

## **EXPLAIN THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH THE STORY OF “GAMES AT TWILIGHT” USES CONTRAST.**

“Games at twilight” is a short story written by Anita Desai. It is a very descriptive account of a young boy’s experiences, thoughts and feelings whilst playing hide and seek with some other children. Just when the young boy, Ravi, finally triumphs over the other, “bigger”, children, his victory is ignored and pushed aside. This anticlimax results in Ravi feeling completely insignificant and irrelevant.

This story contains many contrasts that are used effectively to assist the reader in understanding Ravi’s complex emotions. One of these distinctions involves the children and the adults in the story. The mother in the tale is the predominant adult. There is a very marked discrepancy between the children and the mother, for example, the mother wishes to spend the stifling afternoon in the house cooling down whereas the children desire to run around outside and play. “they wailed so horrendously that she actually let down the bolt of the front door so that they burst out like seeds from a cracking, over-ripe pod into the veranda, with such wild, maniacal yells that she retreated to her bath”. This quote also shows another contrast; the children blend in with the hot, vibrant afternoon environment, which is the time when they use the garden, the mother blends in with the cool serene evening surroundings, which is the time when she uses the garden. Also as the mother is individualised at the start of the story and the children are not this reinforces Ravi’s feelings of insignificance, he blends in, he is not noticed among the other children.

There are numerous quantities of contrasts associated with the weather and environment, one of which I mentioned in the previous paragraph. Another is the difference between the appearance of the early afternoon and “twilight”. The image of the afternoon is one of a harsh, scorching setting, while the evening is portrayed as a composed, tranquil scene. “The white walls of the veranda glared stridently in the sun. The bougainvillea hung about it, purple and magenta, in livid balloons. The garden outside was like a tray of beaten brass.” These are very vivid images of a bleak location where no life stirs until the heat of the day has subsided. Alternatively when night arrives a very different place is depicted. “The trees and bushes around them stood inky and sepulchral, spilling long shadows across them.” This is a much more sombre portrait of the garden than how it looked in the afternoon. I feel that these very different representations of the garden reflect the children’s mood as a group and the nature of the games that they are playing; in the afternoon they are full of energy and are excited when they are let out of the house and are playing a rough game, whereas, in the evening they are calm and are playing a doleful game.

At the beginning of the story the children aren’t individualised so we don’t really pay attention to their emotions. Later on it becomes clear that each character experiences very different emotions. For example, the first child who is captured, Manu, is petrified when Raghu captures him. This is a contrast in itself as Manu appears small and weak and Raghu is shown to be big and fierce. “Raghu

turned...and charged after him with such a blood-curdling yell that Manu fell over the hosepipe, fell into it's rubber coils and lay there weeping” This sets the scene for the rest of the tale as the reader is shown Ravi's character in comparison with Raghu's character. Throughout the story Raghu seems to have no emotions and he shows no remorse when it comes to capturing his opponents, on the contrary, Ravi's emotions are very clear and instead of being ruthless like Raghu, he hides in a shed! Another difference of emotions is concerning the way Ravi's emotions change throughout the story. At the beginning he feels scared, “Ravi looked about him desperately, swallowing a small ball of snot in his fear.” After this he feels proud of his “own temerity” but that quickly turns back to fear. These feelings all contrast with the way he feels at the end of the piece; insignificant. “He lay down full length on the damp grass, crushing his face into it, no longer crying, silenced by a terrible sense of his insignificance”

Language is a strong form of contrast all through this story. At the beginning short sentences are used to show the lack of emotion, just the unbearable need to get out of the house, “It was too hot. Too bright”. At the end of the piece longer sentences are used to illustrate how much things have changed and how full of emotion Ravi is. Also the words used to describe the afternoon setting are sharp and harsh, “The garden outside was like a tray of beaten brass, flattened on the red gravel and the stony soil”. Alternatively, in the evening softer words are used, “The trees and bushes around them stood inky and sepulchral, spilling long shadows across them.”

In conclusion I believe that the contrasts used in this tale make it more interesting and definitely help the reader to form a better understanding of Ravi's emotions.

