

Assignment 5A – Fiction

EKSEMPEL-OPGAVE II

1. Write a short summary of Mai Nardone's short story "Only You Farang Are So Easy to Come and Leave" in about 125 words.
2. Write an analytical essay (600-900 words) in which you analyse and interpret the short story. Your essay must focus on the relationship between the characters.

Include the following analytical terms in your essay:
point of view, setting, main theme

Only You Farang Are So Easy to Come and Leave by Mai Nardone

Summary:

The short story *Only You Farang Are So Easy to Come and Leave* written by Mai Nardone in 2017 portrays a small family in Thailand, who has just moved back to their old townhouse in Bangkok, because of the economy collapse. Lara's father is unemployed and money is tight, the only luxury they maintain is Lara's school. Lara's parents decide it's time for the father to move temporarily to America, where there is work. He buys Lara a plane ticket to America so she can visit him. When she arrives in America she discovers that her father doesn't want her to stay and that he won't come back to Bangkok. The story ends with Lara telling her mother that she's coming back but her father isn't, and that he doesn't want to speak with her.

Analytical essay:

The story focuses on the difficult relationships in a family and how money can affect a family like theirs, as well as how much children are affected by an unhappy and dysfunctional family. Lara is the daughter in the family. She's only fourteen and therefore not old enough to be an adult. We see everything from Lara point of view, which means that we might not see the whole picture. However, most of the story deals with direct speech, which means that it is very objective and not one-sided. We here views

and opinions from both her mom, her dad and herself, and it is therefore possible to form your own opinion of the family, their interactions and the place they live.

5 The story is set in the outskirts of Bangkok, where they live. Bangkok suffers from an economical depression and buildings are slowly decaying: "*Bangkok that year became a graveyard of office towers and housing projects*"¹. Almost everyone lives under very bad conditions and because of the crisis a lot of people have large debts they can't repay, this leads to a lot of men committing suicide so they won't be dragged to prison². The atmosphere of the city is therefore very depressing and oppressive. The crisis has also affected the family in the story and they have had to move from their old condominium, which the mother thought off as the high-mark of their family³, to the small and narrow town house. The house has been divided up by walls, which represents the figurative walls between mother and father.

15 The figurative walls between the two has been erected concurrently with the economic crisis and the father's unemployment. When talking to her husband, the mother doesn't want to talk directly to him and makes Lara translate from Thai to English, which shows that she's dissatisfied with him. The dissatisfaction is also showed in the way she disparages him all the time: "*She had adopted the mannerisms of a bird of prey, hunched, stalking Dad's efforts, her censure biting into him like a hooked beak.*"⁴ When he asks her how she's doing, she answers by criticizing his work with the walls, 20 calling it a mess⁵. This disapproval of him shows that she merely sees him as the provider of the family, and when he fails to provide for her she sends him to America for work. The father defends the mother by telling Lara: "*Your mother didn't marry up to play a maid*"⁶, he doesn't see the unfairness of the situation, on the contrary he does want the mother wants, which means that he might love her even though she just 25 wants him for the money. The mother does however show a sign of love, when Lara tells her that the father isn't coming home and doesn't want to speak with her: "*The line was bad. Or she was crying, I don't know*"⁷. When she realizes that her husband isn't coming back she starts crying as well as pleading.

¹ Page 3, line 118

² Page 3, line 119-120

³ Page 1, line 2

⁴ Page 1, line 34-36

⁵ Page 1, line 43

⁶ Page 3, line 105-106

⁷ Page 4, line 162

Lara is very mad at her mother. Their relationship has also drastically changed because of the crisis. She asks her mother *"Why don't you get a job, Ma?... You want to live big so bad you go and make it happen. Do it yourself."*⁸ She's tired of her mother complaining and expecting so much of her father, when she doesn't do anything herself.

5 She gets even more angry with her mom, when she sends the father to America: *"In the months before he left, I let the house divide us"*⁹. She's protesting her mother's decision by cutting her off, and making their relationship distant and rage-filled.

Lara's relationship with her father is very different from her relationship with her mother. She tells him: *"We need you more than we need the money"*¹⁰, she's willing to sacrifice going to the good school for her father to stay, she clearly loves him and doesn't want to be left in Bangkok with her mother. However, when he decides to move to America despite Lara's protests she gets angry with him as well, waiting for a chance to tell him that he's just another one of those foreigners passing through¹¹. So even though she loves him, she hates him at the same time for leaving her.

15 The effect that Lara's parents' relationship has on her, is also evident in the main theme of story. The story's main theme is family, and more specifically separation in the family and the effects separation has on children. Other themes in the story is oppression, disapproval and the lack of love. The authors message with the story is that money isn't more important than the happiness of your child and separation has affects the child more than anything else.

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All in all, the story deals with problems that many families have experienced or might experience in the future, and that sometimes decisions are made which has big consequences, especially for children. The story carries the message that these decisions shouldn't be the reason that your child is unhappy and depressed.

⁸ Page 3, line 97-98

⁹ Page 3, line 112

¹⁰ Page 3, line 107

¹¹ page 4, line 152-153

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