

Costs and benefits of conformity and rebellion in selected literature essay



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Literature work mostly revolves around specific themes such as violence, love, poverty, revolution and issues that practically affect the characters. The latter are often members of the society, who the authors choose to relay certain social and other messages in the society. The works are often a depiction of the way of life of the people in the society at that particular period of time

In this essay, the author uses the works of chosen authors to analyze the benefits and costs of conforming to the norms of the society or rebelling against them by choosing to follow personal principles by individual characters or communities.

This work by Henrik Ibsen is seen as a depiction of rebellion against societal norms that do not conform to the humane aspects of life. These are aspects such as autocracy and dictatorship. The author illustrates rebellion using a female protagonist in the writing. The character is searching for her individuality via realizations and hurdles she encounters. This society had created a niche for the woman as a housewife and social partner to her husband (Ibsen 184).

Ibsen's story is controversial. The female protagonist represents the entire women folk who feel that the norms dictating that the woman should be the comforter, helper, and supporter of man are oppressive to the woman. The title of the book is symbolic because the protagonist, Nora, "refuses to be A Doll" to be played with by her husband and other male folk in the society (Ibsen 185).

The play introduces the woman as having her defined purpose and goal, contrary to the social norms in which her subscribed subordinate role in a relationship is to be loving and respectful to her husband, as well as been submissive to him.

The aspect of rebellion in the story helps the reader to realize the importance of deviance from the norms of society. The costs of the same appear to be elusive. This is evidenced through the comparison of the characters of Nora and Mrs. Linden. They were both friends since their childhood, but there was a great difference in how each character handled their life (Ibsen 183).

Mrs. Linden chose to marry a rich man to support her family and helpless mother. On the contrary, Nora, who was treated as a doll all her life, never had the chance to express herself. This is obviated in this quote, "look, Nora, in lots of things, you are still a child. I am older than you in many ways and I have had a little more experience" (Ibsen 184).

This treatment, which she was subjected to during her childhood and through eight years of marriage, disabled her to enjoy any kind of experience. She was neither exposed to life nor to the outer society. She found herself married to a selfish husband who loves her because she is amusing to him and makes him happy. This results in Nora rebelling at the end of the play, and she develops a different character from the one she was at the beginning (Cummings par. 15).

Mrs. Linden is portrayed to be a practical woman since after her husband passes on, she embarks on some projects. One of them was a school and <https://assignbuster.com/costs-and-benefits-of-conformity-and-rebellion-in-selected-literature-essay/>

another was opening a small shop. At the same time, she knew that Helmer, Nora's husband, became a bank manager and can help her find a suitable job. She never gives up on searching for a job. These are the results of conforming to the societal norms, which resulted to Nora being a Doll and never having the chance to express herself.

As earlier stated, she did not have any substantial external interactions (Cummings par. 13). The effects of this are well captured when Henrik writes, " Because an atmosphere of lies infects and poisons the whole life of a home..... In a house like that, every breath that the children take is filled with the germs of evil" (Ibsen 179).

The benefit of rebellion is portrayed when Nora decides to leave the house, desert her family and start a new life. Conformity had served to her disadvantage because she was merely a Doll which made her live a lie (Cummings par. 11).

In another exciting work of Shirley Jackson, " The Lottery", a story is told of a community that has roots in a culture that they cannot tell when and how it started, but blindly follows it. The society has not changed as it still embraces the culture which segregates women from men. Women are inferior to men. This particular story is about conforming to traditions that appease the gods so they could bless them with enough rain (Jackson 268).

Unfortunately in the story, it is Tessie who is stoned as a sacrifice. In the process of the sacrifice rebellion is displayed by Tessie in different instances.

The lottery is run by Mr. Summers. Women are supposed to act as mere spectators. The author tries to portray women's inferiority by describing their <https://assignbuster.com/costs-and-benefits-of-conformity-and-rebellion-in-selected-literature-essay/>

clothes. This is portrayed in this quotation, “wearing faded house dresses and sweaters and walking shortly after their men folk” (Jackson 268).

Tessie arrives late, and it is presumed this is an act of rebellion to the values of the lottery. Her explanation to Mr. Summers is viewed as indecent. “Wouldn’t have me leave m’dishes in the sink, now would you Joe?” (Jackson 295).

Women are mere housewives and do not contribute to income generating activities. Tessie inverts responsibility on her husband when their family name is mentioned by Mr. Summers. “Get up there, Bill” she tells her man (Jackson 297). This is an example of Tessie attempts to overturn the roles of men and women, which is rebellion (Kosenko par. 20).

She raises doubt about the rules of the game, claiming that Mr. Summers is not fair. This is a taboo, and she emerges as the one who is trying to fight for the women’s cause from being repressed by culture. Tessie faces death for the rebellion, which is a clear indication that conforming to the societal norms has no escape; the cost of rebellion is death (Kosenko par. 22).

The story “Two Kinds” by Amy Tan is a story of the conflicting relationships between a mother and a daughter. The plot of the story shows how a Chinese mother tries to make her daughter an ‘All-American’ girl. But the daughter, Jing-mei, does not want to be anything that her mother tries to force her to be. The daughter refuses to conform to her mother’s wishes of becoming a prodigy. “‘Of course you can be prodigy, too,’ my mother told me when I was nine,” (Amy 95).

Jing-mei, in her mind, wants to be herself, more than anything. She is strong-willed and eventually shows her mother that she does not want to try to be anything that she is not. A good example of this is found on page 97: “ I will not let her change me, I promised myself. I will not be what I am not” (Amy 97). This strains the mother-daughter relationship, and because of this, the daughter is termed rebellious (Elton 198).

In this book, Amy Tan explores the clash of cultures between a first-generation Chinese-American daughter, Jing-mei, and her mother, Suyan, a Chinese immigrant.

“ And after I played them both a few times, I realized they were two halves of the same song” (Amy 42). It is obvious that by conforming to her mother’s wishes, the daughter would have had a nice relationship with the mother. But she would not have achieved her dream. She struggled to pursue what she believed in, and it brought conflict (Caravaggio par. 7)

In the poem “ What is work?” Philip Levine simply portrays the need to work. One needs to conform to the hard conditions of work so that they can benefit. Any attempt to rebel will definitely make one lose their job. Thus, the benefits of conforming in the poem are various. One is the status the job gives the person. This is despite the fact that one has to do with adverse conditions like rain.

In the poem The Secretary Chant by Piercy, the author displays the dehumanization of a woman by her work. Despite this, she still has to conform. She does not rebel. She takes it humbly as her job and delivers.

This helps her to perform her duties diligently. But rebellion would mean her <https://assignbuster.com/costs-and-benefits-of-conformity-and-rebellion-in-selected-literature-essay/>

work is jeopardized. Rebellion has no room if one is in need of the position (Anonymous par. 1 and 2).

The above works have explored the theme of conformity and rebellion to the societal norms effectively by the use of female characters. They portray the results of conforming as unwinding loss of reputation and lack of experience in facing the realities of life. This deprives the characters status and a position in the society. As a result, they tend to rebel so as to find their purpose and claim their position in the society. The consequences are harsh but they do not give up.

Authors have successfully given an account of life in the old days and the social problems and events which were evident in that period of time. This is together with the effects they had on the society and what was done to the consequences or the merits of any actions undertaken in order to make it possible to exist in that society. Many of these actions were either conforming to the laid down protocols of the society or rebelling against them.

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