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English 403 - Children's Literature

January 23, 2013

Corduroy Mini Analysis

Corduroy is, at first glance, a sweet children's book about a bear looking for a home.

There are several themes that are obvious at first, such as the desire for a family, and the need for acceptance and a home. When we take a deeper look, there are multiple sub-themes to explore, and two of these are complacency, and the journey to self-realization.

In the beginning of the book, Corduroy the bear sits, day after day, on a shelf. He waits for someone to take him home, but has little or no self-awareness, to the extent that he doesn't even realize that he is missing a button on his overalls until he is influenced by an external event. One day, a girl shows interest in Corduroy, but the girl's mother points out the missing button and dismisses Corduroy. This event causes Corduroy to feel sad, evaluate his situation, and he decides to make changes; He goes out into the store to find his missing button.

This turn of events immediately made me think of the parallels to the 2002 movie *About Schmidt*. The movie follows retiring insurance actuary Warren Schmidt, who has spent his adult life at the same job, and married to the same woman. He retires, and his wife suddenly passes away. Due to this unexpected event, his complacency for his life has turned to sadness, and he is forced to re-evaluate his entire life, motives and relationships. He goes on a journey of self discovery, taking his RV on a cross-country trip to his daughter's wedding, and on the way stops

at many places from his past, trying to find something, anything to satisfy his emptiness and sadness.

A second theme that I found fascinating was the contrast of innocent love that the little girl had for Corduroy, versus the more jaded view of her mother. Where the mother looked and saw the flaw of the missing button first, the girl saw a sweet bear that she loved, regardless of his damaged outfit.

Children can relate to this story in many ways. The first is the desire for belonging. All kids want to be loved and accepted, and can relate to Corduroy in that fashion. Most children have experienced teasing or being viewed as different, and would no doubt be able to empathize with Corduroy's feelings of dismay due to his shabby outfit. This story is a valuable teaching tool, showing children about acceptance and love, despite a differing exterior. This book is entertaining and enlightening, and both my children and I enjoyed it.

WORKS CITED:

Freeman, Don. *Corduroy*. New York, Viking, 1968. Print.

About Schmidt, Dir. Alexander Payne. Perf. Jack Nicholson, Kathy Bates, Hope Davis, Dermot Mulroney. New Line Cinema, 2002. DVD.