The Turn Of The Screw: Quotes And Characters Analysis

Quote Analysis

Quote: “The little girl who accompanied Mrs. Grose appeared to me on the spot of a creature so charming… she is the most beautiful child I have ever seen” (James 15).

Character

This quote is saying that the Governess, or the narrator meets the girl who she will be looking over, and immediately thinks she’s an angel because of her looks. The girl go so charming and sweet to the Governess that she has already made up her mind on who she is as a person. Right here the author uses direct characterization as this quote shows directly that the Governess will make up her mind quickly and go off her dramatic feelings to believe something.

Diving deeper into the quote and the personality of the Governess, I can tell that the two kids she is looking over are going to be angels in her eyes, but are actually going to be troublemakers. I can make this assumption based off of how the Governess so quickly made up her mind on how the kids will be perfect and be basically angels. The author wouldn’t include this if he wasn’t going to use it later, which is why I think this part foreshadows the kids being trouble opposed to being good. The Governess’ deception of people are based on their appearance. If somebody looks nice and innocent, then her mind will automatically tell her that they are indeed nice and innocent, no matter what the person actually does. This could cause problems in the future. Her personality also ties her to being an unreliable narrator as she could be in her own altered reality.

The Governess’ characterization ties into the thematic idea of appearance. Appearance plays a big part of the story as the Governess makes assumptions and judgements of other people, all based in those people’s looks. In other words, she is judging a book by its cover everytime she sees a new person. The character of the Governess will alter the story because her altered reality and her unreliable aspects of the story will change how the story progresses. In her mind something could be happening, when the complete opposite is actually occurring.

Quote: “No it was a big, ugly, antique, but convenient house, embodying a few features of a building still oldr, half replaced and half utilized, in which I had the fancy of our being almost as lost as a handful of passengers in a great drifting ship. Well, I was, strangely at the helm” (James 19).

Setting

As the quote refers to, the setting of the story mainly takes place at a mansion known as Bly. Here in this quote, the narrator gives us her brief description of the house where she will be working. She describes it as a little old and quirky, but still a reasonable place to reside. She makes a connection where she connects Bly to a drifting ship at sea.

There is a lot of importance to the way the narrator explains the setting. Going back to the quote, the author uses imagery when describing Bly as a drifting ship at sea. The narrator will continue to give this persona that Bly is this mysterious that is by itself with no real contact with the outside world, other than trips to church. This is where the drifting at sea comes in, as the narrator believes that she is separated from everything now. Her perception of Bly as a ship is important because it ties into the scary ghost story feel of the story, as the story is supposed to be a ghost story being told through a narrator that was in the experience. The quote and setting also foreshadows doom to happen in the future. The narrator insists that the feeling of the house is irky, adding that something doesn't feel right but she can't put her finger on it. Obviously this feeling is setting up for the conflict or climax of the story, also being a reason why the setting of this story is so important.

The setting of the story plays a big role in the thematic idea of isolation in the story. The isolation of Bly increases the pressure on the governess, the narrator, and intensifies the events happening around her. As I previously, the contact with the outside world is very thin when it comes to working at Bly. The Governess compares this isolation as being a passenger on a drifting ship at sea, which illustrates to the reader how isolated Bly actually is. The setting of Bly causes this isolated feeling in the governess which intensifies everything, which cause the governess to overreact and see things differently than they actually are.

Quote: " I remember the whole beginning as a succession of flights and drops, little see-saw of the right throbs and the wrong" (James14).

Point Of View

This quote shows where the point of the story, excluding the prologue, is established. This quote shows that the governess is telling the story from her perspective. The story is being told in a first person point of view because of this. The governess is telling the audience details about the story through what she sees and thinks, along with not sharing thoughts of other characters in the story, also making it a first person point of view.

The story being told in first person carries a lot of importance. Because you don't hear any other character's thoughts, the audience only gets one version of the story when something happens. With the governess' perception already shaky because of her judgement of people, it makes her an unreliable source of info. Even though the story being told is only being told from her perspective, her being unreliable cause the reader to not fully understand if the stuff being told has actually happened. This mysteriousness causes the reader to feel the elements of the unknown. The reader is now left guessing what could happen next, and what things being told is true or false. For all we know the complete opposite of what is being told is happening, which ties into the book being a ghost or horror book, as everything happening is creating that suspicious vibe.

