B Block

Q2: The Pupil

In the excerpt, “The Pupil” by Henry James depicts the relationship between a tutor, Pemberton, and a wealthy American family, specifically Mrs. Moreen, and her son, a young boy named Morgan. Morgan has a heart problem, which is why he needs a tutor, but Pemberton is hesitant about working with the American family. He values his image and hopes to fulfill an esteemed position tutoring a well-behaved boy. After meeting the ‘new money’ American family, Pemberton is appalled by the ill-mannered and unconventional ways of the high-standing upper class. When detailing how Pemberton acquired this job, he explains it was from meeting “an Oxford acquaintance” (39-40). His idea of “university honors” (60) cater into his idea that he, an esteemed English university graduate, should be assisting a proper, cultured family he can be proud of. Pemberton’s decription of Mrs. Moreen as a “large, affable lady” (8), reveals his dismay towards her physical demeaner. His is unimpressed and frankly appalled by her heavy physicality and informal attitude, as shown this his condescending denotion. He goes on to add that she is wearing “a pair of soiled gants de Suede” (9), futhering her lack of grace and elegance and re-establishing the cultural divide between Pemberton and the Moreens. Pemberton has grown up with very different ideas than those exhibited by the American family. He has been raised with the belief that his manners are of paramount importance and are one of the most rudimentary lessons to learn. Pemberton’s prior preminitions and cultural ideals depicts the scoial divide that keeps him from understanding the newly wealthy Americans.

Like any proper Englishman, he does not “broach the subject” of money, not wanting to seem improper or rude. He is more timid and modest, showing respect to those around him. Mrs. Moreen, who is very rich, as evident through the description of her “fat, jeweled hand” (10) regards money in a very offhand, careless way. While Pemberton is concerned about money, the reader gets the sense that money is no concern for Mrs. Moreen since she never addresses the subject. She sees him as a lower social status. Mrs. Moreen says that she will give Pemberton the “regular” payment, showing her lack of concern for his finances or axieties. Mrs. Moreen’s relationship to Pemberton equates to one of a socialite and servant, as he can’t ask even ask her a simple question about his salary. Pemberton seems squirmish and uncomfortable with Mrs. Moreen. Mrs. Moreen describes her son at the “mercy of a weakness” (35).

After their breif introduction, Mrs. Moreen asks her son to “fetch her fan” (16). Her low-class, disrespectful verbiage portray her condesending attitude. Her son Morgan is leaves to get it but returns empty-handed with the “cynical confession” that he couldn’t find it. Morgan is the opposite of Pemberton, with his disrespectful, primitive behavior. Moreen’s rude behavior is again exhibited as he looks pointedly at Pemberton when “appearing to address himself to his mother”. This disrespect is a manifestation of the differences in the social and cultural classes of the time. Morgan;s lack of respect towards his mother and “improper answer” (24) contrasts the ideals he has grown up with and therefore becomes the first thing he seeks to rectify.

Pemberton’s relationship with Morgan is strained and tainted by his insecurity. He is anxious about his new job and is frusterated with the informal, tactless behavior and the Moreen’s uncultured attitute only disappoints him. His prior assumption of Morgan’s characters is very different from the pupil he finds himself with. Pemberton describes Morgan as seeming “sickly without being delicate” (49). Morgan is not delicate begacue of his illness. Rather than seeming week or ill, Morgan is seems and disrespectful. Pemberton does not understand this, as he is the academic scholar from England. This can be seen by Morgan’s “mocking, foreign ejaculation” : “Oh, la, la” (78). Morgan’s condesending amusement and superiority completly deter Pemberton’s expectations. Pemberton doesn’t know how to interact with the Morgan and is very uncomfortable. Morgan’s behavior describes a child who needs to be taught courtesy. He and his mother can only be characterized a uncultured, disrespectful, and uncaring. ..

Pemberton’s poper English background and academic success solifidy the cultural divide between the Moreens and himself. He is unable to understand their actions or motives, leaving him disappointed and frusterated. He soon becomes uncertain and appauled by the tactlesss behaviors of the newly wealth American family and their unforseen superiority. As told in Pemberton’a point of view, Henry James’s “The Pupil” clearly depicts the relationships between Pemberton, Mrs. Moreen, and her son Morgan.