

Analysis of the Different Growth Environments for Children of Rural Areas in *The Grass House* and *Anne of Green Gables*

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Abstract: *The Grass House* describes Sang Sang's unforgettable and impressive elementary school life which has lasted six years. This great novel presents readers the growth environments, set in Yau Ma Tei, for children from China's countryside. *Anne of Green Gables* depicts the living environments in Canadian rural areas. By entering into the process the Anne's growth environments, readers can detect Canadian rural children's special conditions. By analyzing the two books, we can find that there are many differences in the growth environments in Chinese and Canadian rural areas. The differences can be divided into two parts: cultural environments and natural environments. Cultural environments can be divided into three parts: education system, customs, and the sense of value. And natural environments consist of buildings, climate, and rural planning, etc. By comparing the different environments, we can find the best growing environments for children.

Keywords: *The Grass House*, *Anne of Green Gables*, Growth environments.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Lucy Maud Montgomery is the author of *Anne of Green Gables*. She has written a series of world famous novels, and *Anne of Green Gables* was published in 1908. She was born in Prince Edward Island, which is one of the most beautiful provinces in Canada.

Cao Wenxuan is the author of "The Grass House". He was born in Yan Cheng, Jiangsu Province, and he is a child writer. He graduated from the Peking University in 1977, and then he stayed in Peking University as a teacher in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature.

Humans are the nature's son, and the nature can provide people the demands of life, and it can make people's spiritual world more colorful. How many generations of children spend their happy childhood days in the nature's arms? Today's children have a little opportunities to enjoy this kind of blissfulness. The industrial civilization takes away children's rights for enjoying the bright sunshine and fresh air. How to reduce the distance between children and nature is essential at present.

With the development of the urbanization, more and more people come to big cities to look for job opportunities, resulting in the phenomenon that more and more children are left in rural areas. Left-behind children usually cannot get enough carefulness in family. So, looking for a way for their parents can take care of them in the daily life is very important.

1.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE

The thesis aims to analyze the different growth environments for children in rural areas in Canada and China systematically. Through analysis, some parents and teachers can find the best way to cultivate children. And by making research on the different environments, people can find some different features in the two nations. If parents and teachers know the best way to cultivate children, they will try their best to realize the conditions.

1.3 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

By analyzing the growth environments in the two books, the thesis can explore the best growth environments for children in China and Canada respectively. And, there are a lot of descriptions about the nature in the two books. All of these beautiful scenery can arise children's deep love for nature and life.

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2.1 THE CHARACTERS IN THE GRASS HOUSE

2.1 Sang Sang

Sang Sang is the son of the headmaster of Yau Ma Tei local school. He is energetic, lovely and sensible.

Sang Sang is the embodiment of Cao Wenxuan, who wrote his childhood memory into the novel. Sang Sang is a child growing up in sufferings. As a normal people, Sang sang has his own shortcomings, just like that he was jealous of Du Xiaokang at one time. But, when Du Xiaokang's family went broke, he felt sympathy for him, and decided to keep the secret (Du Xiaokang has stolen the book from a girl student.) for him. Though having a lot of shortcomings, he had many valuable merits which makes Sang Sang more like a real human being.

2.2 Anne

Anne has red hairs and a face of freckles. (Criticizing her red hair can anger her!) Anne lost her brother in her early years. Later, her father died. She always keeps a positive attitude towards life, and she imagined some beautiful things in orphan asylum. After several adoptions, she comes to Green Gables and gets adopted by the Cuthberts. After then, her new life begins.

3.1 THE GRASS HOUSE

3.1.1 The Principle of Equality

Sang Sang is the son of Sang Qiao, headmaster of Sang Sang's school. Sang Sang is equal with other children. He doesn't get privileges in his daily life.

The principle of equality can also be shown in Zhi Yue's experience. Zhi Yue's home is far away from Yau Ma Tei. When the rain is heavy, Sang Sang's mother invites her to stay overnight in their home. They treat her equally like Sang Sang and Sang Sang's little sister.

