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A Chip of Glass begins with a flashback to when Mrs. Bamjee first brought a duplicate machine back to her house in South Africa. Mrs. Bamjee was a widow with the surname Pahad and five children when she met Mr. Bamjee. Now, they are married and have nine children in total- the oldest, Girlie, being married and living close by- in a small house with little space for privacy. Mr. Bamjee's discontentment with the duplicate machine in their house is quite evident. He knows his wife will use it to print leaflets for her political causes, this time apartheid, and asks her whether it isn't enough that they've got the Indians' troubles on their backs without adding the Africans' too. Mr. Bamjee himself is a fruit-and-vegetable vendor, waking up early to reach the market at five. Mrs. Bamjee tells him that it is not long now, and he turns his back on her as she and the children smile. Gordimer next describes Mrs. Bamjee's physical appearance- her thin body and black braid and cheap sari. She used to have a glass ruby fit into her nostril, courtesy of her mother, but she had abandoned it long ago. Mrs. Bamjee sits up past midnight, making leaflets on the duplicate machine. Mr. Bamjee already knows what the leaflets say- captions about burning passports for freedom and not going to work in protest of the Africans' leader being jailed. Mrs. Bamjee has quiet and serious meetings with several prominent Indian figures in light of the situation, and having people of such repute in his house makes Mr. Bamjee proud. Further, he trusts her completely- he knows she will not behave improperly, for besides her political activism, she is a 'normal' Muslim woman. As soon as the meetings are over, she goes about preparing dinner and taking care of the children, just as Mr. Bamjee expects her to. When he questions why she does these things, she reminds him what happened last time she fought for a cause: he told her there was no point until something happens to them Indians- and then days later his own mother lost her house, and he realised that everyone is in danger. As they discuss this, Mrs. Bamjee mentions that their family friend Ismail's brother has been engaged, and there is a party to celebrate- one that the Bamjee-Pahad family must attend. She begins to fix up one of her children's dresses for the event, and this very normal action calms Mr. Bamjee a bit. The next morning, they hear that Dr. Khan, one of the people who had a meeting with Mrs. Bamjee, had been arrested. Mr. Bamjee often comes home to see black women resting or drinking tea, and he thinks it would never happen in a regular Indian household. Mrs. Bamjee is not particularly modern, but she is different in an unclear way- the same unclearly that Mr. Bamjee has about his attraction to her. He was indeed attracted, which is what led to their marriage, but he is not quite sure what about her was attractive to him. On a Thursday morning, Mrs. Bamjee is arrested, her duplicate machine seized. Mr. Bamjee is quite horrified- he realises that he will have to take care of all the work now, from the children to cooking to cleaning and all the other work his wife does. It upsets him greatly, and he wonders why she has to get involved in such business. As she is taken away, she reminds him to make sure the children attend Ismail's brother's party, or else Ismail will be offended. The children try to help her as much as they can, providing her with comfortable clothes and promising they will be alright. The fifteen-year-old Jimmy immediately runs next door to tell Girlie the news, and they are the ones who visit their mother in prison later- she is in the next town, and they take money from Mr. Bamjee to catch the train. Mr. Bamjee finds the house strangely quiet and empty without his wife. The room seems different without the duplicate machine. One day, the youngest son gets mocked by the teacher in school because his mother is in prison for protecting the Africans- despite the teacher being a person of colour, as well. His colour brought him trouble throughout his life- he wants to hang on to the little whiteness he has, and refuses to believe they are all the same. Jimmy points out that it is this very reason their mother is protesting- to stop such a mindset. Soon there is a hunger strike, and Mrs. Bamjee participates from prison. She grows weaker and weaker without food, and Mr. Bamjee helplessly wonders why they must go through this. Girlie, pregnant, arrives early at the house one morning to wish Mr. Bamjee a happy birthday. Something which he had completely forgotten about. She explains that her mother reminded her when she visited the prison- Mrs. Bamjee insisted that her husband's birthday should not be forgotten. Mr. Bamjee is moved- despite all the chaos, as she starves in prison, his wife remembers his birthday. Girlie points out that her mother has always been that way- she never wanted anyone to feel left out and always remembers everything, from the starving kids to the boys who can't go to school. That is the reason he fights for justice so strongly. Mr. Bamjee is tired of this situation, but nonetheless, a realisation dawns on him at Girlie's words. Mrs. Bamjee is always kind, compassionate and strong. She was never like the others, and in that moment, he remembers why he was attracted to her. A Chip of Glass Ruby by Nadine Gordimer is a short story written in third-person and internal monologue- here specifically of Mr. Bamjee. It focuses on an Indian Muslim family living in South Africa, and provides a glimpse of the political scenario at the time. This story was published in 1982, which is in the midst of South Africa's apartheid era- 1948 to 1994. Apartheid means 'apartness', and refers to the segregation policies and blatant discrimination against the non-white South African citizens. This is what Mrs. Zanip Bamjee fights against, through meetings with prominent figures, by making leaflets