**EN LIN**

**CMLIT 102W-02**

**DATE:**02/26/2019

*Your essay is well done. You give precise and convincing explanations of qualities and situations that make or prevent a character to be seen as sympathetic, and you show how the characters of these works are presented. Your examples are well chosen and well supported. Your organization is clear and orderly. There are a few places where your grammar is slightly off, but nothing serious. The writing and expression are well done.*

*Grade: A-*

Outstanding literary works, good stories that people remember always contain unforgettable characters. They could be heroic figures that possess courage, integrity, or kind-hearted figures that are worthy of sympathy. They could also be characters that are evil in nature. A lot of literary works intentionally demonize antagonists or don’t even reveal their personality as if they were born to be villains. However, efforts made to deeper depiction of antagonists’ emotional shift and inner thoughts sometimes can be well paid off. It helps the readers understand better the complex idea that the story tries to express. Edmund is a good example in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Shakespeare uses different techniques to characterize Edmund as [*an*] immoral, vicious person that is simply unworthy of sympathy.

At the very beginning, Edmund’s potential of being a[-] evil has been exposed to the readers by his soliloquy, “Wherefore should I Stand in the plague of custom, and permit The curiosity of nations to deprive me, For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines Lag of brother?....Well, then, Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land”(Act 1, Scene 2, Shakespeare). It is very clearly shown that Edmund has resentment towards the fact that he was not born to be a legitimate son of Gloucester, letting [*let*] alone a legitimate heir. The setup of Edmund’s background makes him a well-rounded character, at the same time, it draws the reader's attention to Edmund’s actions. Shakespeare spends a great length of writings[-] to depict Edmund as a skilled liar by presenting the way he uses language to manipulate people. He tells his brother Edgar that Glouster is planning to hurt him and pretends to be concerned with his safety, “That's my fear. I pray you…. as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak: pray ye, go; there's my key. if you do stir abroad, go armed.”(Act 1, Scene 2, Shakespeare). He even fakes the fighting scene against Edgar by wounding himself, in order to deepen Gloucester's belief in Edgar’s conspiration. Edmund’s high capacity of duplicity already foreshadows his later vicious actions (Atherton). A visible spear is easily withstood, but an unseen arrow is hard to guard against. His hidden resentment makes him a dangerous character.

In contrast to the internal characteristic that Edmund possess [*possesses*], the story also identifies Edmund as unworthy of sympathy by putting Edmund in a special context. First of all, Edmund has an attractive appearance, which is compared to his dark and manipulative nature. His nice appearance is the important key that helps him establish his position of power. Secondly, He has an honest and kind-hearted brother Edgar, who never gets skeptical of his words. If Edgar were not such person, the evil side of Edmund would not be fully presented. This context is emphasized through Edmund’s soliloquy, “A credulous father! and a brother noble, Whose nature is so far from doing harms, That he suspects none: on whose foolish honesty My practises ride easy! I see the business. Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit: All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.”(Act 1, Scene 2, Shakespeare)

King Lear, on the other hand, is identified as a character that is worthy of sympathy. This is not very clear at the beginning of the story. He acts like a child and insults his only loyal daughter Cordelia simply because she is not willing to flatter him. When Goneril instructs Oswald to be rude to him, and asks him to cut down the number of his knights by half, Lear immediately turns into furiousness [*furious*]. His cruelty is shown when he speaks vicious words to her [his] daughter Goneril: “Dry up in her the organs of increase; And from her derogate body never spring A babe to honour her!”(Act 1, Scene IV ,Shakespeare) However, as the story goes on, Lear’s better qualities are revealed. His hiring of Kent is a sign that he inspires loyalty (Guzov). The conversation between him and the Fool shows his tolerant side. He begins to regret that he has mistreated Cordelia so badly. As Lear gets himself into the wild storm, his emotional state shifts from madness to desperation. At this stage, he is no longer an authoritative King with power but a weak old man. We start to share his outrage against Regan and Goneril. Finally, when King Lear wails with Cordelia dead in his arms, our sympathy is likely to lie with him.

Unlike *King Lear*, the story in *Things fall apart* doesn’t really stress any evil antagonists. Ikemefuna is one of those characters who tends to evoke reader’s sympathy. He is a completely innocent victim. His village sends him to Umuofia like an object to avoid war and bloodshed. The confusion Ikemefuna has toward his fate has not been resolved since the day when he is sent to Okonkwo’s house. He lives with Okonkwo for three years and develops intimate bonds with Okonkwo. Nonetheless, everything he owns can disappear at any moment because his life is [does] not belong to him. Sadly, he is killed by Okonkwo at the end, the only person who he thinks will protect him.

One might argue that Okonkwo is one of those evil characters based on the fact that he kills Ikemefuna without hesitation. However, it is also true that he struggles throughout the whole event. The story is told in omniscient point of view. The narrator reveals the hidden side of Okonkwo, which helps the readers understand this character in [*a*] much deeper way. Okonkwo works very hard in order to escape his father’s fate. He is afraid of being a weak man like his father. His father is a poor slug in people’s eyes, which embarrasses him greatly. Consequently, Okonkwo tries to earn his respect back from those people in the group. He denies his emotion because he believes that a respectful man doesn’t show his emotion like women do. After he kills Ikemefuna, he did not taste any food for two days.(Ch.8, Achebe) He also follows Chielo to the mouth of [*a*] shrine to protect his daughter Ezinma(Ch.11, Achebe). Those actions indicate that Okonkwo actually cares about Ikemefuna and Ezinma. Ironically, at the end of the story, Okonkwo kills the white commissioner's messenger. He then chooses to hang himself, which is the most disrespectful and coward[*ly*] way to die in Umuofia(Ch.25, Achebe). Throughout his whole life, Okonkwo struggles to fight his way up to be an honorable man in Umuofia. He kills himself because what he is fighting for becomes meaningless as the system of Umuofia is torn apart by the outsiders. To some degree, Okonkwo is identified as worthy of sympathy in that he is the last man who stands out to protect Umuofia.

**Work Cited**

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