

(Name)

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### Symbolism in “The Red Convertible” by Louise Erdrich

“The Red Convertible” is one of the short stories in the Love Medicine series written by Louise Erdrich, an American author, in the year 1984. The story is centered on the relationship of two brothers who grow up on an Indian reserve and how war affected their relationship. Louise Erdrich used imagery, symbols, colors, and metaphors to describe as much as possible the changing state of the relationship between both brothers.

The Red Convertible, the flashy red convertible, and its purchase even after the disasters that befell them both symbolizes the young and adventurous spirit of both brothers and also the strong, vibrant, and optimistic relationship between them. The brothers saw the car as a promise of the future. The red color of the car symbolizes blood, the fountain of the strongest link on man could have with another, and the care and affection both brothers had for each other.

*“There it was, parked, large as life. Really as if it was alive. ... That car reposed, calm and gleaming... Then, before we had thought it over at all, the car belonged to us...”*

The car was in a good condition before the war as the brothers went for frequent road trips in it, spending quality time together. However, the car is left in the garage, untouched by Lyman, during the war. This symbolizes true love and that one brother misses the other deeply.

Henry returns from the war, torn up both physically and psychologically.

*“...once I was in the room watching TV with Henry, I looked over, and he'd bitten through his lip. Blood was going down his chin. ...There was blood going down Henry's chin, but he didn't notice”*

Lyman tried to rekindle old flames but failed and he destroyed the car, thereby destroying their relationship. Henry spends countless hours trying to fix the car, hence, an attempt to fix their relationship, symbolizing hope and optimism; a belief that things were eventually going to get better. When he succeeded in fixing the car, the brothers go for a drive to reminisce about the good times.

In the end, Henry tells Lyman to take good care of the car meaning that the car had more value to them than its worth, it was a symbol of their brotherhood. Lyman lets the car roll into the flooded river, after his unsuccessful attempt to save his brother from drowning, symbolizing lost hope, heartbreak, disappointment, lost love and his pessimistic view of the future.

#### Reference

- Edrich, Louise. "The Red Convertible." In McMahan, Elizabeth, et al., Eds., *Literature and the Writing Process*. New York: Prentice Hall, 463-469. Print.