

# **delmore schwartz in dreams begin responsibilities**

Delmore Schwartz is a pivotal figure in American literature, particularly known for his short stories and poetry that delve deep into the complexities of the human psyche. Among his notable works, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" stands out as a cornerstone of modernist literature, illustrating Schwartz's adeptness at exploring themes of dreams, reality, and the burdens of responsibility. This article seeks to analyze the significance of this collection of stories, its thematic depth, and its impact on both literature and contemporary writers.

## **Background of Delmore Schwartz**

Delmore Schwartz was born on December 8, 1913, in Brooklyn, New York. He was a prominent member of the New York intellectual scene and had a profound influence on several writers, including figures such as Jack Kerouac and Philip Roth. Schwartz's literary career was marked by his struggles with mental health and personal challenges, which deeply influenced his writing.

## **Early Life and Education**

- Schwartz grew up in a Jewish family with immigrant roots. His parents were from the Russian Empire, and their experiences shaped much of his early worldview.
- He attended the University of Wisconsin and later transferred to New York University, where he graduated in 1936. His academic background in philosophy and literature provided a rich foundation for his later works.
- Schwartz published his first collection of poems, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," in 1938, which received critical acclaim and established him as a significant literary voice.

## **Literary Style and Influences**

- Schwartz's writing is characterized by its psychological depth, intricate narrative structures, and a focus on existential themes.
- He was influenced by a range of literary figures, including James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, and Sigmund Freud, all of whom contributed to his understanding of the human condition.
- His works often reflect the tension between the inner self and external reality, a theme that resonates throughout "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities."

## **Overview of "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities"**

"In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" is a collection of stories that encapsulate Schwartz's literary prowess. The title story, along with several others, explores the intersection of dreams and reality, underscoring the

emotional and psychological burdens faced by individuals.

## **Title Story Analysis**

The titular story, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," serves as a poignant exploration of the relationship between dreams and reality. It begins with the narrator recounting a dream in which he observes his parents before their marriage. The narrative evolves to reveal the tension between the idealized past and the harsh realities of adulthood.

- Themes of Memory and Regret: The story emphasizes the conflict between cherished memories and the responsibilities that come with adulthood.
- Parental Relationships: Schwartz presents a complex picture of family dynamics, highlighting the burden of expectations placed on children by their parents.
- Dream vs. Reality: The dream serves as a metaphor for aspirations and desires, while the waking world represents the responsibilities that accompany those dreams.

## **Other Notable Stories in the Collection**

- "The World is Round": This story explores the theme of alienation in urban life, depicting characters who grapple with their identities against the backdrop of a bustling city.
- "The Last and First One": In this narrative, Schwartz examines the cyclical nature of life, contemplating the transitions between youth and adulthood.
- "The Unfortunate": This story delves into the challenges of creativity and the pressures that come with artistic ambition, a recurring theme in Schwartz's work.

## **Thematic Exploration**

Schwartz's collection is rich with themes that resonate on multiple levels, making it a significant work in modern literature.

## **Responsibility and Choice**

One of the central themes in "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" is the burden of responsibility. Schwartz posits that with every choice comes a set of responsibilities that shape an individual's life.

- Consequences of Choices: Characters in Schwartz's stories often face the repercussions of their decisions, leading to feelings of regret and introspection.
- Existential Dilemmas: The characters grapple with the meaning of their choices, reflecting Schwartz's own struggles with identity and purpose.

## The Nature of Dreams

Dreams play a crucial role in Schwartz's narratives, serving as windows into the characters' subconscious.

- Dreams as Reflection: Schwartz uses dreams to illustrate the inner thoughts and desires of his characters, often contrasting them with their waking lives.
- Symbolism of Dreams: The dream sequences in his stories symbolize hope, aspiration, and the ideal self that often remains unattainable.

## Impact on Literature

Delmore Schwartz's "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" has had a lasting impact on American literature and continues to be studied and appreciated by scholars and readers alike.

## Influence on Contemporary Writers

Schwartz's exploration of complex themes and psychological depth paved the way for later writers. His influence is evident in the works of:

- Philip Roth: Roth's exploration of Jewish identity and the burdens of familial expectations echoes Schwartz's themes.
- Jack Kerouac: The Beat Generation writer drew inspiration from Schwartz's introspective style and existential concerns.
- Saul Bellow: Bellow's characters often grapple with similar themes of alienation and responsibility.

## Legacy in American Literature

- Recognition and Awards: Schwartz received several accolades throughout his career, including the prestigious O. Henry Award and the National Book Award.
- Continued Relevance: The themes of dreams, responsibility, and the human condition in Schwartz's work remain relevant, resonating with contemporary audiences facing similar existential dilemmas.

## Conclusion

Delmore Schwartz's "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" is more than just a collection of stories; it is a profound exploration of the human experience. Through his intricate narratives and deep psychological insights, Schwartz invites readers to reflect on their own dreams and responsibilities. His work not only captures the essence of the human condition but also serves as a touchstone for understanding the complexities of life in a modern context.

In summary, Schwartz's contributions to literature are invaluable, and his exploration of dreams and responsibilities continues to inspire and challenge readers and writers alike. As we navigate our own lives, the themes presented

in "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" remind us of the delicate balance between aspiration and reality, urging us to confront the responsibilities that define our existence.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What are the main themes explored in Delmore Schwartz's 'In Dreams Begin Responsibilities'?**

The main themes include the conflict between dreams and reality, the struggle for personal identity, and the burden of responsibilities that come with adulthood.

### **How does Schwartz use the concept of dreams in the story?**

Schwartz uses dreams as a metaphor for aspirations and desires, contrasting them with the harsh realities of life that impose responsibilities on individuals.

### **What role does the protagonist's relationship with his parents play in the narrative?**

The protagonist's relationship with his parents highlights the generational conflicts and the weight of familial expectations, which amplify the central conflict between dreams and responsibilities.

### **In what ways does 'In Dreams Begin Responsibilities' reflect the anxieties of the 20th century?**

The story reflects 20th-century anxieties through its exploration of disillusionment, existential dread, and the tension between individual desires and societal obligations.

### **What literary techniques does Schwartz employ to convey his messages?**

Schwartz employs vivid imagery, stream-of-consciousness narrative, and symbolic elements to deepen the reader's understanding of the protagonist's internal struggles.

### **How does the title 'In Dreams Begin Responsibilities' encapsulate the story's essence?**

The title suggests that while dreams can inspire and motivate individuals, they also bring about the weight of responsibilities that must be faced, encapsulating the story's central conflict.

## **What is the significance of the setting in 'In Dreams Begin Responsibilities'?**

The setting reflects the protagonist's psychological state, with urban landscapes symbolizing the complexities of modern life and the pressures that come with it.

## **How has 'In Dreams Begin Responsibilities' influenced contemporary literature?**

The story has influenced contemporary literature by inspiring writers to explore the dynamics of dreams versus reality and the intricacies of personal responsibility in their own narratives.

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