

WHAT IS SO IMPORTANT ABOUT REX? IN JAMES THURBER'S SNAPSHOT OF A DOG.

R.JEYALAKSHMI,

Assistant Professor,

Department of English,

R.M.K.Engineering College,Chennai.

Abstract:

Sincerity and love for the master is ingrained in his blood. **Rex**, whom Thurber proudly stated as American bull-terrier had a gentle disposition .He never bit a person during his ten years' life, nor ever growled at any one except prowlers. He never ran barking after wagons or automobiles. The characterisation of Rex in Thurber's Snapshot of a Dog is nostalgic and a phenomena of its kind. Thurber was emotional, nostalgic, proud and with much pleasure present his reminiscences about his pet dog even after twenty five years of its death.

Keywords: Nostalgic, reminiscences, faithful, humorous.

James Grover Thurber (1894-1961) is probably America's best-loved humourist. He was also a skilful artist and a cartoonist. For many years he kept the world laughing with his fables and cartoons in the **New Yorker Magazine**. Although he loves to joke about the foolish things people do, he also can be quite a serious social critic.

Snapshot of a dog is both humorous and serious as his writings usually are. The story flows along easily and smoothly, and the reader has the impression that the writer is talking to him. At the story's start the writer **James Thurber** found a dim photograph of **Rex**, their pet dog. Their dog died twenty five years ago. It made him think back to his childhood and he gives us an account of Rex and its qualities.

The protagonist of the story is a bull-terrier named as Rex by the author, James Thurber. While dogs are commonly associated with faithfulness, James Thurber portrays him with nobility and uses him as a tool to demonstrate the power of free will. Dogs play important roles as companions and helpers for humans. While playing as a boy, **James Thurber** was blinded in one eye, and for long fought a grim battle against loss of sight in the other. Probably this may be the reason for portraying Rex with one brindle eye. His sense of humour is well-revealed when he describes Rex's brindle eye "*that sometimes made him look like a clown and sometimes reminded you of a politician with derby hat and cigar*".

Rex,the American Bull Terrier is a companion and family- dog breed. Originally bred to "bait" bulls, the breed evolved into all-around farm dogs, and later moved into the house to become "nanny dogs" because they were so gentle around children. Their tenacity, gameness, and courage make them popular competitors in the sports of weight pulling, agility, and obedience and competition.

This story proposes a long overdue reading of Thurber's pet, Rex. Rex was a male terrier, big and muscular. Rex was a tremendous fighter. But he never started any fight. The technique of Rex was to have a grip of the enemy's ear at the root and not to leave it under any circumstances. One such fight was with a big dog of a Negro owner. Managed boldly to pick them up and threw them away in order to separate them. They fell ten feet away but Rex still held on. The two dogs got into the middle of the car tracks. He was as powerful as a wrestler. He was noble and never lost his dignity. Obviously, the fight reveals the tenacious nature of Rex.

Thurber mentioned the fight as "Homeric" because even though a motor man tried to pry Rex's jaws open with a switch rod, another person held burning stick close to Rex's tail still he paid no attention. Finally the **Oak Street Fire Department** stepped in and turned on a powerful stream of water on the dogs.

Rex held on for several moments before he finally let the other dog go. Even some of Thurber's relatives considered this fight as a blot to their family.

The American bull terrier was used as a fighting dog, a past that continues to dog him. Unfortunately, some people still breed and use the dog for fighting purposes, perpetuating his reputation as an overly aggressive dog. To be sure, this is a dog with a prey drive -- he was also a ratter in his early days -- so living with cats, small dogs and other small animals may be too much of a temptation for him. This may be the genetic inheritance as in this story too Thurber says, *He killed cats, that is true, but quickly and neatly without especial malice, the way men kill certain animal.*

The character of Rex is portrayed in such a vivid manner. Thurber says swimming is his passion and he depicted the first day of his *virgin dive*. The author was quite emotional when he recollected the night they found Rex, trying to get a small chest of drawers up onto the porch from a distance of half a mile. He revered Rex to such an extent that he says that in his world there was no such thing as *impossible*. The author proudly says that even death couldn't beat him down. He died after "*straight-arming the death angel*" for more than an hour.

No doubt Rex, is an affectionate, friendly dog who is loyal to his family and good with all the three brothers as well. Rex waited for the arrival of one of its owners. It was really heart-breaking when Rex was holding his breath for one of his three masters. When the third brother came, he touched his hand with his muzzle and fell down and left its breath.

References:

1. **The Snapshot of a Dog, James Thurber, March 1, 1935.**
2. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1935/03/09/snapshot-of-a-dog>.