

Ms. Nenni

Senior Rhetoric

Period 3

December 12, 2018

Shawshank Essay

“Andy was the part of me they could never lock up, the part of me that will rejoice when the gates finally open for me... no matter how old and broken and scared the rest of me is” (King 58). Friendship is often a gift that is overlooked when hardships fall upon us. We get the idea that we need to go through things alone or be independent, but many times that makes life lonely and hard. Stephen King explored this idea in his novella *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* through his characters of Andy and Red. Andy and Red are both locked up for murder when they meet and although they did not expect it, they grow to become true friends that are able to get one another through hard times. **It is in their story that Stephen King determines the central theme of his novella that friendship is a powerful force that can get us through even the toughest of times.**

To begin, we first see the faint signs of friendship between Andy and Red in their first meeting in the exercise yard. At this point in the story, Andy has just arrived at Shawshank State Prison. Like most prisoners, Andy entered scared and alone even though he tried not to show it. He approached Red for the first time to ask him about getting him a rock hammer - something to allow him to keep his hobby during his time in jail. After Red had delivered the hammer, Andy wanted to thank him. ““Thanks for the tool,’ he said, and walked away. I watched him curiously... I admired him. In spite of the problems he was having, he was going on with his

life” (King 12). Although Andy and Red aren’t friends yet, we see the connection between their characters early on. From their very first interaction, Red was able to see that there was something more about Andy than the sisters or any other of the inmates could tell. Although these comments don’t necessarily show the power of friendship yet, the reader can get a sense of how influential these two characters will be on each other.

As we move through the text, we can see this theme continue to grow on the plate shop roof in the turning point of the story. After Andy’s third year at Shawshank, he and Red were granted an opportunity to do some outside work tarring the roof of the plate shop one spring. As they were working, Andy overheard the head guard talking about a recent inheritance he had come into, and how angry he is that the money would be taxed. Andy uses his banking knowledge to explain a loophole to Hadley, the guard. As a reward, Andy asks that Hadley get all of the men on the crew three beers a piece. Red recalls the event as he says, “That beer was piss-warm, but it was still the best I ever had in my life... Only Andy didn’t drink... He sat hunkered down in the shade, hands dangling between his knees, watching us and smiling. It’s amazing how many men remember him that way” (King 23). It is here that we see the turning point in Andy and Red’s relationship. For the first time, the other inmates begin to respect Andy and see him as a human being, over just a ‘fresh fish’ new inmate. From that point forward, Andy had friends in prison to help him get through the hard times to come.

After years of watching Andy and Red’s friendship grow stronger and stronger, we see the true power of it just before Andy escapes from Shawshank. As Andy and Red sit in the exercise yard - nineteen years after their their first meeting - Andy shares an enormous secret with Red: his secret identity on the outside. Andy was struggling with the idea that Warden

Norton was never going to let him out of prison despite knowing that he was innocent, and he was telling Red how he “prepared for the hurricane.” Afterwards, he says to Red, ““You know Red.’ he said in an offhand voice, ‘a place like that I’d have to have a man who knows how to get things.’ I thought about it for a long time... ‘I couldn’t do it,’ I said.... ‘I wouldn’t know how to begin. Or where.’ ‘You underestimate yourself... [you’re] a rather remarkable man, I think.’” (King 44). It is only with Andy’s guidance, encouragement and friendship that Red was able to fight the heavy hold of