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English 32

21 November 2023

A Haunted House

“A Haunted House” by Virginia Woolf is a short story that utilizes symbolism and modernist elements to represent the theme of love that goes against the traditional scary haunted house story. In the beginning we are introduced to a ghostly couple who are searching for their lost treasure in their house. The house is now occupied by a living couple who are aware of the ghost couple but aren't afraid of them because they know the ghosts aren't dangerous. As the ghost couple searches the house for their treasure they discuss "Here we left it," "Oh, but here too!" "It's upstairs," "And in the garden," (Woolf). This implies that the house is the place that represents where their hidden treasure can be found. Frequently the narrator, who is the lively woman, refers to the house having a pulse. For example, “the pulse of the house beat softly” and “the pulse of the house beats wildly.” The “pulse of the house” can be symbolic to a beating heart which represents that the house is also the place where the ghost couple shared their love. The ghost couple states, "Here we slept," "Kisses without number." "Waking in the morning—" "Silver between the trees—" "Upstairs—" "In the garden—" "When summer came—" "In winter snowtime—" Here the couple is reminiscing on the memories they had together. In the end of the story it can be interpreted that all along the treasure was their memories and their love for each other. At the end the narrator exclaims, “Oh, is this your buried treasure? The light in the heart” (Woolf). “The light in the heart can be referred to the ghost couple looking back on their memories with one another and also their love they continue to have for each other even in death.

Overall, Virginia Woolf challenges the concept of a haunted house story by using symbolism in “A Haunted House” to represent a love story rather than a scary story.