Breaking News: Another Case of Racism

Every day, people are treated with racial discrimination, but **what effects does racism have on a person?** The book *Indian Horse,* written by Richard Wagamese, is a story set in Ontario in 1964 about a young boy who is snatched away from his family, and taken to St. Jerome’s Residential School, where he finds a way to escape through hockey. He and the other school kids are abused physically, sexually, and emotionally. The protagonist, Saul Indian Horse, is eight years old when he is taken to St. Jerome’s, and he witnesses many of the other kids kill themselves because of the horrors and trauma they are facing at the school. “The Watch” written by Elie Wiesel, is a short story that shows the impact and emotion of the Holocaust on a Jewish survivor. The character (Elie) is in desperate search of his watch that he received from his Bar Mitzvah, which he buried before getting taken away to the concentration camps. **For teachers to teach the effects of racism, to read a novel is a better way than to read a short story. Both *Indian Horse* and “The Watch” give deep insight to the effects of racism on the characters, but because “The Watch” is a short story, and only shows a moment in time, it gives less information of the long term effects of racism. “The Watch” shows how the character is determined to find closure from his anger and sadness. However, *Indian Horse* gives more information on the effects of racism on Saul, and how it effects his life in the long term.**

Firstly, in the novel *Indian Horse*, Saul is taken away to St. Jerome’s Residential School, where a nun claims, “At St. Jerome’s we work to remove the Indian from our children so that the blessings of the Lord may be evidenced upon them” (Richard Wagamese, 46-47). Saul was beaten and abused by the priests and nuns, and witnesses other kids killing themselves or going insane by the trauma and racist mistreatment of the kids. Furthermore, Saul is so hurt and shook by the Residential School that he writes, “I learned that I could draw the boundaries of my physical self inward, collapse the space I occupied and become a mote, a speck, and indifferent atom in it’s own peculiar orbit” (Wagamese, 48-49). A new priest named Father Leboutilier arrives and gives Saul a chance to find joy through the horrors going on at the school by allowing him to play hockey. Saul started to wake up extra early, every morning, and practice hockey to become better. He was determined. He becomes so good at hockey in secret, that one day when a player on the St. Jerome’s team hurts their ankle, Saul offers to play. He does so well, that Father Leboutilier lets him play on the team. The St. Jerome’s team plays another town team, but when the First Nations kids step on the ice, they are greeted with mockery and because Saul was so small, the other team yelled, “The Indian school brought their mascot!” “It’s he a squirt? Nah. He’s a dribble!” (Wagamese, 75). This racism makes Saul determined. He channels his anger and persistence, and plays the best he possibly can, and St. Jerome’s team won the hockey game. As Saul’s hockey career progressed, the more teams laughed at him, and yelled racial slurs and insults at him: “They called me Indian Whore, Horse Piss, Stolen Pony… made me feel ashamed of my skin” (Wagamese, 164).

Secondly, the short story “The Watch” by Elie Wiesel, is about a man named Elie who is a survivor from the concentration camps during World War II. After the Holocaust, he comes back to his old house where he is determined to find the last piece of his belongings, which is a gold watch given to him by his parents on his Bar Mitzvah. Elie has so much desperation and emptiness that he mutters, “I shall rip the earth from end to end, but I must know. Nothing can stop or frighten me. I’ll go to the bottom of my fear, to the bottom of night, but I will know” (Wiesel, 3). Elie was desperate, from losing his family because of the racist genocide of killing millions of people, simply because they were Jewish. Elie is filled with inner anger and sadness, and the figurative language of the short story gives insight to what Elie would be feeling. He claws his fingers into the frozen ground because he needs closure, and to know that one of his possessions may have survived the Holocaust as well. Elie changes his anger into persistence, and he doesn’t give up until he finds his prized possession: “Feverishly, furiously, my hands claw the earth, impervious to cold, fatigue and pain” (Wiesel, 3). Elie was effected by racism, by being robbed of his future, and losing his family and everything that was familiar to him was snatched away. He remembers his childhood: “Once upon a time, there had been Jews and Jewish children, children robbed of their future” (Wiesel, 5). Specifically, Elie was determined, and filled with anger and frustration of how his life was ripped apart, because of the racist world and how people couldn’t except Jews for who they are. Elie just wanted to find his sense of hope, and close the longing feeling of not knowing if his watch survived.

Thirdly, in contrast, *Indian Horse* goes into deep detail on how Saul and the other children in the Residential School were effected by racism. Kids killed themselves, or went insane because they were treated abusively and with such racism that they wanted to escape their reality. Saul turns to drinking to numb the pain of his hurting: “You drink down beyond thinking, beyond emotion. You drink down to where you can’t hear voices anymore, can’t see faces, can’t touch anything, can’t feel” (Wagamese, 189). The Residential school and the other hockey teams made him feel ashamed of his skin, and he wanted to shrink into nothing and disappear. Because *Indian Horse* is a novel, it gives deeper insight and goes into further detail on how the kids were effected by racism. On the contrary, because “The Watch” is a short story, it gives short bits of insight on how Elie was effected by racism by using figurative language so that the reader has to inquire what Elie must have been feeling. Elie was desperate to find his watch so that he could feel closure. Although “The Watch” is a short story, the author did a fantastic job showing the effects of racism without actually using a lot of literal language to describe Elie’s feelings. The two books are both effective in showing the effects of racism on a person, but *Indian Horse* goes into much further detail and because it is a novel, it has a much longer period of time to go in depth of the effects of racism on a person, so that gives the author an advantage.

In conclusion, for a teacher to teach the effects of racism on a person, it would be better to read a novel, rather than a short story. “The Watch” and *Indian Horse* both show the effects of racism on a person, but because *Indian Horse* is a novel, it gives much deeper insight to the effects of racism, rather than “The Watch”, because it is a short story so there is a limited amount of time to write about how someone is effected by racism. In *Indian Horse*, Saul witnessed other kids killing themselves or going insane so that they could escape their abusive and racist reality, and he turned to alcohol and became a drunk, so he could forget the abuse and trauma he went through. In “The Watch”, Elie is so desperate that he will do anything to just to find closure. Ultimately, because *Indian Horse* is a novel, and “The Watch” is a short story, *Indian Horse* is able to further show the effects of racism on a person. The racial treatment of people is horrific, but it is great that teachers have the opportunity to teach students about how a person is effected by racism, so that the students can learn from the mistakes of the past, to treat others equally, without any racial discrimination in the future.