The Education of Little Tree Book Report

*The Education of Little Tree* is a fictional memoir published in 1976 by Forrest Carter. This book tells us the story of a five-year-old boy who lost his parents and was raised by his Cherokee grandparents. *The Education of Little Tree* made a rather positive impression on me. It tells us about the simple and peaceful life in the mountains and being a part of the beautiful world of nature.

I think that before discussing the book itself, it is very important to mention couple of words about its interesting historical background. When the book was just published in 1976, it regarded as a personal memoir of the author. *The Education of Little Tree* gained a big success, mainly because of its naivety and charming atmosphere that reader gets from descriptions of simple Cherokee life in the mountains. “And its backwoods spiritualism has won devotees in such diverse quarters as the Washington State court system, where it is used to help rehabilitate juvenile offenders” (Mcwhorter). Nevertheless, after several years, it turned out that Forrest Carter, whose real name is Asa Earl Carter did not have any Cherokee roots, thus this memoir could not be true. Moreover, Asa Carter had a very controversial political life and was a member of racist organizations, such as Ku Klux Klan. Such facts about life of the author of *The Education of Little Tree* had a big influence on the people’s opinion about the book. Many scholars and historians examined the book and confirmed that it contains many misleading elements about Cherokee culture. Thus, with time, *The Education of Little Tree* was re-classified as fictional memoir, and it still awakes many discussions on the topic of the value and significance of this book (Mcwhorter).
The Education of Little Tree made a positive impression on me, despite the controversial background of its author Forrest Carter. It is indeed very atmospheric and easy to read story. The grandparents of Little Tree are very kind individuals who love and educate their grandson. This book shows us the life where a boy instead of playing in the yard goes hunting with his grandpa, and reads Shakespeare in the evenings with grandma. From my point of view, the very significant idea that author tried to emphasize in this story is education and its value. The main things that grandparents were teaching Little Tree are basic human values and moral principles. Both, grandpa and grandma were referring to the idea of “its own Way” meaning that everything in the world has its own purpose, and in order to be happy, one should follow “the Way”. Also, grandparents taught Little Tree to be generous.

Grandpa once said:

It is so with people who store and fat themselves with more than their share. They will have it taken from them. And there will be wars over it…and they will make long talks, trying to hold more than their share. They will say a flag stands for their right to do this…and men will dies because of the words and the flag… but they will not change the rules of the Way. (Carter 10)

These words of grandpa explain Little Tree the danger of being greedy. The boy remembered this principle and always shared food and everything what he got with other people later in the story. For instance, when Little Tree was in the orphanage he shared an extra candy with his friend.

In addition, grandparents did not forget about classical ways of education, especially reading. Every evening, grandpa and Little Tree were gathering around grandma (she was the only one who knew how to read) and listen her reading different books, including Shakespeare’s plays, history books about Caesar and Alexander the Great, as well as philosophical and political readings about George Washington. Also, they were discussing
their readings (Carter 14-15). I really enjoyed reading these parts. I could vividly imagine their atmosphere and joy of discussing the topics they like. Overall, I think that the way grandparents were teaching Little Tree was very effective and the best possible. In comparison to the unfriendly atmosphere of the orphanage school, the home education of the boy was much better option. While reading the book, I also found some useful moments and principles that should never be forgotten (being generous).

In this book, we sometimes encounter racial prejudice issues. Since, the story was written many years ago, the racism was rather widespread, especially in the South. Nevertheless, author does not concentrate on it, rather just acknowledge. When Little Tree encounters racial prejudices from the side of other people, he does not exactly understand what it is. I think it is because he is still a sincere child with naïve worldview.

Little Tree is very kind, thus regards every single person with kindness. This kindness is also shown in the situation in the orphanage, where Little Tree was penalized. I think that every child would get offended and feel negative emotions after being ripped out. Nevertheless, Little Tree did not have hard feelings towards people in the orphanage. He just wanted to go back home. I did not like the atmosphere that was created in the chapters about orphanage. In comparison to positive and easy life in the mountains with grandparents, the life in the school felt to be unhappy.

The end of The Education of Little Tree is a bit sad for me, because grandparents died and Little Tree stayed all alone. Of course, the deaths of characters were not dramatic, but peaceful on contrary. Grandpa and grandma were old already and lived good and happy lives. They were ready to leave this world and left it with peace. However, I wonder whether Little Tree was indeed ready to become independent and how his life would go in the future.

The Education of Little Tree is a story about happiness that can be found in simple and not fancy life, and the topics of moral education and kindness are emphasized as well. I
would not say that this book is genius, but I liked it mainly because of the sweet and positive atmosphere that was present throughout the entire story.
Works Cited
