

Art of Characterization in “Thank You, Ma'am” by Langston Hughes

Muhammad Javaid Anwar

Govt. of Punjab Education Department

Vehari, Pakistan

raojavaid96@gmail.com

Basri Sattar

Punjab Group of Colleges

Vehari, Pakistan

basrisattar1991@gmail.com

Muhammad Naveed Anwar

Govt. of Punjab Education Department

Vehari, Pakistan

muhammadnaveedanwar143@gmail.com

Abstract

Langston Hughes was an American artist, writer, and dramatist whose African-American subjects made him an essential supporter of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. Langston Hughes was

conceived on February 1, 1902, in Joplin, Missouri. He distributed his first lyric in 1921. He went to Columbia University, yet left following one year to travel. He proceeded to compose incalculable works of verse, writing and plays, and in addition a prominent section for the Chicago Defender. He passed away from this world on May 22, 1967. (Editors, 2014)

When you were younger, has anyone treated you good or bad according to your behavior? Or do you remember any incident of your life in which you made a mistake and someone offered you a chance for changing your life? Langston Hughes' short story, "Thank You, Ma'am", distributed in 1958, catches the two circumstances. Langston Hughes was a vital and productive essayist amid the Harlem Renaissance of the mid twentieth century. He expounded on African American life and experience. Much thanks to You Ma'am is about what happens when a high school kid and a more seasoned working lady crash on a Harlem road.

There are three major topics present in "Thank You, Ma'am": Forgiveness and Empathy, the Power of Love and Trust, and Christian Charity. At the point when Roger first grabs the handbag of Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, she wrestles him and hauls him to her outfitted room at the back of a house. The peak of the story is when Roger does not leave.

Keywords: Langston Hughes, Thank You, Ma'am, Harlem Renaissance, mid twentieth century

Research Questions

1. What is the theory of Characterization?
2. How does Langston Hughes depict theory of characterization in his short story entitled Thank You, Ma'am?

Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of this study:

1. The students will be able to know about Langston Hughes.
2. The students will also know about Langston Hughes works and writing style.
3. The students will learn the story of Thank You, Ma'am.
4. This study will also enhance the moral development and students will know about what is good and what is bad for them.
5. Finally, the students will also learn about the theory of characterization.

Delimitation of the Study

While working on Langston Hughes the focus is on “*Thank You, Ma'am*” only one short story. It is impossible to cover all the works of this writer in one study so the researcher selected only one theme to explore i.e. characterization.

Chapter Analysis

Portrayal hypothesis was created during the 1970s by an individual from the Russian Academy of Sciences, a noticeable artificial intelligence V.A. GorbatoV, and turned into the core of a global school. A considerable lot of the present institute graduates make another age of researchers, in excess of 150 specialists and partner educators, building up another distinct hypothesis of computerized complex frameworks, in view of the ordinance of the purported portrayal standard, restricting the arrangements of a working models and structure models utilizing the worldview of monotone mappings of the thought about framework. (Johnston, 2017)

Portrayal is the procedure by which the author uncovers the identity of a character. Portrayal

is uncovered through direct portrayal and aberrant portrayal.

1. Direct Characterization tells the audience what the personality of the character is.

This short story “*Thank You, Ma’am*”, by Langston Hughes depicts direct characterization through these characters in this way:

“She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but hammer and nails.” (Hughes, 1958)

This above text from the short story describes art of direct characterization that she was a strong woman with strong muscles.

There is another example of direct characterization from the story:

“He looked as if he were fourteen or fifteen, frail and willow-wild, in tennis shoes and blue jeans.”(Hughes, 1958)

This line from the story also depicts art of direct characterization that the age and physical appearance of boy.

2. Indirect Characterization shows things that reveal the personality of a character.

There are five different methods of indirect characterization:

1. Speech

What does the character say? How does the character speak?

“I were young once and I wanted things I could not get. You thought I was going to say, but I didn't snatch people's pocketbooks. Well, I wasn't going to say that.”
(Hughes, 1958)

These above lines from the text reveal the speech of protagonist of this short story that when she was young, she wanted to fulfill her wishes but she never choose any wrong way for the fulfillment of them.

“Well, you didn't have to snatch my pocketbook to get some suede shoes,” said Mrs.

Luella Bates Washington Jones. "You could of asked me.” (Hughes, 1958)

The above speech of a woman from the text also describes that she was a good woman by nature. She is caring and loving and always takes care of others.

2. Thoughts

What is revealed through the character's private thoughts and feelings?

“Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook nor nobody else's—because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But from here on in, son, I hope you will behave yourself.” (Hughes, 1958)

These lines from the story reveals us the inner thoughts and feelings of the woman that she is very good woman by heart and nature. She also wanted to turn bad boy into good that's why she treated boy very politely and offered him some money for his shoes.

3. Effect on others toward the characters

What is revealed through the character's effect on other people? How do other characters feel or behave in reaction to the character?

“The boy wanted to say something other than, "Thank you, m'am," to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but although his lips moved.” (Hughes, 1958)

This quotation from the text shows us the boy reaction towards woman. The boy who was trying to snatch her purse for his shoes now turn into good and wanted to say thanks to the lady for her nice behavior.

4. Actions

What does the character do? How does the character behave? Looks what does the character look like? How does the character dress?

“Let the water run until it gets warm," she said. "Here's a clean towel.” (Hughes, 1958)

This line from the text shows that the lady was morally good and she took great care of the young boy who tried to snatch her purse.

"Do you need somebody to go to the store," asked the boy, "maybe to get some milk or something?" (Hughes, 1958)

This line shows us boy behavior towards woman that he wanted to help her out in some way.

“Then she cut him a half of her ten-cent cake. Eat some more, son," she said.” (Hughes, 1958)

This line is also a great depiction of woman good action. In order to beat him or instead of taking him jail, she behaved like a gentle woman. In short, her good actions and behavior turned a bad boy into good.

Conclusion

In the end, we may conclude that this short story by Langston Hughes is a great example of characterization. He has beautifully depicted his characters in his short stories. The protagonist of this story a woman and young boy is a great element of art of characterization.

Bibliography

Editors, B. (2014). *Langston Hughes Biography*. Retrieved from The Biography.com website:

<https://www.biography.com/people/langston-hughes-9346313>

Hughes, L. (1958). *Thank You, Ma'am by Langston Hughes*. Retrieved from TLC (Thinking

Through Literature and Culture) : [https://tlc.cet.ac.il/ShowItem.aspx?ItemID=bda23ae0-](https://tlc.cet.ac.il/ShowItem.aspx?ItemID=bda23ae0-3d15-40c3-a2aa-8f6b99c7a9b5&lang=EN)

[3d15-40c3-a2aa-8f6b99c7a9b5&lang=EN](https://tlc.cet.ac.il/ShowItem.aspx?ItemID=bda23ae0-3d15-40c3-a2aa-8f6b99c7a9b5&lang=EN)

Johnston, K. (2017). Methods of Characterization. *The Pen & Pad* .