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English 10

Synthesis Essay

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***How Does One Cope with Hardship in Residential School?***

***How does one cope with hardship in residential school?*** The novel, *Indian Horse*, set in Ontario, Canada and written by Richard Wagamese following the story about the young Obijway man who was in residential school. **Similarly**, *Sugar Fall*, written by David Alexander Robertson, is set somewhere in Canada in the 1960s. The two protagonists in both stories find their own ways to cope with suffering when they are in the Residential Schools by having pride in their dear cultures and families. ***However***, the main character, Betty, copes with hardship by making new friends and remembering what her father taught her about family and tradition, Saul in *Indian Horse* plays hockey and isolates himself to cope with hardship. ***Despite those differences***, both characters overcome that by finding the strength in relationships and passionate to cope with it.

In *Indian Horse*, Saul, the protagonist, copes with hardship in the residential school by being passionate to play hockey and his attachment to family. When Saul is focusing on hockey he distracts himself from the realities of the Residential School. Since he was eight years old and was not old enough to play on the team, he experiences joy from practicing his hockey skills individually and secretly after he is done maintaining the rink in the early morning: “For the rest of the day, I’d walk through the dim hallways of the school warmed by my secret. I no longer felt the hopeless, chill air around me because I had… the ice, the mornings and the promise of a game that I would soon be old enough to play” (Wagamese, 66). Then, Saul develops his skills on the ice by using a horse turd and a stick. Saul shows his skills to father Leboutilier and he decides to put him in the hockey team. ***Although*** Saul witnessed many kids commit suicide and get beaten, playing hockey gave him an escape from that: “When I hit the ice, I left all of that behind me” (Wagamese, 83). Through hockey, Saul can escape from the horrors of the residential school. Saul’s involvement in hockey gives him the opportunity to be adopted into the Kelly family. His talent is soon recognized by Fred Kelly, who has his own hockey team and decides to become Saul’s guardian. Saul is rescued from the residential school; he now lives happily with the Kellys: “Fred and Martha Kelly were good to me” (Wagamese, 114). He becomes closer to their son, Virgil. ***In the end***, Saul’s enthusiastic passion for hockey as well as his relationships with his two families helps him cope with hardship.

***Meanwhile,*** in Sugar Fall, Besty copes with hard ship by remembering about what Besty’s father taught her before and the relationships she develops while at the Residential School. ***Therefore,*** she could distract herself from the realities of the school. Betty’s promise to be good to her father and the strength in the relationships between herself and her family gives her a way to overcome hardship. She wants to remember where she comes from, what her culture is and wants to remember her background. In the story, Betty’s father says, “So, no matter how hard they try to tear you away from our ways, they will fail because you are strong” (Robertson, 37). Betsy knows that no matter what nuns or priests do to her to make her cry and forget about her father’s teachings, they will always fail. Betty works hard at her school work so she will be left alone. She has a friend, Flora, who is also a victim of racism in Residential School. She helps Besty overcome hardship. One time, she asked Besty to run away from school with her but Besty did not want because of promise with her father:“I want to, believe me, I do, I just can’t, I made a promise to my father” (Robertson, 31). The promise was important to her, so she stayed. Furthermore, when she finally had enough and was about to leave, she remembered her relationships with her family: “And as quickly as I forgot, I remembered everything… I remembered Sugar Falls… I remembered the words of my father” (Robertson, 36). In the end, relationships with family and friends give Betty the strength to persevere through her suffering.

***Similarly,*** in both *Indianans Horse* and *Sugar Falls*, Saul and Betsy learn how to cope with hardship when they are both sexually abused by priests and nuns. Betty experiences sexual abuse from the residential school: “Flora told me once how she got through the abuse… she would numb her body so she couldn’t feel it… when it was my turn, I did the same… he called them happy rides when he came for us and made us sit on his lap” (Robertson, 27-28). ***On the other hand,*** Saul seems to repress the truth about Father Leboutilier for many years but now that he is consciously aware of it, there seems to be a chance that he will be able to begin the process of recovery. ***Also,*** after Saul witnessess, many kids “die of tuberculosis, influenza, pneumonia, and broken hearts at St. Jerome’s”(Wagamese, 55), Saul completely retreats into himself: “That’s how I survived. Alone… I ached in solitude.”(Wagamese, 55). Saul knew that he could not do anything to change his situation, so he decided to stay quiet and suffered alone. ***According to Saul and Betsy,*** they have to remember the times in the past and where they have been before to make a better life for their future.

***In conclusion,*** in both *Indian Horse*, by Richard Wagamese, and *Sugar Falls*, by David Robertson, they are not being able to resist or run away, both characters need something important to them in order to cope with their hardships. In the book *Indian Horse*, Saul find passionate in hockey that creates a major distraction against his hardships. ***On the other hand,*** In *Sugar Falls*, Betty’s relationships with her family remind her that no matter how bad her situation is, she can always use the strength in her relationships by holding onto her father’s teaching. Through two meaningful stories, everyone have their own hardship in life and they should learn that having something meaningful in their life to temporary escape from reality can cope with hardship no matter how bad their situation is. Saul and Betty show the reader how they decided to deal with their grief.

***Bibliography:***

**Wagamese, Richard. *Indian Horse: a Novel*. Douglas and McIntyre, 2016.**

**Robertson, David, et al. *Sugar Falls: a Residential School Story*. HighWater Press, 2011.**