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The Effects of World War II

In “Between the Acts” was written during World War II and in her characters, Woolf used the theme individualism and collectivism to showcase the division that the war caused to the social class. According to “On Different Levels Ourselves Went Forward’ Pageantry, Class Politics and Narrative Form in Virginia Woolf’s Late Writing” by Ben Harker, he mentions. “Managing tension between historically produced, class bound. Ways of seeing and not seeing individuals...pressured of historical movement”(435). From this quote, one can get the impression that due to the war it caused conflict with the social class and where one must fit in. People felt like they weren’t being seen if they belonged to a certain group. Which is why I believe Woolf used individualism for her characters to have a space of their own where they can speak out. Which is why we see her characters get mad that they have to join together for the pageant because they are scared of losing the little voice that they have if they join the group. From that point in the book we can already see the division happening. Harker also mentions, “The pageant with its emphasis on an event that draws together the wider community” (436). Since the war brought the division between people in the social class, I get the impression that Woolf used her characters from the book and the pageant to get her characters to connect again and to show them it's okay to all become one. Woolf wanted the tension and the division to

end and in order for her to do that, the only way to bring them together was the pageant. Since tensions were high, I felt like this was Woolf's way of saying in order to defeat the war and bring peace we all must leave our individualistic values behind and form together, so as a group we can end the war.

Works Cited

HARKER, BEN. “‘ON DIFFERENT LEVELS OURSELVES WENT FORWARD’: PAGEANTRY, CLASS POLITICS AND NARRATIVE FORM IN VIRGINIA WOOLF’S LATE WRITING.” *ELH*, vol. 78, no. 2, 2011, pp. 433–456. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41236551. Accessed 13 May 2021.

