



Toolkit Assignment -- Writing Assignment

God from a machine in Virgin of Small Plains

"DEUS EX MACHINA (from Greek *theos apo mechanes*): An unrealistic or unexpected intervention to rescue the protagonists or resolve the story's conflict. The term means "The god out of the machine," and it refers to stage machinery. A classical Greek actor, portraying one of the Greek gods in a play, might be lowered out of the sky onto the stage and then use his divine powers to solve all the mortals' problems. The term is a negative one, and it often implies a lack of skill on the part of the writer.

In a modern example of *deus ex machina*, a writer might reach a climactic moment in which a band of pioneers were attacked by bandits. A cavalry brigade's unexpected arrival to drive away the marauding bandits at the conclusion, with no previous hint of the cavalry's existence, would be a *deus ex machina* conclusion.

Such endings mean that heroes are unable to solve their own problems in a pleasing manner, and they must be "rescued" by the writer himself through improbable means. In some *genres*, the *deus ex machina* ending is actually a positive and expected trait. In various *vitae*, or Saint's Lives, divine intervention is one of the normal climactic moments of the narrative to bring about the rescue of a saint or to cause a mass conversion among conventional pagan characters."

Wheeler's Literary Terms and Definitions

http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_D.html

The climactic car crash in Virgin of Small Plains, which delivers Catie from her pain and Judge Newquist from being charged with murder can be considered a *deus ex machina* resolution.

Is this an easy way for the author to resolve the story? Or do you feel it is a fitting ending?

Is there a thread of divine intervention in the story?

Write your perceptions of intervention, divine or otherwise in Virgin of Small Plains.