

Delusions of grandeur



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The short story Paul's Case follows the character Paul through his exploits in his short-lived life. Paul is introduced as a rather troubled young man as demonstrated by the dynamic between him and his teachers. He is infatuated with artistry especially in the theater and even works at Carnegie Hall in Pittsburgh which gives him the opportunity to indulge his fixations. However, he has a naïve idea of art and only appreciates it for the grandiose sense of belonging rather than the artistry. Paul dislikes his middle-class life and looks down upon the businessmen, teachers, and families in his community. He holds himself in high regard and believes he will lead a cultured and prosperous life with great wealth. He pursues adventures that he hopes will grant him the unrealistic fantasies he has of his future life. Paul is a depressed young man who is superficial, delusional, and self-obsessed which is illustrated by his dissatisfaction with his current life and yearning for a better life which is out of his reach.

Paul is evidently superficial and delusional through his obsession with wealth, hatred of the middle-class life, and the desire for the good life. He describes his state of living as unfortunate and miserable; he believes he was meant to be rich and it was a sheer mistake that he was born in a poor household. He looks down upon the life his father and their neighbors lead; he describes them as unsophisticated, reverent and miserable. Paul obsesses about the lives of the iron magnates but does not yearn for the lives of "cash boys" who work hard to achieve success. He feels alienated and drowning in ugliness by being in the middle-class life, only when he goes to the theater that he feels the ugliness leave him. He fantasizes about the easy life but he lacks the ambition and drive to achieve these

accomplishments, he only hopes to be in the adventures of actors and artists but not work to be an artist himself. Paul's obsession and superficiality drive him to steal \$1000 from his new job to fund his exploits in New York City; he splurges on expensive apparels, a room at an elegant hotel and the high social life to feel the contentment he has always yearned for his whole life.

Paul's fixation on wealth and power is illustrated in his obsession with art, the theater, and the lives of artists. After a concert, he follows the soloist to her hotel and imagines her life. He envisions the marble floors, lights, exotic meals and expensive wine; he then compares the high life with his room which he considers ugly and miserable. Paul uses his fascination with the art world to escape from his dull life and bask in the glow of sophistication. He believes that riches is the only way out of his current life, but he is deluded, as he does not understand the concept of money and hard work. Paul is always unimpressed by the lives of the hard-working people in his community; he does not consider a hardworking man, married with children as a success.

Paul's narcissistic and self-obsessed nature is demonstrated comprehensively in the story through his attitude towards others and his delusional sense of self-importance. He regards his teachers unworldly and believes he has a better understanding of taste that they do, he thinks this of everyone except for the artists he looks up to. He is disgusted by the scents and filth in his home that he douses himself with cologne to rid himself of the smell before he visits Charley Edwards. Paul's dire need for admiration leads him to lie about the adventures he goes to with the actors, and on how he treats the women to expensive hotels and gifts. The idea of returning to his <https://assignbuster.com/delusions-of-grandeur/>

old middle-class life weighs on him that he chooses to commit suicide to avoid subjecting himself to the mediocrity. Paul's ignorance of how much his narcissism surpasses his ability to match the expectations he has set for himself leads to his demise.

The protagonist is presented as a victim of grandiose delusions or megalomania, a disorder which is mostly prevalent among young people. Paul exhibits symptoms such as self-perception of being superior, obsessing on fantasies of success and power, sense of entitlement, exploitative and arrogant demeanor. Due to his feelings of inferiority he compensates through crafting illusions of superiority. His enthrallment with the art world is a form of elitist narcissism which comes with lacking the concept of hard work. Furthermore, self-indulgence is a common indication exhibited through his splurging. The mismatch between his narcissism and the reality of his life results in depression which in turn makes him suicidal.