

The Saintly Drunks: Analyzing the diverse inhabitants of Cannery Row

Cannery Row is a book that shows how stereotypes of certain areas can be misleading and even incorrect. The little town of Cannery Row is much more than a town full of beggars, drunks, and outcasts, but is instead a 'little piece of heaven'. In *Cannery Row*, Steinbeck presents a seemingly poor town of rich diversity.

Mack and the boys are excellent examples of Cannery Row's rich diversity, and how the normal stereotype of "drunken bums" does not necessarily apply to them. For example, Mack and the boys appear to be outcasts in Cannery Row, but are actually quite respected. This shows that despite their outward appearance, the actions of the group help justify that they are as worthy of respect as normal people. This also shows that the even the so-called "outcasts" of normal society can earn a place of respect in the simple social hierarchy of Cannery Row. Also, Mack and the boys decide to throw Doc two parties, with no rewards expected back. This shows that Mack and the boys are not completely selfish, and try to reward others' kindness with some gratitude. This also shows that this group of "bums" will try to work towards the happiness of others, and never give up until they can make their environment positive. Mack and the boys add color to Cannery Row with their humble personalities. They are not merely bums, but in fact more like saints.

The most intriguing and colorful character in *Cannery Row* is Doc. Doc appears to be a lonesome scientist with little company, and a drunk at the worst, but Doc is more than what he seems. For example, when the flu epidemic hit Cannery Row, Doc took in "patients" for help, even though he was not a certified doctor. This shows that Doc will go out of his way to help the people of Cannery Row at any cost. This also shows that Doc cares enough for the people of the town to exhaust himself helping their needs. Also, Doc's presence is so cherished by the people of Cannery Row that they decided to throw him two (slightly chaotic) parties. This shows that even though he may seem like a drunken scientist at points, Doc is highly respected and loved by the people of Cannery Row. This also shows that Doc's actions eventually pay off for him, and he receives immense gratitude from the town. Doc is not someone who blends easily into Cannery Row, but his nature and personality is that of a Christ-like figure.

Cannery Row is truly 'a piece of heaven'. The other areas may seem richer, and classier than this small town, but they are nothing when it comes to

heart. Cannery Row first appears a home for the bottom feeders of society. But Cannery Row is a rainbow of colorful personalities, who are just misunderstood. Cannery Row is like a looking glass, whose view changes depending on the person. As Steinbeck states, Cannery Row really can be a place of "Saints and angels and martyrs and holy men", because of the unique characteristics that each of its inhabitants bring to the town.