3.1.2 The Strength of Sympathy

The Grandma Qin has her own dream: having a land which is owned by her and her husband. They work day and night, and make a lot of money. At last, they fulfill their dream. They value it very much, while good time doesn't last long. Her husband leaves the world. When the fragrance of the wheat floats in the air, the local government grabs her land to build a school. For showing her dissatisfaction towards the local government, she affects students' classes purposely.

Sang Sang enters Grandma Qin's life by a chance, and he feels sympathetic about her. He knows her miserable stories and becomes a listener to Grandma Qin. By chatting with innocent Sang Sang, Grandma Qin has opened her closed heart gradually.

The seed of sympathy grows quietly in Sang Sang's inner heart.

3.2 Anne of Green Gables

The Green Gables is a small village isolated from the outside world. And its transportation is not convenient. From the text, the economical level is not very ideal. From the book, readers can feel that this place hasn't been polluted by the industries.

When Anne hears that she would be adopted in Prince Edward Island, She is longing for this place. And that is because Prince Edward Island is the most beautiful place in Canada.

The relationship between Anne and Diana makes Anne grow healthier. Diana is Anne's bosom friend. The complementary relationship of the two girls makes Anne improve herself.

4.1 Different Cultural Environments

China and Canada belongs to different cultural circles. China belongs to East Asian culture circle, while Canada belongs to western European culture circle.

The basic factors of east Asian culture circle are Chinese characters, Chinese traditional rules, agriculture, and Buddhism. All of these factors have affected the countries' characters, ideology, and social structures in east Asia.

Western European culture believe in Christianity. This culture circle has the most wide areas. Most of the countries are immigrated countries, and they are influenced by the United Kingdom. Their religion is Christianity.

4.1.1 The Education System

From the two books, we can see that the education system in Canadian villages and in Chinese villages have their own advantages.

The education system in Canadian villages is more diversified than that in Chinese villages.

In The Grass House, students go to school from Monday to Friday, while in The Green Gables, students sometimes go to picnic and hold a tea session.

The first feature of Canada's education system is that Canada is a federal country and the provinces of Canada have many powers.

The second feature of Canadian education system is that schools pay much attention to students' ability development.

However, many students in Chinese rural areas have to quit schools due to their family financial problems. Just like Du Xiaokang in *The Grass House*. But at present, with the popular of education, the bad condition has improved a lot. China has many policies to develop the rural education, and almost each family in Chinese rural places can afford the education.

Chinese rural education system is more appropriate for traditional culture to hand down than Canadian rural system. Just like in the book of *The Grass House*, Zhi Yue can recite a lot of poems. And in the textbooks, there are amounts of ancient poetry. By reading and reciting the poems, children can feel the greatness of Chinese Characters, and they can understand the social environments in the ancient times. Learning history and comprehend the life of a poet can gradually make children can think more comprehensive and more logically.

4.1.2 The Values

The core difference between Chinese and Canadian countrysides is that Chinese people usually think collectivism is superior to individualism. While Canadians view individualism higher.

In *The Grass House*, we can get a glimpse of Chinese rural people's collectivism from one event: In the area, there are five elementary schools which gather together and have a contest about gymnastics. And in this time, the contest will be held in Yau Ma Tei primary school. Sang Qiao has been paying much attention on reputation, and he shouts loudly sometimes. In the day before the contest, the teacher Jiang Yilun asks Tu He to his office, saying, "You stay in classroom in the next day." Under such circumstances, the teacher has to sacrifice Tu He's self-esteem to protect the public's interests, due to Tu He's a bald head. And there is another event showing China's collectivism in *The Grass House*: The local authority decides to sacrifice Grandma Qin's land to build a primary school. From the two events, we can conclude that Chinese people are collectivism-oriented. Collectivism and individualism have their own advantages and disadvantages. In *Grass House*, collectivism can make the class come to the top in the competition, but at the same time, it need sacrifice some individual's rights. And the sense of collectivism has benefit China a lot. In the time of Reform And Opening-up, China has paid much attention on the development of the southern areas and . And that has get a big achievement. At present, the wealthier areas in china helps the central areas and the western areas to develop. Their development has provided much experience to the rest areas.

