

Ashley Svec

Final Essay

May 20,2004

Ms. Kain

Literature

Literature is a very important part of American culture. It gives people a chance to express themselves in poetry, drama, short stories, and novels. We have read all of these this past semester. None of the pieces we read are from the current day. They have been from past periods of time such as World War II. We have discussed several themes including discrimination, materialism, and loneliness.

Discrimination has been a huge theme. There was discrimination of gender, age, and race. In "Old Age Sticks", the old men are discriminating against the young boys and their behavior. This cycle goes on forever. In "A Raisin in the Sun", there is discrimination with both gender and race. When Mr. Linder came to visit the Youngers home, he showed great discrimination. He told them that they should not move to the white neighborhood for both their sake and the other white people's sakes. Also in that play, there is a lot of discrimination towards women. There is nobody besides mama that feels that Beneatha should be following her dream of being a doctor. People try to talk her out of it a million times. They believe that she should just be a normal stay at home housewife. We don't have as much discrimination with gender and race today, but I believe we still have a large problem with the discrimination of age. Young people

believe that the old are worthless. Old people believe that the young do not mean anything and should be watched at all times because they are bad, bad people. Discrimination is not as bad of a problem as it was back in the day, but it still happens once in a while and I believe it should be stopped. Discrimination can sometimes lead to materialistic thoughts in people also.

Materialism is a huge thing today and back in the day of World War II. The Great Gatsby is a great example of this. The characters in this movie only wanted expensive things and the expensive, important lifestyle. They had parties just to let everyone know they had money and so that they could be known for there great parties. In the play we are watching now, "Death of a Salesman", all Willy wants is a lot of money and to be able to show off his family and friends with what materialistic things he has. People today are just like that; they only want what looks good. People used to marry others because they loved them very much. Now, many people marry others because of money or because they have a nice car or house. What happened to the world? It seems like you can only be happy if you have expensive, cool stuff. People in our society today are looking for money to make them happy. This really needs to change. Love is what brings us all together. There is too much greedy hatred in the world today and not enough happiness. I have never been one to care about money or clothes very much. Of course, I like to look good when I can, but it doesn't run my life. I am fine with who I am, unlike a lot of girls these days. The pop divas today give young girls a lot of materialist ideas and make them think that a person can only be successful if they have money and the right clothes. This

world is so materialistic these days and it drives me crazy. In affect of materialism in the world, many people also are extremely lonely.

Loneliness. Personally, I feel that we read too much about loneliness. It seems like every story we read had something to do with it. For example, "The Unknown Citizen" was just downright depressing. Yes, it has a very good point, but who wants to think about the government talking about them like a number. "The Far and the Near" portrayed loneliness as well. The train conductor was very disappointed to find that nobody in that town was like he imagined them to be. He almost would have rather continued thinking that the town was full of nice, friendly people instead of the reality. This happens a lot in our society today. People make assumptions especially about Hollywood stars and then later find out that they were completely off. It may be a good surprise, and it may be a bad one. In "A Corn Planting", loneliness is portrayed over and over again. The old couple is first lonely because there son went away to work and they don't see him very often and then later they are lonely because there son is dead and they will never see him again. Of course, they deal with their loneliness by going about their everyday lives and planting corn. Many people do this though. They don't want to deal with tragedy or loneliness so they bury themselves in work or whatever else they can find. Also, "A Clean, Well Lighted Place" has a loneliness them in it, the character goes to a bar because he has nothing better to do with his life and there is nobody at his home waiting for him. This also happens in our society, people are not happy with their lives, so they go drink it off.

This semester has been very fun and interesting. I am not a huge fan of reading really long and, to me, boring books, but we did not do that. Granted, there were some short stories I did not like as well, but overall I really liked what we did this semester. The themes of discrimination, materialism, and loneliness taught me a lot about myself and forced me to compare the stories to our society today. This has been a great semester full of great, inquisitive readings.