
Decoding the Plot of "The Ice Palace" (1920) by F. Scott Fitzgerald

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ABSTRACT

F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Ice Palace" remains a seminal work of American literature, delving into themes of identity, cultural displacement, and the search for belonging. This study aims to dissect and analyze the intricate plot structure of "The Ice Palace," employing a qualitative method to uncover deeper insights into Fitzgerald's storytelling techniques and thematic undercurrents. Drawing five essential components of plot, the research scrutinizes each narrative element, tracing the protagonist's journey from exposition to resolution. Utilizing content analysis of the story, the study reveals how Sally Carrol Happer's experience in the Northern environment, particularly her harrowing ordeal in the ice palace, leads to a profound realization of her true self. The resolution, marked by Sally Carrol's decision to return to the South, highlights the thematic emphasis on embracing one's identity and finding fulfillment in authenticity. Through close examination of plot dynamics, this research offers fresh perspectives on Fitzgerald's narrative craftsmanship and thematic resonance in "The Ice Palace."

Introduction

In the world of literature, F. Scott Fitzgerald's mastery of storytelling stands as an enduring testament to his ability to weave intricate narratives that delve deep into the human experience. Born in 1896, Fitzgerald emerged as one of the preeminent voices of the Jazz Age, capturing the essence of a generation grappling with the aftermath of World War I and the rapid societal changes of the early 20th century. F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Ice Palace," a poignant short story published in 1920, navigates the tumultuous journey of its protagonist, Sally Carrol Happer, as she grapples with the clash between her Southern upbringing and the unfamiliar Northern environment she encounters. As a seminal work of American literature, "The Ice Palace" delves into themes of identity, cultural displacement, and the search for belonging, offering a rich narrative ripe for exploration.

Plot has many meanings and applications. In literature and storytelling, plot refers to the series of events that form the narrative of a story. These include exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Plot is the basic structure that moves a story forward and provides context for character development and thematic exploration. In geometry, a plot is a two-dimensional representation of a set of data points, often used in statistical analysis and data visualization. This can include various types of plots, such as line plots, scatter plots, and bar plots, which help illustrate trends and patterns in data. In medical research, plot may refer to the sequence of events or progression of a disease. For example, in the context of celiac disease, a plot might depict



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the development of dilated cardiomyopathy as a complication of the disease. In meta-analysis, a plot is a graphical representation of the results of various studies. A forest plot is a specific type of plot used to display meta-analysis results, showing the results of individual studies and an overall summary estimate. This helps visualize the heterogeneity and consistency of results across studies.

This study aims to dissect and analyze the intricate plot structure of "The Ice Palace," paying particular attention to the five essential components outlined by DiYanni (1990): exposition, complication, crisis or climax, falling action, and resolution. By scrutinizing these narrative elements, the research seeks to uncover deeper insights into Fitzgerald's storytelling techniques and the thematic undercurrents that run through the narrative. While "The Ice Palace" has been subject to literary analysis in various contexts, a focused examination of its plot structure remains relatively scarce. Previous research has predominantly explored Fitzgerald's thematic preoccupations, character development, and narrative style. However, a comprehensive analysis of the story's plot dynamics presents an opportunity to glean fresh perspectives on its narrative intricacies and thematic resonance.

Drawing on Roberts' (1999) definition of qualitative research as rooted in interpretive thinking. This means that knowledge is created and shaped through the interaction of those involved in the research process. Qualitative methods focus on how the researcher can explore and analyze what they believe can be known, based on their assumptions about knowledge. This study used the descriptive qualitative method to delve into the nuances of "The Ice Palace." By eschewing rigid methodologies in favor of interpretive analysis, the research endeavors to uncover the underlying meanings embedded within the narrative, shedding light on the interplay between plot elements and thematic motifs.

