

## **Fiction Analysis of The Centaur by John Updike**

The Centaur by John Updike is a fiction novel regarding a protagonist; George Caldwell who faces different problems about his wealth and health. He is short in the leg with an arrow. He then proceeds to Hummel's garage for assistance due to the prolonged pain as they struggle to pull the arrow out. The author through the struggles that George undergoes reveals the steadfast faith and hope in life when a person faces problems. George gives up his dream of becoming a professional footballer and struggles through social issues coupled with depression and suicidal thoughts with his son Peter who helps him.

### **Setting and point of view**

The drama takes place in Olinger and Anton in Pennsylvania immediately after the World War II. The author centers on George who is a teacher with depression and thoughts of committing suicide. The fiction entails a social drama within a family overwhelmed with both personal and social issues with a mythological context that reveals the intentions of each character.

The narrator is omniscient with a third person voice perspective in most cases. However, there are some episodes especially in different chapters where the first-person point of view features primarily from the second character who is Peter. We tend to realize that the protagonist is easy and has no confidence with a depressive tone amidst troubling mood Zimmerman who is the villain. However, the major conflict arises within George Caldwell who gives up and finds difficulty in living a normal life.

### **Imagery and Symbolism**

Updike uses imagery to show the characters and their behaviors especially George Caldwell who gets public humiliation and excitement of students as well as Zimmerman besides revealing a feeling of pity in George Caldwell. For example, George Caldwell has pain physically as well as emotionally and sees it as a living being. Such pain depicts physical suffering which is enhanced by the humiliation of the children.

Secondly, Zimmerman has a lustful behavior that is represented through his arousal. He is more interested in female students, unlike George who spends time in teaching. Zeus loves the smutty

faces of the students. However, such behavior reveals the uneasiness in George Caldwell whenever he is in school. On a separate note, George becomes a laughing stock when he does not care about his health and welfare. Peter is dismayed by his behavior especially his attires. For example, the narrator can describe his coat that is tattered, castoff with buttons that are mismatching. Such imagery makes the reader feel pity towards George.

Separately, the author uses Olympus as an allegory in the fiction. The introduction of Olinger high school is an allegory to Olympus Mountain which is a home to the Greek gods. Besides, there is an abyss which is a symbol of despair in George that reaches its peak and then he masters the courage to walk when he did not expect. For he says, that is it a significant step for the entire walk in life he was not prepared to do.

In conclusion, Updike uses the literary elements in the fiction novel to illustrate the extent of poor life and humiliation that George Caldwell passes. The author can evoke readers to empathize with the protagonist through his life as he struggles to make both ends meet.