

Main Characters in “A Handful of Dust” & “The Remains of the Day”

In both A Handful of Dust by Evelyn Waugh and The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro, the main characters are considered to be victims of their own innocence and ignorance. On the one hand, Tony Last, who is the main character in A Handful of Dust, is a victim of the new world that lacks morality. On the other hand, Stevens is the main character in The Remains of the Day. He is a victim of the new civilization which replaces the old British one with all its old traditions and principles.

In A Handful of Dust, Tony is imprisoned by his own ideas and beliefs. He knows nothing about the new immoral world. He seems to belong to the world that no longer exists. He is the last one who still believes in old morals and traditions. He believes in a certain tradition that is gradually fading away. Tony loves Hetton with its old gothic style. He believes that Hetton symbolizes the grandeur of the past. Tony is a real gentleman and a respectable person. He has once felt guilty because of getting drunk and annoying Brenda. He does not see Brenda's faults. He is only aware of being rude and not behaving like a gentleman.

Tony is considered to be the only one who does not know about Brenda's love affair with John Beaver. When he knows about this affair, he does not want to believe it. In spite of Brenda's confession, Tony needs more time to understand the truth. He does not want to see the reality. He cannot easily get rid of the habit of loving and trusting Brenda. The Tony goes in search of a city after opening his eyes to the savageness of the world and people around him.

Moreover, he has lost his own world with all its morals, principles and traditions. He feels lost in the new world which lacks all the features of grandeur and glamour. Then Tony dies after his failure in finding the city of civilization and after losing his own world with all it stands for. Tony's death is considered to be a sign of the moral disintegration at that period of time, and by his death, old morals and traditions die too. This shows that Tony is a victim of his ignorance and unawareness of the changes that are taking place around him.

In The Remains of the Day, Stevens is a victim of his blindness of the changes that are taking place around him. He has imprisoned himself within the walls of Darlington Hall. He is obsessed with his life inside Darlington Hall, although life outside it undergoes a great deal of change. Yet, Stevens seems to be unaware of these changes. Stevens is so professional. He believes that he has to spend all his life doing what he is asked to do. He cannot think about what he wants by himself. He does not even know what he wants and what he does not.

Emotions have no place in Stevens' life. He thinks that emotions may hinder him from doing his profession in an ideal way.

Stevens' profession seems to govern his own life. It is even more important to him than his father, whom he admires, as he has left him dying in order to serve the visitors of Darlington Hall. Even though Stevens loves Miss Kenton, he refuses to admit it. He thinks that love may prevent him from doing his profession accurately. He will even give up his love towards her for the sake of his job and because of his professionalism. The relationships he has ever had in his life are with Lord Darlington hall, his father and Miss Kenton. Being sheltered within the walls of Darlington Hall prevents him from having any other relationships. In fact, those relationships are even controlled by his professionalism.

After the Two World Wars, the British society has completely changed. It becomes more experienced. However, he is still ignorant about those changes. He knows nothing about the new world and he seems to be lost in it. This shows that Stevens is a failure in his both social and personal lives. Finally, he decides to return to Darlington Hall and continue his life as a butler for the American gentlemen. This shows that Stevens has not changed, even after his journey outside the walls of Darlington Hall. He is still a victim of his own ignorance and innocence. This also shows that he still believes in the old British civilization and traditions which no longer exist.

Thus, Tony and Stevens are victims of their blindness. Both of them still live in the world of their own which has been completely changed. So, characters play an important role in emphasizing the ideas of the writers to the readers.