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CP English 4th Period

Identity Unit Paper

Life is not perfect sometimes even harder and cruel, so people start to build a wonderful world unconsciously in their mind. This is a good thing, because hope and dream are the main mental support for people to go through the hard time. However, when people cannot keep balance between reality and dream, they will feel unhappy and even cause problems. In “The Struggle to be an All-American Girl” written by Elizabeth Wong, there is no possibility for her to feel happy since her life is a battle between Chinese heritage and American culture. In “Paul’s Case” written by Willa Cather, Paul’s final suicide proves that he cannot stand the hopeless and ugly life in Cordelia Street and doesn’t want to give up his dreamful and beautiful life in New York. In “From Notes of a Native Son” written by James Baldwin, the author feels like his life is in danger since unreasoning contempt is around him all the time.

It is obvious that everyone has a dream life. Elizabeth’s dream is to stop learning Chinese heritage which is required by her mom, as she writes: “No amount if kicking, screaming, or pleading could dissuade my mother, who was solidly determined to have us learn the language and our heritage” (Wong 1). Same thing for Paul, his dream is to be a model usher. “Gracious and smiling he ran up and down the aisles. Nothing was too much trouble for him; he carried messages and brought programs as though it were his greatest pleasure in life” (Cather 645). And the life in New York is also what he expected. He does so well there and even makes new friends! In “From Notes of a Native Son”, the speaker says: “I even remember the movie we saw because its title impressed me as being so aptly ironical. It was a movie about the German occupation of France, starring Maureen O’Hara and Charles

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Laughton and called *This Land is Mine.* I remember the name of the dinner we walked into when the movie ended: “It was the “American Dinner” (Baldwin 668). From here, we can see that the speaker feels so unfair that he cannot be treated as same as White Americans. To live in a world without despise is his dream.

However, the reason why a dream is a dream is that it is different from reality, which we are always unsatisfied with. Elizabeth struggles with almost everything in her life: She recognized her principal as child killer; she prefers French; she thinks Chinese flag is not as pretty although it has the same color as American flag; she says: “The language was a sauce of embarrassment” (Wong 1). Since she doesn’t like the reality that she is a Chinese which is unchangeable, she cannot feel happy and lives in torment. Paul has even more serious problem, he cannot fit into his real life in Cordelia Street at all. “Paul never went up Cordelia Street without a shudder of loathing” (Cather 647). And he loath his ugly chamber, the cold bath room, the cracked mirror and dripping spigots. “The nearer he approached the house, the more Paul felt to the sight at all” (Cather 647). Moreover, Paul loves to be an usher so much. “It was at theater and at Carnegie Hall that Paul really lives; the rest was but a sleep and a forgetting” (Cather 650). However, his father doesn’t agree him to do this job and the last pleasure in his life disappeared. Life of the life of the speaker in “From Notes of a Native Son” is as grey as life of Paul since he suffered racial discrimination. “My working day became one long series of acrobatics designed to keep me out of trouble” (Cather 668), but he is finally fired. In addition, he becomes so angry and depressed every time he is told that “We don’t serve Negroes here” in the restaurant. In summary, all of them think that they live in disgusting world.

There is so much distance between our dreams and life, and if it is almost no possibility foe them to escape from their grey life, they will finally cause problem. It’s lucky for Elizabeth to have a chance to

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stop Chinese school. “After two years of writing with moc and reciting words with multiple of meanings, I finally was granted a culture divorce” (Wong 1). But Paul and the speaker in “From Notes of a Native Son” are not as lucky as Elizabeth. Even though Paul has gone to New York using stolen money, he is finally found out and has to go back to his grey life again, so he chooses suicide to resist his fate. For the speaker in “From Notes of a Native Son”, since he cannot control his anger every time he feels unequal, he causes problems such as attacking waitress. “My real life is in danger, and not from anything other people might do but from the hatred I carried in my own heart” (Baldwin 669).

The struggle toward a future is a good thing, but people can be troublemakers if they can’t balance themselves between life and dream. Keeping dream in mind and acting towards the dream step by step can be a good choice for all the people.

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Works Cited

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