

Forgiveness starts here too.” How is the idea of forgiveness demonstrated in ‘Invictus’ and ‘Ransom’

Forgiveness involves letting go of resentment and the suffering experienced. Many characters in the historical fiction ‘Ransom’ by David Malouf, and the 2009 film ‘Invictus’ directed by Clint Eastwood, portray forgiveness through their actions and attitude. ‘Invictus’ highlights the determination of wanting to unite a nation whereas, ‘Ransom’ shows how the act of forgiving unites two long-time enemies. Through this, the act of forgiveness brings people closer together, showing the impact forgiveness by leaders has. Contrastingly, both texts also illustrate the impact not forgiving has on an individual and on their relationships, with misery and sorrow being a common denominator in the emotions reflecting the actions of characters such as Zindzi and Achilles. To that, where ‘Invictus’ depicts the ruining of relationships due to not forgiving, ‘Ransom’ differentiates, showing the comfort and love a relationship can give when forgiveness takes place instead of resentment. Overall, Malouf and Eastwood, demonstrate the idea of forgiveness as a gradual process, where for some it is a mindset and the key to achieving their bigger picture goals as a team. The act of forgiveness, in both texts, vary amongst individuals and the way the author has portrayed it.

David Malouf’s historical fiction, ‘Ransom’ and Clint Eastwood’s film text, ‘Invictus’ both capture the fruitful essence of forgiveness, through the protagonists displaying acts of compassion which ultimately suppresses the vengeful atmosphere that resides in both texts, and thereby, exhibiting the capability forgiveness has to unite people. Through the ambitious black South African leader, Nelson Mandela, who forgave his oppressors to move forward in the spirit of “reconciliation”, in order to achieve a “rainbow nation”, Clint Eastwood reveals the power of forgiveness. It “liberates the soul. It removes fear. That is why it is such a powerful weapon”. Its strength empowers gaps amidst racial disharmony and social trouble to be sealed. The opening scenes of ‘Invictus’ illustrates the government’s devised legal segregation system of apartheid, as well as Mandela’s public release from prison and subsequent journey to presidency. By incorporating it in a stylised montage, comprising enacted moments and documentary footage that highlights the violence and hatred towards Mandela, viewers are provided with a personal context of Mandela, allowing his stance of forgiveness to have a greater impact as it depicts his still standing merciful and kind hearted nature. Mandela uses football, a common love for both races, as the catalyst to reform relationships between the white and black South African community, to achieve forgiveness of the hurt the apartheid brought as he believes it will liberate the soul. On the other hand, through Somax’s storying telling, a technique used by both Eastwood and Malouf to share messages by, Priam is enabled to understand forgiveness, and the power of it, thereby being influenced to forgive Achilles. Being a novel, Malouf’s uses a lyrical choice of expression to depict Priam stripping himself of his “ceremonial figurehead” which distinguishes him from commoners, and humanises himself with the help of a “common man” named Somax. This provides Priam the ability to level with Achilles father to father and beg, on “his knees” for his son’s body, something that he would have never done being the King of Troy. The “clasps of Achilles’ hands” and sacrificing a cart full of “gold” and his other “favourite” jewels demonstrates Priam’s forgiveness to Achilles. Like in Invictus, the words of ‘I forgive you’ is never stated in ‘Ransom’, demonstrating that both Eastwood and Malouf, as reflected from their works, heavily believe in forgiveness as an action rather than a statement said, therefore, they use actions to intertwine the conflicting parties in each text.

