

Abstract

In life, people are possible to fail in achieving their expectation. In Edith Wharton's The Children, the writer finds out the main male character, Martin Boyne and the main female character, Judith Wheater have the same expectation, but they both fail to achieve it and have different reactions to the failure. She wants to find out the reasons for Martin and Judith's expectation and also their efforts to achieve it. She would compare Martin and Judith's different reactions toward failure that later bring certain effects to their lives. The writer applies the literary theory of characterization and some psychological theories on failure. Then, she finds out that Martin's failure makes him depressed because he never experiences failure before whereas he is so sure that he will succeed in his efforts. The truth comes out that he fails and he has nobody who supports or shares his burden. Meanwhile, Judith's failure does not make her frustrated because she has often experienced failure before and after her failure, she has a mother who takes care of her. Then, the writer concludes her findings that the reactions of the characters to their failure of their expectation are influenced by some factors. There are character traits, situation and condition of life. She discovers that Martin becomes depressed because he has low tolerance to frustration, whether Judith is not depressed because she has high frustration tolerance. However, the condition that Martin does not get support from anyone and Judith gets support from her mother are the main things which determine their reactions to their failure.

Synopsis

In The Children, an instant bestseller when it was first published in 1928, Edith Wharton created a comic, bittersweet novel about the misadventures of a bachelor, Martin Boyne and a group of precocious children. The seven Wheater's children, step-brothers and step-sisters grown weary of being shuttled from parent to parent "like bundles", are eager for their parents's latest reconciliation to last. Those children have expectation that they do not want to be separated anymore and that their parents do not divorce again. A chance meeting between the children and the solitary forty-six-year old Martin Boyne leads to series of unforgettable encounters. The encounters begins on a ship deck when the Wheater's children run away from home under the lead of the vivacious fifteen years old Judith Wheater, the eldest. Then Martin Boyne is agree to be the guardian of the Wheater's children, because he has expectation to unite those children. The secondary topic of this book is the relationship between Rose Sellars, the quiet, gentle, widow of exquisite tact and Martin Boyne who had been her lover in the past. At first, Rose Sellars immediately understands and accepts the fact that Boyne's preoccupation with the Wheater's children is, unknown to himself, a manifestation of his hopeless passion for little Judith, but then she is jealous to Judith.

After the children is separated, Judith realizes that her expection has failed, because she cannot unite her brothers and sisters and she let her parents to divorce again. Instead of long sadness and depression, Judith tries to begin her new life and

forget her failure in the past. In the other hand, Martin Boyne feels guilty that he fails to achieve his expectation in uniting the Wheater's children. At the end of the story, he is left, old and desolate, staring through a ballroom window at the beautiful Judith who, dancing with a young man, is no longer even aware of his existence. With deft humor and touching drama, Wharton portrays a world of intrigues and infidelities, skewering the manners and mores of American abroad. Long unavailable in paperback, this acclaimed novel is a brilliant addition to Edith Wharton's celebrated literary masterworks.

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