

The analysis of the short story “Love is blind and deaf” by Jonathan Safran Foer

Jonathan Safran Foer is an American novelist, who was born February 21, 1977. He is best known for his novels “Everything Is Illuminated” (2002), “Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close” (2005), and for his non-fiction work “Eating Animals” (2009).

“Love is blind and deaf” goes back to the original love story and the original sin. It is a one-page story about Adam and Eve, where we learn the secret of their *marital felicity*. That Adam was blind and never had to see Eve’s “*oblong, splotchy birthmark*”. And that Eve was deaf and never had to hear “*how weakly narcissistic Adam was, how selectively impervious to reason and unwonderfully childlike*”. And then they ate the apples and knew everything. This knowledge had cured them of their blindness, deafness and marital felicity. They knew all but were suffering, that knowledge was of no use as it didn’t bring them what they desired most of - peace. So they started using fig leaves to cover his eyes, to stuff her ears. It didn’t work long though. And then there is God, *The Unseeing and Unhearing*, who gives us a piece of moral. God says that they are always so close – they never see the space between them, so they always see the little things that upset them so much.

Structurally we can divide this text into 3 logical parts: the introduction (the perfect love between blind Adam and deaf Eve), the chain of events (eating apples, knowing everything, struggle to live happily with that knowledge) which is followed by the highest point of the action in the story (self-retained blindness and deafness) and the last part of the text, its denouement (God’s revelation).

Even though the story is written in the 3d person singular, the author tries to remain objective. Which is also can be because of its genre that is to be a kind of a parable (short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle).

The theme of the text is the relations between men and women in connection with problems of love. So, the problem addressed in the story to the readers lies in the relationships of men and women, in the way they get over their imperfections in order to try and love each other, in the way they treat one another and what they are ready to do to be together. And I believe this problem is rather vital nowadays as many people can’t find love and peace with someone because they don’t know how to love even themselves with all their flaws.

The main idea of the story is that one can achieve peace if starts accepting themselves and their beloved just as they are with all their faults and imperfections. Exactly accepting them, not closing their eyes or ears to them.

The mood of the text is lyric, that is expressing direct personal feeling. The tonality of the text is anxious and gloomy. From the very beginning we can feel that something bad is going to happen to Adam’s and Eve’s love.

As for the language used in the text it is primarily neutral and literary: *oblong, rotated, gnawed, incremental, ambiguously, hurl, holler; retreated, diminish, canyon*.

The syntactical structure of the sentences is rather simple. The author uses mainly short, simple sentences with active voice to show that both Adam and Eve are active participants in their lives. The tense used in the story is Past Simple, the text of the narration about the events which happened long ago. E.g.: *Adam and Eve lived together happily for a few days. They ate apples when they ate and, after a while, they knew it all. Eve saw him and approached*. We can also see the usage of Present continuous for expressing God’s irritation

on Adam and Eve. *“They’re always inventing new ways not to be aware of the canyon between them...”*

What catches your eye in the first place is intertextual inclusions, by which we mean first of all the names of the main characters Adam and Eve, the title “Life is blind” accompanied by “and deaf” creates an ironical effect. We may probably even say that it is a kind of a parody on the famous Biblical parable or myth. This is also showed by usage of various biblical allusions such as *Adam, Eve, fig leaf, paradise, the apple they ate, God, angel*. We can also find an allusion to the Internet pictured as *“a book without edges”*.

Adam is portrayed as a handsome but ignorant blind man. While Eve is supposed to be an ugly deaf woman with beautiful voice and mind (not to talk nonsense). Describing them the author uses different epithets to show extreme character of their faults. *“<...> the oblong, splotchy birthmark across Eve’s cheek, or her rotated incisor, or the gnawed remnants of her fingernails. <...> how weakly narcissistic Adam was, how selectively impervious to reason and unwonderfully childlike”*.

God is *“the unseeing and unhearing”*, who genuinely thinks about their wellbeing. By adding these very epithets the author expresses the irony. But still it’s difficult to see and understand His better intentions when you think of what happened to Adam and Eve. *“They’re always inventing new ways not to be aware of the canyon between them...”* – this line and bolded word make us think that what happened to them is some kind of an experiment. Yes, in order to help them finally to find peace, but still the experiment that made them suffer again and again, and **always** until they find their way.

The text is permeated with irony. It is in the title, in the description of God, who *“simply didn’t exist enough”*. In the framed story which started and ended with blindness and deafness, that *“worked until it didn’t”* and *“was good until it wasn’t”*. Repetition is also used numerous times, as well as asyndeton, polysyndeton and enumeration in order to produce a hurried, anxious mood but still save the clearness of the message, avoid the ambiguity.

“<...>, and where breezes begin, and what happens <...>. Adam saw spots; Eve heard pulses. He saw shapes; she heard tones”.

“<...> they were fully cured of their blindness and deafness. Cured, too, of their marital felicity”.

“First they fought passively, then they despaired privately, then they used the new words ambiguously, then pointedly, then they conceived Cain, then they hurled the early creations, then they argued <...>”.

“And then the first bruises spread across the first knees, as the first humans whispered the first prayers”.

“But God refused them, or ignored them, or simply didn’t exist enough”.

“None of the paintings, none of the books, no film or dance or piece of music <...>”.

“I’m here,” <...>, because his eyes were covered with fig leaves. <...> “Here I am,” <...>, because her ears were stuffed with rolled-up fig leaves”.

“<...>a sentence or a silence here, a closing or an opening of space there, a moment of difficult truth or of difficult generosity”.

The main idea that the author tried to bring to us, I believe, to be of vital importance. One can achieve pure happiness, love, joy and peace only through accepting themselves and each other just as they are. Through realising all our faults and imperfections and embracing them.