

Essay-Wettbewerb 2019/20

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Author, Storyteller, Richard Van Camp

In the last weeks, I have read a few short stories by the author Richard Van Camp and decided to write an essay about it. My first paragraph will be about Richard Van Camp and his work. Secondly, I will summarize the short story to give you an overview of what it is about. After that, I am going to answer my research question about the representation of females by analyzing the story. My last paragraph will contain my conclusion, opinion, as well as a summary of all the important points.

Who is Richard Van Camp and what is he known for? Richard was born on the 8th of September in 1971 and is a proud member of the Dogrib (Tlicho) Nation as well as a bestselling author and an internationally renowned storyteller. He attended the En'owkin International School of Writing, the University of Victoria's Creative Writing BFA Program and later graduated from Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia with a master's degree. Van Camp has published 15 books, including *The Lesser Blessed* which was turned into a film in 2012. The talented author received eight awards and was nominated two times. (Richard van Camp, n.d.)

The story I will be focusing on is called "Ehtsèe/Grandpa" and is one of Richard Van Camp's short stories from the book "Moccasin Square Garden". It is about a boy who wants to learn more about his cultural background. At the beginning of the story, the boy is facing a situation in which he is trying to communicate with his Grandpa who only speaks the Tlicho language. They somehow manage to understand each other and spend a day together watching a movie. Because of his will to learn more about his backdrop, the boy starts working as an archivist for the Tlicho nation. He interviews and photographs the community members and is endlessly happy with his work. The story ends with the death of the grandpa and him giving his pipe to the boy as a symbol to be his successor. The boy has always seen his grandpa as his role model and was sad when he passed away. Even if they did not spend much time together the time that they did was valuable and meant a lot to both of them.

In this paragraph, I want to write about how women are represented in the story. Although the story does not really talk much about women and mainly focuses on a boy, I could still find a few interesting things. At one point in the story, the boy talks about how he remembers the difference between the words Ehtsi for grandma and Ehtsèe for grandpa in the Tlicho language and says, "With Ehtsi for grandma, I always think the final ee sound is stronger than the final eh sound in Ehtsèe. Just like owls and ravens: the female is always stronger, bigger. That's how my grandparents were." I think just by that quote you can already assume that women are definitely not underestimated and somehow have a better

reputation than men (131). Women are portrayed as important, strong and responsible. They are independent and do not need to rely on anyone. The story introduces us to three female characters. Firstly, the mother of the boy, she is an independent and mature person. Then the grandma, she is strong and powerful. And finally, Jennifer the nurse, who is kind and empathetic. Like I said the story is not directly about women, but I feel like without these characters there would be something missing and the story would not be as interesting as it is.

As I already mentioned before, this paragraph will include the conclusion and my opinion. I think the author did a great job empowering women. I am a big fan of seeing females represented as characters who know what they are doing, and who are strong, fierce, independent and do not let anyone look down on them because of their gender. It is important for girls and women to see themselves as confident. Even though I enjoy seeing this representation, I also enjoy it when those characters have moments of weakness and doubt. You can still be independent and take advice from other people. When I think about our society, I notice that women feel the need to work harder than men to do a certain job or work in a specific profession, but in my opinion that is the wrong mindset. Everybody should be treated the same and by writing literature that supports this statement we will get closer to the goal, which is having equal possibilities for both men and women. I think this story really shows that there does not have to be a gender that is less important. We should all work together for a future in which it does not matter whether you are a girl or a boy to be successful and independent.

Bibliography:

Richard Van Camp (n.d.) About Richard. [online] Available at:

<https://www.richardvancamp.com>