Discrimination Against Fixed Conditions

Living with circumstances in which one cannot alter while having others nearby victimize you; Discrimination. In the short story *A Teacher’s Rewards,* the author Robert Phillips tells the story of a man who travelled to reconnected with his third-grade teacher. Raybe Simpson stood in front of Miss. Scofield on her front porch. After explaining who he was, Miss. Scofield invited him in. During the time they spent talking in her home, they began to uncover how Miss. Scofield mistreated Raybe. What was supposed to be a time of sipping tea and recalling the time they had together, took a turn for the worst. They uncovered all the times she had smacked his hands in class and in front of other students. When Raybe stated he had been in prison, Miss. Scofield justified it with subtle jabs at his upbringing. This escalated the conversation and began to create conflict. Raybe decided to finish the conversation off by demanding her to place her hands on the table, he took out his hammer from his coat and began to pound her hands. Miss. Scofield abused Raybe Simpson based on his social class. Raybe lived with his aunt in extreme poverty. *Long, Long After School,* a short story written by Ernest Buckler is narrated by a man who encounters an old classmate while collecting funds for their late teacher; Miss. Tretheway. When they crossed paths at the cemetery gate, the narrator told Wes Holman the news; their third-grade teacher had passed the night prior. Wes, who had been close to Miss. Tretheway, had a hard time accepting the news leading to him not attend the funeral. The following day, the two men encountered one anther again at the cemetery and began reminiscing on their school days with their late teacher. Throughout this conversation, the author**,** Ernest Buckler allowed various hints towards racism. Wes specified numerous times that he never felt as though he was equal among his classmates because of the colour of his skin. Discrimination and the effects of it may have on the individual it faces, are lifelong struggles and unfortunately, society has created biases that believe differences are worth discriminating against.

The old public-school system created a habitation of ‘normalcy’. A place in which whatever was seen as abnormal or different caused question in behavior. Due to a variance in skin colour, Wes Holman faced unfair treatment. Teachers and students recognized he didn’t ‘fit’ into the painted picture of the other people in their school and community and they chose to act upon that. Discriminating in a group is easier than just one individual, hence the statement where Wes said, “The kids used to tease me at school.” (Ernest Buckler, page 50) Society found its way to use several people to harm as one force. Having only one person on his side, he treasured Miss. Tretheway. After she passed, the narrator and Wes flashed back and unveiled many moments of racist acts and comments. When Wes spoke about the boys in his class, he acknowledged that when they would tell a joke, they would look at him and laugh. A classmate spoke, “Shhh… Wes is blushing,” (Ernest Buckler, page 50) and due to Wes being of colour, this was a racist remark. Whereas, Raybe Simpson was a child of poverty. Having grown up in a household with minimal income, people surrounding him chose to target his social class. His everyday was difficult. With the memories of his parents who had passed, he was lucky to be living with his aunt. When Miss. Scofield stated, “It’s unlikely me not to have remembered or known that one of my boys was an orphan,” (Robert Phillips, page 383) she was being insensitive to his childhood past. With an upbringing where immediate family was missing, poverty was present and with a teacher that would consistently have Raybe in trouble, contributed to him ending up facing jail time. During their conversation, when Miss. Scofield realized that Raybe had been in prison, her tone changed. The reasoning behind Raybe’s visit was to get justice. He needed to express the discrimination he faced by doing what he felt would provide him with satisfaction. This fulfilment was created by smashing Miss. Scofield’s knuckles against her dining room table with a hammer. Raybe had major deficiencies in different aspects of his life. The classism that was portrayed in this story is mostly by a public-school teacher who noticed a sense of power over a child. As a result of discrimination, both Wes and Raybe found themselves having to deal with the forever pain of coping with facing injustice.

Battling prejudice is not easy however, with coping mechanisms and the people who are involved in the situation, certain aspects can differ one’s life from others. Wes Holman found himself fighting against racism. After years of damaged memories and stories, he decided to seek what was worthy of his thoughts. He chose to honour the person who made him feel special and at the least, equal to everyone else. This was Miss. Tretheway. The impact she had on Wes’ life was remarkable. Wes experienced a time where he almost bled to death and needed a blood transfusion. She donated and gave him her blood, “I didn’t know whether an old maid’s blood would be any good to a fine young specimen like you, Wes, or not.” (Ernest Buckler, page 52) Recapping on their school days, the narrator and Wes uncovered Wes’ attachment to Miss. Tretheway. Majority of reviewing was positive and blissful when Wes spoke about her. On the other hand, Raybe experienced discrimination based on his family dynamic and income. When he reminisced on his school days with his old teacher, Miss. Scofield, he had an undertone of revenge and anger. Not having the mentor that Wes did, or someone who was on his side, Raybe’s choices in how he handled his pain were extreme. A line in which he said, “Can’t do that just yet, bitch. I got a score to settle,” (Robert Phillips, page 386) Raybe voiced his inner, built up tension. The bitter, harsh tone in his voice projected a negative approach. From here, things escalated until he resulted in thrashing her fragile hands with a hammer. The way each man chose to deal with their childhood issues showed the kind of person they are and how discrimination played effects on their everyday attitude.

Undergoing hardship at a young age could lead to making immoral decisions in one’s life. Wes Holman, being in the minority of his school and community caused for racism lasting most of his life. While looking back on his prior times, he has chosen to allow for grief but also move on and look at the joy that was also present. He said something sweet about Miss. Tretheway, “She was so beautiful,” (Ernest Buckler, page 49) he recognized that through all of his suffering he had a wonderful lady by his side. He could live with the fact she will always be in his heart. Looking at Raybe however, he went through difficulties with a superior figure, not someone of his age. He may have realized as he grew up, that although being an adult, she was not more powerful than his own voice. As he got older, he began taking paths where he could be out of ordinary. Which led to him getting into prison. Along with the idea that turned into an act of which he abused his past teacher in her own home. He got the satisfactory that “for once, he finished something.” (Robert Phillips, page 387) The choices we chose to make throughout our lives may be the results of challenging past events.

Prejudice and the outcomes it can have on the person it effects are not easily forgotten or excused. Yet unfortunately, parts of the world have produced biases that assume dissimilarities are reasons to discriminate. Due to isolation and differences, the details in both of these men’s lives have led to sorrow and great adversity. Although, the two stories have distinctive outcomes. They both demonstrate that in life, it is important to remain proud of one’s identity. Whether it be skin colour, social class or our personality. Be strong in who we are and what we stand for. Persevere through obstacles that may challenge us to do otherwise.