



A Conversation With My Father

Grace Paley

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A Conversation With My Father Details

Date : Published 1974 (first published January 1st 1972)

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Author : Grace Paley

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From Reader Review A Conversation With My Father for online ebook

Anatoly says

The story written by Grace Paley "A Conversation with My Father" includes a story told within another story. The plot is based on dialogues between a daughter and her elderly father.

In the text the father asks his daughter (writer) to tell him a story. She does it telling about a woman who lived in the neighborhood with her teenage son. The son becomes addicted to drugs and then the mother tried to share the addiction of her son assuming that it would make them closer to each other.

The first variant of the story told by the writer didn't satisfy the father because it is short and she didn't give any details. He says "You left everything out. Turgenev wouldn't do that. Chekhov wouldn't do that."

She retold the story making it longer: the son fall in love with the girl and gives up the bad habit and he demanded that his mother did it too. She couldn't and he left her alone.

The writer tried to continue the story choosing a better destiny for the heroes. The father isn't satisfied again because he sees a pessimistic end of the story. The daughter believed that the author had a right to create the destiny for her protagonists freely. The father became a pessimist or realist from his life experience. "In your own life, too, you have to look it in the face." He used a logic "A person must have character, She does not."

Paley finished her story with an open question: can a person change? She (or her protagonist) thinks I that every person or character of a story should be given a chance for a better life.

My interpretation of the moral of the story that this is about a writing style with:

- advice to draw a bright picture, to pay attention to every detail, as great writers do it;
- depicting the true story facing to the truth even if it is cruel;
- discussing freedom and restrictions for writers in constructing the plot.

We can see a great example of metaphorical description. Let's compare:

A simple description: The father is in a bad physical condition but with a clear mind.

Grace Paley's description: "His heart, that bloody motor, is equally old and will not do certain jobs any more. It still floods his head with brainy light. But it won't let his legs carry the weight of his body around the house."

Grace Paley plays with language, drawing from patterns the picture of real life. This story uncovers for readers the process, mechanics of writing and does it well.

This is a link to the audio about this story from The Guardian:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/aud...>

Mark Muckerman says

How does one review four pages?

Does the reader seek to praise what is present or forgive what is absent? Is it about the content? The plot? The development or respect for the lack of development, recognizing that four pages permits none? Do we look for style and substance in the telling of the tale? In this case do we review the story, or the story within the story, or the story about a story, or the REAL story, which is the unspoken story of the emotional relationship of parent and child - alluded to and illustrated, but never overt - always present but conveyed in layers that must be revealed?

In the end I choose all:

At face value, the four pages were a pleasant read.

The interaction of father & daughter was well conveyed.

Below that, the real relationship tells more than the story.

Below that, the allegory of the inner story and the verbal fencing about its quality is well written, but the word choice reveals a much greater depth of emotion that the words, taken as a whole, convey with texture beyond a mere accumulation of organized letters and spaces.

Eleanor King says

This text struck me more of a literary example, a way of showing how long-lasting the effect Chekhov and Maupassant have had on short stories. For any writer of short stories today, they will undoubtedly, whether it be consciously or not, be incorporating ideas and styles set up by Chekhov and Maupassant.

Maria says

A story and the same story retold inside another story all asking "Can a person change?"

????? ?????? says

Story number 8 in the Storied life of A.J. Fikry :)

Monica says

Read this after it was mentioned in Gabrielle Zevin's The Storied Life of A.J. Finkry. While unimpressed with the ending, I think it is a crafty story and I appreciate the art of the leveled storytelling (it's a story, or two, within a story), which is clever. What I love the most about it I think is the descriptions of her father, so poetic. I suppose the more I think about it, the more okay I am with the end, just because her father has the last word, like she promised her family.

It's a very short story (4 printed pages), and I would recommend for anyone looking to dabble in short story or feeling particularly literary.

I have not read any of Grace Paley's other stories.

Neyly says

Another short short story.

I like the construction: a short story told (and revised) within the short story. I like the dialogue between the daughter and her elderly infirm father. The ending seems abrupt, but, no matter, I still like it.

Recommended.

Rhiann says

Short story
A.J. Fikry No 8

Neil Pittman says

Paley plays with language and storytelling well. It was a fun little ride.

Mehrdad says

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