Once And Future King By White Essay, Research Paper

Experience is Everything In the book, The Once and Future King, T.H. White shows

the importance that education relies heavily upon ones own personal experiences.

When Merlyn is called on to tutor Wart, an adopted child, he uses this exact

learning method on Wart. Merlyn, who is a magician, uses transformation as a his

learning tool. Merlyn turns Wart into different animals to show Wart lessons of

life. Through each transformation Wart experiences different forms of power,

each being a part of how he should rule as king. When Wart experiences each of

these different stages of lesson he finds out from Mr. P that mind power is

nothing, from the wild goose he learns freedom, and the badger teaches him to

accept what you have. When Wart is transformed into a fish Merlyn takes him to

go talk to the master of the moat, Mr. P. This is the first transformation that

Wart will learn his first lesson in. When Wart approaches Mr. P he already

senses a great deal of danger because of his massive size and strength. Wart was

so flabbergasted by his enormous structure that he could not think of anything

to ask Mr. P. Then Mr. P replies with his view on life, a simple statement,

?There is only power. Power is of the individual mind, but the mind?s power

is not enough? (52). Mr. P is showing the importance of physical power over

the minds with this comment he makes . What Mr. P states astonishes Wart so much

that Wart becomes speechless and does not move from where he is positioned. As

Mr. P teaches his theories of life he becomes very agitated with Wart and

Pronounces, ?I think you ought to go away really almost at once in case my

disillusioned mouth should suddenly determine to introduce you to my gills,

which have teeth too? (52). As Wart is listening to Mr. P say this he is

stunned by the words he is saying to him. Wart is astonished that Mr. P is

thinking about eating him. At this instance Wart has enough time to turn around

and swim away just in the nick-of-time to escape from Mr. P. Another one of

Wart?s transformation places him in a flock of geese. These geese are a peace

loving race that never kill. Wart learns all about being a geese from other

geese. Wart learns most of his lessons from a goose named Lyo-lyok. Wart and

Lyo-lyok talk about how the geese communicate and most everything about geese.

When Wart asks, ?Are we fighting people?? (169). Wart and Lyo-lyok get in an

argument. Lyo-lyok refuses to listen to Warts explanation to his question.

Lyo-lyok did not understand Wart?s point of view. Once Wart explains to

Lyo-lyok his situation, she then helps Wart in his understanding of the goose.

Wart learns that there is one leader to a group who is called The Admiral. He

guides them on their flight south for the winter. The Admiral receives his

position because of his knowledge of the southern migration route. He is only

elected if all the geese in the migration group agree he is capable of doing the

job. During the flight the geese obey his choices, since he is their elected

leader. But his power ends once they are back on the ground, where he is only

looked upon as a respected elder. Lyo-lyok teaches Wart about this and tells

him, ?this is how Great-uncle became an admiral? (171). Through out Wart

experiences as a goose he learns alot about why the geese are not a group that

fights within their species. Lyo-lyok tells Wart that the only reason humans

fight amounts each other is that we set boundaries and that is what causes

fighting. In the final transformation Wart visits the badger. The badger is a

great philosopher who enjoys giving scholarly commentaries, this is why Merlyn

wants this to be Warts last transformation. Merlyn explains that, ?except for

Archimedes, he is the most learned creature I know. You will like him? (183).

While Wart is visiting him, he explains a story he has written on the creation

of the animal kingdom?s hierarchy. In his commentary he explains how man

answered God?s riddle and is awarded control over the animal kingdom. The

Badger explains to Wart, in his view, that God created embryos and that the

embryos had a chance to pick out three different characteristics to change about

themselves. When man approaches God he states, ?I think that You made me in

the shape which I now have for reasons best known to Yourself, and that would be

rude to change? (192). This, God explains is a riddle which Man has solved. In

this lesson Wart learns that some things are better off being left alone than

being changed. Through each of the transformations, Wart sees different uses of

power. Wart must choose how he will eventually govern his kingdom. The leaders

he visits, govern in their own way, each retaining their power through different

methods. When these are combined, the following picture of how a leader should

or should not rule emerges: A leader should not attempt to rule his or her

people through might and fear, as does the fish-king. A democratically elected

leader, whom subjects have faith in his or her ability to get a job done, and

who has the required skills will complete the task at hand, as do the geese.

Leaders must give great thought to making decisions related to their use of

power, and use their experience, like the Badger. Also like the Badger, these

decisions should be made without the help of others, and therefore may lead to

solitude. T. H. White is therefore similar to Merlin in trying to teach us about

leadership.

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