

A cage of butterflies essay sample

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



In the novel, *A Cage of Butterflies*, by Brian Caswell, he explores many themes, the most important being the theme of 'being different'. I believe that Brian Caswell is very passionate about this topic and that he wants to explore what being different and an individual really means. This topic is very relevant in today's society.

Being drastically different is a burden because you will never be or feel accepted. Many of the kids at the Think-Tank had felt this way before they came to the institute when they were in the outside world and at school. On page 10, Greg says "It doesn't take long to discover what being different means...so they learned early to blend it...like Chris...he'd fake enough mistakes to keep him near the middle of the class...but they got him in the end...you just couldn't live your whole life under a lie like that." From this quote we can see that the kids, before coming to the Think-Tank, tried to fit in by pretending to be something that they weren't just to be accepted. Greg also says "I guess that's why most of us don't mind it here, it's a place where we don't have to pretend to be anything but what we are." The kids feel comfortable and safe in the Think-Tank because they feel that they don't have to pretend to be something they're not, they don't have to 'live a lie.'

Because the kids and the babies are different, when they were in the outside world they were labeled as outcasts. They felt like Tall Poppies. Poppies are usually all the same shape and size so a tall poppy would be one that stands out from the rest and is different. Tall poppies look abnormal so people cut them down to size. Tall poppy syndrome is when someone is outstanding and people, often by criticizing, ridiculing and isolating, 'cut them down to size'. This would have been very difficult for the kids to deal with.

The Kids at the institute all have special gifts. For starters they all had extremely high I. Q's. For example Grettel is a whiz with multi-dimensional maths, Gordon and Lesley have eidetic memories and Mikki has unlimited knowledge. On page 17 it says " Every kid on the bus had some special gift. Abilities beyond the understanding of most people. But what had it gained them? Rejection by kids their own age, Freak status with those adults who weren't actually scared of them. And a home away from home with Larsen and MacIntyre and the other researchers who set them tasks, monitored the results and generally used them as guineapigs." In this we can see that because they are different, they have been isolated and confined to be treated like guineapigs and many of the researchers don't even treat them or regard them as human beings. It tells us that basically the negative effects of being different heavily outweigh the positive effects.

The Babies are also very different. They had all the symptoms of autism yet they can communicate telepathically. We later discover that this was all part of the shield which helps them overcome the noise. The shield is like a protective barrier that the babies have created around their minds in order not to hear the uncontrolled thoughts of everyone else (the noise). Their difference had made them very prized and precious to Larsen, yet he was so egocentric that he was unable to pick up the signs to discover their real powers.

I think that at the beginning of the book the reader gets the impression that being different is an incredible burden and that there are very negative effects, however by the end of the book you begin to change your opinion. It

is as though because they are different they are drawn to each other and feel like a family. Susan expresses this on page 163, " Now I'm complete, with my family." If the kids weren't different they never would have found each other and would still feel alone in the world.

All of the kids at the Institute would have had a lot to deal with as a result of being so different. I believe that Brian Caswell wants to tell the reader that although someone may be different due to physical, intellectual, mental or psychological reasons, we should not treat him or her differently. I believe that being different can be a burden, or a blessing...its what you make of it.