

Writing Assignment “The Destroyers” by Graham Greene

Our current unit is on Passion...take a look at the various ideas presented about passion in texts given to you at the beginning of the unit. This will get your mental juices going.

Now, consider the short story “The Destroyers”. Is the story saying something about passion? To answer this question you need to consider the following (and be specific to the story even though the questions are general):

- a) What does passion mean? (in the dictionary it is defined as a “strong and barely controllable emotion.”)

- b) Which characters show the idea of passion?

- c) What impact does passion have on the individual?

- d) What impact does passion have on society?

- e) Where does passion come from?

- f) What are the issues associated with passion?

Finally write a paragraph where you explain how passion applies to the story. Start with a topic sentence that explains the message and then defend your ideas with evidence from the story.

ELA 30-1/ 30-2 Passions Unit

Here is an example from our last unit (written by yours truly!):

Story “On the Rainy River” – Perspectives

An individual’s perspective of himself, when challenged by the reality of a significant event, can be irrevocably and disconcertingly changed. Tim O’Brien thought he was a “secret hero”. He believed that “he [would] behave like the heroes of [his] youth, bravely and forthrightly, without thought of personal loss and discredit” (70). Unfortunately for O’Brien, his perception of himself and the sad reality of the draft led him to a moment of disillusionment and awareness. Many go through life believing certain truths about themselves that prove so thoroughly wrong when put to the test. This moment of truth comes to all of us in the form of a reckoning of sorts. For Tim O’Brien, it came in the summer of 1968 when he received his draft notice. His view of himself as a pacifist, a hero and a conscientious objector was challenged when he faced the reality of leaving behind his family and suffering the desertion of his community. In fact, prior to this moment his whole perception of the world was determined by a kind of intellectual abstraction. He viewed the world as an academic would through glasses tinted by abstract ideas and a “smug removal” from all that was real. So, when he faces the reality of the draft, Tim O’Brien faces a “moral freeze”. His perception of himself as “a hero , as a man of conscience and courage” is challenged and becomes just “a threadbare pipe dream”. He realizes in a moment of honesty that he “couldn’t make [himself] be brave” and so he must face a new perception of himself. This is heartbreaking for him and not just because it’s better to be brave and not to be cowardly but because his perception of himself was so opposite to the reality. And so, he must face the ironic conclusion where, though society will see him as brave for risking his life, his perception of himself has changed. The Lone Ranger mask is discarded and he is left with a suit of shame and embarrassment.

ELA 30-1/ 30-2 Passions Unit

Critical Response Exemplar ELA 30-2

Sometimes an individual's perspective can be greatly changed by a single event. In Tim O'Brien's story "On the Rainy River", he shows that sometimes a person can have a certain belief his whole life and then have it changed when a monumental decision must be made. Tim O'Brien always thought that he would be a hero if he ever encountered a negative situation. He thought that he would behave bravely. Most of us, I think, believe that of ourselves. I know that I used to play games as a child where we would become the heroes we saw on TV and save poor helpless people from all kinds of disasters. What happens to Tim O'Brien, however, shows that this perspective can change when reality forces a person to really encounter the situation. Unfortunately, the chances are pretty great that we won't behave like the hero we think we should be but instead cave in to our fears. In the story, this fear is not physical fear (like death in the war) but instead fear of losing his family and the respect of his community. I believe that this is probably a greater fear for most of us. I heard it once said that "it's hard to stand up to your enemies but even harder to stand up to your friends". What Tim realized when his perspective changes is that he doesn't have the courage to do what he believes is right. He will go to the war and fight because he's too "embarrassed" to go against the beliefs of his family and society. The funny thing is, society then perceives him as a hero but he sees himself as a coward. The single event of the draft, changed Tim O'Brien's perception of himself forever but it did not alter the perception that others had of him.