

**Nine Stories: Final Paper – The True Heroes, Villains and Victims of War**

Throughout the course of history, it is safe to say that war can change the very shape and future of countries that are taking part in it. If it can greatly change a country, what more to its people? In a broader scale, war certainly has winners and losers. Countries that are victorious usually if not always get more benefits than countries that are defeated. However, it is usually the people in higher-ranking gets the most glory and attention. If we look at post-war scenarios thoroughly, there are those whom we can consider as the losers of the war no matter what the outcome of the war. These are the soldiers and the common people, whom have been forcefully sucked in to the fold in order to fulfil the sometimes greedy ambitions and thirst for power of their leaders, soldiers like J.D. Salinger.

Nine Stories, written by J.D. Salinger, is a series of books that mainly focuses on the effects of war on society and its people. During his time, J.D. Salinger worked as a soldier for the United States in which their goal was to stop the Hitler-led Germany from wreaking havoc throughout Europe. J.D. Salinger must have written majority of his experiences in the WWII through the short stories found in Nine Stories. Majority of the nine short stories, just like war, have a commonality of having heroes, villains and victims. However, the interesting part of it is the kind of people that were portrayed as the heroes, villains and victims. Majority of the heroes in the stories are children and at times, women. The villains of the stories are the war and society itself while the victims of the stories are usually represented by the soldiers.

At times of war, people who are aware of what is happening like adults and especially soldiers who are taking part in it, lose track of their own mind and emotions leading to them making questionable decisions. Based on J.D. Salinger's book, these burdens are carried over even after the war, as evident by characters such as Seymour from "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" and Franklin from "Just Before the War with the Eskimos" which are portrayed as adults or soldiers who are physically and mentally damaged because of the sights they have seen throughout the time of war. Soldiers feel the most pain out of everyone as part of their job is to kill their enemies while being away from the love of their family. In addition, the fact that they know that their very lives are at stake makes it tougher for them to overcome the amount of stress it gives them. This leads to innocent civilians and soldiers being diagnosed to numerous

disorders such as PTSD, mood swings, anxiety and sleep disorders. This is why J.D. Salinger thought of soldiers as the true victims of war.

Knowing all of this, who or what is to be blamed for the pain brought to the soldiers? Majority would answer war itself. J.D. Salinger often made war as the root cause of suffering for the victims of the story such as Seymour and Sergeant X of "For Esme with Love and Squalor". However, war is not a natural calamity, it is man-made. This is why based from *Nine Stories*, readers can also tell that society plays an antagonistic role in majority of the short stories found in it. The society's (can be a group of people or one person) thirst for power and their desire to prove that their race are better than others, often cause misunderstandings and during J.D. Salinger's time, often leads to war and conflict. This is very evident in the story "Down at the Dinghy" where Lionel's father is hated by their very own maids due to the fact that he is a Jew which might be a direct correlation to Hitler's hate for the Jews leading up to the Holocaust.

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Often times, contributions of children are overlooked in times of war. However, J.D. Salinger took an exception to that. *Nine Stories* often made children the heroes and heroines of the stories. The theme the stories often portrayed the innocence of children and how they are the reason for happiness for common civilians and soldiers alike. J.D. Salinger did not overlook the contributions of children in the eyes of a soldier as they are considered their source of hope, the light at the end of the dark tunnel that is war. Soldiers, knowing that they fight for the future of their country would gladly risk their lives for these children, so that they would have a better future. As an example, in *Nine Stories*, Sergeant X looked at Esme as someone who is worth fighting for. This is why thinking about her always calms him down as everything he has fought for is for the sake of children like her.

This is not only the case for American soldiers like J.D. Salinger as it is for soldiers of every nation. Let us take into consideration Filipino veterans who fought the Japanese during World War II. Filipinos were caught in a power struggle of countries fighting for supremacy and in turn have to clean up their mess for them. However, Filipino soldiers and heroes endured it, all for the sake of the next generation's future.

J.D. Salinger is sending a message to everyone that if we are going to be conquered by something, it should be love, not hate caused by conflict. Instead of isolating and inflicting pain on one another through racial slurs, verbal abuse and direct assault, people should start loving one another as it is pure and innocent like the children in the story. We should give each other hope and make things better. He is trying to show that love is a beautiful sight to see and an amazing emotion to feel. Only then we could get rid of the concept of having a villain and victim in our society in which every single one of us are considered as heroes to one another. It is until then we would feel true happiness like how a soldier feels happy in the presence and company of children.