
Summary

Blythe and Sweet begin their article on John Cheever’s “The Swimmer” with a quote from an article written by Cheever’s wife. Using this quote they set the stage for the premise that “The Swimmer” is divided into two parts with it being set in what is a longer period of time that seems to be encapsulated into one day.

Next the authors prepare the reader by asking a number of questions and related interpretations that they think make the interpretation of this piece of short fiction problematic. Again the authors are preparing the reader for their own answer to the issue of how to interpret this short story.

As Blythe and Sweet continue they provide evidence from the text to support their approach interpreting Cheever’s piece. Immediately afterwards they move into their cyclical approach for interpreting “The Swimmer” and combine this with the idea that the story is a composite of different parts from the life of Neddy Merrill and not events all taking place in a single day.

The authors then conclude the article with a comparison between Shakespeare’s King Lear and Cheever’s Neddy Merrill. Then they build off of the comparison in order as they restate their argument for interpreting “The Swimmer” in the closing of the article.

Main Points

Blythe and Sweet make a number of excellent points regarding this short story.

The first is that it is a cyclical story that may be interpreted as taking place over a period of time that is much longer than a single day.

Perhaps the most important point that the authors make is regarding what they see as the theme of the story. They put forth that Cheever is writing about change, which they describe as “the law of the universe.” (2)

Next in support of their view that “The Swimmer” takes place over a longer time than it first appears, Sweet and Blythe list off a number of details that support the impossibility of everything in the story occurring in a single day.

The point that the closed with and reinforced their argument was a listing of characteristics, behaviors, and experiences that Neddy Merrill has in common with King Lear from Shakespeare’s play. In showing that “The Swimmer” is similar in nature to “King Lear” the authors drive home what they feel is the correct interpretation of the
short story.

**My View of the Article**

I felt like the authors in this article provided a decent foundation for their approach to interpreting this short story. To be honest their approach to the story was one that had not entered into my mind. Additionally, they included details that I felt supported their approach to understanding “The Swimmer.”

Particularly interesting to me was their comparisons with Shakespeare’s “King Lear.” I felt like the authors’ drawing out of the similarities between the two main characters in each of the works was an excellent way to illustrate the cyclical nature in the short story.

Something else that I felt was very interesting was their belief that Cheever had blended a number of events in Neddy Merrill’s life together to make a short story that seems to occur all in one day. It is, I think, an excellent use of writing. Not to mention that it greatly changed the way that I now view the short story.

Overall, I think this is an well-written article that does not use language that is beyond the common person to read. Although there were a few words that I looked up in the dictionary to be sure about their meanings. I also felt like they put out a very viable way of interpreting Cheever’s short story and put a spin on it that I think many might not consider even though there is evidence supporting this view of the “The Swimmer” in the text.