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The Last Letter

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Patriotism and Plays

Rhetorical Analysis:

I analyzed a letter from an archive put together by Evelyn Corrie Birkby. She compiled documents including letters from a Japanese-American soldier she met at a Military Intelligence Service Language School, Camp Savage. The soldier, Sergeant Richard Hayashi, wrote her on November 17, 1942 close to his graduation from Camp Savage, in [Savage, Minnesota](#). Hayashi was studying to be a Japanese linguist and would be involved with activities like overseas interrogations. Sergeant Hayashi went on to serve both in the South Pacific and Europe.

Hayashi's letter illustrates American unity through patriotic diction. Hayashi says he does not care where he serves after graduation as long as he keeps the "...good old American flag flying over this beautiful country..." The American flag, a symbol of national unity, and the adjective "beautiful" express his pride and admiration for the United States. Hayashi claims the country as "my own," confirming his identification with America and its ideals. Hayashi conveys his nationalistic passion when he calls freedom's enemies "...worries and vermins that are gnawing on the very foundation that this country is founded on..." He expresses utter loathing for opposing forces. Hayashi wants to annihilate these "pests" from the world, and takes great pride in having that military responsibility. The bold diction labels the enemy, "vermins," as nothing more than a nuisance. Hayashi's letter reveals his aversion for freedom's foes and his determination to protect freedom for America and the world.

Hayashi emphasizes freedom as something worth fighting for, and that all people value liberties. "...I think that there is no man on earth who doesn't treasure this 'Freedom'..." Hayashi understands

freedom as a commonplace for many nations worldwide. He prizes his homeland liberties, but also makes the assumption that surrounding societies cherish freedom. He confidently asserts the whole human race feels the same appreciation towards freedom as he does. Further, if Hayashi believes each person treasures freedom, each person and nation should support to defend it, ending the worldwide conflict.

Hayashi's visionary mindset emerges with his focus on worldwide harmony. "Someday I am hoping there will exist upon this earth an everlasting peace." He believes international stability is possible, revealing his optimistic and determined personality. He makes a promise, "Mark my word," that this "Utopia" can become a reality. The short sentence displays Hayashi's intensity. His assertion resonates with the reader, reinforcing his intent to see this vision through. Hayashi proclaims his beliefs strongly and expresses them without doubts. Patriotism combined with his hopeful Utopian vision characterizes Hayashi's as a passionate and ambitious soldier. He trusts peace among nations can occur, and can undertake his military responsibilities to help create this reality.

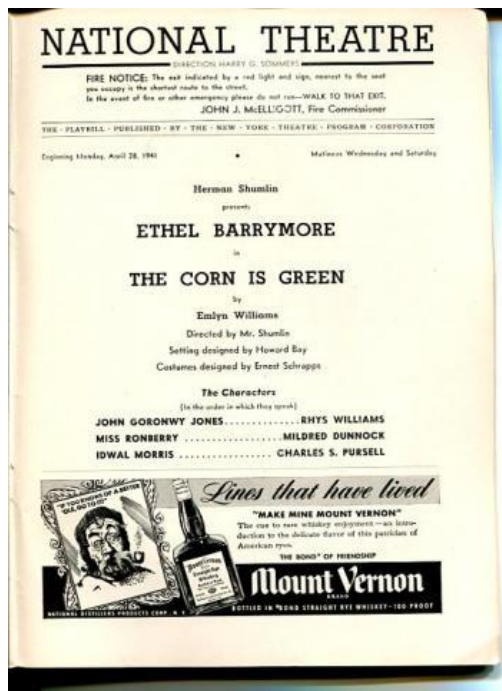
The letter's tone changes from friendly to passionate as Hayashi begins to discuss American ideals, enemies, and world peace. Initially, he asks Evelyn how day-to-day life is going, then transcends into a sermon-like speech, building energy and enthusiasm all the way through his Utopian vision. The tonal shift occurs because Hayashi begins writing about something important to him, which triggers fervor as he proclaims his values. Hayashi's discourse of "worries and vermins" leads to comments concerning worldwide freedom appreciation, and then provokes an inspiring description of world peace. Hayashi ties one belief to another, elevating intensity along the way. The amiable letter temporarily transforms to a zealous oration. Passion explodes from phrases like

"beautiful country," "treasures freedom," and "everlasting peace," making Hayashi's mindset clear-cut and understandable. Sergeant Hayashi's enthusiastic tone demonstrates his firm support of freedom and American ideals.

Hayashi's patriotism is compelling, because he was a Nisei, a second generation Japanese individual. Although he was born in the United States, he had strong biological ties to Japan, an enemy Axis Power during World War II. Hayashi does not verbalize any support with Japan though, as he describes the opposing countries as "vermins." As an American citizen, Hayashi understood his opportunities and identified with U.S. values over Japanese culture. His loyalty remained exclusively with the United States. Despite close ethnicity with an enemy, Hayashi valiantly supported the Ally side of World War II.