The focus was on analyzing the plot in "The Ice Land" by F. Scott Fitzgerald using DiYanni's (1990) framework outlines the fundamental elements that constitute the plot structure of a short story, which are: 1. Exposition: This is the beginning of the story where the setting, characters, and background information are introduced. The exposition provides essential context for the reader to understand the world of the story and the characters' circumstances. It sets the stage for the events that will unfold, 2. Complication: Also known as the rising action, this is the stage where the central conflict or problem emerges. It creates tension and drives the narrative forward as the protagonist faces obstacles or challenges that they must overcome. The complication often introduces new characters, conflicts, or plot twists that complicate the protagonist's journey, 3. Crisis or Climax: This is the turning point of the story, where the conflict reaches its peak and the protagonist faces a critical decision or confrontation. The crisis or climax is the most intense and dramatic moment in the narrative, where the protagonist's actions or choices have significant consequences that determine the outcome of the story, 4. Falling Action: Following the climax, the falling action depicts the aftermath of the crisis and the resolution of the conflict. It shows how the events set in motion by the climax begin to unravel and move towards a resolution. The falling action often includes moments of reflection, reconciliation, or consequences for the characters' actions. 5. Resolution: Also known as the denouement, this is the final stage of the plot where the conflict is resolved, and loose ends are tied up. The resolution provides closure for the story, revealing the outcome of the protagonist's journey and any lessons learned along the way. It offers a sense of completion and fulfillment for the reader.

Employing a qualitative method, this study conducts a systematic examination of "The Ice Palace," dissecting its plot structure and thematic resonance. Through close reading and textual analysis, the researcher scrutinizes each component of the plot, tracing the protagonist's journey from exposition to resolution. By refraining from prescriptive methodologies, the study embraces interpretive flexibility, allowing for a nuanced exploration of Fitzgerald's narrative craftsmanship. The researcher gathered information without using a test instrument; instead, she relied on library sources related to the analysis of the plot. The data source of this



research is from F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story "The Ice Palace" that taken from the website <https://americanliterature.com/author/f-scott-fitzgerald/short-story/the-ice-palace> which accessed on 21st December 2023. The data collection technique used was content analysis. First, the researcher read the short story multiple times, then, identified parts related to the plot, and determined the story elements connected to the plot. To analyze the data, the researcher followed several steps. First, she read the short story repeatedly. Then, she analyzed the plot. After that, she read relevant references for the research.

Discussion

After analyzing "The Ice Palace," the researcher intends to highlight and discuss the specific elements of plot present within the narrative. According to DiYanni (1990) there are five essential components of plot within a short story: comprising exposition, complication, crisis or climax, falling action, and resolution. In this analysis, the researcher identified and discussed in detail each plot component, from exposition to resolution, focusing on the protagonist's journey, Sally Carrol Happer, and the conflicts she faces in confronting a culturally different environment. Utilizing DiYanni's framework, this research highlights how each plot element interrelates and contributes to the development of themes and characters within the story. Here are some aspects of the plot that the researcher successfully identified based on DiYanni's framework.

a. Exposition

F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Ice Palace" opens with an exposition that meticulously sets the stage for the narrative, introducing both the protagonist, Sally Carrol Happer, and the environment in which she resides. Through a combination of vivid descriptions and insightful characterizations, Fitzgerald immerses the reader into the Southern atmosphere of Tarleton, Georgia, on a warm, languid summer day. The town is depicted with an aura of nostalgia, emphasizing its quaint charm, the leisurely pace of life, and the pervasive sense of tradition that permeates every aspect of its existence.

Central to the exposition is the introduction of Sally Carrol Happer, a young Southern woman whose presence embodies the essence of Tarleton. As she lounges on her porch, absorbed in a book, Fitzgerald paints a portrait of Sally Carrol that is rich in detail, capturing her youth, her Southern roots, and her current state of mind. Through subtle nuances in her interactions and reflections, the reader gains insight into Sally Carrol's character, which is portrayed as vibrant yet tinged with a hint of restlessness. This restlessness serves as a driving force behind her desires for something beyond the confines of her small Southern town, setting the stage for the narrative's unfolding events.

Furthermore, the exposition deftly introduces key relationships and conflicts that will drive the plot forward. Sally Carrol's engagement to Harry Bellamy, a Northerner, emerges as a central point of contention, laying the groundwork for the cultural clash between the North and the South that will define much of the story's conflict. Through conversations with her friends and family, subtle hints of skepticism and concern regarding Sally Carrol's impending move to Harry's cold, unfamiliar hometown are woven into the narrative, foreshadowing the challenges she will face in adapting to her new environment.

