

# Main themes 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 theme is mainly about the changes that take place in the English society after the Two World Wars. On the one hand, lack of morality in the English society after World War I is considered to be the main theme of A Handful of Dust. On the other hand, the main theme of The Remains of the Day is the deterioration of the British Empire and the rise of the American one after the Two World Wars.

In A Handful of Dust, loss of morality is considered to be one of the main consequences of World War I. people begin to lose faith in everything and even in God. All the elements of Victorian traditions are disintegrating. Old traditions, principles and morals are becoming of no use in people’s lives. Keeping up appearance is one of the most important things that people cared about. People have become more materialistic. They are ready to do anything in order to get more money. The emptiness and hollowness of people’s minds is reflected in the way they behave. People accept Brenda’s love affair with John Beaver as if it is not something strange. Everybody is interested in this affair. Nobody seems to be bothered by the fact that Beaver belongs to a lower class and Brenda is a married lady.

Mrs. Beaver will even encourage her son to have an affair with Brenda. She thinks that Brenda may help in his life and offers him all the money that he wants. This shows that Mrs. Beaver, Brenda and John Beaver have no morals or principles in their lives. Another example for the lack of morality is Brat’s club. All the members of this club show the lack of manly and gentlemanly qualities at that period of time.

Hetton, which is considered to be a symbol for old traditions and morals, has become hideous and ugly. Nobody cares about it anymore except Tony who loves and appreciates it. This proves that nobody still cares about old morals and principles. Even though Tony is the only one who still cares about old morals and principles, every one regards him as a fool and a pig. This also shows that Tony still lives in a world that no longer exists. This world still keeps old morals and traditions. After opening his eyes to the ugliness of the world around him, he goes in search of a city looking for the old civilization. He has lost his own world with all it stands for. This shows that the loose behaviour and the loss of morality are beginning to replace all the Victorian morals, traditions and principles.

In The Remains of the Day, the deterioration of the British Empire and the rise of the American one is one of the main consequences of the world wars.

Darlington Hall which symbolizes all old traditions, customs and principles is bought by Mr Farraday, the American gentleman. This shows that the new America traditions are on their way to replace the old British traditions. By the deterioration of Darlington Hall, the English culture decays and fades away. People begin to believe in the new civilization and forget all about the old one. The only person who cannot cope with these changes is Stevens. He still thinks about the greatness of Great Britain. He still believes in old customs and traditions which are not present any more. After feeling lost in the outside world, Stevens decides to resume his old life as a butler in Darlington Hall for Mr Farraday.

Professionalism is also considered to be one of the main themes of The Remains of the Day. Stevens is the symbol of professionalism. He believes that he has a job in his life. He has to spend all his life doing what he is asked to do. He knows nothing about the world outside the walls of Darlington Hall. Even when he goes outside it, he feels lost and returns to it once again. Emotions have no place in Stevens' life. He thinks that emotions may hinder him from doing his work properly. Profession seems to control Stevens' life. He considers his profession to be the most important thing in his life. He has even left his dying father in order to serve the visitors of Darlington Hall. He does not reveal his love towards Miss Kenton, even though he knows that he loves her. Stevens seems to know nothing about the changes that have occurred in the outside world. He still lives in a world of his own; that world no longer exists.

Thus, both novelists seem to focus on the changes that have occurred in the English culture after the Two World Wars. Each of them discusses one aspect of these changes to show the reality of the English society at that period of time.