In both texts, ‘Invictus’ and ‘Ransom’, forgiveness is demonstrated as a gradual process, which is influenced by a higher authoritative power. To that, the act of forgiving someone takes time in both texts. Through Mandela’s influence, Jason is able to forgive the white Special Branch officers for their perpetrating acts of violence against them during the anti-apartheid movement. Jason and his team “represent [Mandela] directly” therefore, they are needing to forgive and accept the Special Branch officers so that a “rainbow nation” is able to develop to achieve Mandala’s goal and aim as president, unity. Similarly to the character of Jason, Achilles also struggles to forgive and let go the pain and grief caused by the death of his adopted brother, who he had “deep affection for”. Not wanting to forgive Hector and his family, leads to Achilles trailing Hectors body in the “dust” for eleven days, although, the god’s “continue to defy him” as it is not lawful. His actions of vengeance does not bring the satisfaction in which Achilles desires, it leaves him feeling “torment[ed]” as he believes he is partially responsible for Patroclus’ death. Malouf figuratively illustrates Achilles feelings of despair demonstrating the impact not forgiving has on an individual. Priam being an imagery of Achilles’ father, Peleus, denotes the effect a highly respected individual can have on another, resulting Priam’s journey to the Greek camp in forgiveness. Forgiveness is portrayed by Achilles symbolically. Peace is symbolised by offering Priam to “eat something together” and to “call on [him]” when in need. This underlines his forgiveness for the murder of his adopted brother, leading to the two cities becoming allies. Their forgiveness brings reconciliation and allows each other’s city to be safer. Likewise, reconciliation brings a smile to the face of Jason in ‘Invictus’ when in the presence of the special branch officers who he has befriended. This allows both teams to work together effectively and in unity, and like in ‘Ransom’, protect other lives.

The struggle to forgive and reconcile with an individual can break relationships while forgiving has the power to strengthen and mature a relationship as you are willing to move on from the past and look to a brighter future. Nelson Mandela's daughter and wife refusing to forgive the Afrikaners who "forced" them out of their home leads to their loving relationship with President Mandela to be destroyed, considering he chose to forgive to "serve the nation" whilst Zindzi let her "selfish" feelings overthrow her. Forgiveness is demonstrated throughout many characters in 'Invictus', but by Clint Eastwood demonstrating the tension between a father and daughter illustrates what impact unforgiving can have on relationships, especially on a "sacred bond". Eye contact is avoided between Zindzi and Mandela, as well as, avoidance of contact and seeing each other, as seen when she "cancel[s] her visit" with "no reason". Eastwood demonstrates that forgiveness is essential in maturing and keeping relationships, otherwise, as the music played when Zindzi is at Mandela's house portrays, loneliness and sorrow to be experienced due to the loss of a relationship. Malouf sharing Somax's experiences through storytelling allows Priam to learn about the death of his son, highlighting "it was [Beauty's] fault, that little off-side mule [he is] so fond of." The cater revealing how his initial retort upon finding his son's body was to "[punch]" his mule, yet, he was prevented to do so by the love for her. Malouf is trying to depict through Beauty being a mule, that even the lowest ranking are worthy of forgiveness as mules are often seen as the slave animals. Somax forgiving allows reconciliation to occur. As a result, Somax's attitude on "what would have been the good of [punching her]? That wouldn't have brought him back" influences Priam's action to forgive. By this, Malouf illustrates Somax's value of forgiveness enabled him to possess "comfort" in a relationship instead of sorrow and misery as experience by Mandela and his daughter, Zindzi.

The film 'Invictus' and novel 'Ransom' demonstrate the power forgiveness has to reconcile citizens of nations, as well as to unite conflicting teams. This was demonstrate by the two statesmen in the texts, Nelson Mandela and Priam, who have the authoritative title to influence their nation. Being great influences, Mandela and Priam motivated others to forgive through their words and actions. As forgiveness is a gradual process for some, Jason progressively learnt to forgive the special branched officers through constant interaction of being Mandela's bodyguards. Due to Priam's resemblance to Achilles' father, Achilles too learnt to forgive Priam, not only by this perception, but also by Priam's actions and determination to ransom his son's body. Somax choosing to forgive his mule instead of "punching" her as no good would have come out of that, represents that all statuses deserve to be forgiven and that forgiveness allows relationships to continue and grow. With that being said, the idea forgiveness was not always demonstrated in 'Invictus', thereby relationships were ruined. Zindzi and her mother refusing to forgive the Afrikaners lead to a family being broken and melancholy to be experienced. Ultimately, the idea of forgiveness is demonstrated by David Malouf and Clint Eastwood in a similar way through actions, however, applied and performed in various ways.