# Study Of Ragtime: Analytical Essay

The Ragtime is a historic event in the progressive era (1900s) where there was industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and political corruption. The book Ragtime uses many plots of different characters during the time period and makes each character cross paths with each other. The author uses fictional characters to symbolize the Progressive Era to show how each character have difficulty in change, finding meaning of life and the change in technology industrialization. The narrator is in the third person view that knows each fictional character's own story.

In the book he uses Father, who represents the character as a standard man. He finds himself having difficult to the changes during the progressive era. Being born with money, owning a firework business and having a family. All changes once he arrives from his trip from Arctic in a boat named "Roosevelt". Once he arrives back to New York, he realizes he feels set apart from his family and the environment. His wife known as Mother acts less modest towards Father. He finally feels depressed for being helpless towards his mother and son. In the end he goes to a baseball game with his son and he realizes the immigrants playing in the field. He finally feels completely lost to the new change. E.L. Doctorow compares him with the arriving immigrants in the shore and Father emotionally are the same.

Mother is fictional character that uses the absence of his husband to find her purpose and her ability to help Sarah. Mother tries to keep the firework business running while Father is in his trip. Sarah is a washwoman who has a child with Coalhouse, who she tried to bury in Mother backyard. Mother gives her shelter and takes care of her child. After the trip of her husband she soon realizes she is not interested in Father and becomes less modest to Father for using her for his pleasure. Throughout the novel she realizes her own sexuality. She soon marries Tateh and takes care of the business and the children (little boy, little girl, and Sarah's boy).

The little girl also known as Sha goes from being a tired worker with Tateh to being happy once they are leaving New York an meets the little boy. She went from being a poor immigrant to living in a house with Mother. The little boy who is the son of Mother and Father is open- minded of the changes in the environment. These two are the symbol of the future America.

Coalhouse Walker is a ragtime pianist in Harlem, and the father of Sarah's child. In the beginning of the novel he is prideful and does not act as other African Americans. Father notices his not like other colored people, he expected him to be a violent person. That all changes when fireman vandalize his fancy car. He is to prideful, so he waited for justice for his car, but soon Sarah gets assassinated for trying to visit the vice president and try to resolve Coalhouse problem. Soon Coalhouse changed to violence and did a revolution to burning 2 firehouses and killed people using the bomb created by Mother Younger Brother. This showed how society changed Coalhouse to a prideful man to a man who did the behaviors of the white man expectations.

The second symbolism is the characters finding meaning in the progressive era. Throughout the novel characters derive a meaning in life facing challenges of the changes in the community. J.P. Morgan a wealthy man tells Ford (the creator of the assembly line) about reincarnation.

This shows his journey of seeking new knowledge of the truth and meaning. He travels to the Egyptians pyramids to find new meaning of reincarnation.

Evelyn Nesbit tries to seek meaning in life by developing interest in Tateh and the little girl, after her loss of Stanford White who got shot by Harry K. Thaw. Evelyn becomes wealthier due to the marriage of Thaw and uses her money to help socialist causes. She seeks to help others and feels confident in her sexuality by agreeing with Emma Goldman, a political anarchist.

Houdini is an escape artist that could escape any situation. He is a character that could escape situation physically but not mentally. His emotions of his Mother make him feel imprison, but seeks to spiritualism, to conduct research of the afterlife to talk to his mother. He finally continues to seek more in magic.

Tateh also feels trapped with the little girl in New York, who later tries to escape New York by traveling to other locations. He finds his new meaning in life in staying with Mother, Sarah and the children. Later then Marries Mother after the death of Father.

The third symbolism is the result of technology improvement in the progressive era. The technology made products made more efficient such as the assembly line for cars created by Ford. Henry Ford takes a big step in making new automobiles which later takes a series of killing due to the value and crime. For example, Coalhouse’s car vandalism which led to many deaths. When technology is used, it makes values of individual and their abilities more ineffective.

The book Ragtime is used to show the different perspectives of fictional characters that live during the progressive era and how there all connected. Using the characters struggle to change or finding meaning or technology improvement effected their lives.