At the same time, Canadians' individualism can be shown in *Anne of Green Gables*: In Canada, the puff sleeve is very popular, and the most of Anne's

classmates wear puff sleeve. Anne wants to wear it too, but Marilla holds the idea that the good clothes are those making people feel comfortable. However, Anne still sticks to her own wishes. In the end, Matthew fulfills Anne's wish. The individualism is fully shown in this experience.

4.2 Different Natural Environments

4.2.1 The Buildings

From the two books, we can see that some of Chinese rural residents live in grass houses or bungalows. While Canada rural residents usually live in country houses of two floors.

Chinese architecture reflects China's history and the cultural heritage. It is the symbol of folk wisdom. The architecture of Chinese rural areas is as old as China's civilization. Traditional Chinese people believe in the integration of nature and human. In grass house, the buildings keep a harmonious relationship with nature. Around the grass houses there are hills, rivers and other nature landscapes.

Most Canadian rural residents live in houses of two floors. And they have their own gardens, in which grow flowers and trees.

The difference is mostly because the population. China has a large population needs to be nourished. So, the buildings in China are space-saving. While Canada's climate is very cold, and about half of the territory is in the frigid zone. So, Canada's population is not as large as China. The per residents in Canada have more space to live, so many family have their gardens.

4.2.2 Climate

Canada is located in the far north of North America, renowned as "the Country of Maple." In *Green Gables*, the sunshine is rich, and most regions are of temperate coniferous forest climate. The *Green Gables* is located in Prince Edward Island, and the warm sea water of St. Lawrence's bay makes Prince Edward Island's climate calmer than the other places.

The Grass House belongs to the region south of the Yangtze River. The climate is very moist and warm. And there are many rivers, classical gardens, bamboos, and windmills around the *Grass House*. Children who grow in this kind of circumstances can have a soft characters. While China is very large, different places in China have different climates.

4.2.3 The Rural Planning

Canada has experienced a long period of rural construction, and accumulated a colorful rural construction experience. And China's rural construction has achieved a certain success.

We can divide Chinese rural areas into three big regions: the eastern, the central, and the west. The Grass House belongs to the eastern in China. Chinese development speed has been boosted since the Reform and Opening-Up. While the central and the west develop toughly and slowly due to geographic and historical factors.

Canadian areas are clean, progressive and tough. The biggest feature of Canadian rural areas is that there are few inhabitants. And each farm's scale is large.

Since the Reform and Opening-up Policy, cities in China have developed rapidly, so have the country sides. And the transportation has become more convenient than before. The differences with cities have narrowed a lot.

5.0. The Impact of Growth Environments on Children

Chinese rural children are more obedient than Canadian rural children. And Canadian rural children are braver. The reason behind is the growth environments and education. In Grass House, children always respect teachers and parents. While in Green Gables, when Anne and Marilla have some arguments, Anne will stick to her own opinions.

Canadian children have more courage to express their inner feelings. Anne shows her hatred to people who judge her red hairs. And she also express her love to the person she like. She express her likeness to Diana.

Chinese rural children have more thirst for knowledge. In the earlier days, China has appeared the great educator and the first teacher: Confucius. Many of his ideology has handed down from generation to generation. One of his ideologies is "They who love it are better than those who know it, and they who delight in it are better than those who love it." Many Chinese children are affected by this famous old saying, and that makes them cultivate the love for knowledge. When their rights for education are taken away by the god, they try their best fight against it. Just like Du Xiaokang, he has to leave school because his family has suffered a lot. But that cannot stop his studies.

6.0. The Best Growth Environments for Children

Analyzing the two novels enlightens us what is the best growth environment for children.

In the first place, good family environments can benefit children a lot. The relationship between parents and children should be kind and warm. In Green Gables, Matthew respects Anne's choice of clothes, and he buy a skirt which has puff sleeve. Within a family, the parent should provide a comfortable and peaceful space for children. But at the same time, parents also should be authoritative.

In the second place, good natural environments can benefit children. The beautiful and charming nature can cultivate children's love for nature and their sense of beauty. The growth environments is ideal no matter in Grass House or in Green Gables.

In the third place, good school environments can benefit children a lot. The clever teacher, the kind and friendly classmates and the positive class environments all can make children better and better. In the real world, teachers should build a positive class culture.

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