

Naming of Parts by Henry Reed: Summary

Naming of Parts written in 1942 by an English poet Henry Reed is a war poem written during the Second World War. It has five stanzas and is a fine lyric poem where the new recruit is being taught to operate a rifle, but at the same time is being distracted by the outer beauty of the springtime. The two distinct speakers in the poem; one the strict instructor and the other new sensitive recruit, go side by side presenting their views on war and normal life.

The first speaker speaks within about the first three and a half lines of each stanza and the second speaker speaks in the remaining lines of the stanza. The first speaker is too much concerned about the war and teaching the proper operation of the rifle and the second speaker is less worried about the war and much attracted by the normal life and the pleasures of the spring time.

The opening of the poem is spoken by the instructor who clearly says that the particular day is for the naming of the parts of the rifle. But meanwhile, the second speaker is fascinated by the Japonica flower glittering like a coral who cannot pay full attention to the first speaker. The instructor is teaching about the swivels of rifle and telling them that they will get their own rifle later on. The second speaker at that moment turns his attention to the branches of the tree which are silently holding their gracing beauty. The second speaker juxtaposes his restless mind to the silent branch. The instructor is now telling about the safety catch of the rifle and strictly warning them not to use their fingers instead tell them to use their thumb. The second speaker is again comparing human life to the fragile and unpredictable life of flowers. Though being so fragile to the outer world the flowers are not using any safety mechanism. He is surprised by the fact how the flowers simply exist in the nature without any sense of violence. The first speaker is now focusing on the bolt and breech. He uses the military term for releasing the bolt as 'easing the spring' which takes the second speaker to the bees and their pollination process taking outside in the nature. The bees and the pollination process forces the speaker to suggest a sexual connotation to the meaning of the 'easing the spring.' The movement of the bolt and breech 'forward and backward' with great speed directly suggests the sexual act that is being suppressed in the newly recruit. The rifle 'cocking-piece' refers to the fitting symbol of sexual

tension, and the 'release' he and his fellow soldiers are being denied. The rifle's 'point of balance' figuratively suggests the present situation of the young soldiers how they have been living in balance out of imbalance.

Reed is against the war that can be vividly seen in this poem when he shows the second speaker who is not concerned with the war and the instructions given by the senior. Despite the beautiful season of birth and renewal, the spring season, the soldiers are forced to unproductive act of war. The flower Japonica is noteworthy here as it is primarily found in Japan, one of the powerful enemy of England, and its presence in the war scene shows that nature transcends political and natural boundaries.

Questions and answers

What basic contrasts are represented by the trainees and by the gardens?

The gardens represent the natural, the free, the graceful, the beautiful, the joyous-- everything that is missing from the lives of the trainees. The bees, by fertilizing the flowers, are helping to bring about new life. The trainees and the gardens thus symbolically represent a series of opposites: death versus life, incompleteness versus completeness, the mechanical versus the natural, regimentation versus freedom, awkwardness versus grace, dullness versus beauty, boredom versus joy-- the list can be extended. Through this ironic juxtaposition, the poet indirectly makes a statement about the kind of life imposed on man by war and preparation for war.

What is it that the trainees "have not got" ?

Besides lacking slings and piling swivels, the trainees have not got a "point of balance"--in one sense the point on the rifle at which it balances on the finger, in another sense a psychological point of balance in their lives.

Who is the speaker of the poem?

The speaker of this poem is a beginner soldier who is being taught how to use a rifle professionally.

How does the speaker feel about war?

Throughout the whole poem, the student has not been paying attention in the class. Instead he has been looking out of the classroom window and noticing all the signs of spring. This shows that he is clearly going to miss normal beauty when he actually goes to war.

What does naming of parts mean?

"Naming of Parts" is a thirty-line lyric poem divided into five stanzas. The poem depicts a group of infantry recruits receiving a familiarization lecture on their rifles. The title reflects the practical necessity of knowing the proper term for each of the rifle's parts.

Who wrote naming of parts?

"Naming of Parts", is a poem by Henry Reed, in which a lecture on the parts of the Enfield rifle is juxtaposed with observations about nature in springtime. It was first published in the magazine New Statesman and Nation, in August 1942.

What does easing the spring mean?

