

## Essay #3

Major Paper

Option # 1

Megan Lawday

040580840

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“Ignorance and prejudice are the handmaidens of propaganda. Our mission, therefore, is to confront ignorance with knowledge, bigotry with tolerance, and isolation with the outstretched hand of generosity.”(Annan). There are many social issues that are encountered in our everyday lives. One of the most reoccurring is stereotyping. The two characters presented in this essay are Hana from Hana’s Suitcase and Princess Elizabeth from The Paper Bag Princess. Both girls have been stereotyped. Hana is stereotyped on her cultural and religious upbringings; she must face the deportation and mass killings of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. Elizabeth is stereotyped based on other “traditional” fairy tales; where the princess needs the rescuing and the prince fights the fierce dragon or villain. She faces a sexist stereotype. This essay will discuss how the authors; Levine and Munsch deal with stereotyping, their similarities and differences.

Hana is a young girl born in Czechoslovakia in Europe. She lived there with her mother, father and older brother. They are Jewish. Being Jewish, like any other culture or religion has certain customs and beliefs; like every human being. The story about Hana is of real life circumstances, that deals with what she and her family went through during the Holocaust and how being stereotyped by the Nazis, marked them as inferior. The Germans were taught that Jewish people are “...Evil, that they worked together with the Devil, that they desecrated the host, that they rejected Christian revelation and in fact murdered Jesus Christ.” (Wilensky ¶2). These proclamations or judgements about Jews are how stereotypes are created. Stereotypes are created mentally about a certain type of

individuals, being grouped as all the same. But stereotyping statements are just what each individual see everyone else as. This stereotype and judgment, about all Jewish people shaped the "Final solution", created by the Nazis; they were to exterminate the Jews. Levine shows the devastation of the Holocaust through Hana's life. Levine takes us through Hana's life and teaches us about how the Holocaust took away everything Hana had, including her life.

Levine shows us the damage stereotyping does to people. She told us the story of a little girl; Hana and how she was slowly seeing the effects of the Nazis invasion. She was no longer allowed to go to school, play in parks, keep pets, allowed outside after a certain time; she was not permitted to go to the movies and they mad her wear a star patch with the word "Jude" on it so that everyone knew that she was Jewish. She didn't understand why she was different from her friends and why being Jewish was wrong. "...Hana went outside less often...She hated the star. It was humiliating. It was so embarrassing." (Levine 38). She knew that what was happening to her and her family was wrong but when you are treated as less than equal you start to feel as though it is the truth. Levine demonstrates the cause of being stereotype through the Holocaust. She writes about Hana because it creates a greater effect for the readers, they feel a stronger emotional connection to Hana and learn about the genocide that occurred from stereotyping.

Princess Elizabeth deals with stereotyping on different levels. Munsch takes traditional fairy tales where the prince saves the damsel in distress and twists it so that the princess was the one doing the saving. Munsch took this approach to show how fairy tales stereotype sexes. Traditional fairy tales show that woman are less inferior that they fall

madly in love and need rescuing- woman are reliant on men. In the Paper Bag Princess we see Elizabeth, a princess who loses every possession she owns and goes after a fierce dragon to save her prince charming. Elizabeth also deals with the stereotyping in the quality of life. Elizabeth puts on a brown paper bag- the only thing she had left, she goes to save her prince charming, and he is disgusted by her. "Elizabeth you are mess. You have no shoes! You are wearing a paper bag. Come back and rescue me when you are dressed like a real princess." (Munsch 11) Prince Ronald sees her as a hobo, she is not worthy of rescuing him. Munsch shows stereotyping based on appearances. The dragon destroys all her materialistic things, which would show her status as a princess but without these items does not mean that she isn't one. Munsch teaches the readers that gender, clothes and possessions don't define a human being. "Its beauty that captures your attention; personality which captures your heart." (Gibran 1)

Levine and Munsch both use female characters as their main focus. The story is told through their lives. Levine's story is a non-fiction story and she uses Hana- a young girl who was in the Holocaust, to gain a stronger personal connection with her readers. Levine wants to inform readers about the Holocaust but she doesn't just inform you about the details, she takes the reader through the life of a young girl who has to experience being judged and stereotyped; the story teaches its readers the damage that has happened through stereotyping and discrimination. It teaches readers about empowering the mind, how one can stand strong and protect what matters most- love and memories. Hana is a strong character that many readers can relate to in some manner. She had such innocence of being a kid and had everything taken away from her, everything that she called her world. But through the worst genocide in history, Hana keeps her head high and tries her

best to stay positive and motivate herself. Hana is a brave young girl who is an inspiration to all Levine's readers.

Elizabeth has a similar situation, Elizabeth's story is fiction but she too has everything taken away from her, she is a princess who has everything and is just waiting for her prince charming to marry her. A dragon comes along and takes away everything she owns and leaves her with nothing but a brown paper bag. Like Hana, both characters have a malicious "dragon" that swoops in and takes away everything they call home. They both use the power of their minds to keep their monsters from winning a fight they never saw coming. They fight their misery through wit, empowerment, bravery and love. Elizabeth is a strong female character as well; she teaches young girls about breaking the stereotypical sexist roles that exist in traditional fairy tales. Munsch teaches young girls that they can be the heroes in their own story, that they can be the saviours and can battle their villains without the help of men. Both Elizabeth and Hana are strong characters and role models for young girls.

Levine's and Munsch stories differ from one another as well. An obvious one is that one is fiction and the other is a true story. As well both Hana and Elizabeth defeat their enemy using their minds but in different manners. Hana keeps herself strong and empowered with her mind. She keeps the Nazis from getting to her emotionally by not showing fear or sadness, she keeps herself motivated through the love and memories she has for her family. Family and friends are powerful things and she uses her mind to defeat the Nazis from taking over all of her, she keeps them out of her most powerful parts her heart and mind. "The girls held hands. They closed their eyes and tried to imagine being

somewhere else... Hana closed her eyes; she saw the strong, smiling face of her brother.”  
(Levine 80).

Elizabeth uses her mind as well to defeat her dragon but she does so by using her wit, to make the dragon think that he is all high and mighty. She wins the battle by using his ego to her advantage. ““Wait! Wait!” Elizabeth said. “Are you fierce dragon?” “Oh yes!” said the dragon” (Munsch 5) Munsch teaches young girls that they can defeat their “dragons” with the power of their minds. They don’t have to be big, strong, powerful and armoured to defeat a fierce dragon; you can be a small, little and a girl with no shield or armour and still bring down a fire breathing dragon.

Levine and Munsch teach young girls and children about how powerful their minds are. Levine teaches us about history and how a young girl’s story can inspire many generations to come. Hana is a very strong character that all readers can relate to, she had such innocence and bravery, Hana was young when she died but her story was not finished. She now has her story being told and read to millions of people. She lives on in her readers’ hearts. Munsch’s writing in the Paper Bag Princess shows that anyone can be a hero in their own stories, that they don’t have to have the most glamorous armour, sword or be a male to defeat a fierce dragon all they have to do is be themselves and have the courage to fight their own battles. Elizabeth teaches young girls that they can be their hero that they don’t need men to rescue them. Both stories teach its readers to not stereotype or judge a book by its covers. It is not what is on the outside that counts but it is who the person is on the inside. Both stories teach that to put yourself in someone else’s shoes and to look on the

brighter side of things. "So when I want to cry the blues I just recall the centipede. Consider walking in her shoes and then my life seems sweet indeed." (Levine 81)

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