and by providing a safe shelter for people of colour to rest and drink tea. Gordimer employs a balance of perspective, description and narration to portray the mindset of the other characters, despite the internal monologue being heavily focused on Mr. Bamjee. More prominently, it is the characters' discussions and interactions that highlight their thoughts and points of view. The story also contains clever dialogue, symbolism and imagery which help paint a more vivid picture. The themes in A Chip of Glass Ruby are sacrifice, bravery, compassion, selfishness, discrimination and justice, and political activism. We also see the overarching theme of relationships, family, and community. The duplicating machine plays an important role in the story, both literally and figuratively. It is introduced in the very first line- Mr. Bamjee's irritation on seeing it gives the readers an early glimpse of his perspective on the situation, as well as the differing opinions of him and his wife. His insistence on 'let the natives handle their trouble' shows that he is less compassionate and more self-centered. We may also assume that he does not want to attract trouble or danger in any way, and would much prefer to live a calm life in a 'normal' Indian Muslim household. The machine symbolises the political protest in itself, as well as Mrs. Bamjee's courage and strength as she participates in it. They are a family of eleven- nine children and two adults- with ten of them living in one house. They manage to work, play, eat and sleep within their space without any complaint, which is a subtle hint at the theme of family. Through Mr. Bamjee's thoughts and the way he regards his wife, readers can see that he has a very conservative and patriarchal view. For example, when he says "her body was as scraggy and unimportant as a dress on a peg when it was not host to a child." it shows that he considers his wife's- or a woman's, in general- job to bear children and raise them, cook for the family and look after the house. Anything else Mrs. Bamjee does is seen as unnecessary and questionable, and she receives no support from him. The only thing we may say is that he doesn't stop her, either- however this is more likely due to her willpower and strong personality than his understanding. The reputed figures who often visit their house may be another reason, as Mr. Bamjee feels a sense of pride to see such prominent people in his home. Overall, his outlook highlights the theme of selfishness. Another glimpse at his patriarchal mindset is when he describes her stamping leaflets "as if she were pounding chillies" which suggests that he believes that's what she should be doing, rather than political activism. The fact that Mr. Bamjee trusts his wife completely and knows that despite all her meetings with reputed men for her cause, she would never behave offensively is a hint of one of the things that attracted him to her- something he struggles to remember throughout the story. Jimmy and Girlie are presumably the two oldest children, as they seem the most supportive and understanding of their mother. It is also important to note that as her children from her previous marriage, they have known her longer than Mr. Bamjee has, and are used to her spirit. When Mrs. Bamjee tells them they must go to Ismail's brother's engagement party, it shows the way she balances her life as an activist, a wife and a mother. She still makes sure the family attends all social gatherings. She still cooks every meal and stitches up her children's clothes. She does not compromise one for the other, which proves that family is just as important to her as her cause. It is also a nod to her personality, which becomes even clearer at the end- she never forgets anyone and never leaves anyone behind. When Mrs. Bamjee is arrested, the copying machine is taken away. This represents a loss in her freedom, as she goes to prison. The way her children help her showcases the theme of family, while her husband's anger and fear highlights selfishness once more. His main thought is how he will manage looking after the children and house in her absence. This is in stark contrast to her attitude- even as she is being taken away, she tells Mr. Bamjee that he cannot forget to take the kids to Ismail's brother's party. Even in a difficult moment, she shows love for her family. Her compassion for others is one of her strongest qualities. Mr. Bamjee does not once in those moments think about his wife's health, well-being or state- he simply wonders why she had to be so politically active, why she had to leave him to do so much work. His thoughts are consistently about himself, while Mrs. Bamjee's thoughts revolve around others. In school, one of the younger sons faces a difficult time from his teacher because of his mother being in prison. Here, we see the theme of prejudice. The teacher, who is a black man himself, ridicules Mrs. Bamjee for fighting for equality. He strongly dislikes the idea of everyone being equal, because his colour gave him trouble when he was younger. He wants to hold on to the little whiteness he has and assert his dominance over others- something he cannot do if everyone is brought to equality. He is triggered by his own experience into believing he is different or better than others. He discriminates against others in fear of being discriminated against- linear to the mentality of 'if I do it first, nobody will be able to do it to me.' While Mr. Bamjee thinks his wife is being troublesome by bringing this plight upon her children, Jimmy is very mature and reasonable. This shows his open mind and the bond between mother and son. This incident also provides a direct, everyday example of the problems faced in the society because of apartheid, which help the readers feel closer to Mrs. Bamjee and her cause. Mr. Bamjee finds the house quiet after his wife is taken away. This represents his gradually changing thought process. He may be closer to understanding