Literally, the easing of the rifle's spring requires ejecting any and all cartridges from the magazine, thus rendering it safe for inspection by an officer. ... To ease springs, or charge magazines and come to the order. Or The object of a soldier easing the spring is to remove all tension from the mechanical parts of the rifle.

GENERAL, YOUR TANK

BERTOLT BRECHT

Summary

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), German Playwright and poet, was one of the most prominent figures of the twentieth-century theatre. He was also a committed political activist. He wrote for the cause of the humiliated and the offended, always extolling the greatness of the ordinary man. During the heights of his dictatorship, Hitler banned Brecht's works, forcing him to leave Germany.

The poet addresses the General. He tells him that his tank is powerful. It can destroy forests and it can crush a hundred men. But it has one defect. It needs a driver. The bomber is also powerful. It flies faster than a storm and it can carry a

thing bigger than an elephant. But it too has a defect. It needs a mechanic to function. The poet tells the General that man is very useful. He can fly and he can kill. But he has one defect. He can think.

Answer the following questions

1. Bertolt Brecht is awriter
German
2. The poem General, Your Tank is written by.....
Bertolt Brecht
3. General, Your Tank is an.....
anti-war poem

4. Evaluate General, Your Tank as an anti-war poem.

General, Your Tank is an excerpt from Brecht's anti-war poem, From A German War Primer in which Brecht expresses his strong and abiding faith in the greatness of mankind in unambiguous terms. Brecht's concern was always for the soldiers not the generals. It is the soldier who fights and gets killed, bringing laurels to the General in the process. The ordinary soldier is always forgotten, whereas the General is elevated to the status of a hero on winning the war. Brecht expresses his dislike towards wars and he ridicules the General in the poem. The General seems to be powerful with his tank and bomber. But his tank has a defect that needs a driver. And the bomber even though it is powerful, it needs a mechanic to function. He adds that the general has a man capable of flying and killing. But there is one defect – the man can think.

The Dog of Tithwal - Summary

In The Dog of Tithwal by Saadat Hasan Manto we have the theme of conflict, connection, ignorance, pride and struggle. Taken from his Kingdom's End and Other Stories collection the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and from the beginning of the story the reader realises that Manto through the setting may be exploring the theme of conflict. The story takes place just after the partitioning of India and when India and Pakistan went to war. What is interesting about the setting is that Manto gives each side a voice. The reader is

given access to both the Indian and Pakistani camps that are fighting against one another and the remarkable thing is that there is very little difference between any of the men in either camp. Particularly when it comes to their treatment of Jhun Jhun. It is as though he is treated as a trophy by both sides till he no longer becomes useful and is shot by Singh from the Indian Camp. Rather than viewing Jhun Jhun as a pet both sides use him as a toy to promote their own goals and ideals. The same goals and ideals that have caused the war in the first place. With both sides considering themselves and their way of life to be better than the other side.

Though the conflict between both sides is described as being a waste of time at stages there is also a farcical element to the battle between each side. So close to each other are they in proximity yet no man is killed. The only victim in the story is Jhun Jhun. It is as though both sides view the conflict half-heartedly. As though they have been given orders to fight yet are not committed to fighting. Which may be the point that Manto is attempting to make. He may be suggesting that the war itself was futile when in reality everybody who participated in the war was in fact similar to one another. Each man had families at home that worried about them and the conflict could have easily been resolved by political means rather than by use of force. The only dividing factor between those who participated in the war was their religion. Manto also appears to be using night and day to symbolise the blindness of both sides. As expected one would find it difficult to see at night time. However the killing of Jhun Jhun occurs in the day time. With each individual on both sides using Jhun Jhun as a symbolic tool to promote their nationality.

It is also possible that Jhun Jhun symbolises the ignorance of both sides. Allowing the matter of a dog's nationality to merit such importance and recklessness from both sides. The compassion shown by Singh when he gave the crackers to Jhun Jhun is not mirrored the next day when he shoots Jhun Jhun because he has encamped himself on the Pakistani side. In reality Singh's actions are cruel but that is the nature of war. It is not only humans who may be used as pawns to fight or die but animals too due to man's ignorance can also become victims of a struggle that they have no knowledge of. If anything neither Singh nor those he is fighting against realise that they themselves are victims of the war. Such is the hatred that exists between both sides that each are willing to use a dog as an instrument of suppression. To satisfy their own lust for victory. In many ways Jhun Jhun could be a person. An innocent individual who happens to be caught between both sides.

