
Lolita: The Theme Of Desire

Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov is a haunting story about a young girl named Dolores Haze, who is seduced and coerced into a sexual relationship by a man who uses the pseudonym Humbert Humbert. Humbert develops a fascination with Dolores and eventually marries her mother so he can stay close to her. This obsession makes him go to extreme lengths to be with her. Nabokov creates a poetic image throughout Lolita through his word choice and symbolic references.

This report aims to elaborate how Nabokov combines an example of innocence with a disturbing description through the eyes of Humbert and incorporates the theme of desire in the novel through symbolic references. To begin with, Nabokov shifts the scene from a conversation between Lolita and Humbert to her sitting on a stool and him observing her. The first sentence of the passage when Humbert looks at Lolita being served an ice cream invokes a disturbing image for the reader. The image intertwines the innocence of childhood polluted by his description of her. The words 'high stool' displays how he places her on a pedestal, as if she is someone he looks up to and in a sense worships. The imagery in this sentence with the sun shining on her skin is poetic and symbolizes life and energy, visible in younger children. This scene gives the reader a sense of status or royalty, as Humbert intends to and eventually gives her the royal treatment as the novel progresses. He does all the chores, brings what she needs and wants, and in return, he wants her attention and complete devotion.

Further on, the image turns from childlike and innocent to lustful jealousy when he observes a boy serving her ice-cream. The word choice is also interesting; the word "erected" implies a sexual urge within Humbert and the way he describes the young boy reinforces this idea of jealousy when other men look at or talk to her. He says, "...eyes my fragile child in her thin cotton frock with carnal deliberation" (Nabokov 115). His tone is rather protective, in the sense that he does not want any other man to eye her with sexual intentions. Had it not been evident how he views her, the tone sounds parental and instinctive with the words "my fragile child" since guardians and parents want to protect their children from anything dangerous.

In Humbert's case, he wants Lolita for himself to fulfill his desires and there is nothing protective about the way he feels for her. He even admits that he is not a good father figure to her later on in the novel when he says talks about their journey. Additionally, his impatience to reach the 'The Enchanted Hunters' emphasizes his desperation and is symbolic to the context of the novel; 'hunter' implying how he views Lolita and what he intends to do to her. He creates a fairy-like image of her throughout the book, using the words 'fairy' and 'nymphet'. The words 'enchanted hunter' here apply to him, since enchanted means being bewitched (Oxford Dictionary), and depicts his mental state and captivation with Lolita. He observes her with great fascination and intertwines her child-like actions with his lustful intentions. This allows the reader to observe the scene through the eyes of a man who has lost touch with reality and preys on this young girl.

To conclude, this passage displays how Humbert creates a disturbing image of her innocence intertwined with his jealousy and desire. Nabokov uses symbolism, and his word choice is interesting as it further connects this passage to the theme of desire in the novel that eventually leads to Humbert's destruction.

