

Steven Crane's Maggie: A Girl of the Streets

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Maggie A Girl Of The Streets

Maggie and Jimmie are two siblings being raised within the slums of New York City in the Stephen Crane novel; *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. The parents of these two are constantly fighting as broken furniture and fistfights are an everyday occurrence in the decrepid family apartment. The mother and father fight while their children hide frightened as "There was a clash against the door and something broke into clattering fragments (Jimmie) heard howls and curses, groans and shrieks, confusingly in chorus as if a battle were raging" (11). Crane exaggerates the [furniture](#) destruction as every night when the two parents battle, seemingly all the furniture in the apartment is destroyed. Obviously, this poor family couldn't afford to fix and/or buy new furniture everyday. This then is the environment that Maggie and Jimmie struggle with throughout the novel, but both respond to in opposite ways. Maggie dreams of a better life than of her roots while Jimmie accepts his roots and becomes nihilistic. However, the hope of Maggie sadly goes unfulfilled.

Maggie is introduced into the storyline quite subtle and quickly becomes the main focus of attention by the other three main characters. From the beginning, Maggie is a harsh contrast to the slum environment she has to endure. She "blossomed in a mud puddle ... a

most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a pretty [girl](#)" (16) that not only had the physical beauty that her family seemed to lack, but also the hope that she could be better than what was around in her environment. Therefore, the slum environment that surrounds her contrasts her character greatly. "None of the dirt of Rum Alley was in her veins" (16) as she became the talk of numerous males in the neighborhood.

Pete; an acquaintance of Jimmie, became Maggie's [infatuation](#). They meet when Pete is called to the Johnson apartment by Jimmie after Pete promised to attend a boxing match with him. Although only a bartender, Maggie finds Pete as a man of "personal superiority" (17) that is capable of providing her with any dream she desires. She views the contrast between Pete and her environment when:

The broken furniture, grimy walls, and general disorder and dirt of her home all of a sudden appeared before her and began to take a potential aspect. Pete's aristocratic person looked as if it might soil.

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