The end of the story is also interesting as Manto highlights just how desperate and cruel war can be. With both sides pride being at stake Jhun Jhun is eventually shot by Singh. Who like his opposing counterpart appears to show no remorse. Instead

he is satisfied that Jhun Jhun was the wrong nationality and as such had to be shot. It might also be important to consider that Jhun Jhun does not have a voice in the story as this would have been the case for millions of people while the war was in progress. Many people were killed based solely on their nationality and their religion and one suspects that very little emotion would have been shown by any of the perpetrators. Regardless of what side of the conflict they were on. Just as Singh shows no emotion when he kills Jhun Jhun men similar to him would have shown no emotion when it came to the matter of having to kill somebody. Whether they were an innocent civilian or a member of the opposing side. If anything Manto may be highlighting to the reader the futility of war when in reality each character in the story has more in common with one another than they might suspect.

- Write either an alternate ending for the story or an epilogue that tells what happens next.
- Compare and contrast the characters of Subedar Himmat Khan of the Pakistani army and Jamadar Harnam Singh of the Indian army. What do you think the author meant to convey through their similarities and differences? Why did he draw these characters as he did?
- Both songs in "The Dog of Tithwal" are about love. Why do you think the author chose to use songs in this story, and why do you think he chose songs about love?

TOYS by Roland Barthes

Summary

Roland Barthes about the Author Roland Barthes (pronounced, roll-ah-ng) (1915 – 80) was a French literary theorist, philosopher and critic. His writings on semiotics (the study of symbols and signs) were largely responsible for the growth of leading intellectual movements like structuralism and New Criticism. He was a major

influence in the development of prominent schools of theory such as semiotics, existentialism, Marxism and post-structuralism. His work with structuralism focused on revealing the importance of language in writing. He made a breakthrough in culture studies, viewing specific cultural materials – soap advertisements, wrestling matches, toys, women’s magazines - as myths, thereby exposing how the bourgeois society asserted its values through them. His works include, *Writing Degree Zero*, *Mythologies*, *Elements of Semiology*, *The Empire of Signs*, *The Pleasure of the Text*, *Roland Barthes, A Lover’s Discourse*, etc. Barthes died at the age of 64 from injuries suffered after being struck by an automobile.

Roland Barthes’s essay *Toys* is an attack on modern toys and their negative impact on the psyche of children. It also advocates the destruction of modern toys and seems to hint to a going back to good old wooden toys. It provides a unique and insightful look into an increasingly commercialized and commodified culture by focusing on the role played by toys in the lives of children. He highlights the negative role of toys on children when they hamper the natural creativity, curiosity and innocence of the children. He states that “All toys...are essentially a microcosm of the real world.” He argues that majority of toys exist merely to prepare children for adulthood and in the process proves hollow the elitist claims that toys, “have an important role in the socialization and education of children”. Barthes easily proves hollow the claim that toys have an important role to play in integrating children into the adult world. He shows that these toys are nothing more than an effective method of training.

Roland Barthes writes about the toys that the children of this generation are given to play with. These toys are miniature versions of the adult world because sadly the child is considered to be a smaller adult and not a younger adult.

The ability to think, imagine and create is killed by these toys because of their complex nature.

This results in the child inadvertently accepting its social environment without any questions or objections. The author believes that enforcing these concepts of the "adult world" on a child corrupts his/her mind and creates in the mind of the child an attitude that he/she has to fit into their social setup and cannot have an individualistic approach/ability.

He also considers such an attempt as an assault on the creative and inventive quality that is inherent in every human being. The child becomes a mere owner or user and not a creator or an inventor. He/She remains oblivious to the joy of discovery, imagination and creation. Building blocks are examples of toys that encourage and stimulate a child's mind. Using these toys the child makes things that may/may not be functional but they are something that he/she has created and are specific to his/her thought process and hence represent his individual sense of understanding his/her environment and using it to his/her best advantage. Playing with building blocks, the child explores the different structures that he/she can create with the very same blocks, only by changing its position or integrating it with other blocks. Slowly and progressively the child will create structures that not only have form but are also functional. Such stimulation is essential to developing minds that think individually.

