

## Freudian Analysis of "Marigolds"

Most of the time there is a moment in life where one realizes they have lost all innocence and gained some compassion. "Marigolds" shows how one young girl transferred from a child to young adult through her life experiences. Throughout this story another young, but at the same time old in her prime, lady's experiences are revealed: the author's. In this short story, "Marigolds," Eugenia Collier's subconscious is unmasked through symbolism, diction, and Lizabeth's actions.

In the beginning, the author explains how this young girl, Lizabeth, lived in the culturally deprived neighborhood during the depression. Lizabeth is at the age where she is just beginning to become a young woman and is almost ready to give up her childish ways. Through this time period she was confused and could not quite understand what was happening to her. In the end she rips Miss Lottie's marigolds among the ugly place in which she lived. The marigolds were the only things that make the place a bit beautiful to the eye. In this scene the marigolds represent the only hope the people had for themselves in this time of depression. This could reveal how the author has experienced a loss of hope in times of need. In her explanation of how Lizabeth had torn up the flowers and destroyed all hope in that time of depression, might explain that she has also destroyed hope in a time of pain and grief. Later she writes, "And I too have planted marigolds." This could mean she has learned from her experiences and that she has finally found hope and always tries to seek the good within the bad and the ugly. On another note, it could mean she just wants to act out on something, but she can't, so she writes about her transgressions through this story.

As the story begins, Collier uses diction that gives a feeling of negativity. Obviously the author has lived through the depression and was black because one could not write something so

accurate in accordance to that time period and have one feel the deep emotional impact of her writings without experiencing it personally. In the first sentence she writes "...all I seem to remember is dust—the brown, crumbly dust of late summer—arid, sterile dust that gets in to the eyes and makes them water, gets into the throat and between the toes of the bare brown feet." In this phrase the words give a harsh, cruel feeling of how the depression was, which could then explain how she remembers the depression and that it was a hard time for her. Most likely it was a significantly hopeless moment in her life. In the next paragraph she writes "When the memory of those marigolds flashes across my mind, a strange nostalgia comes with it and remains long after the picture has faded." Knowing the marigolds symbolize hope the word "nostalgia" gives a feeling of longing, since the denotative meaning is yearning. When stating the marigolds give a "strange nostalgia" the author could be thinking how she, sometime in her life, longed to have hope. She needed to have something to look forward to or just something to look at to give her hope. Later, towards the end of the story she explains "...Innocence involves an unseeing acceptance of things at face value, an ignorance of the area below the surface." The words she uses give a sense of wisdom knowing that wisdom comes with age and experience, since she is an adult and has had many experiences through out her years of age. Her word choice is of an adult. A child or young adult could not use those words and see the real meaning behind it. Also, she says, "This was the beginning of compassion and one cannot have both compassion and innocence." This sentence can tell us about the author's values. Compassion, to her, is of great importance because it involves looking beyond yourself and "...into the depths of another person." This allows one to see all that is happening and be caring towards a situation. Another example is when she writes "...from the bright thing that I destroyed in a blind, childish striking our at God-knows-what." The two words "blind" and "childish" might describe how she was a

child; unable to see the realities of life and sheltered from the true meaning of things in her life. Even the feelings she has toward her own inadequacy.

Furthermore, Lizabeth's actions also give an idea of how Collier's subconscious could have emerged through her story. When all the children were bored and trying to figure out what to do, they decided to go over to Miss Lottie's house and annoy her by throwing rocks at her beautiful flowers. In Lizabeth's mind, she knew that in their doings, it was wrong to destroy Miss Lottie's marigolds, but decided to throw the pebbles anyway. In writing how Lizabeth just followed what everyone else was doing, could be showing how Collier followed her peers when she was younger and did not care what happened, also concluding that she may have had a need of acceptance. Moreover, in the circumstance that Lizabeth's father cried and her stating "I did not know men ever cried." could imply on how sinister the depression was on a poverty stricken family. Even the sound of his "...harsh, painful, despairing sobs" tells of how hard it was on a family. Her father "...was a strong man..." and could have been very strict; she would have never thought of him to cry. This could say that Collier never had strong father figure that she could look up to. She told us how the father was frustrated to the point where could not handle the pressure of trying to support his family, so he resolved to crying. Maybe her father never took good care of his family and was never there for her. This gives one a feeling of sympathy towards Collier letting one see how the depression was a very cruel experience to Collier given the way she described the effects of it. In addition, in the middle of the story, when Lizabeth is more confused than ever, she says "Everything was suddenly out of tune, like a broken accordion." This could explain how Collier felt during her adolescence and her time of confusion.

Moving along, another occurrence helping to decipher the author's subconscious is when Lizabeth asks Joey, her brother, to come with her to wherever she was going to go. This tells one she did not like to be alone in a time of confusion or bewilderment and when Collier's father wasn't there, she went to another male, her brother. This could be how she dealt with the disappointment when her father let her down. It also means she had a very poor relationship with her father and even her mother because she says "...nor did I notice my mother's absence, for she always worked until well into the evening." Since she had Lizabeth go to her brother instead of her parents, it may have described the way she dealt with her problems. Not wanting to go to her parents for help. As one can see, the actions of Lizabeth can tell a lot about the author.

Finally, the impact of harsh times during the depression affected Eugenia Collier considerably. Through that experience she did grow up and made a realization that may have taken others a very long time to conceive. I did learn more about the author just by reading what she had to say through "Marigolds." The symbolism, diction, and Lizabeth's actions and reactions to things helped to reveal her subconscious and could make one aware of the difficulties and hardships during this era.