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28th, October 2016

Dr. Carr

AP Literature

AP Test Essay – Rewrite

 Desire, it is a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen. In Lan Chang’s, “Water Names,” the author tells a short story about deception and lust. The meaning of her story is to show the reader how curiosity and desire can take over one’s mind and consume them. She mixes two stories and two settings into one as she tells an ancient legend.

 At the beginning of her story, the reader is introduced to three characters. Two sisters and a grandma who live together and spend time talking around evening. Ingrid and Lily are two sisters who can be described as normal, rambunctious, playful kids. In order to settle them down for the night, Grandmother Waipuo, starts telling them a story about their family history. The setting in the grandmother’s story takes place many years ago with a father and daughter who fish. They are on the river constantly, and they hardly have any issues until the daughter thinks she has fallen in love and is consumed by it.

 The legend of Wen Zhiqing’s daughter has elements of darkness and mystery that reveal greed and desire. Throughout the entire story, his daughter’s name is never revealed. She has multiple symbols that can be applied to this writing. One of the reasons that she is nameless is to represent the curiosity of the unknown. “…spoiled by her father, kept protected from the river, so she could not see its danger.” (Paragraph 10) The quote in paragraph 10 shows how Zhiqing protected and sheltered his daughter, which would leave her unknown of dangers and curious as to what she sees because she has never experienced pain or inflictions. Paragraph 18 actually elaborates on the action she takes which gives the reader an eerie and shocking feeling due to her rebellious ways and sudden disappearance. “She had taken advantage of the confusion to hurry to the river and visit her beloved.” (Paragraph 18) This also shows how entranced she was by the man in the river that she was in love with. Her mind had been so into him that she was willing to be with him and die for him despite her family’s wishes.

 As the legend is being told one can see the daughter’s yearning for more grow. It is first revealed when the characters are fishing and the daughter makes a statement with a sense of disappointment. “If only this catch would bring back something more than another fish!” (Paragraph 11) She then proceeds to lean over the side of the boat and peer into the river. She eventually sees a man in the river and becomes consumed with this siren-like spirit. Now back into the original story, the grandmother starts wrapping up and explains that the girl was never found. “…she was seduced by a water ghost. Or perhaps she lost her mind to desiring.” (Paragraph 22) Waipuo tells the story in a whimsical way that will teach her granddaughters to not have a longing for something or to be consumed by lust. The girls name is never revealed so Ingrid and Lily can envision themselves in her spot, or for the reader to even do so.

 Greed and lust is a normal human emotion. It’s become even more relative in society over the years. Chang develops a well written story about the effects of greed and wanting more.

Work Cited

Chang, Lan Samantha. *Hunger: A Novella and Stories*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. Print.