Moreover, Fitzgerald utilizes the exposition to skillfully foreshadow the central conflict of the story: Sally Carrol's internal struggle between her Southern identity and the allure of the new life she is about to embrace in the North. Themes of cultural differences, the clash between tradition and modernity, and the complexities of personal identity are subtly interwoven into Sally Carrol's musings and interactions, laying the thematic groundwork for the narrative that follows.



The exposition of "The Ice Palace" serves as a masterful introduction to the protagonist, the setting, and the central conflicts that will propel the story forward. Through rich descriptions, insightful characterizations, and subtle foreshadowing, Fitzgerald establishes a strong foundation for the unfolding narrative, setting the stage for Sally Carrol's journey of self-discovery and the challenges she will face along the way..

b. Complication

In "The Ice Palace" by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the complication of the plot serves as the catalyst for the protagonist's internal and external struggles, setting the stage for the narrative's development towards its climax. Sally Carrol Happer, a young woman from the warm and languid South, embarks on a journey to visit her fiancé, Harry Bellamy, in his cold and brisk Northern town. However, this seemingly simple decision initiates a cascade of events that gradually build tension and introduce the central conflict of the story.

The cultural clash between the South and the North becomes increasingly apparent as Sally Carrol attempts to adapt to her new environment. The harsh and unforgiving Northern winter starkly contrasts with the mild and hospitable Southern climate she is accustomed to. Beyond mere weather differences, Sally Carrol encounters unfamiliar social norms and behaviors that challenge her deeply ingrained Southern sensibilities. This cultural dissonance contributes to her growing unease and discomfort, exacerbating her sense of alienation.

Moreover, Sally Carrol's initial excitement about her engagement to Harry and her romanticized view of the North begin to dissipate as she confronts the harsh realities of her new life. The warmth and affection she expects to find in her relationship with Harry are overshadowed by a pervasive sense of coldness and detachment, both in the weather and in the demeanor of the Northern inhabitants. This personal disillusionment compounds Sally Carrol's inner conflict, forcing her to confront the stark disparity between her expectations and the harsh truths of her reality.

The pivotal moment of complication occurs during Sally Carrol's visit to the grand Ice Palace, a symbol of the North's pride and aloofness. Here, she becomes physically and emotionally overwhelmed by the imposing structure and its frigid confines. Lost within the labyrinthine corridors of the palace, Sally Carrol experiences a profound sense of entrapment and confusion, mirroring her internal turmoil about her future with Harry and life in the North. The ice palace serves as a potent metaphor for her existential crisis, highlighting the daunting choices she faces and the uncertainty that shrouds her path forward.

Collectively, these elements heighten the story's tension and complexity, laying the groundwork for the emotional and narrative peak that follows. Sally Carrol's experience in the Ice Palace crystallizes her inner turmoil and prompts a reckoning with her true desires and identity. As the complication unfolds, Sally Carrol's struggle to reconcile her Southern heritage with the realities of the North sets the stage for the climactic confrontation where she must confront her deepest fears and make a decision that will shape her future.

c. Crisis or Climax

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story "The Ice Palace," the crisis or climax occurs during Sally Carrol's experience inside the ice palace. This moment is crucial as it encapsulates her intense emotional and physical turmoil, serving as the turning point of the story. The ice palace is a massive, labyrinthine structure made entirely of ice, emblematic of the cold, stark Northern environment that starkly contrasts Sally Carrol's warm Southern roots. Initially curious and somewhat excited by the novelty of the ice palace, Sally Carrol's adventure quickly turns into a harrowing ordeal.



