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Puppy Reflection

In George Saunder’s “Puppy” the reader is shown a comparison of two very different mothers. I found it interesting that Saunders decided to compare the mothers through their children. While in hindsight it makes perfect sense to me that the best way to compare mothers would be through their children and their parenting styles, I never would have thought of that myself. I like reading this story, because it reminded me a lot of my childhood. I complained a lot during family trips and my parents general response was, “you’ll appreciate this when you’re older” (I still don’t know what they were talking about though☺).

George Saunder compares two very different mothers in his short story “Puppy”. The first is a typical middle class suburban and the other is “poor white trash”. In the story they intersect around the puppy that the middle class mother wants to buy from the poor family so her children can learn to be more responsible. This contrast between the two mothers allows the author to explore the middle class mother’s snobiness and her inability to look beyond what she sees when she refuses to buy the puppy because she thinks the other mother is abusing her son by chaining him in the backyard and her house is a mess. However, she doesn’t have enough grace not to abandon the puppy in a home she thinks isn’t a good one. Ironically, in the end the author makes the mother who chains her son to be the one who is more sympathetic because the author makes sure we know that she has a compelling reason for chaining him based on saving his life and making him happier. We also know that when she kills the puppy she’s also doing it to save her husband’s feelings. Things that appear horrible on their surface are not always that horrible when we learn more about the character’s motivation. All the wealthier woman could see was that the home and the situation wasn’t up to her own standards. They both love their children and want the best for them but the story implies you can’t judge other people based on a middle class viewpoint or just on what you see. Also, just because the wealthier woman thinks she’s a better mother doesn’t mean she is one.