The first person point of view ties into the thematic idea of appearance, just like character. As I alluded to, the story is being told through the governess' experiences and thoughts about the story, making it first person. The first person point of view is developing the theme of appearance. Appearance plays a big role in the story as the governess sees through people's actions based on what they look like. For example, Miles, the boy being watched over by the governess, is a troublemaker, however he is able to get away with most of these things because

the governess is so set in stone on her idea that he looks too innocent to do anything bad. The same can be said about Flora, the girl being watched over by the governess, as she too causes some trouble, which is overlooked by the governess because of her sweet and innocent presence. Through the point of view of the story the reader can learn what processes through the governess' mind in these situations, and we get detailed analysis on each new character she sees. The reader is able to decipher what her thoughts on each person is based on her actions and thoughts, which would not be possible if the story wasn't being told from her first person perspective. The story could be told differently from a different character, as they would possibly see things differently than the governess, which in the end would change the outcome of the story.

Quote: "I secured five minutes with her in the housekeeper's room, where, in the twilight, amid a smell of lately-baked bread, but with the place all swept and garnished, I found her sitting in pained placidity before the fire"(James 87).

Text Structure

This quote shows that the author uses descriptive details to develop the story. He uses description in each chapter , which is how the whole text is structured. There are twenty four short chapters in the book, along with no pictures.

The author includes these short chapters filled with descriptive details to build up the conflict and climax later in the story. Each chapter ends un suspense to add appeal to the following one. Also, as I mentioned there are no pictures included in this story. This is the case because the author purposely used a descriptive writing style in order for the reader to paint their own picture in their mund of what's happening. Words like "lately-baked bread" and "swept and garnished" give a good image in the mind of the reader.

The text structure of the story can tie into the thematic idea of the supernatural, or ghosts. As the story goes on each chapter is specifically placed to build more and more suspense. As the suspense builds, the ghost of the story, Peter Quint, is introduced. The author adds the ghost right around the middle of the story, adding to the suspense. From there on out the ghostly element adds to the suspense of the story, eventually building up to the end of the story. The ghost appears one last time, as the boy dies attempting to see it. This is what each chapter and moment was leading up to.

Quote: "It was the dead silence of our long gaze at such close quarters that gave the whole horror" (James 63).

Tone

During this quote, the tone of the story is shifted. The main character's tone is switched from joyful to a frightened tone after she sees the ghost of Peter Quint. The main character after this moment stops treating everyone as innocent and begins to see the dangers of everything around her. The main character sees the ghost at night in a dark hallway, and it changes her perception of the kids and she beings questioning them for their behavior instead of saying they are too innocent to do anything wrong.

During this event in the story the tone is shifted to reflect and emphasize the scary situation the character went through. The whole point of the tone is for the author to set the mood and express the emotions of a character. Henry James, the author of the text, uses tone to his advantage as right as the main character meets the ghost, the entire mood shifts in the story. Before this happened, the events happening were joyful but a little weird as it was foreshadowing this moment to happen. And once the moment did finally happen, more and more bad occurrences started. For example, the kids started to lie to the main character, placing a distrust amongst them as the main character became furious with the kids.

Just like text structure, the tone of the text ties into the theme of ghosts. The ghostly element of the story is portrayed as the main character is heavily affected after seeing a ghost. Her mind is shifted and the tone of the whole book is switched. The author wants the ghost to play a big role in the text to make the novel scary. Because of this, the author allows the ghost to almost control the mind of the main character, hence why the ghost or the supernatural is a thematic idea.

Key Characters

The Governess: Both the main character, and narrator. In charge of watching Miles and Flora at Bly. She is very judgemental and acts on her first thoughts and instincts. Sees ghosts that nobody else sees, making her an unreliable narrator.

Miles: The 10 year old boy being watched over by the governess. Described as charming and handsome. Although he was expelled from school for saying disrespectful remarks at other kids, Miles appears as a good child. Dies at the end of the story of the ghost of Peter Quint appears for the last time.

Flora: The eight year old girl being watched over by the governess. She is immediately loved by the governess for her sweet looking appearance. She is weirdly well behaved for an eight year old, so well that when she does misbehave it is blown over and not thought of.

Peter Quint: Former valet at Bly, known for being too lenient with the kids. Peter Quint’s ghost comes back to Bly and gets into the head of the governess, and eventually ends up being the reason to miles’ death.

Mrs. Grose: A servant at Bly, who often talks to the Governess and defends the kids at all costs.

The Uncle: The children’s Uncle who hired the governess to her position. The governess is in love with the Uncle, however the reader knows very little about him, other than he is likely rich and successful.

Setting

The entire story takes place at a remote mansion called Bly. It is isolated from the rest of the town, and gives off the impression that it is old and haunted.

