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MCC-UE 1805

Informative Speech

**Introduction**

I. Opening Statement – Literature, like any art form, is often used as a means of expressing an opinion and making a statement on society. Science fiction as a genre in particular is not as fantastic as you may think: good science fiction is based on society as it exists today and is a reflection on our progress as a race.

II. Thesis statement – For my informative speech today, I’m going with a good old fashioned book report – my book: Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* **ask if anyone has read it.**

III. Preview statement –

Banned from schools in West Virginia, Utah, Alabama, and Missouri between 1970 and 1985 / accused of being sexist / anti-LGBTQ / and racist

1970 Nebula Award / 1970 Hugo Award – Like winning the Oscar and Golden Globe for best picture (only achieved by *Dune*, *Ender’s Game*, and *Ringworld*) – Considered the third best science fiction book of all time but often unread by many.

*Today I will be discussing these contradictions, the book’s controversy and the contrary therein, through a discussion of the book’s plot, its author, and its themes.*

**Body**

I. About the author: Ursula K. Le Guin: recently passed away, January 22, 2018

A. Often considered one of the best science fiction writers of all time

1. First woman to win either the Hugo or Nebula Award, and second author to win both.

2. First author to win both *twice* for two different books (*The Dispossessed)*

3. First woman named “Grandmaster of Science Fiction” in 2003 by Science fiction writers of America

B. Greatly influenced by her father, who was an anthropologist (study of human culture and society)

1. Most of her books are formatted as an anthropological study of fictional societies – the protagonist in TLHD is anthropologist Genly Ai who was sent to study to planet of Geth.

2. Uses her books to investigate and isolate characteristics of society

II. Plot Overview

A. The title is from a fictional poem within the novel

1. Themes heavily influence by Toaism, Chinese philosophy which favors balance and a “natural” state

B. Setting: Geth (“word for Winter in fictional language”)

1. Permanent ice age, life structured around extreme cold, approximately same level of technology today.

2. Two states: authoritarian oligarchy and a socialist monarchy

3. Protagonist, Genly Ai, is a representative of the Ekuman (interstellar UN) come to study world and offer admission to organization

C. Conflict / Plot: Genly Ai tries to convince the planet to join the interstellar alliance amidst nativism and skepticism

1. Differences in culture makes it difficult for Ai to communicate / convince the people to trust him / accept his offer

2. People are intersex: live as neutral gender 3 / 4 of the time, go through monthly cycles of sexual fruition (“kemmer”) where they adopt sexual characteristics by chance

III. Themes of the novel and its underlying controversy: Le Guin asks many questions of society in her novel

1. Gender: what would life be like if there was no gender – society run by gender

1. No competition: society formed of equality – no war, moves slowly, little ambition, no marriage

2. The narrator / reader has to adapt their paradigms to unisexual society

3. Criticism: Use of masculine pronouns, depiction of mainly masculine roles in society vs. that Le Guin didn’t want to invite new he/she word, unreliable narrator

B. Loyalty / Trust: Loyalty and trust are vital components of establishing relationships

1. Genly Ai tries to establish trust between himself and Gethen society

2. “Genly recognizes that the Gethenian system of shifgrethor, their notion governing "prestige, face, place, the pride-relationship" prevents a Gethenian from offering direct advice to another without also offering insult” Christine Cornell *Interprative Journey*.

3. In essence the idea that the society needs to trust Genly while Genly must also come to trust society

C. Duality: the idea of opposites in balance with one and other (Will Dems / Rep agree?)

1. The title is representative of the theme, influenced by Yin-Yang

2. Two opposite governments (Karhide: balanced / Orgoreyn: oppressive)

3. Exception is gender – on purpose to highlight it

4. Seen as a criticism of capitalist Christian west compared to the communist / socialist eastern society

**Conclusion**

I. Summary statement – The Left Hand of Darkness is truly a multifaceted demonstrating of some of the issues of society.

II. Concluding statement – The only question that remains: when will you read it.

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