The climax reaches its peak when Sally Carrol becomes disoriented and trapped within the icy corridors of the palace. Her physical entrapment mirrors her psychological and emotional realization that she does not belong in this cold, foreign place. As she wanders through the freezing maze, her initial enthusiasm and curiosity transform into panic and despair. The intensity of her feelings during this episode is vividly described:

"A moment of sheer panic swept over her. She felt that her clumsy boots were being guided forward by some overwhelming force ... This was what she had fled from in terror on that first day, this cold and, when it caught her unaware, this shadowy, ice-created nightmare." The description of her panic and sense of entrapment marks the story's highest point of tension. This experience crystallizes her realization that her attempt to assimilate into a life that is fundamentally incompatible with her nature is futile. Her fear and desperation in the ice palace symbolize the ultimate clash between her Southern warmth and the Northern coldness, both literally and metaphorically.

Sally Carrol's ordeal culminates when she is finally rescued by Harry, her Northern fiancé, and his friends. This rescue represents her physical escape from the immediate danger but also signifies a deeper, emotional liberation from the oppressive Northern environment. It is in this moment of crisis that Sally Carrol understands she cannot forsake her true self and her Southern heritage for a life that feels so alien to her:

"She caught Harry's arm with both hands and held on tightly as they struggled out into the softer snow and sunshine."

The crisis or climax of "The Ice Palace" is powerfully realized in Sally Carrol's near-catastrophic experience within the icy labyrinth. It is this moment of intense fear and disorientation that ultimately drives her to the realization that she cannot marry Harry and live in the North, leading to her decision to return to the South where she truly belongs. This pivotal moment encapsulates the core conflict of the story and underscores Fitzgerald's themes of regional identity and the clash of different ways of life.

d. Falling Action

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story "The Ice Palace," the falling action serves as a crucial phase in Sally Carrol Happer's journey of self-discovery and resolution of the story's central conflict. Following the climactic moment of her harrowing experience in the ice palace, the falling action unfolds with nuanced emotional and psychological depth, offering insights into Sally Carrol's inner turmoil and eventual resolution.

As Sally Carrol finds herself trapped and disoriented within the icy labyrinth of the winter carnival, her sense of terror mounts exponentially. The frantic attempts to navigate her way out only exacerbate her feelings of isolation and entrapment. The extreme cold serves as a metaphorical barrier, emphasizing the stark contrast between her Southern heritage and the Northern life she attempted to embrace. This physical and emotional entrapment underscores the depth of Sally Carrol's inner conflict, highlighting the profound dissonance between her aspirations and the reality she faces.

The subsequent rescue orchestrated by her fiancé, Harry Bellamy, and his friends represents a pivotal moment in Sally Carrol's narrative arc. Beyond the immediate physical rescue, it symbolizes the beginning of her journey towards emotional and psychological resolution. The danger she faced within the ice palace serves as a stark revelation of her true feelings about her place in the North. It crystallizes her understanding that the Northern environment, with its coldness and alienation, is fundamentally incompatible with her disposition and background.

As Sally Carrol is brought back to warmth and safety, she undergoes a profound process of introspection and acceptance. The traumatic experience in the ice palace becomes a catalyst for her to confront her inner



conflicts and reconcile with her true identity. This emotional and psychological resolution marks the culmination of her journey of self-discovery, as she comes to terms with the reality that she cannot find fulfillment in the North.

The decision to return home to the South signifies the culmination of the falling action and the resolution of the story's central conflict. While not explicitly detailed in the narrative, Sally Carrol's feelings and reflections strongly suggest her realization that her place of belonging lies in the warmth and familiarity of her Southern roots. The near-death experience in the ice palace serves as a poignant reminder of her true self, prompting her to embrace her identity and make the decision to return home.

The falling action in "The Ice Palace" intricately depicts Sally Carrol's emotional journey towards self-realization and resolution. Through moments of intense fear, introspection, and acceptance, she navigates the complexities of her inner conflict and ultimately finds peace in embracing her true identity. This phase of the narrative not only completes Sally Carrol's character arc but also underscores the thematic emphasis on the importance of authenticity and belonging.

e. Resolution

The resolution in F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Ice Palace" serves as a vital component in concluding the narrative and delivering its thematic message. Sally Carrol Happer's decision to return to the South, effectively breaking off her engagement with Harry, marks the culmination of her journey and growth throughout the story. To fully grasp the significance of the resolution, it is imperative to dissect the events leading up to it and understand how they contribute to Sally Carrol's ultimate realization.

