

# The chrysalids: realism towards postmodern societies

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World War Two was an occurrence that caused over a dozen societies to discriminate and prejudice others. Their fear and disbeliefs of others ultimately lead to conflict and minor-wars. John Wyndham was knowledgeable about society's feelings towards others. His aim was to give the reader a surreal feeling of postmodernism in *The Chrysalids*.

Postmodernism is expressed as a form of literature, which is marked ideologically and stylistically. Literary conventions as often unrealistic plots, parody, paranoia and dark humour. John Wyndham writes *The Chrysalids* as a warning to today's society. Discrimination and racism are found throughout the novel and is a correlation to present society. David's actions are done due to Waknuk's religious laws, which could be a warning to our society if we do not include everyone in our society. A chrysalid is expressed as a protective covering, state of being or growth. Therefore, *The Chrysalids* novel is a direct symbolic of David's coming of age and growth. David's conflict in his early childhood, his enlightenment and his decision to leave Waknuk for his safety all contribute to the fact that David is a dynamic character.

David's conflict in his early childhood was a factor that leads David to become a dynamic character. One occurrence that causes conflict to David is Uncle Axel's opinion and criticism on Waknuk's definition of a perfect human. Uncle Axel's criticism can be found on page 79 stating, " They might begin to think to themselves: ' What are we doing? What are the Old People really like? What was it they did to bring this frightful disaster down upon themselves and all the world" (Wyndham 79).

David's parents have always been severely strict about following their

society. One day, David was hoping for a third hand. Unsurprisingly he got yelled at for it. Uncle Axel's approaches on the Old People changes David's view on the Waknuk Society. Uncle Axel even admits that the "definition of a perfect human" is not correct. Nicholas Repentance was written after the tribulation so it was thought to be mostly made up.

Another occurrence that caused conflict in David's early childhood was Sophie's sixth toe discovery and the conflict she had between society and herself. Sophie's extra toe goes against Waknuk's society. While David and Sophie were catching shrimp, Alan happened to stumble upon them. What Alan saw next opened a whole new perspective for Sophie. This is evident on page 44, stating, "He broke off suddenly. I looked up and saw that he was staring down at something beside me. I turned quickly. On the flat rock was a footprint, still un-dried. Sophie has rested one foot there as she bent over to tip her catch into the jar. The mark was still damp enough to show the print of all six toes" (Wyndham 44).

This incident affected David greatly afterwards. David fought Alan trying to give Sophie time to run. Alan was much stronger than him but luckily Sophie knocks him out. David was very frustrated about everyone's perspective on Sophie. Throughout David's childhood, he was told to fear and report any mutants. He never felt that Sophie was a threat but more than a friend. They did not want the people of Waknuk to harm Sophie. This conflict is expressed as a person versus society. This leads David to believe that the definition is all fraudulent and their slaughtering innocent lives over something that they can't control.

In conclusion, David's conflict in his early childhood advocates the fact that David is a dynamic character. His discovery of Sophie's sixth toe and his Uncle beliefs on Waknuk's religion plays a major role in David's development and evolution throughout the novel, *The Chrysalids*.

A significant factor that leads David to be a dynamic character is his enlightenment to change his beliefs and go against his own society. David's discovery of his telepathic abilities supports the fact that David is a dynamic character. David being told his telepathic abilities was an offence is found on page 30, stating, "Davie', he said, ' I want you to make it a promise that you will never, never tell anyone else what you have just told me, never. It's very important: later on, you'll understand better how important it is. You mustn't do anything that would even let anyone guess about it. Will you promise that?'" (Wyndham 30).

David at the time had no idea what powers he possesses, but to Waknuk, they were a threat. This conflict is shown as a person versus society. David is now contemplating what Waknuk considers a mutant. David now goes against the image of God. David is now experiencing what it feels like for offences in Waknuk, not having control over what they have or can not have. This personal experience made David feel like his society is not fair. David's understanding of Waknuk's unfair laws and regulations ultimately leads to his enlightenment towards Waknuk's society.

