

# Whirligig case essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



“ An identity would seem to be arrived at by the way in which the person faces and uses his experience.” This quote, by James Baldwin, reveals that a person can discover who they really are by what actions they do. For example, helping people and assisting their needs, will result in a discovery of an identity of a nice person. If one goes around beating helpless people up, then one will discover itself to be rude and mean. This relates to “ Whirligig” because of Brent’s actions. Brent travels across the country constructing whirligigs to spread happiness throughout America. By him doing these kind deeds, he exposes his true self identity. Brent Bishop, a teenaged boy in Paul Fleischman’s novel Whirligig, undergoes a dramatic change in self-identity during his journey through America. Persistently apprehensive about what people think about him, Brent constantly varies his self-identity to impress and fit in with his peers. When getting ready for the party, he notices his earring: “ Next he inspected his left ear’s gold earring.

At his school in Atlanta, it had been the right ear.... But at Montfort School, in the western suburbs of Chicago, it was the left” (6). This proves that Brent always changes his appearance to coordinate to what other people like. All Brent attempts to do is follow the trends specific to his location and fit in rather than do what he wants to do that makes him happy. In addition to following the trend with his earring, Brent insists on being on par with the music, “ Discerning what stations were considered cool was another of his moving-in tasks” (6). This proves furthermore how much Brent cares about fitting in and impressing others. Will Brent ever discover what his true identity really is? Gradually, Brent develops a more positive perception of himself throughout his journey of constructing whirligigs.

For the first time, Brent ponders if he should do what he wants to do instead of following what his environment is doing. Brent, passing some time, “Retreats to the bench, pulls out his harmonica, plays the six songs he’s memorized, and then moves on to ‘I’ve Been Working on the Railroad’” (66). Brent chooses to play a harmonica only to have fun with himself. He does not play a harmonica to fit in or impress others like he has in the past, but strictly to fulfill his free time.