his wife when he gives his son an extra shilling to visit her. However, it is Girlie who delivers the final moment of enlightenment. Mrs. Bamjee remembers her husband's birthday, something he himself does not. She is in prison, starving on a hunger strike, yet she thinks of him. Once again, we see a clear display of compassion from her end, especially with Girlie's words about her. Mr. Bamjee remembers why he married her- he complains all the time that she is not like other wives. Yet the very reason he was attracted to her is that: she is not like anyone else. Not just in her spirited nature, but in her kind heart. The fact that Girlie is pregnant, and her belly is mentioned in the last line, may represent a full-circle. Girlie herself is dressed 'modern', according to Mr. Bamjee. This could be a hint that the next generation is going to follow in the footsteps of Mrs. Bamjee. Maybe not as political activists themselves, but not confined to the expectations of patriarchy and society- it hints that they will be open to fighting for justice and standing up for what they believe in. The yet-to-be-born baby is a symbol of new life and new beginnings, for society and for the family- especially Mr. Bamjee's view on his wife. Meanwhile, the title of the story- A Chip of Glass Ruby- comes from the glass ruby nose piercing that Mrs. Bamjee used to wear. Glass ruby is shining and striking to the eye- this may symbolise Mrs. Bamjee herself. Her bright spirit and strong but beautiful nature, a light of hope among the difficulties. A Chip of Glass Ruby | About the Author Nadine Gordimer was a South African writer born in 1923. She often wrote about moral and racial issues, and included the political scenario as an element in her work. Especially the apartheid, as she lived through the entirety of it. She was actively a part of the anti-apartheid movement. Gordimer reviewed Nelson Mandela's famous defense speech of 1964. She is critically acclaimed and has several honourable recognitions for her writing, including the Booker Prize and the Nobel Prize in Literature. She passed away in 2014, at 90 years old. 1. Who is the main character in the story? What does the main character look like? The main characters in the story is Mrs. Zanip Bamjee – mother who wanted to help those in need. She look like poor people that lived in African and Indian. 2. Describe the main character's situation. Where does he/she live? Does he/she live alone or with other? What does the main character do for a living, or is he/she dependent on others for support? - Mrs. Zanip Bamjee was a political activist who felt obligated to help the people in need. One way she helped her community was by making leaflets and protesting against the government. She did this because the black community was being taken away from their homes and deep down she felt like that was going to happen to them. she lived with other in African and Indian people, she is dependent on others for support. 3. What are some of the chief characteristics of the character? How are these characteristics revealed in the story? How does the main character interact with other character? Note the degree of complexity of his/her behavior, thought, and feelings; their appearances, their habits, mannerisms, speech, attitudes and values. What is the main character's attitude towards his/her life? Is he/she happy or sad, content or discontented? Why? - The characters was a mother of all the son, she was a poor woman that trying to help in need people. she have 9 children. she is very kind person, she talk normally with other all the time. 4. What sort of conflict is the character facing? How is this conflict revealed? Is it resolved? If so, how? - Mrs. Bamjee gets arrested for helping the activists and her family is left mother-less. Yes they resolved Girlie takes care of her siblings. 5. In any character a developing character? If so, is his change a large or a small one? Is it a plausible change for him? Is he sufficiently motivated? Is the change given sufficient time? - No, Nothing change in the characters. A useful analysis of the short story: A Chip of Glass Ruby - includes themes, setting characterisation and plot. Learning material Subjects Nadine Gordimer's Six Feet of the Country As active in the anti-apartheid system, Nadine Gordimer, the South African writer who was born in 1923, doesn't stop bombarding the apartheid system in most of her works which deal with the moral and psychological tensions of her racially divided home country. She was a founding member of congress of South African writers and even at the height of the apartheid regime. A monster, apartheid, South Africa and racism were the most important elements which play a part in Gordimer's collection of short stories called Six Feet of the Country that indirectly denounce a main dangerous trammel of that system. Teeming with a lexical register suggestive of a bleak gloomy mood, figures of speech, and many symbolic elements, the first story of Gordimer's collection, Six Feet of the Country, chime in with the overarching theme of maltreatment of the blacks and the rejection of other. Within a story of a died man, not only barred from the right of immigration and working in a south African city, Johannesburg, but also prevented of being buried there after his death of pneumonia, the writer depicts the horribleness of the apartheid system and stresses the extend to which causes such discrimination huge hazards and social problems that lead even to a horrible death. A reader can find out that the theme is linked to darkness by merely spotting the dominant chokng, devaluing words sprinkled over the pages of that story such as: "sadness, Sick, devil, fear, irritated, dead, cold, pneumonia, mourners, grave, funeral, coffin ect. "Such lexical register endows the story with a dreary mood and enhances the characters' bad temper. In other term, the unfairness of the apartheid system and its dramatic effects are reflected