Another aspect that he points out is the material that is used to make toys. He condemns the use of the extremely impersonal plastic as a material and the

complex construction of toys. Toys of this generation are merely chemical objects with no kind of connection to the pioneer conception of toys, which is, to think, create and explore. These toys are vulnerable to the breaking of one little spring which leads to a total collapse. They do not have any post-expiry importance to offer and are absolutely useless once broken.

It is also pointed out that gradually the toys made of wood are becoming extinct in spite of its ideality as a material used for making toys. It is obtained from a living source and this itself forges a bond between the child and the toy. Wooden toys never break they only wear out progressively owing to the interactions between the hand and the toy. They are timeless and everlasting. The most cherished quality of wood is its human, almost life-like touch. Such materials represent the untiring efforts that the human race has made to evolve from the very basic and humble beginnings. They represent the growth of man in terms of his role as an inventor and the growth of technology in terms of the progress in materials. Most importantly they keep us rooted to our source.

a. Why does Barthes state that the adult French man sees the child as another self?

According to Barthes the adult French man sees the child as another self because all the toys are commonly seen essentially a microcosm of the adult world. They are all reduced copies of human objects.

b. What do French toys mean, according to Barthes?

In Barthes view French toys always mean something that is always entirely socialized, constituted by their myths or the techniques of modern adult life.

c. What does Barthes mean when he refers to “the alibi of a nature which has at all times created soldiers, postman and Vespas?”

The French toys literally represent the world of adult functions. This fact obviously prepares the child to accept them all without any thought. The world of the adult is

thrust upon the child. The child is forced to accept the social environment silently without questioning. This is what Barthes means when he refers to “the alibi of a nature which all the time created soldiers, postman and Vespad.

d. French toys are like a Jevaro head. What is a Jevaro head? How is it similar to the toys?

Barthes says that toys are like Jevaro head. The Jevaro are one of the most feared tribes in South America. They have the war custom of cutting their enemies' head and also shrinking it to the size of a ball. The toy-like head could still be recognized as that of an adult. Toys are like Jevaro head in the sense that the toys which stands for an object, say a revolver, may still be recognized as a revolver.

e. „It is not so much, in fact, the imitation which is a sign of abdication, as its literalness.“ Explain this statement.

The statement means that the French toys, in fact, express love for war, bureaucracy, ugliness etc.

f. What message do dolls indirectly convey to the little girl?

The dolls given to the little girl prepares her for the casualty of housekeeping. They condition her to future role as a mother.

g. Why does Barthes describe modern toys as faithful and complicated objects? Barthes describes modern toys as faithful and complicated objects because the child only used the toys as an owner and not as a creator, he does not invent the world he uses it.

h. How do building sets differ from other toys? Building sets differ from other toys in the sense that it develops the child's creativity and allows the child to discover something and create meaningful objects. Other toys do not allow the child this benefit.

i. „But such toys are rare.“ What is referred to here? How do they benefit the child?

The reference is to the „building sets“ designed as toys for children. Such toys develop the child’s creativity and allow the child to discover something and create meaningful objects.

j. Why does Barthes oppose plastic toys? Current toys are molded from the plastic materials. They are the product of chemistry and not of nature. They have the appearance of hygienic but it destroys all the pleasure, the sweetness and the humanity of touch. That is why Barthes opposes plastic toys.

k. Modern toys offer no pleasure. Why?

Modern toys are chemical in substance and colour. Their very material introduces one to a feeling of use, not of pleasure. They are the product of chemistry and not of nature.

a. What are the limitations of present-day toys?

Current toys are molded from the plastic materials. They are the product of chemistry and not of nature. They have the appearance of hygienic but it destroys all the pleasure, the sweetness and the humanity of touch. Wood as a material for making toy is gradually disappearing. Barthes considers wood as a familiar and poetic substances. It does not sever the child from the close contact with the tree. Wood does not wound or breakdown. It does not shatter. It can last a long time, it lives with the child. Wood makes objects for all time. Yet currently there hardly remain any of these wooden toys. Toys are chemical in substance and colour. Their very material introduces one to a feeling of use, not of pleasure. These toys die in fact very quickly and it is incapable of bringing of fond memories of childhood. Unlike building sets, other current toys neither develop the child’s creativity nor allow the child to discover anything. They do not allow the child to create meaningful objects.

b. Why does Barthes favour the use of wood in the production of toys?

