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Story Essay Final Draft

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Finding Home

"Reading makes immigrants of us all. It takes us away from home, but more important, it finds home for us everywhere" (Rhys). This quote reveals that literature helps readers understand things that are unknown to them. It opens new doors and perspectives, offering a sense of belonging and understanding even in unfamiliar places. Jean Rhys, also known as Ella Gwendolen Rees Williams, is best known for her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. As a child and adolescent, Rhys claims that her mother was cold, disapproving, and distant so she frequently found solitude in the company of books and the voices that remained disconnected from her reality (Jean Rhys). In the short story by Toni Cade Bambara's "The Lesson," the narrator Sylvia, a young girl who lives in the slums of Harlem, experiences a socioeconomic injustice. However, she gains personal growth in the process and senses a feeling of home in an unexpected place she thought she would never belong.

"The Lesson" is a story based on young African American children living in the slums during the 1960s. Narrated by Sylvia, a young girl whose family relocated from the South to improve their financial situation, the story takes a turn when Ms. Moore, the only well-educated person in the neighborhood, decides to take upon the responsibility to educate the young minds of her area. One fine summer noon she takes them on a field trip to a high-end toy store in

Manhattan. This trip exposes the children to a world that is extremely different from their own, one that is filled with luxury and privilege.

Inside the expensive store the children gather around a \$1000 toy, questioning the people who shop there as the cost of the toy is equivalent to how much their parents earn in a year. As a result, Sylvia questions herself if they live in the same world as the people who shop there do.

“Who are these people that spend that much for performing clowns and \$1000 for toy sailboats? What kinda work they do and how they live and how come we ain’t in on it?” (Bambara).

Through reading and literature readers learn about the economic inequalities that African American face during those times and the countless minor inequalities they face in their everyday life.

Minor inequalities as perceived when Sylvia, our narrator unaware of the world outside of her neighborhood, was questioned on her existence “So we. . .And then she gets to the part about all being poor and living in the slums which I don’t feature” (Bambara). The kids are immigrants to the expensive and luxurious toy store. Here, literature takes the children away from their familiar environment and immerses them in the unfamiliar world of the toy store. Similarly, literature can help readers see different viewpoints in this case, social equality between the rich and poor.

It allows them to see life from a different perspective. Ms. Moore encourages the children to critically examine their surroundings and think about their place in the larger world. “Imagine for a minute what kind of society it is in which some people can spend on a toy what it would cost to feed a family of six or seven. What do you think?” (Bambara) At the very end of the story Sylvia and her friends learn the true nature of self-awareness; the toy store visit becomes a transformative experience. Likewise, the readers are also taken away by literature to

this immense world of knowledge, awareness and understanding. Knowledge, in this context, becomes the kids and the readers' new "home," a place of growth and empowerment.

In the story "The Lesson" by Toni Cade Bambara, the author writes about a young African American girl because the author dedicates her life and her art to realizing positive change and healing in the black community. Her fiction is distinguished by its emphasis on the African American community, its idiomatic expressions, interpersonal relationships, myths, music, and history (Toni Cade Bambara). As readers read about new facts such as the African American suffering from socioeconomic injustice which they are unaware of, they become immigrants to that world. Eventually, through those experiences of learning and self-awareness they find their new "home." In conclusion, "The Lesson" by Toni Cade Bambara demonstrates how literature can take readers away from the familiar and expose new worlds and perspectives. Through the characters' experiences, the story illustrates how literature can be a powerful tool for personal growth, self-discovery, and the finding of home and belonging, even in unexpected places.

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Academic Integrity Pledge

I affirm that I have worked on this story essay on my own and that I have not received any unauthorized help.

Thank you.

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