The Impact of Our Childhood

Have you ever been treated like a lesser person due to something that is completely out of your control? Well that’s what the stories “Long, Long After School” by Ernest Buckler and “A Teacher’s Reward” by Robert Phillips are about. “Long, Long After School” is about a man, Wes, of colour sharing his memories of a beloved teacher who just passed away, with a man who was dealing with the arrangements of the funeral. “A Teacher’s Reward” is about a man, Raybe, who went to see his old teacher who is now retired and the man tries to get the teacher to remember who he was. Events that happen in our childhood can mold and shape who we become as adults.

Both Wes and Raybe faced discrimination as they were kids, things that they were not able to control. Wes was discriminated against because of the colour of his skin. Wes was doing a lady’s laundry but it fell out of the basket so Wes’ teacher “went with me right to Mrs. Banks’s door and told her what had happened. I could never have made Mrs. Banks believe I didn’t upset the stuff myself.”(Phillips, pg. 50) Here we see that Mrs. Banks would not have believed Wes if Wes said it himself. It had to take an adult who was Caucasian to explain what happened. Another example, was when Wes was explaining how he almost bled out, “and in those days no one felt too comfortable about having his blood siphoned off. I guess no one felt like taking any chances for me, anyway.”(Phillips, pg. 52) No one wanted to take the risk for the kid who was black. They did not care that he could have died. People decided that he did not matter and he was not worth the effort. Raybe was discriminated against because he lived with his aunt who was poor, so both of them lived in poverty. Raybe’s teacher was even cruel to him, it was not just the kids. “Because you picked on me all the time. Made me worse than I was. You never gave me the chance the others had.”(Buckler, pg. 386) His teacher did not treat him like she treated other kids. She was more mean to him. Raybe’s teacher “punished me [Raybe] for everything that happened.”(Buckler, pg. 387) He was the scapegoat and the teacher only blamed him. Not only were Wes and Raybe discriminated against, but they were also bullied because of their situations.

People bullied Wes because he was black, and Raybe because he was poor. The other boys “would be telling some joke with words in it to giggle over, they’d look at me and say, ‘Shhh… Wes is blushing.’”(Phillips, pg. 50) Here it shows that the boys were making fun of Wes because they knew he would not be able to blush because of his skin colour. The girls also treated him as inferior. One day they were playing a game and Wes “put my hand out to close up the ring with the biggest Banks girl, but she wouldn’t take it. She said, ‘Your hands are dirty.’”(Phillips, pg. 50) The girl would not touch Wes because he was considered dirty due to his skin colour. Raybe was bullied by other kids and even his teacher because his aunt was poor. Raybe’s teacher would hit his hands, one day Raybe he even told her, “You rapped them, all right… Wasn’t for any one thing. You did it lots of times. Dozens of times.”(Buckler, pg. 384) This shows that the teacher hit Raybe’s knuckles and that it was not just a one time thing; she continually did it. Raybe was left “out of things because you were always saying I was bad.”(Buckler, pg. 386) The kids saw how she treated Raybe so they treated him that way. They thought he was bad so they would not let him join whatever they were doing. Wes and Raybe’s teachers were very different. Wes’ teacher was kind, loving, and caring; although, Raybe’s teacher was mean, harsh, and cruel.

The difference between Wes and Raybe was the way the teacher behaved and treated them. Wes’ teacher, Miss Tretheway, was very nice to Wes and treated him like a normal human, she may have even gave him special treatment because of the other kids. “Miss Tretheway made us both hold out our hands. She said, ‘Why, Marilyn, Wes’s hands are much cleaner than yours. Maybe Wes doesn’t like to get his hands dirty, did you ever think about that?’”(Phillips, pg. 50) Miss Tretheway, Wes’ teacher, made the girl who called Wes dirty feel how Wes felt, Miss Tretheway then went and held Wes’ hand showing him that he was normal. “Miss Tretheway’s was A negative, too… and that’s funny, because only seven per cent of people have it. She gave me a whole quart, just as soon as she found out that hers would match.”(Phillips, pg. 52) Miss Tretheway was the only person who volunteered to help Wes out when he was bleeding. No other white people did, they did not want to be associated with helping out a black person. Raybe’s teacher was mean and abusive to Raybe, she treated Raybe like dirt. “‘I remember you very clearly, now,’ she exclaimed, her hands to her brow. ‘I remember you! You were no good to start with. No motivation. No follow-through. I knew just where you’d end up. You’ve run true to form’”(Buckler, pg. 385) This shows that the teacher never thought highly of Raybe, and she always thought he would go to prison so she didn’t try to help him. “And you always told me I was dirty. Just because my aunt couldn’t keep me in clean shirts like some of the others.”(Buckler, pg. 386-387) His teacher would insult him and make him feel inferior because he did not have as much money as the other kids. We see that Wes had a very loving and kind teacher while Raybe had a harsh and abusive teacher, which could have greatly affected how they turned out in the end.

Our experiences as children can determine and influence the type of person we are as adults. Wes was bullied and discriminated as a child because he was black but he had a loving teacher that helped him become kind to others, despite his hardships. Raybe was bullied and discriminated against due to him being poor as a child, and his teacher also bullied him and abused him. His teacher helped shape him into the man that went to prison then was released and assaulted her. We as a society need to realize that if we treat someone kindly it can make a huge impact to what they become as an adult, and vice versa.