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Wood makes objects for all time. There hardly remain any of these wooden toys. Current toys are chemical in substance and colour. Their very material introduces one to a feeling of use, not of pleasure. These toys die in fact very quickly and it is incapable of bringing of fond memories of childhood. That is why Barthes favors the use of wood in the production of toys.

c. What are Barthes' views on building sets as toys?

In his essay „Toys“, Roland Barthes analyses toys as a text and brings out the underlying ideology and the cultural significance of children's playthings. In the course of his observation Barthes makes a distinction between building sets which are designed as toys and other common toys. France is the second largest toy market in the Europe but kids' building sets enjoy only marginal sales in France. Barthes describes modern toys as faithful and complicated objects because the child only uses them as an owner and not as a creator, he does not invent the world, he uses it. Building sets differ from toys in the sense that it develops the child's creativity and allows the child to discover something and create meaningful objects. Other toys do not allow the child this benefit. The set of blocks implies a very different learning of the world. The actions that the child performs with such toys are not those of a user but those of a creator who fashions the sensible world in the light of eternal ideas. From the building sets the child creates forms which walk or rolls. He creates life itself. But Barthes laments that such toys are rather rare.

d. Toys is an analysis of the cultural significance of children's playthings. Discuss.

Roland Barthes "Toys" is an analysis of the cultural significance of children's playthings. According to Barthes the adult French man sees the child as another self. All the toys are commonly seen essentially a microcosm of the adult world. They are all reduced copies of human objects. Barthes pities that the elders belittle the child. We create for children a small world that goes with their size, underestimating their imaginative capabilities and power of creativity. Since the child is a minor by law, she/he does not enjoy the right to take decisions and everything is decided for her/him. In Barthes view, French toys always mean something that is always entirely socialized in the adult point of view. Toys

usually consist of an assortment of the miniature items of the Army, Broadcasting, and the post office, medicine, school, hairstyling, the Air Force Transport and science. The French toys literally represent the world of adult functions. This fact obviously prepares the child to accept them all without any thought. The world of the adult is thrust upon the child. The child is forced to accept the social environment silently without questioning. Toys reveal the list of all the things the adult usually finds. Barthes says that toys are like Jevaro head in the sense that they could still be recognized as the object which it stands for. The toys thus initiate the child into a world of adulthood. For example, the dolls given to the little girl prepares her for the casualty of housekeeping. They condition her to future role as a mother. Barthes describes modern toys as faithful and complicated objects. This is because the child only used the toys as an owner and not as a creator, he does not invent the world he uses it. The toys are prepared for him. They are actions without adventure, wonder and joy. They are supplied to him ready made and he is never allowed to discover anything. French toys are thus meant to produce children who are users and not creators. In the course of his observation Barthes makes a distinction between building sets which are designed as toys and other common toys. France is the second largest toy market in the Europe but kids' building sets enjoy only marginal sales in France. Barthes describes modern toys as faithful and complicated objects because the child only uses them as an owner and not as a creator, he does not invent the world, he uses it. Building sets differ from toys in the sense that it develops the child's creativity and allows the child to discover something and create meaningful objects. Other toys do not allow the child this benefit. The set of blocks implies a very different learning of the world. The actions that the child performs with such toys are not those of a user but those of a creator who fashions the sensible world in the light of eternal ideas. From the building sets the child creates forms which walk or rolls. He creates life itself. But Barthes laments that such toys are rather rare. According to Barthes toys signify bourgeois ideology. Current toys are moulded from the plastic materials. They are the product of chemistry and not of nature. They have the appearance of hygienic but it destroys all the pleasure, the sweetness and the humanity of touch. Barthes considers wood as a familiar and poetic substance. But wood as a material for making toy is gradually disappearing. It does not sever the child from the close contact with the tree. Wood does not wound or breakdown. It does

not shatter. It can last a long time. It lives with the child. Wood makes objects for all time. Yet currently there hardly remain any of these wooden toys. Toys are chemical in substance and colour. Their very material introduces one to a feeling of use, not of pleasure. These toys die in fact very quickly and it is incapable of bringing of fond memories of childhood.