in a sorrowful mood and mourning characters in this story. Gordimer, to elaborate her language and diction, is not limited only in choosing a lexical register coherent to the theme, but she also uses some figures of speech to convey some meanings in relation with the theme of maltreatment of the blacks and the rejection of others. She uses exaggeration to emphasis the racial views of the white people and their disdain to the blacks, and to foreground the incompatibility of these two races under the apartheid system: "They mean those strange moments on city pavement when a black man won't stand aside for a white man. Also, through the repetition of the word sick, "He's too sick - Very sick", a reader can simply discern the symbolic meaning of the word "sick" which describes the entire black race that suffers from the effects of the apartheid system. The sickness of Petrus's brother chimes with the moral sickness of the black population during the span of that unfair system. Moreover, the writer adds, too, a remarkable understatement which tones down the incident of a died man: "the boys stood around as they do in the kitchen when it is discovered that someone has broken a dish. Through this figure of speech, the writer wants to show that the black people were often exposed to death under the apartheid system, so that death became as a normal thing for them. Nadine Gordimer is not only apt in showing the reader about the harshness of the apartheid system through the diction, but she is also adept at choosing symbolic settings, situations, and inageries to highlight the main theme. The place, where both the white speaker and his wife live, is imbued with beauty and brilliance, as the writer depicts it; however, Petrus's black family's home is a hut. This implicit symbolic contrast reflects a manifestation of the rejection of the other, the blacks. Another symbolic element is the speaker's rejection to his wife: "I know through the way she never looks at me when she talks to me at breakfast next day that she is hurt and humiliated at my not wanting her. "That kind of relationship cuts the right at the core of the apartheid system repression of the black people. Interestingly enough, the image of the faint light plays an important, symbolic role in drawing the blacks' situation under that political system, for they were living hidden in darkness. The light of the torch and the light of the candle are as like as a faint light squeezing from a little gap in a dark place in which the blacks are hidden from the political system. More to the point, an avid reader can notice the repetition of the word "kitchen" throughout the story. A kitchen is place that links with spiritual nourishment and caring for others. Characters' emplacements revolve around the kitchen as if they are looking for help, care and warmth. All these symbols help enhance a reader's sympathy with the blacks and convey the main theme. Eventually, Gordimer's creation is obvious through the usage of chokng words creative of a bleak mood coupled with bad characters' temper, witty figures of speech, and clever symbolic elements. These all come to elaborate the theme of the rejection of other and enhance its horribleness and chock born from the apartheid system, the source of the social problems from which the characters suffer. Remember! This essay was written by a student You can get a custom paper by one of our expert writers Order custom paper Without paying upfront "A Chip of Glass Ruby" is about an Indian-African Muslim woman named Zanip Bamjee. She lived with her children and her husband in a poor neighborhood, with all the other Indian and black families. Mrs. Bamjee was a political activist who wanted to help everyone in need. One way she helped her community was by making leaflets and protesting against the government. "What's the difference, Yusuf? We've all got the same troubles." The black community was being taken away from their homes and Mrs. Bamjee wanted to help them because she felt that it might happen to them later on. She would stay up late most of the time to finish making copies of the leaflets. Her eldest son Jimmy also felt the same way about the government and wants to help his community. But Mr. Bamjee, who saw things differently, felt that his wife and Jimmy might get themselves into trouble. He was a food and vegetable vender, trying to make a better living and make things right for his family. But with his son and his wife's political activity he felt things might not be the same. Girlie, in the other hand felt that her mother is doing the right thing. Mrs. Bamjee was taken away from her house and was put into jail with the other activists. Mr. Bamjee never figured out why he had married his wife. Girlie said to him "It's because she doesn't want anybody to be left out", and at the end Mr. Bamjee realized that "Nobody else is like that", the way Mrs. Bamjee was. My favorite part is when Mr. Bamjee bought his wife flowers and the best fruits, because he realized at the end that she was different. She cared for her family and wanted everyone to live a better life. The point of this story is to show us the reader that sometimes people can have a situation where they have to decide from two good things. But we can't always do two good things at the same time. So sometimes we have to sacrifice one good thing for another. This relates to Mrs. Bamjee because she had two good things to do at the same time. One was to stay home and take care of her family and the other was to help the black community. Both of them are good things that she wanted to maintain, but at the end she felt that helping her community was the first step in order to help her family, because it can also happen to them later on. She wanted the best for her children and others like them, because she felt that everyone should get an equal opportunity as the whites or upper class. Question: 1. Was Mrs. Bamjee able to solve the conflict with the government?