

Skylar Grieco

Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead

By Bert V. Royal

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environmental Facts

1. Geographical location, including climate: An incredibly average American town. The weather is a comfortable warm temperature throughout the play, although cloudy at times.

2. Date: The time is the present in spring. There are a number of references to prom so we would assume that it is nearing the end of the school year, likely sometime in March or early April. The time of day varies from morning, to lunchtime, to late at night.

3. Political Environment: The political environment is similar to that of our current situation. The youth of the nation is largely in favor of more liberal views and there is a much stronger push for social change than previously seen.

4. Social Environment: The youth is also largely ignored or insulted by previous generations, as they are seen to be self-centered and dramatic, amongst other things. This is potentially a reason for the terrible behavior that occurs in the play, as the kids feel neglected or they are told that they are bad people, so they then embrace that sensation.

5. Religious Environment: Religion plays a role in this show, in terms of nobody is quite sure what to believe. Most of these kids are at a point where they are questioning a lot of things and religion or an afterlife are brought up more than once, even in the first three scenes. Van considers himself to be a Buddhist and entertains the thought of reincarnation, while CB's Sister changes her identity and religion every week from Baptist to Wiccan, and so forth.

II. Dramatic Action

The play takes place over the most interesting few days of these teenagers' lives. We would assume that before CB's dog dies things were relatively "normal" in their lives, and the kids mull through their routines every day. But with the death of CB's dog, the action is thrust forward to become the most interesting three days of their lives. CB begins to question his whole life and messes up the gang's routine which then throws everything slightly off. CB goes through every one of his friends to try and find some sort of answer for his questions about life, but is only met with more questions and confusion. The play ultimately resolves in CB getting his answers from one person he never expected to hear from, his pen pal.

III. Characters

CB (Charlie Brown): CB wants answers and clarity. He has lived in his entire life questioning every move that he makes and he is finally starting to actually fight for the solutions. In the past he has not been very strong willed, but now he is beginning to stand up for himself and his beliefs,

and demonstrating a spine. His moral stance is in question and shifting through the show. Early on he is seen as a bully standing by Matt in his antics, but then he later starts to stand against Matt and switch sides to do what he considers "right." He is introspective, inquisitive, unstable, confused, and caring.

CB's Sister (Sally): CB's Sister wants self-actualization. She tries to switch through a variety of identities and find who she is. In a way she is experimenting through every social clique quicker than humanly possible. She has a strong will and holds firm in her convictions, despite her changing outer appearance, she is one of the few good people in the show. She still retains some of that innocence in her search for herself, which is made clear through her attempts at reaching out to Beethoven, never having smoked pot, and never had any sort of sex. Her moral stance would be considered the "best" amongst all the kids, as she has a view of humanity different than others. She still remains optimistic in a number of situations, despite her being confused about other situations. She is extroverted, kind, empathetic, lost, and perseverant.

Van (Linus): Van wants to chill out. He was always the philosophical one as a child and is now philosophical through pot. He does not show any great will or drive for anything, other than getting high. His moral stance is one that is mostly about people taking care of themselves. He doesn't worry much about others and he doesn't expect others to worry about him. He is relaxed, philosophical, calm, and lazy.

Matt (Pigpen): Matt wants CB. He has repressed homosexual feelings for CB and converts those feelings into homophobia and intense aggression towards Beethoven. Matt is very strong willed. He has a very corrupt moral sense. He claims to be doing the right thing by standing up for CB as his best friend, but in reality he is just a bully. He doesn't see his behavior as bad and he doesn't care. He is anal, aggressive, homophobic, loyal, close-minded, and impulsive.

Beethoven (Schroeder): Beethoven wants to be left alone. He is tired of the torture and abuse he has endured and wants to be left alone to his piano. Beethoven does not have a very strong will. His father and the other children at school have broken it. He has a strong moral stance, but it is perverted because of his abuse. Rather than seeing the good in people, he perpetually sees the worst in people, because that is what he is accustomed to. He is introverted, frightened, isolated, realistic, and kind.

Tricia (Peppermint Patti): Tricia wants popularity. She is not as cool as she would like to be so she forces her insecurities upon other people, such as Frieda. She has a strong will because she believes herself in all of her misplaced convictions. She has what would be considered a terrible moral stance by western standards, including activities such as drinking, drug usage, and sex. She is hypocritical, free spirited, insecure, catty, and assertive.

Marcy (Marcie): Marcie wants approval. She is always trying to appease Tricia and do things to satisfy her. She has a strong will, so long as it pertains

to following Tricia. Her moral stance is one that is very heavily influenced by those around her. She is impressionable, intelligent, funny, and a follower.

Van's Sister (Lucy): Van's sister wants to enjoy her life. She is very impulsive. She acts strongly on her emotions. She is very strong willed and will not be stopped when she sets forth to do something. She has a very corrupt moral sense and sees the world as a ruined place. She is impulsive, extroverted, witty, clever, and aggressive.

IV. Idea

A. Meaning of title: The title of this play means a few things. Dog Sees God is a palindrome, by spelling the same thing both forwards and backwards. Dog Sees God also refers to Snoopy's death at the beginning of the play acting as a bit of an inciting incident. The phrase Dog Sees God is also a reference to the expression that "a dog sees god in his master. A cat looks in the mirror."

(pg 24) The second part of the title, Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead, is a parody of the common phrase used in titles like confessions of a teenage drama queen, or shopaholic, etc... This furthers the point that while this play is a drama, it is also a parody.

B. Philosophical Statements in the play: Van: "Dude, we all have to let go of things from our childhood." (Pg. 11) Van's Sister: "I've been branded a sociopath and I have no choice but to believe it." (Pg. 35) CB: "Do you ever feel like you're not a real person? That you're the product of someone's imagination and you can't think for yourself because you're really like just some creation and that somewhere there's people laughing every time you

fail?" (Pg. 46-47) Van: "Don't concern yourself with death. Immerse yourself in life. Enjoy every moment that you're allowed to but keep asking questions." (Pg. 48)

C. Super-objective with explanation: The super-objective of the play is to accept and embrace the inevitability of growing up and losing innocence. All of the kids are facing moments that were inescapable, after having dealt with some sort of loss of innocence. Everyone has experienced similar situations to those presented in this play, although not quite as extreme perhaps. The elements presented are universal, especially to this recent generation of youth.

D. Metaphor with explanation: My metaphor for this play is an old stuffed dog that was once loved and played with every day, but has now been ignored and neglected and left to rot. The idea behind this is that as people grow up they begin to forget things in their lives that were once important to them. They leave things behind and neglect them. These things then morph and deteriorate to a tattered, withered state. They were once pure and clean and now all that's left is a sad shell of the past.