

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

The supervisor should complete the report below and then give this cover, enclosing the final version of the extended essay, to the Diploma Programme coordinator. The supervisor must sign this report; otherwise the extended essay will not be assessed and may be returned to the school.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) _____

Comments

If appropriate, please comment on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion H. Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate.

took on a challenging literary topic and did a reasonable job, despite not having had much prior training in literary analysis.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: _____

Date: _____

ASSESSMENT FORM (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number									
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ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL

First examiner	maximum	Second examiner
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General assessment criteria

Refer to the general guidelines.

A Research question	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
B Approach	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
C Analysis/interpretation	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
D Argument/evaluation	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
E Conclusion	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
F Abstract	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
G Formal presentation	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
H Holistic judgement	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

Subject assessment criteria

Refer to the subject guidelines.

Not all of the following criteria will apply to all subjects; use only the criteria which apply to the subject of the extended essay.

J		<input type="checkbox"/>
K		<input type="checkbox"/>
L		<input type="checkbox"/>
M		<input type="checkbox"/>

TOTAL OUT OF 36

Name of first examiner (CAPITAL letters): _____ Examiner number:

Name of second examiner (CAPITAL letters): _____ Examiner number:

How are the journeys of self-discovery of the protagonists of “The Impressionist” and “The Mystic Masseur” similar?

Word Count

: 3550

Abstract

The Research Question

The protagonists of both novels, Ganesh and Pran Nath from “The Mystic Masseur” by V.S. Naipaul and “The Impressionist” by Hari Kunzru, are in search of their identity. Both protagonists take a journey through time and places, meet people and come across unexpected turns in their lives that moulds them into people they didn’t know even existed. Both books manage to capture a very realist picture of the emotions of a young man experiencing these physical, emotional and spiritual changes in his life with wit and humour. The research question this essay deals with is:

How are the journeys of self-discovery of the protagonists of “The Impressionist” and “The Mystic Masseur” similar?

The Scope of the Investigation

In order to examine this question, this essay will look at the major factors influencing the protagonists in their journey to become self-aware. The essay will firstly focus at the setting and time periods of the protagonists. Secondly, the essay will look at an assortment of adventures the protagonists experience and the different characters they come into contact with. This essay will highlight the conclusions the protagonists come to about their journey of self-discovery.

Conclusion

This essay deduces that the journey of self-discovery of the protagonists, Ganesh and Pran Nath of the “The Mystic Masseur” and “The Impressionists” is similar. The essay accepts the difference in the settings and situations of the protagonists yet it concludes that the outcome of the self-discovery in both protagonists is almost parallel. It also arises new questions on the limitation and generality of the journeys of self-discovery for young men.

Word Count: 270

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Introduction

The protagonists of both novels, “Ganesh” and “Pran Nath” of “The Mystic Masseur” and “The Impressionist” respectively, are two young persons in search of their own identity. Both experience a series of unexpected events that not only change their lives but also make them aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Both characters are exposed to a world they didn’t know existed. The situations they go through, the other characters’ influence on them and their own helpless and moldable nature, changes them into people they didn’t know even existed.

Ganesh is the son of a local Trinidadian who gathers enough money to send Ganesh to ‘Queens Royal College’. After his father’s death, Ganesh, who was indifferent towards the outside world, suddenly had to face everyone and understand his community. He is burdened with responsibilities and is forced by the community to marry. These incidents lead Ganesh to change and adapt into the person he eventually becomes. Pran Nath is brought by his rich father in Agra. Pran Nath is spoilt, pampered and ill-mannered as a child as he grows up without his mother, who died as soon as he was born. Once when Pran Nath is fifteen years old, he tries to grab the maid’s daughter, but the maid catches him. She tells on Pran to his father, not only about his son’s ‘devil’s nature’, but also his true parentage. Pran Nath was the result of an incident that occurred between his mother and a British officer caught in a storm. Pran Nath’s father disowns his son after learning his soiled background and dies from a heart attack and thus Pran is thrown to the streets to search for his true identity.

The writer of “The Mystic Masseur”, V. S. Naipaul and the writer of “the Impressionist”, Hari Kunzru are well-known contemporary British writers. Even though both are of Indian ethnicity, V. S. Naipaul grew up in Trinidad while Kunzru was brought up in England. “The Mystic Masseur” was Naipaul’s first novel in 1957 and it gained great popularity all over the world. The queen of England knighted V.S. Naipaul in 1989 on top of the various other awards he achieved during his long career as a writer including the Nobel prize for literature.¹ “The Impressionist” was Kunzru’s first novel as well, and the book qualified Kunzru for the finals for the “Best of young British Novelist”² He is a well-known freelance journalist and an editor.³

Both novels portray the lives of two young men who grow up, change and adapt to fit in and be respected by the people around them. Both books manage to capture a very realist picture of the emotions of a young man experiencing these physical, emotional and spiritual changes that I can relate to personally. This aspect of the books convinced me to further research and understand the journeys of discovery of young men like myself and thus I wanted to research, **How are the journeys of self-discovery of the protagonists of “The Impressionist” and “The Mystic Masseur” similar?**

¹ Nasta, Sushila. "V.S. Naipaul." *Contemporary Writers* (2002)
<<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth78#top>>.

