt like this is what she would have wanted since she did the same with her husband when she found out he was sick. Ultimately Nai Nai ends up living way past the time frame that the doctor gave her. Throughout the story the narrator Lulu Wang struggles with the ethical dilemma of not knowing if her family is making the right decision.

In this story Lulu Wang uses her conflict with herself and also her conflict with her family to portray the theme of life choices. Wang is told that her father has decided that the family will not tell her Nai Nai she is sick. Wang is completely against this. She wants to be able to grieve with her grandmother and be their for her. Her mother lets her know that she has no say in the matter. Confused and upset Wang couldn't understand why her family thought this was the best thing for Nai Nai .As her family prepares to travel to china for the fake reception Wang asks her father how he feels about lying to Nai Nai .He felt like it wasn’t a bad lie because that was the way everyone wanted it to be. Wang then states that isn't what she wanted or how she wanted it to be or what she thought Nai Nia would have wanted. She felt guilty for be apart of what she called “the lie”. As the story goes on Wang starts to become conflicted. Wangs mother tells her of a cultural belief called Chauncey .This is the belief that you can wash away misfortune with joy. During her visit to see her grandmother she finds out that her grandmother had done that same thing to her husband , Wangs grandfather when he was sick and didn't inform him until he was on his deathbed. Her father tells her that he believes his father knew he was sick and dying which leads Wang to question if Nai Nai knew she was dying and sick. She also finds out that her grandmother previously had breast cancer and decided not to let anyone know. The family leaves in belief that Nai Nai will be dying soon but she By the end of the story Wang says “ what my family did was kind and it worked . . Maybe” . Wang realizes that even though it may not have been the right thing to do , the choice her family made was the best thing for Nai Nai .

Redeployment by Phil Klay is a story about Sargent Price a marine who comes home from war. He describes himself as a dog person. Who ultimately had to shoot dogs while away at war. When he comes home he finds that some things are not how he left them. His dog Vicar is very sick, throwing up anything he eats. He is also trying to adjust to his the way things used to be. With his dogs’ health steadily declining Sargent Price finds himself having to choose between killing Vicar himself or letting someone else do it. Sargent price decides that he would rather do the honors than to have what he refers to as “some stranger” kill his dog instead.

In Redeployment, Phil Klay uses character vs self and character vs character conflict to portray the theme of life choices. “We shot dogs. Not by accident. We did it on purpose and called it “Operation Scooby.” I’m a dog person, so I thought about that a lot.” The author starts off the story with Price discussing how he had to shoot dogs while he was away at war. Price also mentions that he is a dog person. The author does so to give the reader insight on the type of person Sargent Price is for later in the story. In the story the main character Sargent Price returns home and has a tough time adjusting. All he can think about is the war and boot camp and those dogs he shot “Here’s the thing. I’m thinking a lot, and I mean a lot about those f\*\*\*\*\*g dogs” his next thought was about Vicar . When sargent price and Cheryl first got vicar he was already old so naturally as he got older he became sick “And I’m thinking about my dog Vicar about the shelter we got him from. Where Cheryl said he had to get an older dog because nobody takes older dogs. How we could never teach him anything. How he’d throw up shit he shouldn’t have been eating in the first place. How he’d sink away all guilty, tail low head low and back legs crouched. . . so there it was Vicar and Operation Scooby, all the way home.” He reflects on getting vicar and him already having bad health. He also compares Vicar to Operation Scooby connecting the two. As the story progresses Price spends more time with Vicar eventually realizing he is only getting worse. This brings him to the realization that something has to be done. After careful consideration Price makes the choice to kill Vicar.

A Good Man Is Hard to Find by Flannery O’Conner is a short story about a family consisting of A grandmother, father, mother and two kids. The grandmother warns the family of a criminal that has recently escaped from prison in an effort to convince them to travel Tennessee instead of Florida. Her efforts were unsuccessful and the family sets off to Florida the next morning. Their trip quickly takes a turn for the worse. The family gets in a car accident and end up stranded in a ditch. Seconds later a man comes to rescue the family. The grandmother recognizes the man; it’s the misfit. The grandmothers talk to him and learns that he was wrongfully accused of killing his father, and other factors of his life that led him to become the person he is. The grandmother does her best to convince him that he’s a good person but ultimately it wasn’t enough after going back and forth he shoots her.

In this story Flannery O’Conner uses Character vs Character to portray the theme of life choices in A Good Man is Hard to Find. One example of this theme is the scene with the Misfit. He finds the family trapped in a ditch and comes over to them with a gun. After a moment the grandmother finally recognizes him from the paper and acknowledges that she knows who he is. She tries to convince him that he isn’t a bad person in hopes of being let go, "you shouldn't call yourself The Misfit because I know you're a good man at heart. I can just look at you and tell " to this the Misfit responds "Nome, I ain't a good man, . . . but I aint the worst in the world neither” He tells her about his life “Been in the arm service, both land and sea, at home and abroad, been twict married, been an undertaker, been with the railroads, plowed Mother Earth, been in a tornado, seen a man burnt alive oncet," . . ."I even seen a woman flogged “ , and how he was once a singer in the choir .He also mentions how he was wrongfully accused of killing his father, which led him to escape prison. He also tells her about his father and how he was always good at avoiding authorities. She tries to convince him to pray and have mercy on them but her efforts ultimately had no effect of him. He took the grandmother into the woods where she continued to beg and plead with him to pray . In the end he makes the choice to shoot the grandmother.

 Each of these authors used character vs self and or character vs character to express the theme of life choices. In each story the characters were faces with a situation where they either had to make a decision or had input on a decision that was made. The authors portrayed this through the conflict between the character and their self or the character and another character. The authors did a great job at expressing the theme of life choices in each of the stories.