Quote: “There had been a moment when I believed I recognised, faint and far, the cry of a child; there had been another when I found myself just

consciously starting as at the passage, before my door, of a light footstep" (James).

Foreshadowing

This quote shows a moment where the author foreshadows the future death of Miles. During this moment it is the governess' first day at Bly and she hears a distant cry. The distant cry appears to be from a child, but she thinks nothing of it. Later in the story, Miles suddenly dies after the last appearance from the ghost of Peter Quint.

The author uses foreshadowing in the first chapter to set up a defining moment at the end of the story. In the first chapter the governess was describing her first day on the job at Bly. She describes an odd sequence of a distant cry of a child. In this moment the author hints at the future problem of ghosts that the characters face, mainly the governess. The words "the cry of a child" are specifically important as it directly shadows the death of Miles by the ghost. It also foreshadows the weird behavior performed by Flora through the story.

The thematic idea of ghosts is also developed by foreshadowing. As I mentioned before the author's purpose of the governess experiencing the faint cry of a child is to hint at a future moment in the story. Because the faint cry heard appeared to be a child, the author used that to ultimately have Miles be killed at the end by the ghost. Without the foreshadowing aspects in the text, the suspenseful and erie feeling of the story produced by the ghosts wouldn't have been developed. This is the case because the story wouldn't be scary or suspenseful if every that happened was straight up told to the reader, as it would read like a nonfiction book. The whole purpose of the ghosts in the story are to make it suspenseful, and without things like foreshadowing hinting at certain things here and there, that suspense wouldn't be created.

Summary

The story starts out in a prologue which is where a character named Douglas shares the story of the governess from a written record. Once he starts to read from the written record, the story shifts to the narrator, or the governess' point of view. The governess begins her story with her first day at Bly, an isolated mansion where she would look over two kinds Flora and Miles accompanied by the servant Mrs. Grose. The governess meets Flora and is charmed by the sweet appearance of her. The next day the governess receives a letter saying that Miles was expelled from school. The governess voices her concerns over it, but Mrs. Grose assures her that Miles isn't as bad as he seems. Later on, the governess faces eye to eye contact with a strange man in the tower of the house, but doesn't tell anyone, until she sees him again just outside the window. Mrs. Gross identifies this strange man as Peter Quint, a former valet who is now dead. On a later day, now looking over the children with a twisted mind because of Peter, the governess sees a women across the lake dressed in all black. She believes that this woman is Ms. Jessel, the governess before her who just previously dies. The governess believes Flora also saw the ghost of Mrs. Jessel, however she kept that to herself. A couple days pass and the governess again engages in a staredown with the ghost of Peter Quint until he went away. Back in her room the governess finds Flora missing. Flora then suddenly emerges from the window but doesn't reveal what she was doing or why. One night the governess again finds the ghost of Miss Jessel, and yet again finds Flora weirdly by the window. In an attempt to not disturb her, the governess flees outside where she sees the shadow of Miles on the lawn. After being

startled by each ghost multiple times, the governess is convinced the ghosts come back to meet with the children. She ponders whether or not to leave but she ends up deciding to stay. The governess is with Miles one evening, but has lost Flora who was at the lake. Mrs. Grose and the governess eventually find her there, but the governess points out to both of them that she sees Miss Jessel. Flora flips out and is disgusted by the governess, and Flora suddenly becomes ill. Because of this sickness, Flora and Miss Jessel go to the children's uncle, while the governess stays back with Miles. At dinner the governess sees Peter Quint once again, pointing it out to Miles who then suddenly falls into and dies in the governess' arms.

American Literature

The main thing most people get out of the story of The Turn of the Screw is the ghost aspect of it. Ghost stories were developed in the 1800s and immediately rose to fame, leading to the creation of this book. America and the rest of the world fell in love with the idea of ghosts and spirits, and still today many people believe and get scared about the idea of ghosts. Many versions of ghost stories and films have been created. Movies like the Ghostbusters and Paranormal Activity were popular movies that were based off of ghosts. Ghosts like Casper the Ghost and Bloody Mary have risen to fame. America has made the ghost one of its favorite scary stories, movies, and make believe ideas ever. The ghost is associated with American traditions like Halloween, and you've been booed, where someone puts a picture of a ghost on your door and rang the doorbell, leaving candy behind. The Turn of the Screw is now being noticed even more in America as a movie based on the classic story is being released in 2020. The ghost will live on for a very long time as it can be used in a variety of different manners. It's safe to say that America has fallen in love with the idea of ghosts.