

In the short story 'Flowers' by Robin Jenkins, there are key themes of the loss of innocence and the far reaching effects of war. The significant event in the story happens when a little girl finds two dead airmen. In this time, the key themes of the story are made aware to the reader. Jenkins uses characterisation, setting, symbolism and language to effectively convey the impact of the event. In 'Flowers', a young evacuee called Margaret is living in the Scottish highlands, where she rebels against the adults and misses home. Disobeying a promise not to go down to the beach nearby, she comes across the decomposing corpses of two airmen. This traumatic encounter shows to the reader the horrible, far reaching consequences of war.

In Flowers, the description of the setting changes hugely after the significant event. At the start of the story, the sea loch has a "cool salty breeze that was pleasant". The use of the word choice 'pleasant' tells us that the setting is a calm, peaceful place to be. However, after the dead airmen are found, "a sweet nasty smell mingled with the tang of the sea". The word choice of mingled connotes that the sea is now entangled in the war and is now forever stained by it. This shows the significant event is greatly important as it effectively conveys the far reaching effects of war; even a sea loch in the highlands of Scotland is affected by war.

Within the story, a flower is an important motif that is shown to change permanently as a result of the significant event. Initially, when found by Margaret, the flower is described by talking of "it's beauty, harmlessness, and it's loneliness". The flower shares many qualities with Margaret, suggesting it stands as a symbol for her character and emphasising her innocence. Later on through the story after the significant event, the flower is "crushed into a green black mess". The use of the word choice 'crushed' connotes destruction and disfigurement, telling us Margaret's innocence has been irrevocably destroyed as a result of the war. The significant event is used effectively here to convey the far reaching impacts of war as it has killed Margaret's innocence, even though she lives far from any fighting.

The character of Margaret changes dramatically after the significant event.. Leading up to the significant event, as she finds the dead airmen thinking they are alive, she is "smiling shyly". The use of the word choice 'shyly' tells us that she is embarrassed and innocent, portraying her character as naïve. Further on however, after Margaret has found out the airmen are deceased, she is described as "screaming...weeping and yelling". This word choice connotes extreme fear and overwhelming emotion. This shows us the terrible effect the war has had on her, although she is far away from it. The significant event has been used effectively to convey the huge effect war has on everyone, as even a young girl in the highlands is traumatised by it.

Within 'Flowers', the airmen are described vastly differently before and after the significant event. Initially they are described as "the true flowers of our country, the most precious, the most beautiful". Just as flowers are fragile and admirable, so too are the airmen, showing their value. Later on however, after the significant event, the airmen are described as "unrecognisable as human". This suggests the airmen have been dehumanised by war, as they no longer can be seen as such. That they are unrecognisable shows how they could have been anyone. The significant event is shown to be important as it effectively tells us the far reaching impacts of war. This is because the airmen are portrayed as precious and yet are changed irreparably by the war.

The significant event in 'Flowers' works as a major plot point, effectively emphasising the far reaching effects of war. The reader is shown how the setting and Margaret and the airmen are forever changed by the war despite being far away from it. In the whole of the story, Jenkins' anti-war sentiment is made clear; even though people can be taken away from war and put in a safe place, it will continue to affect them.