

The analysis of All the King's Men

Title of the story

1. The title All the King's Men is derived from the well-known nursery rhyme about Humpty Dumpty. The title indicates that in the novel there's going to be a so-called king who manipulates all the people around him and his servants who never have any free will and usually do everything the king tells them to without thinking about the reasons or the consequences.

Subject matter of the story

1. In my opinion, the subject matter of the presented selection from the novel is decision-making. The role of ambitions in the life of an individual can be defined as subject matter of the story as well. Jack Burden, a student of history, is facing a dilemma – he is to decide whether to follow his ambitions and take the dirty job or reject the offer and remain an honest man.
2. The author is trying to solve a problem connected with psychological slavery. He's trying to demonstrate that some people become servants of one person who claims to be superior to them. Such servants stop being individuals and lose their independence and freedom, becoming pliable puppets in the hands of a cunning puppeteer. The author believes that the psychological dependence should be put to an end.
3. The author hasn't solved the main problem in the presented episode. Jack takes the job, rejecting all his morals for the sake of a powerful individual. Thus, the author proves that more and more people become victims of psychological slavery.

Structure of the text

1. The text can be divided into 4 major parts: the introduction, in which Jack briefs us on the forthcoming events of the selection, the driving scene and the conversation between the Boss and Jack, the retrospective paragraph, the conclusion, in which Jack expresses his disgust for himself and his new job.
2. The introduction and the closing paragraph form an imaginary frame around everything that happens in the selection. These two parts contain Jack's summary of the events after they actually occurred. The driving scene, the conversation and Jack's reminiscence about the Judge have one thing in common, which is Jack's inner struggle, his doubts about the risky job.
3. The driving scene occurs at night and includes description of the black Cadillac speeding through the night along the empty motorway. The conversation follows the driving scene in the composition of the episode and takes place at the Boss's place. The retrospective paragraph does not have a specific setting, because it consists of fragments of Jack's memories about Judge Irwin, which have happened at different time in different places. The introduction and the conclusion do not have any specific setting either, because they express Jack's opinion about the events that have already happened.

Plot of the selected episode

1. The presented episode contains one of the turning points of the novel and a crucial moment in Jack Burden's life. Jack has to make one of the biggest decisions of his life. It's up to him whether he will remain an independent individual and an honest man or break all his morals and radically change the lives of other people.
2. The chain of events is as follows: Willie Stark, who is going to run for the U. S. Senatorship, is looking for a way of neutralizing his political rival Mac Murfee. The latter has already provided

himself with blackmail evidence against Willie, the price for which can only be the position of the senator. The only man who might convince Mac Murfee not to use his weapon against Willie is Judge Irwin, a man of stainless reputation and irreproachable morals. Willie Stark is determined to find some slips in the Judge's past to make him act in Willie's interests. The Boss realizes that the evidence against the Judge cannot be forged to pin the Judge down. He needs facts, and it is only Jack Burden who is able to provide him with them. But, as we learn from the text, Judge Irwin turns out to be Jack's father, so the young man has nothing left to do but plot against his own father.

3. The main events of the selected episode are the driving scene and the conversation. The driving scene is very symbolic. It conveys intense emotions through the description of the empty road, the mysterious sounds of the night, the misty fields. All those images that the author created makes us feel the heavy burden of Jack's dilemma on our skin. During the conversation Jack is weighing the pros and cons of his decision, although it is not very obvious, because it seems like that the Boss imposes his opinion on Jack, leaving the young man with no other choice but to take the job. The retrospective passage includes the description of Judge Irwin's appearance and behaviour in different situations.

Characters

1. Verbs and adjectives that characterize:
 - a) The Boss: sitting straight up, walking casually across the yard, his head bowed a little, his hands clasped behind him – these expressions portray the Boss as a royalty.
 - b) Sugar Boy: hunched over the wheel, locking the car doors, the wheel that looked too big for him; came into the yard, said goodnight, and went to the house – Sugar Boy is described as a faithful and loyal servant of the Boss
 - c) Judge Irwin – tall old head, yellow eyes glittered, leaning over a chessboard, aquiline florid face, brooding over the board – these expression characterize the Judge as a noble, honest man with the right amount of dignity in his character; my opinion is that Judge Irwin was always young and keen on the inside no matter how old and tired he seemed to be on the outside.
 - d) Jack Burden: crawled out of the car, didn't go right to sleep, had every reason to congratulate himself on a job well done – it's obvious that the dilemma that Jack's facing is torturing him from the inside. As a student of history, he's always open to challenging job opportunities, but it's very hard for him to throw away all his morals and beliefs.
2. Speech
 - a) The Boss's manner of speech demonstrates his scornful attitude to everyone and everything around him. However, the biblical analogies and idioms he used characterize him as a very clever and wise man.
 - b) Sugar Boy is not supposed to express his opinion towards anything, that's why he doesn't talk much. He's a silent servant of his master.
 - c) Judge Irwin talks in the manner, in which everyone who stands on the side of justice talks. His sentences have dignity and pride hidden in them. Nevertheless, he talks in a very friendly manner that characterizes him as a kind-hearted, good-natured person behind the steel shield of his stainless reputation.
 - d) Judging from Jack's manner of speech, we get the image of an arrogant yet gifted young man, who's come to the certain point where the boundary between the good and the evil is very thin. He understands the complexity of his state, that's why it's hard for him to hide the irritation and disgust coming from the inside of his mind.

3. The only character that has the inner speech is Jack Burden, the narrator. From his inner speech we learn about his occupation, his ambitions, his attitude towards the main events of the novel, his emotional struggle, his doubts about the dirty job and his disgust and disrespect for himself after he has accepted the job.
4. On the one hand, it might seem that the main antagonist of Jack Burden is the Boss, because that manipulative man is trying to make the student of history abandon all his morals and accept the dirty job. On the other hand, Jack Burden's antagonist is Jack Burden himself, because he is the one who has to make a decision and take the whole responsibility for it. The Boss made an offer, but that was Jack who accepted all the immoral conditions and plotted against his father.

Main idea of the text

1. From my point of view, the main idea of the presented selection is that everyone at least once in their life comes to a point when they have to make a decision that can change their life forever and there will be no turning back.
2. The main idea is conveyed to the reader through Jack's narration, his emotions and personal attitude towards the offer. The reader practically becomes a part of Jack's character and therefore has to face the decision as well.

Writer's attitude

1. One of the main artistic methods of Warren's is irony, which mostly turns out as tragic irony, the irony of life and situation. There isn't a single beam of light in the dark image created in the selection. The author somehow managed to get the reader to sympathize Jack even when at the time when he takes the wrong turn and drops his morals.
2. The sentences and expressions the author uses are tragically coloured, but we can't say that the author sympathizes the main character. From my point of view, the writer looks at the picture that he has drawn himself as if he had nothing to do with the process of creation. He portrays himself as a neutral party, who only adds bitter and ironic remarks and metaphors to aggravate the impression of the situation.

Reader's attitude

1. After having read the presented episode, I got the idea that one should never abandon his beliefs and morals no matter how irresistible the temptation is. Nothing positive can ever come out of dropping the morals that have taken years to finally appear and strengthen.
2. I support the author's point of view that concerns people being fanatically dependent on each other. I think that none of us should ever forget that we were born to be equal and individual, and that dedicating our life to someone with no emotional or material reward will never pay off.