

Matthew Cather

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Dr. Simkins

### A Proposal for intersectionality of War and America

A majority of the texts I have read this semester have discussed wars. These stories on wars are not just the blood-soaked battlefields, but also the class wars that have taken place. The recurring theme of these important pieces of literature helped me come to a conclusion for my topic. When one thinks of war, we often immediately think of any war that has been fought physically, but what about the mental ones? The essence of war is conflict. This conflict can be both internal and external, physical and metaphorical. The theme of war is appealing because of its omnipresence throughout literature. For my final analysis I am going to investigate and analyze the intersectionality of this war and events that shaped the ideas of America.

This discussion of the different types of war was a recurring topic during group discussions. The group agreed that it would be an interesting task to discuss. The most common type of war encountered in our reading has been class wars, they are so frequently encountered because classes divide people and that division is where the conflict arises. One of the more impactful stories was the first chapter, "Battle Royal," of Ralph Ellison's book *Invisible Man* depicting the brutal conflict between the separate but equal community. *School Days of an Indian Girl*, written by Zitkala-Sa, expresses the tension not only between the Americans and the Native Americans but also the internal tension between the indoctrinated natives and the rest of the Native American community. "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Gilman expresses the frustrations and conflict of the patriarchal society.

“Battle Royal” is a good example of a class war. It shows how people with power humiliate and abuse those who do not. This piece of literature can relate back to the overall theme of war. The “Battle Royal” shows how one class, in this case the wealthy upper class, abused their power and took advantage of what they saw as an inferior class. This war of classes is analogous to the events leading to and during the civil rights movement. The civil rights movement was important because it shaped America and is still a battle we are fighting today. This piece of literature would particularly be interesting to discuss because it is still a current issue we face. I think it would raise some good questions and a good discussion topic. I like this piece over some of the other civil rights because I enjoyed some of the authors writing from later in his book and I think it would be interesting to see how the stories develop further into his book.

*School days of an Indian Girl* also serves as good commentary on the war between the American citizens and the Native Americans. Not the physical wars that were fought, but the mental war of stripping the Native Americans of their culture to indoctrinate them into the ideas of The Union. Possible points of discussion from this collection of stories would be again a powerful class seeking to oppress what they considered to be an inferior class. This is an issue that can still be seen today, which makes it relatable. For example many historical names for geological locations, such as Denali, the largest mountain in the United States, were renamed without consideration to the Natives that named it. I would choose this book because of its format. The collection of short stories gives a diverse of situations and examples that could be used in showing the intersections of Zitkala-Sa’s personal experience and the class war between the Native Americans and The United States’ government.

“The Yellow Wallpaper” contextualizes the struggle of women in a patriarchal society. Again, this war was the one with power seeing themselves as superior to the other class. Examples from the short story is the dismissiveness of the husband, John, and his inability to relate with his wife and understand that she might know what is best for herself. The aspect of the story that appeals to me is the simplicity of the story. It is very direct and has strong characters that could be generalized. For example, John’s sister represents the kind of people in the society that were complicit in the suppression by the other class. Another interesting aspect of this short story that I am interested in exploring is the two support characters John and his sister. I will analyze the kind of people they represent using this short story as an analogy to the women’s suffrage movement.

Another recurring war throughout literature is man versus himself. This internal conflict has manifested in literature. While not read but watched, *Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck, the film revolves around the Tom Joad’s internal conflict of keeping the status quo or standing up for the little guy and doing what is right. “We Wear the Mask”, by Paul Laurence Dunbar, also captures that internal struggle and burden that the everyday person feels with society. I want to further investigate the internal war that people go through. More specifically I will look into the internal struggles of what people feel when what they believe goes against society.

In *Grapes of Wrath* John struggles with the injustices he encountered in the world. This story starts with the protagonist, John, getting out of prison, placing him on the outskirts of society. For most of his journey, Tom is complicit with the status quo of society and the injustices hidden in it. It is when he becomes fed up with the injustices on the peach farm and

becomes an outlaw again that he gets a sense of justice. I am interested in irony of John doing justice for society as an outlaw in society and how society is responsible for justice.

“We Wear the Mask” uses the idea of a metaphorical mask that we use to hide our true self from society. This internal war is inside everyone. It is also like the internal conflict that America has always dealt with when it comes to the different interest of individual groups. I think this poem is similar to the idea of mob mentality; How the ideas of a society might differ from the the ideas of the individuals in it. I want to look into how society limits the individual.

One unique piece of reading for the class has been “The War Prayer” by Mark Twain. This story addresses the side of conflict that is most often forgotten. That a war always has a loser. One of Sir Isaac Newton’s three laws of physics is that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. In the context of war this means if there is a winner of war it is required that there is a loser as well. This can be used to draw parallels to the two sides of war throughout literature covered in class. “The War Prayer” is an example to acknowledge that both sides have a reasons for fighting a war and can be used to contrast why each side is fighting them in the first place.

For my final analysis I have three main topics of interest. Most of my research and analysis will be into the class wars of america and how some of the class reading has captures moments and ideas of that part of our history. Another topic I will invest in the internal societal conflict individuals have and how this parallels and intersects with the internal conflict of American ideas. Finally My favorite piece of literature this semester has been “The War Prayer” and I will use it to compare and contrast the opposing sides of both the class and internal wars.