Another factor that leads David to his enlightenment to go against Waknuk's society is Aunt Harriet's altercation between her baby and Emily. More specifically, Aunt Harriet's baby being considered a mutant. Aunt Harriet's

altercation between her baby and Emily could be found on page 70. It states, “ ‘ Harriet’ she demanded sharply. ‘ Are you going to tell me that you have not got a certificate?’ My aunt made no reply, but I thought I caught the sound of a suppressed sob or to from my aunt. Then she said, unsteadily, ‘ It’s nothing much!’” (Wyndham 70).

This encounter leads David to comprehend that if his family finds out about his telepathic abilities, Davids’s parents would not have sympathy or forgiveness for him. This foreshadows the reader that David must protect himself from his identity from others to keep himself and his future safe.

In conclusion, David’s enlightenment to go against his own society demonstrates how David is a dynamic character. His discovery of his telepathic abilities and the encounter and experience with Aunt Harriet all play a role in David’s development throughout the novel, The Chrysalids.

One major factor that supports David to be a dynamic character is his decision to flee Waknuk for his safety and control over his future. David’s understanding that the people of Waknuk knew about his and his group’s telepathic abilities supports the fact that David fleeing from Waknuk was necessary. Uncle Axel informed David of being careless about his promise to not tell anyone about his telepathic abilities is found on page 117. It states, “ ‘ Your’re not – you don’t mean she told Alan about herself!’ I protested. ‘ She did,’ he nodded. ‘ She did more than that. She told him about all you.’ I stared at him incredulously. ‘ You can’t be sure of it. Uncle Axel!’ ‘ I am, Davie boy. Maybe she didn’t intend to. Maybe it was only herself she told

about, being the kind of person who can't keep secrets in bed. And maybe he had to beat the names of the rest of you!" (Wyndham 117).

David is now in the perspective of what mutants are feeling. David is now never welcomed in the society of Waknuk. He knows that his family would not have sympathy after what happened to Aunt Harriet earlier. This leaves no choice for David and forces him to flee Waknuk for his safety and have control over his future. David is also aware of what they will exceed to do to him if he stays. Considering that they tortured Sally and Katherine, they will do the same for David, perhaps even worse.

Another major factor that proves David's character is dynamic is the Sealand woman claiming that David's childhood dream is a reality and encouraging him to emigrate and migrate to Zealand. Sealand women's claim about there being a Zealand could be found on page 136, stating, " I was jolted to recognize the picture from the childhood dreams that I had almost forgotten. I broke in, repeating it more clearly than Petra had shown it. A fish-shaped things, all white and shiny. ' Yes - like that,' Petra agreed. ' There's something very queer about this altogether,' Micheal put in" (Wyndham 137).

This discovery was the main reason why David left Waknuk, to go to a society where they were welcomed. In Zealand society, they were encouraged to improve and gain telepathic abilities, unlike Waknuk where they slaughter and torcher civilians who have this ability. This also explains why Petra was so significant to Zealand. They wanted to use Petra for her

incredible strength to teach the people of Zealand more about their telepathic abilities.

In conclusion, David's decision to flee Waknuk for his own safety and control over his future shows that David is a dynamic character. Waknuk's urge to torcher and kill David for his telepathic abilities and Sealand's women's explanation of Zealand all play a significant role in David's development throughout the novel.

In determination, a chrysalid is expressed as a protective covering. State of being or growth. Therefore, The Chrysalids novel is a direct symbolic of David's coming of age and growth. David's conflict in his early childhood, his enlightenment to go against Waknuk society, and his decision to leave Waknuk all contribute to the fact that David is a dynamic character in the novel The Chrysalids by John Wyndham.

The theme of The Chrysalids is a warning to today's society. John Wyndham was knowledgeable about society's feelings towards others and wanted to alter that. His goal was to give the reader a surreal feeling of what might have happened if ends did not meet. David's actions show realism for postmodern society. The actions of the Storms family express racism and discrimination which shows that our society in real life could be much identical.