Sally Carrol's harrowing experience in the Ice Palace acts as a catalyst for her decision to return home. The sheer magnitude and fridity of the palace symbolize the stark contrast between the Northern environment and Sally Carrol's Southern roots. As she becomes disoriented and trapped within the icy corridors, her panic and desperation mirror her inner turmoil and conflict about her future in the North. This intense emotional experience solidifies her understanding that she cannot adapt to the Northern way of life, sparking a profound realization of her true identity.

The resolution represents Sally Carrol's growth and self-discovery throughout the narrative. Initially depicted as a restless young woman seeking change, she undergoes a transformative journey of introspection and acceptance. Her decision to return home signifies her acknowledgment and embrace of her Southern heritage, highlighting the importance of self-awareness and the acceptance of one's intrinsic nature. Through Sally Carrol's arc, the resolution underscores the story's central themes of identity, belonging, and the clash between different cultural environments.

Furthermore, the resolution provides emotional closure for both Sally Carrol and the reader. Sally Carrol's return to the South is depicted with a sense of relief and reconciliation, serving as a poignant moment of catharsis after her struggles in the North. The familiarity and warmth of her hometown contrast starkly with the cold, alienating North, reinforcing her decision to embrace her true self. For the reader, witnessing Sally Carrol's journey and eventual return home evokes a sense of satisfaction and completion, as they have accompanied her through her trials and tribulations.

Symbolically, the Ice Palace itself represents the rigidity and coldness of the Northern way of life. Sally Carrol's escape from the palace and subsequent return to the South symbolize her rejection of this



incompatibility and her embrace of her true self. By rejecting the confines of the palace and the Northern environment, Sally Carrol reaffirms her Southern identity and values, highlighting the importance of staying true to oneself amidst societal pressures.

In conclusion, the resolution of "The Ice Palace" encapsulates the protagonist's journey of self-discovery and the story's thematic essence. Sally Carrol's decision to return home underscores the significance of self-awareness and the acceptance of one's inherent cultural and personal identity. Through her growth and realization, Sally Carrol emerges as a symbol of resilience and authenticity, leaving a lasting impression on readers who have accompanied her through her transformative journey.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Ice Palace" through the lens of DiYanni's five essential components of plot provides a rich and nuanced understanding of the narrative structure and thematic depth of this seminal work of American literature. By dissecting the exposition, complication, crisis or climax, falling action, and resolution, we have embarked on a journey through the intricate layers of identity, belonging, and cultural clash woven into the fabric of the story.

In the exposition, Fitzgerald masterfully sets the stage, painting a vivid portrait of the protagonist, Sally Carrol Happer, and her Southern roots. Through meticulous detail and evocative prose, he introduces the impending conflict of Sally Carrol's engagement to a Northern man, foreshadowing the tumultuous journey that lies ahead. The complication deftly builds tension as Sally Carrol confronts the stark differences between her familiar Southern lifestyle and the cold, alien North. The clash of cultures and the challenges of adaptation serve as catalysts for her inner turmoil, culminating in the climactic moment within the icy corridors of the palace. The crisis or climax marks the pinnacle of tension as Sally Carrol grapples with her physical and emotional entrapment. It is in this moment of desperation that she experiences a profound realization of her true self, setting the stage for her subsequent decision to return to the South. The falling action sees Sally Carrol's rescue and her eventual journey back home, signifying a resolution that completes her arc of self-discovery. Through her return to familiar surroundings, she embraces her identity and finds solace in authenticity, rejecting the pressures of conformity imposed by external expectations. Thematically, the resolution resonates deeply, emphasizing the importance of embracing one's identity and finding fulfillment in staying true to oneself. The symbolism of the ice palace serves as a potent metaphor for the rigidity of societal norms and the coldness of cultural alienation, while Sally Carrol's return home represents a triumph of individuality over conformity.

In its entirety, "The Ice Palace" stands as a compelling narrative that navigates the complexities of personal and cultural identity with finesse. Through its resonant exploration of the human experience, it leaves a lasting impression on readers, inviting reflection on the themes of belonging, self-discovery, and the enduring quest for authenticity in a world marked by change and uncertainty.



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