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ENG1D3

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The Worth of Stories - Haroun and the Sea of Stories

We often see ourselves as the protagonist of our own stories. Salman Rushdie's "Haroun and the Sea of the Stories" follows Haroun, a protagonist of his own story, as he goes on a quest to cleanse the Sea of Stories and reclaim his father's storytelling prowess. Haroun's adventure in Moon Kahani reinforces how he sees his place within his family, community and how he sees himself. Rushdie uses Haroun's quest for normalcy to show that stories deeply shape Haroun's identity.

Haroun's story helps him better understand his relationship with his father and his storytelling. After his wife leaves him, Rashid, Haroun's father and a famous storyteller, devolves into self-pity, provoking Haroun to retort "What's the point of it? *What's the use of stories that aren't even true?*" (22). Haroun begins the story thinking of his father as the "Shah of Blah," a derogatory term pertaining to the supposed uselessness of his stories (15). However, Haroun's adventure in Moon Kahani gives him clarity about his father's craft and leaves Moon Kahani thinking of his father as the "Ocean of Notions" (138). Through Haroun's quest to redeem a sense of his father's former glory, the World of Stories paves a path for Haroun to forge a stronger relationship with his father, ultimately reinforcing Haroun's familial identity. The World of Stories' influence on Haroun's identity extends past his family and to his community as well.

Haroun's quest allows him to contextualize the role of power in his community. Rashid is able to leverage similarities between the World of Stories and their own world and inspire the citizens of the Valley of K to banish a corrupt politician, "[pelting] him with rubbish as he

[flees]” (207). The World Of Stories reminds the citizens, who had become accustomed to the politicians’ assertion of power, that it is necessary to contextualize the role and toll of power in their own community. Through his quest and the consequent aftermath, Haroun gains a profound appreciation for the lessons of stories and grasps how they influence his relationship with his community. Moreover, the impact on the community is also felt by Haroun personally.

The World of Stories bolsters and nurtures Haroun’s confidence. At the end of the story, Haroun achieves the normalcy he has desired from the very beginning and with newfound confidence, he tells the Hoopoe that “he [doesn’t] need to go anywhere at all” (211), and that “time is definitely on the move again around these parts” (211). Haroun no longer needs assistance in analyzing his struggles owing to his adventures in the World of Stories. Moreover, he recognizes that not only will his situation change, but he also recognizes a change within himself.

Salman Rushdie’s *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* explores Haroun’s pursuit of normalcy, leading him to reinforce his familial, community, and personal identity and fully appreciate the worth of fictional stories. Rushdie’s message is clear: stories have the capacity to intimately influence who we are.

Works Cited

Rushdie, Salman. *Haroun and Sea of Stories*. Penguin Books, 1991.