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 English 375  
 11 May 2021

### Close Reading and Stylistic Analysis

L.T. Meade, author of *World of Girls*, uses a variety of stylistic features throughout her text. Full of shifts between narration and dialogue, the piece reveals unity of the narrative voice with certain characters in the text. Additionally, Meade uses diction rife with sentimentality and emotion. Finally, a strong passage of religious rhetoric taps into Hester's emotions. Meade uses these stylistic devices to craft a strong emotional connection between Hester and Mrs. Willis.

In *World of Girls*, Meade alternates between dialogue and narration. The dialogue and narration support each other and create a more cohesive message. In one instance, Hester is having a private conversation with Mrs. Willis. In this passage, the narrative voice and the voice of Mrs. Willis are strongly unified. The narrator comments that Hester's "whole heart had gone out instantly" to Mrs. Willis (32). Later, Mrs. Willis comments to Hester that her "girls are happy" and that a "half-hearted girl has no chance at Lavender House" (32). In this case, both the narrative voice and the dialogue from Mrs. Willis support the idea of wholeheartedness, a mindset which enables emotional connection as a critical element of success at Lavender House. Another moment where this overlap is visible is the mention of Hester's mother, Helen. The narrator describes Mrs. Willis as the "beautiful woman who had known, and loved, and taught" Hester's mother. Mrs. Willis herself mentions that Hester, being "Helen's daughter," must "have strong feelings" (32). Both mentions of Helen by the narrative voice and by Mrs. Willis have strong emotional connotations—inherently in that the maternal figure is traditionally steeped in emotion, and explicitly in the emotional senses described in these passages. In both of these instances, the narrative voice and that of Mrs. Willis support a common theme of wholeheartedness and emotional unity achieved through intimate, maternal moments like this one.

Given that *World of Girls* alternates between a unified narration and dialogue, the diction of the text emphasizes strong emotions and sentimentality. Mrs. Willis mentions Hester's mother as a source of emotional connection, noting that Hester, being "Helen's daughter, must have strong feelings" (32). Emphasizing and focusing on this strongly emotive quality of Hester adds to the focus on emotional unity reflected in the passage. This reinforces the sentimental diction because strong feelings aren't seen as a weakness, but a crucial component in connectivity between Mrs. Willis and Hester. Later, while advising Hester, Mrs. Willis mentions her "motto of life," which is earnestness. Earnestness contains undertones of sincerity and sentimentality. It implies frankness and true belief underpinned by emotional genuinity. The diction throughout the text underscores sentimental diction leading to increased levels of emotional connection.

Seeing that *World of Girls* is rife with sentimental diction, Meade also uses religious word choice leading to a unique type of rhetoric. In counseling Hester, Mrs. Willis assumes a voice of a superior, and uses verbiage with strong religious connotations. In this prophet-like sermon to her pupil, Mrs. Willis states that Hester's time at the Lavender House will be a "time of discipline", of "proving" if Hester's "character can be strong and great and true" (32). In

concluding her address, Mrs. Willis asks: “Do you understand me?” (32). Religion is inherently emotional, and the spiritual and emotional aspects of this exchange are deeply intertwined. In channeling these strongly religious undertones, Meade sets up Mrs. Willis and Hester for an even deeper layer of emotional connection.

In *World of Girls*, L.T. Meade uses alternating narration and dialogue, sentimental diction, and religious rhetoric as prominent stylistic devices. These components work together to craft a strong sense of emotional connection between characters.

#### Works Cited

Meade, L.T. *A World of Girls; the Story of a School*. Cassell and Co, 1902. *HathiTrust*, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433082256904>. Accessed 10 May 2021.