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English 10

Response Paper

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“Sheep,” by Rob Thomas, is a short story told in the first person by the protagonist, Shawn. He is working at a shelter for battered women in rural Texas, when Mr. Watkins, the husband of a battered Mrs. Watkins, begins causing a scene outside. Shawn attacks Mr. Watkins in hopes of controlling the situation. He then has a flashback to his childhood in which his mother was abused by his father. He loses control and his reckless actions result in the woman returning to her husband.

Mr. Thomas uses the literary technique of flashbacks to show reason in his story. Without the flashbacks there would be no connection between the story and Shawn. The flashbacks help the reader understand *why* Shawn reacted the way he does in his quarrel with Mr. Watkins. It ties in the idea of how a person’s childhood experiences can control aspects of their adult life such as their mental state. Not only does Thomas use flashbacks, but he uses a bit of irony as well. Shawn’s mother was abused during his childhood, and now he works at a shelter for battered women. While he is there he has no sympathy at all for women who are trying to escape their husbands or boyfriends. This is shocking and ironic because he holds so much anger towards this part of his past and yet feels no empathy for these other women in the same situation.

I absolutely love this story. One, I can really get into it and enjoy it. Every aspect of the story keeps you interested and entertained. I enjoyed the flashbacks and the

importance it had to the story. Without the flashbacks the story would have been lifeless. Secondly, the characters and the dynamics between them are intriguing and kept me reading. Shawn's relationship with Carlette is so odd and shocking that it causes the reader to feel a bit bitter towards Carlette's character. This really builds a connection between the reader and Shawn. Lastly, the ending to the story was great and the author's note really added a nice touch. In the note the author explains how his own experiences got tied into the story. The author really did a great job of building up emotions within the reader that are similar to the one's his character is feeling in the story. This allowed me to feel a lot more involved in the story and less like an outsider who was only reading it.