Historical Contextualization:

Richard Hayashi's letter reveals how 1940s American culture



compares to today. In his last paragraph, he mentions a "hit" play showing in Minneapolis where he wishes to take Evelyn. Researching this play, "The Corn is Green," uncovered Broadway's role in American society. Although Broadway was beginning to compete with television and motion pictures, theater in the 1940s was an escape from World War II. During the war, food rations and complete support of military effort were enforced. Americans' lives were suffocated by the war. In a nation with such rules and

regulations, theater provided a place free of [government influence](#). If citizens felt overwhelmed by World War II's effects, Broadway created an outlet from their stress. I frequently practice the same technique with movies. While I watch a movie, I become enthralled with the plot and characters, forgetting the worries in my life outside the show. Similarly, Americans could use Broadway as a distraction from World War II. When Hayashi suggests taking Evelyn to "The Corn is Green," he may have had the same method in mind. Hayashi probably felt overwhelmed by his upcoming graduation and military responsibilities. Seeing this drama could offer Hayashi a temporary escape from his stressful lifestyle and give him something else on which to focus.

There were numerous advertisements for cigarettes and alcohol in the show's playbills. For example, on the inside of a 1941 playbill is a Mount Vernon Whiskey advertisement. In comparison, a "Wicked" playbill from 2010 includes restaurant and [MasterCard advertisements](#). Although MasterCard is a twenty-first century product, alcohol and tobacco would not be seen in a Broadway playbill today. In the 1940s, drinking and smoking had less of a stigma and were more socially accepted. Now, negativity associated with drinking and smoking comes from new knowledge. In the 1940s, society was not aware of health risks caused by alcohol and tobacco. Therefore, advertising these products in a Broadway playbill was perfectly acceptable. Now it is known tobacco causes lung cancer and excessive drinking impedes brain development, but

THE CAST
(in order of appearance)

Glinda KRISTIN CHENOWETH
 Witch's Father SEAN MCCOURT
 Witch's Mother CRISTY CANDLER
 Missie JAN NEUBERGER
 Elphaba IDINA MENZEL
 Nessarose MICHELLE FEDERER
 Boq CHRISTOPHER FITZGERALD
 Madame Morrible CAROLE SHELLEY
 Doctor Dillamond WILLIAM YOUNG
 Fiyero NORBERT LEO BUTZ
 Ozian Official SEAN MCCOURT
 The Wonderful Wizard of Oz JOEL GREY
 Chorus MANUEL HERRERA
 Monkeys, Students, Deputies of the Emerald City,
 Palace Guards and Other Citizens of Oz IOANA ALFONSO, BEN CAMERON,
 CRISTY CANDLER, KRISTY CATES,
 MELISSA BELL CHAIT, MARCUS CHOI,
 KRISTOFFER CUSICK, KATHY DEITCH, MELISSA FAHN,
 RHETT G. GEORGE, MANUEL HERRERA, KISHA HOWARD,
 LJ JELLISSON, SEAN MCCOURT, CORINNE McFADDEN, JAN NEUBERGER,
 WALTER WINSTON ONEILL, ANDREW PALERMO, ANDY PELLICK,
 MICHAEL SEELBACH, LORNA VENTURA, DERRICK WILLIAMS

UNDERSTUDIES and STANDBYS
 Understudies and standbys never substitute for listed players unless
 a specific announcement for the appearance is made at the time of the performance.

Standby for Elphaba: EDEN ESPINOSA

Understudy for Glinda: MELISSA BELL CHAIT; for Elphaba: KRISTY CATES; for
 Fiyero: KRISTOFFER CUSICK; for the Wizard and Dr. Dillamond: SEAN MCCOURT; for
 Madame Morrible: JAN NEUBERGER; LORNA VENTURA; for Boq: ANDREW
 PALERMO; for Nessarose: CRISTY CANDLER, EDEN ESPINOSA.

Swings: KRISTEN LEIGH GORSKI, MARK MYARS

THERE WILL BE ONE 15-MINUTE INTERMISSION.

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 with or without flash, is strictly prohibited.

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in Richard Hayashi's time, drinking whiskey and smoking cigarettes were nothing more than social activities.

Broadway ticket prices have drastically increased since the 1940s. In the *Cornell Daily Sun* on October 8 1942, balcony tickets to "The Corn is Green" are advertised for \$1.65. The orchestra seats are [\\$2.75](#). In comparison, a balcony seat costs between \$50.55 to \$92.80 and an orchestra seat costs \$82.55 to \$113.30 [today](#). According to Wolfram Alpha, \$2.75 1942 U.S. dollars would be equivalent to [\\$39.98 in 2014](#). A modern day orchestra seat cost much more than \$39.98, demonstrating inflation and the effects of demand. In the twenty-first century, Americans have more disposable income, so more people can afford a Broadway ticket. In the 1940s, citizens did not have the monetary surplus to support entertainment spending habits. With a larger demand pool for tickets, the price goes up to benefit the sellers. The more money Americans possess, the higher the price climbs.

Investigating "The Corn is Green" revealed social and economic differences between the 1940s and now. During Hayashi's time, smoking and drinking advertisements were published in a public document and a ticket was a small fraction of the current price. However, in both eras, entertainment offers an escape from everyday stress. In the 1940s, citizens desired a diversion from the war's rations and constant influence. Plays boosted their morale, damaged by the horror happening on the home front and overseas. Today, Americans can use Broadway to flee job or family stress. Entertainment remains a timeless method of decompressing and experiencing a world apart from real-life.

Written By: Samantha Zishka

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