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American Literature
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Analysis of Theme Essay

Parents throughout history have had the tendency to spoil their children to “badness” which “is only spoiled goodness” as the British scholar and novelist C.S. Lewis stated. We see this in the science fiction selection “The Veldt” by Ray Bradbury, and the science of spoiled children, their habits, and the root problem of these rotten kids - the parents - in a second selection “Do Kids Have Too Much Power?” by Nancy Gibbs. In these two selections, we see how children when spoiled can become adults in society who do not know how to react to the obstacles in life and cannot handle it when refused something they want.

In the science fiction story “The Veldt” by Ray Bradbury, the author writes of two parents who struggle to maintain control over their lives, home, and children. Throughout the story we notice how the futuristic home known as the “Happylife Home”(pg.1) in which the Hadley’s live, takes care of all the families needs as “wife and mother now, and nursemaid”(pg.2) leaving them without responsibilities and feeling “unnecessary” (pg.2). The Hadley children also begin to rely wholly on the home or more specifically on the nursery. This fact and the parents indulging attitude “but nothing’s too good for our children” (pg.1) creates an environment in which the children feel entitled to the best treatment and never are refused anything.

However, once the Hadleys realize their mistakes in raising their children and see their children’s hatred towards them reflected on the walls of the nursery as a bloody “hot

African veldt”(pg.2) where bloodthirsty lions and vultures roam, it is much too late to reverse the damage. The children cannot handle the discipline their parents are trying to enforce and act “decidedly cool toward” them they “yelled and sobbed and swore and jumped at the furniture” once their father turned off the home which had come to be their parent and replaced their real parents in their hearts.

In the editorial article “Do Kids Have Too Much Power” by Nancy Gibbs we come to see the reason many kids are spoiled and how not only they but also past generations “lost the antimaterialistic philosophy” (pg.1) our ancient ancestors had. The beginning of the article states how the baby boomers “members of history’s most indulged generation are setting new records when it comes to indulging their kids” (pg.1), which leads us to see that the root cause of these “foot-stomping, arm-twisting, wheedling, whining despots”(pg.2) are their “lazy parents who set no bounds” (pg.2) and find it easier to comply with the kids desires than to put a foot down.

Many parents work full-time jobs and come home too tired to deal with a tantrum if they were to say no. Instead of reasoning and explaining to their children why they cannot grant their every wish, they would rather avoid a tantrum and move on, increasing the child's power over their parents and credit cards. Gibbs also asserts that children feel they have power because “technology also contributes to the erosion of parental authority”. (pg.3) It is no longer foreign or strange to see a two year old handling an iPad or Kindle without difficulty and we see in this article how “video games are about letting kids manipulate reality, bend it to their will, which means that when they get up at last from the console, the loss of power is hard to handle.”(pg.3)

The question is how parents can allow their children to be so far gone. According to Gibbs, “the baby boomers were uniquely ill equipped to handle such broad parenting challenges. So eager to Question Authority when they were flower children, the boomers are reluctant to exercise it now”(pg.3) because they are unaccustomed to discipline and order. Discipline has always had a negative connotation. For baby boomers and their offspring, however, discipline should not always be viewed in a negative light but also as a way to correct and to straighten a path. Without discipline we would all be lost in a world without order.

In conclusion, although these are two very different selections they share the common theme of how granting children too much power can be harmful to them and also to the future society. Although the underlying theme is the same for “The Veldt” and “Do Kids Have Too Much Power?” the theme is addressed very differently in each one. In the first selection we read of a fictional example of a family and how their lives were drastically affected by their spoiled children, whereas in the informational article “Do Kids Have Too Much Power?” we are informed, with many studies to support, the reason why many parents spoil their children, the effects spoiled kids have on society, and the ultimate toll it takes on young people. I felt these two articles were brilliantly connected in theme and I enjoyed reading an intense story of spoiled kids and also finding the science of the matter in the second article.