

RED TOPIC 1

Love Story Hidden Messages

Every author has intended messages that they want their audience to see in their piece of work. Sometimes authors are not successful in conveying their intended messages and they end up with contradictions and hidden messages. In his novel *Love Story*, Erich Segal presents many of these hidden messages and contradictions. One contradiction is between the main character Jenny's ethnicity and her actions. Two hidden messages are that a girl should give up her dreams to increase her social and economic prosperity, and a man should fall in love with a woman who knows who she is, but only if she is willing to give herself up for him.

One way in which the novel contradicts itself is in the issue of Jenny's cultural background; she is presented as an Italian American and yet her actions and beliefs contradict those of a typical Italian American. This subculture is typically Catholic, family-oriented, and set in their ways. Jenny introduces herself to Oliver, her love interest, as "Jennifer Cavalleri, an American of Italian descent (5)." By introducing herself this way, she implies that her ethnicity is involved in her identity. Jenny also wears a gold cross around her neck at all times that, she explains, is "for sentimental reasons, not religious (48)." Jenny has no priest and does not follow the Catholic religion. Her father has no idea of this when he tells Oliver. "Jenny has no doubt told you, we are of the Catholic faith (92)." Jenny secretly denied her faith, one that is embedded in the Italian

American culture. Jenny is obviously not the typical Italian American, and yet she uses her ethnicity to define herself

Her actions and life style contradict her implied identity not only in relation to religion, but also in relation to her closeness to her father. Jenny makes Oliver feel guilty for his hard feelings toward his father. Oliver describes Jenny as adhering "to some atavistic Italian-Mediterranean notion of Papa-loves-bambinos and there was no arguing otherwise (43)." After all, the Italian culture calls for this strong sense of family. Jenny, however, does not feel it necessary to consult her father or even introduce him to Oliver before they decide to marry. Also, Oliver only meets one of Jenny's aunts at her graduation. Jenny only invites her father to her wedding because they have a "genuine concern that our omission of the Father, Son, an Holy Ghost would make the occasion far too trying for unlapsd Catholics (103)." Even the tone here is deprecatory towards Jenny's relatives. Also, once Jenny and Oliver are married they never see and rarely call Phil, Jenny's father. Phil asserts "Christ, she should call more often, goddammit. I'm not a stranger, you know (129)." The woman who the novel makes Jenny out to be, a woman who defines herself by her background, and the woman she actually is are two very different individuals.

Along with contradictions, there are also hidden messages in the film; one of these is that high social and economic standing is more important than a person's dreams. Both Oliver and Jenny have dreams for their future.

Jenny has a scholarship to study with a famous music teacher in Paris. Jenny tells Oliver that "she takes very few American pupils. I was lucky. I got a good scholarship, too. (56)." Oliver also has plans to go to law school and become a well-paid lawyer. Jenny's dream is a once in a lifetime chance, whereas Oliver can wait to go to law school. When it comes down to choosing between Oliver's dream and Jenny's, though, of course Jenny gives up her plans. After all, Oliver is a "preppie millionaire" while Jenny is a "social zero." The novel implies that Jenny's dream is not as important as Oliver's dream because he would be giving up his coveted social stance. They do not even have a debate as to what they should do or if a compromise could be made. Jenny automatically gives up her life to become a part of his. This is because his life is seen by society as the "better life."

Jenny makes the decision to give up much of what she loves in order to reach a place of success. She knows that in the end her hard work will have a big pay-off: economic and social prosperity. Jenny takes a low paying job that has little to do with what she loves, music, in order to support her and Oliver for three years. During this time, she no longer has the time to stay in her music groups and she does nothing for herself. Jenny does not complain and never mentions the life she could have had. This is because in the end Oliver ended up with the "absolute highest salary received by any of the members of our graduating class (144)." At that point, Oliver and Jenny are able to live like "nouveau riche." This new lifestyle is much better than the life Jenny would have had if she had