² Pruno, Luca. "Hari Kunzru." *Contemporary Writers* (2006)
<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth03B5O073112634971>

³ "Conversations - Hari Kunzru." *Book Club* (2001) <<http://www.book-club.co.nz/features/harikunzru.htm>>.

Approach to the research question

This essay's prime focus is on the physical and emotional journeys experienced by the protagonist of the two novels, "The Mystic Masseur" and "The Impressionist". This essay, in order to answer this question, will first explore and deduce the changes that are evident in the personalities of the protagonists affected by their respective settings. The two stories take place in different locations and time periods.

"The Mystic Masseur" is situated in Trinidad, an island in the Caribbean, a British Colony. The British around mid nineteenth century brought a lot of immigrant indentured labour groups from India and other Asian countries to Trinida. This story takes place in the mid twentieth century, mainly among the Indian immigrants of Trinidad.

"The Impressionist", on the other hand, is set in the early twentieth century in India. The protagonist is born in Agra, however, through a series of mishaps and adventures, he is often transported, usually against his will, to different parts of India and later to England and Africa. India is still under the British Empire, and a conflict between the Indians, the British and the "Blackie-White" is portrayed in different parts of India, in the novel.

In addition, the essay will also look at the protagonists' self-discovery of their respective identity. Ganesh realizes that he does not control his life, and that everything that happens, happens for a reason. He believes in fate and therefore leaves all his decisions to God. Pran Nath, in contrast, realizes that all the unfortunate (and some fortunate) events he encounters are because of co-incidence. Yet, he strongly believes that these incidents were necessary to occur for him to become what he does in the conclusion of the novel. The essay will next look at the other minor characters of the book that are either related, friends with or enemies of the protagonist. Some of these character either directly influence or their actions influence the protagonists. The essay will focus on how these characters either pressure or persuade the protagonists and mould them into people they prefer the protagonists to be.

In conclusion the changed identities of the protagonists and the main reasons for it to occur will be highlighted. The differences in setting, time period and situations between the two novels will be mentioned, hand in hand with the similarities between the outcomes and conclusions the two protagonists achieve.

Setting

“The Mystic Masseur” is set in the southern most and biggest island of Trinidad and Tobago, situated in the Caribbean. Ganesh lives in Fuente Grove, a small town a few hours away from the capital of Trinidad, Port of Spain. Fuente Grove is densely populated by Trindadians of Indian ethnicity. This story takes place around the 1940s, when Trinidad was still under the British Empire. Ganesh, the protagonist of the novel, is immensely affected by the place and the time period in the story. He doesn’t join the army to help the British in the World War II because he understands that on his return he will not get decent jobs because there will be a sudden rise in the number of potential employees all over the country. He also speculates that when the war is over, American soldiers, on their way back home, might stop over at Trinidad. He feel he should be prepare to handle the demands of these foreigners and thus decides he wouldn’t become a taxi driver like most Trindadians around him. Ganesh later becomes the Member of Legislative Council (M.L.C) followed by a Member of British Empire (M.B.E) and is therefore shifted to a bigger house in the Port of Spain. All this, the glorious outcome of Ganesh’s life, according to Ganesh is because of series of intentional and unintentional decisions made by him at the right time; and therefore the relevance of time is so important in this novel.

“The Impressionist” is set in the early twentieth century when India was still a British colony. Pran Nath is born in a rich merchant’s family, living in Agra. His mother died while giving birth to Pran Nath and thus his father brought him up on his own. When his family disowns Pran Nath after finding out that he is an illegitimate son of his mother and an unknown British officer, he explores the streets of Agra in search for food. “Ejected from his childhood home and traipses through the following locales: a brothel, where he is force to dress as a girl; the court of a minor princeling, where he is ordered to lure a pederastic British major into a compromising situation; a Presbyterian mission in Bombay where he's fought over by the starchy minister and his estranged Indophile wife; a British boarding school where he steps in to impersonate a young Englishman who dies in an Indian alleyway; Oxford, where he strives to remain completely unexceptional; and, finally, the furthest reaches of Africa, where he ventures into the bush as part of an ethnographic expedition.”⁴

⁴ Miller, Laura. ""The Impressionist" by Hari Kunzru." 26/may/2002
<<http://archive.salon.com/books/review/2002/04/26/kunzru/index.html>>.

