

## “Oh thank God”

This is an extract from A Handful of Dust, written by Evelyn Waugh. The novel shows the changes that have taken place in the English society after World War I. Old traditions and morals are disintegrating and becoming of no use in people's lives. Hetton Abbey, which represents a symbol of old morals and traditions, has become hideous and nobody cares about it anymore. People start losing faith in everything even in God. Gossiping has become the only thing that people do in order to fill up their empty lives. They only care about appearance, while reality seems to be of no importance to them. They have become more materialistic. They have no emotions and they are ready to do anything, even if it is illegal in order to get money.

These words are said by Brenda to Jock, when the latter has gone to her in London to inform her about the death of John Andrew. Brenda has said that because she has thought that it is John Beaver who is dead and not John Andrew, as she has got confused between the two names. These words give a hint about what is going to happen in the future. After the death of John Andrew, Brenda becomes free for asking Tony for divorce.

Brenda Last is Lord St. Cloud's daughter. She is so beautiful that everyone used to like her when she was a young girl. Mrs. Beaver says that Brenda is wasted on Tony because he does not deserve her. Brenda is totally different from Tony. She does not believe in old morals and traditions. She hates Hetton and thinks that it is so ugly and does not deserve all the money that is spent on taking care of it. When Brenda first sees John Beaver, she likes him and she will even agree to have an affair with him later on. Brenda plays an important role in emphasising the main theme of the novel. She represents the unfaithful wife who betrays her husband only for the sake of fun. She is considered to be a symbol for the ugliness of the English society in this period of time.

Jock Grant-Menzies is Tony's friend. Unlike Tony, Jock is a realistic man who knows quite well what is going on around him. He is not living in the past like Tony. When Jock knows about the love affair between Brenda and Beaver, he does not tell Tony so as not to hurt him. This shows that Tony is the last one to know about this love affair. Even though Jock knows all about Brenda's affair, he is going to marry her after the death of Tony. This shows that Jock does not have any morals or principles in his life.

Moral disintegration and loss of principles are the main themes of these lines and they are also considered to be the main themes of the whole novel. The loose behaviour and the lack of morality are beginning to replace all the Victorian traditions, morals and civilization. This loose morality is revealed when Brenda

betrays her husband since she gets bored of him. It is also shown in the way the society has accepted Brenda's love affair. They regard it as a normal relationship and not a strange one. They are even not bothered by the idea that she is a married woman.

Those words are also considered to be ironic. Tony has thought that Brenda is going to be shocked and so sad after knowing about the death of John Andrew. On the contrary, she becomes happy as she has finally become free of anything that connects her with Tony. This also helps her to ask Tony for divorce and even to ask him for a huge alimony by forcing him to sell Hetton Abbey. This shows the fade and collapse of the old traditions and morals, and the rise of the loose modern traditions.

The third person narration, which is used in "A Handful of Dust", plays an important role in emphasising the writer's point of view and the main theme of the novel. This kind of narration allows the writer to describe all the events that are happening in the novel and to get into the minds of the characters. On the other hand, it helps the reader to understand more about the characters involved and the events that are taking place in the novel.