Student

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Language Arts/Social Studies

Blood on the River Literary Based Expository Essay

Theme, not Traits

During the 1960’s people fell in love with the Beatles hit song, All You Need is Love. Unfortunately for Samuel Collier this song didn’t have an impact on him because he lived 350 years before anybody had even heard of Paul McCartney, George Harrison, or John Lennon. During the novel Blood on the River by Elisa Carbone, Samuel Collier is a child who is troubled like a turkey before Thanksgiving. When his mother and father died Samuel grew up in a poorhouse and was a scavenger on the streets of London. Without the love and guidance of his mother or father for much of his youth, Samuel trusted and loved nobody. Although Samuel’s father wasn’t alive for much of his son’s childhood, his drinking and violent behavior still took affected the emotional state of Samuel. However, the wisdom and love the Reverend Hunt showed toward Samuel had a positive impact on the main character, as did the lessons that Captain John Smith taught Samuel.

Certainly, Samuel’s father played a large role in shaping Samuel’s personality. Most boys are able to connect with their parents better than any other people they know, but since his father was constantly drunk and often physically abusive with Samuel, his father never earned respect or love from his son. On the streets of London Samuel trusted nobody because he had never learned to trust the people that were important in his life, which is why it was simple for Samuel to make decisions out of anger, and not love as Reverend Hunt taught him too. “But how can I make decisions based on love when there is no one else to love” (7). Obviously, with both of his parents dead Samuel feels like the world is out to get him, so when Reverend Hunt teaches Samuel to make decisions out of love Samuel feels incapable of doing so. This inability to make decisions out of love shows that Samuel’s father and his lack of affection had a lasting impact on his son.

But Reverend Hunt, whom Samuel met in the orphanage, provided love, guidance, and wisdom, which were the main traits that Samuel had lived without for a few years. Although Samuel came to Reverend Hunt with his emotions stretched as tight like a rubber band, Hunt soon became a person that Samuel could trust and love. At Jamestown there were many periods of time where people went without food, and when Reverend Hunt’s health began to fail, Samuel, realizing that it may be the last chance he had to talk to a major mentor of his, voiced his emotions. “‘Reverend Hunt, thank you for teaching me,’ I say. I force myself to talk past the lump in my throat. ‘Thank you for treating me like I was worth something.’” (171-172). This quote shows that Samuel was deeply affected because he was the first person to show Samuel that he had a purpose and was worth more than his father showed him. Later in the book Samuel shows how much Reverend Hunt truly impacted him when he makes a choice out of love, for John and Ann Laydon. Instead of venting his frustration when Ann Laydon refuses to leave Jamestown with her baby, Samuel chooses to secretly take her baby to Point Comfort, forcing the two parents to follow him to safety. This action caused by love for the Laydon family shows that everything Reverend Hunt taught Samuel stayed with him even through the difficult times.

When the voyage to Jamestown was in full swing Captain Smith taught Samuel a few valuable lessons. First, Smith showed Samuel that by controlling his anger he was able to use it to his advantage like when the gentleman accused him of being a criminal. But since Captain Smith was able to contain his emotions he earned the trust of the other colonists on the voyage. Apparently this lesson stuck with Samuel even after Captain Smith sailed back to England because he showed control over his emotions in a potentially life threatening situation. “I want to grab her [Ann Laydon], shout into her face, *There is no safety in James Town!* I am seething with anger- why can’t they see? Why won’t they listen to me?! I want to punch something. I ball up my first, ready to slug the wall. Then an image flashes in my mind, of Captain Smith ready to lose control of his anger, then of him taking a deep breath, focusing, calming, devising a plan. (207)”. If it weren’t for Captain Smith Samuel most likely wouldn’t have been able to control his emotions, and might have lost baby Virginia, and Ann and John Laydon. All in all, Captain Smith taught Samuel valuable lessons that stuck with him, and certainly shaped his personality and emotions.

In conclusion, the main character, Samuel Collier, was heavily influenced by three main people, two of whom taught him how to love and trust people again, which was similar to the effect that All You Need is Love might have had on him. As Samuel grew up in the novel Blood on the River by Elisa Carbone his father was very violent often because his drinking triggered spurts of rage. For this reason, the love and wisdom that Reverend Hunt showed toward Samuel had a positive, lasting impact and the young adults’ emotional and mental state. Also, Samuel’s master, Captain John Smith, provided the guidance that Samuel had missed for most his childhood. Although the every day challenges of Jamestown had an impact on Samuel, the people that he met in Virginia had a lasting influence on each choice he made even after they were no longer in his life. This shows that even though at first some people might seem to be hopeless because they are filled with rage and frustration, a little bit of love, patience, and guidance can have a positive impact on that person for a lifetime. Obviously the phrase “a little bit, can go a long way” applied to the main character because Captain Smith, Reverend Hunt, and Samuel’s father all did small things that shaped Samuel forever. Even though Collier lived through some definitely difficult durations of time, three people changed the course of his life with a few acts of violence, love, and kindness.