

Sample Essay in MLA Style

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Note: As you will see, Heidi's essay, like many of the essays in this text, has been formatted into MLA style. As is customary in MLA style, Heidi's essay does not have a cover page and includes an MLA Works Cited Page.

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Comp 1/ Reader Response Paper

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Le Guin's Morality Tale: A Response to "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"

"The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" by Ursula K. Le Guin is a heartbreaking morality tale from *The Wind's Twelve Quarters: Short Stories*. The story takes place in Omelas, a utopian society where everything seems perfect. However, this perfection is offset by the suffering of a child. In the end, Ursula K. Le Guin's illustration of the dark contrast between happiness and wickedness represents the difficult choices we, as human beings, must make in life.

During the exposition of the story, I was mesmerized by the whimsical, fairy-tale qualities Omelas appeared to have. A shimmering beacon of utopia, everyone in Omelas is at peace and without guilt. Religion, politics, violence, limits, and inhibitions do not exist in this everlasting nirvana. As a cinephile, the city brought to my memory two films with similar utopias: *Pleasantville* and *The Truman Show*. However, these movies and "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" also share a twist: their flawless universes are an elaborate ruse to mask a disturbing secret.

I began to feel skeptical about Omelas even before Ursula K. Le Guin revealed the city's mystery. She asks the cynical readers, like myself, "Do you believe? Do you accept the festival, the city, the joy? No? Then let me

describe one more thing" (3). Then she shares the secret: deep in the cellars of the city, a mentally ill child is locked away. Since the gender is unrecognizable, the citizens refer to the child as "it," signifying its deficient value as a human being. Treated like an animal, it is mentally and physically abused, starving, and losing its ability to speak, since no one talks to it. Devoid of a loving family and friends, the child sits in its own feces, left to waste away for the rest of its life.

As I have a little brother who's diagnosed with autism, reading of seemingly nice people torturing a harmless individual disgusted me. I thought to myself, "Why? Why would the townsfolk of a peaceful community treat an innocent child with such disdain?" Omelas' twisted logic is that one bad must suffer and the pleasure of thousands outweighs one's pain. This philosophy is cruel.

When the children of Omelas are of age to understand, they are brought to observe the poor creature. Their natural reaction, like mine, is of shock and disbelief, traumatized by seeing a kid their own age tortured and forgotten. Some suppress the guilt and depression in order to keep living in a dreamland. Others, like myself, yearn for justice, but our hope is all for naught, as others perceive "it" as the key to the town's success. Le Guin ends the story by showcasing these people, the heroes, the ones who see the city's actions as immoral, counteracting the injustice by leaving the city. They leave their utopian existence behind and journey to the real world. Enlightened by the inhumanity of their city, they do what is morally right and face reality. I firmly agree with this brave decision. As human beings, we all must make a choice when faced with hardship: stay silent or do what is right. I, like many people, believe in standing up for those who are oppressed and mistreated. And I believe Ursula K. Le Guin does as well. Le Guin created a morality tale with significant virtues: appearances can be deceiving, and we, as a human race, must choose either the safe side or the righteous side. These lessons are true and applicable to our daily realities.

Works Cited

Le Guin, Ursula K. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." *Blackboard*.
07 Feb 2014. Web. 14 February 2014.