Poorva Patel

Dr. Randall

English 1102

26 January 2018

Reflection on the Theme of Neglect in John Updike’s *Oliver’s Evolution*

It is the hope of all parents that their children grow up and become responsible adults to take care of them once old age strikes. However, it is their duty to show their kids how to be reliable members of the society by taking good care of them. Parents who neglect their children compromise their future well-being as they do not learn the elements of responsibility. Additionally, neglected children do not get the affection they need to grow well. Their emotional, physical, and psychological growth and development are hindered as they lack some of the basic needs. In John Updike’s story *Oliver’s Evolution*, Oliver is neglected by his parent, thereby becoming a reckless teenager but he becomes a person that can be depended upon when he becomes an adult.

When John Updike says, “His parents had not meant to abuse him; they had meant to love him, and they did love him,” he implies that Oliver’s parents did not treat him well. Their intention was to love him, but struggled to show the affection. One of the reasons why he was neglected was that he was born with turned legs, thus had to crawl with corrective casts. Therefore, the parents might have ashamed by their son’s physical conditions, thus finding it hard to be affectionate to him.

John Updike Writes, “…in retrospect, they wondered if there had really been a need to rush him to the hospital and have his poor little stomach pumped,” he shows how Oliver’s parents did care about his health. They found him on the floor of their dressing room with a box of mothballs. Some of the mothballs had saliva, a clear indication that he was poisoned. However, the parents do not show any urgency to take him to hospital. They felt there was no need to get him to a healthcare provider. Their attitude towards him shows how bad they treated him, and yet he was their son.

Eventually, Oliver marries and becomes a responsible man. Updike says, “He is a tree, a sheltering boulder. He is a protector of the weak,” to show how Oliver evolved to become reliable. This was despite his parents refusing to nurture him, a condition which led to him to protect those that were neglected. He believed it was his mandate to show love to those who needed it most, yet he was never fortunate to get it.

John Updike’s story, *Oliver’s Evolution* explores the life a man who was neglected by his parents due to being born with turned legs. They did not nurture him to become a responsible man and yet he was their son. Also, they were not concerned about his health, a view supported by the lack of urgency to take to the hospital when they found on the floor of their dressing with mothballs. Nevertheless, Oliver overcame his childhood struggles and transformed to be a responsible man. He becomes the protector of the weak, thus offering his love and care to those who did not get them from their family members.