

Explore the role of children in the novel 'The English Teacher'

In Narayan's 'The English Teacher' children play an important role in shaping Krishna's personality. Teaching is a theme that runs throughout the novel and children play an important part in this process. Narayan portrays children as being pure and unsullied by the adult world. They are described as 'angels' connoting their purity as well as their role as teachers, as angels are the messengers of God. This contrasts to the adult world portrayed as being dirty and unclean with 'streets filled with dust'. Krishna is also being taught by Leela and the Headmaster's school the importance of seeing the obvious things in the world that adults overlook. This is shown when Leela says 'You are always yelling at mother' which is an extremely obvious observation to the child but a startling revelation to Krishna showing that he must develop a child's clarity to truly understand the world around him.

Comment [K1]: This candidate has taken a big risk by writing about just one main way in which children are used – to reveal something about the journey of Krishna. However, the risk pays off because the novel is essentially about the development of Krishna and most elements of the novel are just foils used by Narayan to show how he changes over time

Comment [K2]: Beautifully put!

Comment [K3]: Excellent personal development of this idea

Comment [K4]: Again beautifully put and perfectly accurate, Narayan continually stresses the open-minded curiosity of the children compared to the adults

Comment [K5]: Excellently detailed explanation.

Narayan also uses children, and in particular Krishna's attitude to them, to show his progression towards becoming a better man. In the beginning of the novel Krishna had a very dismissive attitude towards children paying them little attention both inside and outside of his classes. As he develops, children are used to show this change. While he is house-hunting with Susila he distracts the man showing him the houses in order to 'spare' the boy he was being aggressive towards. Although this may suggest that Krishna has changed considerably, the use of the word 'spare' is very demeaning implying that Krishna views himself as superior to the child, indicating that he still has a long way to go. By the end of the novel his utter devotion to Leela shows his now open feelings towards children.

Comment [K6]: Good awareness of the key message of the novel

Comment [K7]: A quotation would have been great here

Comment [K8]: Good balanced evaluation of the subtlety here – Krishna's change is gradual and not black and white

Comment [K9]: Again a quotation would have really helped here.

In a physical parallel of the fact that children are a measure of Krishna's emotional change they are also used by Narayan to physically lead him to new areas of his life. For example, it is initially a child at his school that he 'pleads' with to lead him to an available house, which is where his family life began. It was also a child who delivered the message and showed Krishna to the Medium. It is also Leela who leads Krishna to the school and the Headmaster.

Comment [K10]: A brilliant point – nicely introduced – but real insight is demonstrated here

However, Krishna thinks of himself as a 'fool' for not getting any details from the boy who was helping him re-emphasises the point that he does not yet fully trust children at those points in his life. Furthermore, each child seems equally reluctant to help Krishna. The child who shows him the house is eager to return home, the child who brings the Medium's message would rather give Krishna directions and Leela begs 'please don't come.' Thus Narayan shows that despite children being Krishna's teachers, despite them being a gauge for his change and despite them always showing the way, Krishna must want their help and he must seek it or he will never become 'fit to enter their world.'

Comment [K11]: Good connective to demonstrate how this point is being developed

Comment [K12]: An excellent ending which sums up another central message of the novel and the ending on a quotation works really well as it gives the essay a rounded and complete feel.