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Academic Leadership Journal

Free the Beagle: A Journey to Destinae by Roy H. Williams

Atlanta, Georgia: Bard Press 2002, 127 pages, \$14.95 (soft cover)

A review by Don Litzenberg, Graduate student, Chapman University

The art of the parable seems to be lost in today's world of precise definitions and exact interpretations. However, in Roy William's *Free the Beagle*, the art is not only regained, it is glorified and taken to new heights. The story is essentially "the textbook allegorical Hero's journey, updated for a new generation"(p. 127).

The story begins with the protagonist, a lawyer named Intellect, who is forced to take the beagle, Intuition, on a journey to Destinae. Destinae is a far away land from which no one has ever returned, and no one knows for sure how to get to.

The book chronicles his journey through such interesting places as the swamp of despair, where Intellect meets up with the bandits, Worry, Fear, and Panic. After awaking from an attack from the three bandits, Intellect realizes he must find his way out of the swamp, and realizes on the hill Epiphany, "If a step seemed easy, he knew it was leading him downward. It was only the more difficult steps that would take him higher." (p. 36).

As the book progresses, the reader begins to make sense of some of the odd quotes that are placed in the book's margins. For example, when Intellect is resting in the village of Compromise, the chapter begins with the margin quote "Perfection does not exist: to understand it is the triumph of human intelligence; to expect it is the most dangerous kind of madness. –Alfred de Mussey" (p.56)

While on the surface, the village of Compromise would seem to have nothing to do with either the pursuit or understanding of perfection, and, as the reader continues, it becomes apparent that the townspeople feel that they have achieved perfection in simplicity. Not only is everything provided for the town in the grain fields that border it, but the people actually seek to live off only the perfect field that nature has sought to provide. It soon becomes apparent that the absolute drive to achieve perfect simplicity has driven the residents of Compromise to a certain kind of madness where they are unable to see anything outside of their grain and village.

The book moves quickly towards an end that has an epiphany of its own, and is followed by questions for the reader to ponder. While being relatively simplistic at times, the questions are very helpful to educators considering the book for classroom use, as it lends itself to follow up assignments. Despite the simplicity of the end-of-book questions, the reader will find him or herself really asking some very introspective questions of him or herself. The margin quotes, such as "I knew when looking back on the times we cried, I would laugh, but I never thought when looking back on the times we laughed I would cry. –Unknown" force the reader to consider him or herself and his or her own experiences with new eyes.

The real value of the book lies in the lessons that are taught to educators, leaders, and students alike. The book manages to take the world and put it into a perspective that is useful to all ages, all positions, to all. Free the Beagle is an amazingly insightful piece of work and a definite must read for today's (and tomorrow's) leaders. Every leader should study William's work as both a guideline to ethical behavior and a blueprint for success.

Williams has mastered the lost art of parable. Where most other authors merely take a simple idea and tell a story around it, Williams is incredibly good at creating a work that causes the reader to look at the worlds around and inside him or her. Every reader will take a different story away from Free the Beagle, but each reader will come away from the book with a new understanding of self and others.

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