

Writing a Review of a Novel

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A Lesson for Life

INTRODUCTION

Attention-getting
opener

Thesis (author
and title)

It is not what one considers “proper” for a young girl of thirteen to be climbing up and down ropes on a ship in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. This is not a “proper” story; this is the story of Charlotte Doyle. Avi wrote *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, an inspiring fictional novel. Believable characters help people relate to the story. A plot that actually could happen, but that is filled with twists and turns, keeps readers hooked onto every word. Most of all, a good theme, expressed vividly, offers insights into life.

BODY

First element
(characters)

Charlotte Doyle, the main character, always tries to make the “proper” decisions, such as not becoming friends with the sailors on her voyage to America, but most of the time ends up following her heart instead of her head. Captain Jaggery, the master of the ship taking Charlotte to America, is a merciless captain who would do anything for a penny. He

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believes time is money and anyone who wastes time pays.

Zachariah, a sweet and kind old African man, befriends

Charlotte right away and teaches her the lessons of the

sea—how to sail and survive on the ocean. The rest of the crew

are tough men that have no problem working long hours, but

they don't like it when they are mistreated. These men have a

tight bond of loyalty between one another but have very little

loyalty or respect for the captain.

Second element
(plot)

The plot of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* is a believable plot with many surprises. The story starts with

Charlotte boarding the ship very nervously because the families

who were supposed to accompany her on her voyage to

America cannot make the trip. After a few days' stay, Charlotte

discovers a round robin (a sign of an uprising) and the crew's

plan to mutiny. Zachariah, forced to take the punishment for

this revolt, is flogged and dragged away, presumably dead.

Charlotte decides to join the crew and fill Zachariah's place as

a sailor, but is framed for the murder of Mr. Hollybrass, the

first mate. She is sent below decks into the brig (the ship's

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prison), and finds Zachariah, alive, where he had been hiding. Charlotte is brought to trial and found guilty. When Charlotte is trying to escape her punishment, which is to be hanged, Captain Jaggery falls from the bowsprit into the ocean to his death when the ship plunges downward. Charlotte becomes the captain of the once the crew learns that Captain Jaggery was the one who killed Mr. Hollybrass and framed Charlotte. Days later the ship reaches America, and Charlotte returns to her home in Providence, Rhode Island. Charlotte tries to live a “proper” life but becomes uncomfortable. Charlotte describes her house this way: “It seemed immense to me. And dark. Cut off—after so many days—from sun and air (Avi 201).” Charlotte returns to the ship, where her heart belongs, with Zachariah.

Supporting evidence

Third element (theme)

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle expresses one main theme throughout the story. In life, you come across many decisions; once you make your choice, you live with the results, even if they aren’t what you expected.

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Supporting
evidence

In the actual text, Zachariah says it this way:

A sailor chooses the wind that takes the ship from a safe port. Ah, yes, but once you're abroad, as you have seen, winds have a mind of their own. Be careful, Charlotte, careful of the wind you choose. (Avi 198)

While Charlotte was on the ship, she chose to be part of the crew. Once she returns to America, she cannot return to her normal life, not after all the experiences she's gone through.

She has to live with her decision to sail the seas with Zachariah.

CONCLUSION

Recommendation

Thesis restated

Everyone should read *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. The decisions Charlotte makes change her life forever. Her attitude and courageousness create a character everyone can relate to. Most important, an inspiring theme teaches a lesson that can be used for life.