

Good book looking for alibrandi

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A good book leaves us thinking with things to say, and *Looking for Libidinal* is a good example of one of those books. It captures the exact thoughts of a seventeen year old girl, stressed out from her upcoming HSC exams as well as the problems going on in her social life. Melinda Merchant engages us in the themes of multiculturalism, love, rites of passage and coping with death and encrypts these themes beautifully and expresses them with emotion and thought. One of the biggest themes of *Looking for Libidinal* is multiculturalism, as Josses struggles to find her personal and cultural identity.

At the beginning of the book Josses resents having an Italian background, because at school there is the difficulty and prejudice of being a second generation Australian with an Italian background. She experiences a feeling of being different, as the majority of the students have Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, and have not learned to accept anyone other than "their kind". The students tease and make racist comments at her, calling her a 'new Australian', but Josses is strong and fights back, but consequently this gets her into a lot of trouble with the teachers.

Although the students at her school are not the only ones, as there are other people who have preconceived ideas about the 'ethnics', such as Jacob. It begins as Jacob talks about 'going out with the ethnic girl' and as their argument continues, he goes to say 'you people should go back to your own country if you're so confused'. At home as well, there is gossip from the Italian society about Josses not being good enough, and her grandmother always telling her that it kills her inside when Josses fights about having her own rights as well, and that the rules and restrictions are stifling to her.

Also, the rituals within the family, such as Tomato Day, is resented by Josses at first, but as she matures she begins to see that it is not taking up her free time, but it's an opportunity for her family to share and tell their stories. Eventually, Josses comes to realize that, even though not everyone in Australia will ever understand a multicultural society, she knows what her place is and that it matters. " If someone comes up to me and asks me what nationality I am, I'll look at them and say that I'm Australian with Italian blood rapidly flowing through my veins.

I'll say that with pride, because it's pride that I feel. " Love is a major theme that is related to Looking for Libidinal, because it is in this year of Joke's life that she falls in love with Jacob Cote. This decision held an important meaning because this is what made Josses decide between whether she wanted to have an important status and to be considered in the wealthy class, or as Josses describes the beautiful people' (John Barton), or whether she wanted to be seen as the girl who would live her life in the middle-class, just being normal.

Because if she was to choose a relationship with John Barton, this would've left her with a better image to be accepted for her dream job as a barrister. Even so, Josses continued to date Jacob, and throughout the book, her feeling continuously became stronger for and Jacob isn't; repeatedly he begins to show strong emotions for his love for her, but Josses feels he is pushing her too hard. In the end, it is the occasion that Josses stands up for herself that they break off the relationship. It breaks her heart, but this

teaches Josses to be strong and to stand for herself, and that the future is not going to always be how she wants it to turn out.

But that isn't the only relation of love portrayed through the book - despite their disagreements and argues, Josses, Christina ND Katie all love each other. Even though they shout and, at times, swear at each other, beneath it all they all hold a very close family relationship and know that they are a family. At the beginning of the book, Josses resents her grandmother and hates going to her place every afternoon. She argues with her and compels against her with every chance that she gets. Her grandmother, Katie, continues to tell Josses that she and Christina are not good enough and that everything they do breaks her heart.

But as the story follows, Josses tries hard to listen, and begins to understand her grandmother. She listens to the stories she tells about her young life in Australia, and as time passes Josses finds out about things that not only change her life, but her relationship with her grandmother as well. The bond grows stronger and by the end of the book, Josses cherishes the relationships she holds with her mother and grandmother, and reflects back to how she once was, but knows now that what she holds with her family is one of the most treasured things in in her life.

In looking for Libidinal, rites of passage is a key theme because of how Josses transitions from her immature self into a mature and more open-minded woman. At the beginning of the book, Josephine is determined to not abide by the rules, yet as she places in more thought and begins to understand more,

she realizes that she has only been questioning and opposing school, religion and family, but not thinking about her friend's ideas and moral values.

When it came to her friends, she never really gave thought to what she was doing, and this allowed her to be influenced greatly, never standing up for what she thought was right. Once Josephine realized this, she began to have think for herself and started making her own decisions. This is what allowed Josses to stand up to Jacob about having sex with her. By the end of the novel, Josses has realized that there is more to being just a rebel, as being a reasonable and stable person is not about going against someone's rules, but it is about knowing one's self and being able to set your own boundaries.

It is this that enables her to accept that a part of life is to know and go along with another's wish, as long as the balance between conforming and independence is maintained. Death and grieving is another significant issue in *Looking for Libidinal*. Josses says that she would die if her mother dies, but Jacob, whose mother had died several years earlier, says you don't die. He talks about feeling angry and hurt, but then tells Josses that one day you find yourself remembering something and laughing instead of crying.

To Josses, Jacob's description had been so honest and real, and it was then that she realized she had no experience of the death of someone close to her. At the end of the novel, when John Barton commits suicide, Josses is at first in disbelief and hysteria, and then is angry and says she hates John for his weakness. She cries and then accepts that he is gone. Josses had reacted to John's death in a predictable way; owing through the emotions of anger,

hate, pain, guilt, remembering and eventually acceptance, because to her, whatever had happened had already happened, and she had to move on.

In Looking for Libidinal, there are two important comments about suicide. The first was when Joke's father said: " Living is the challenge, Josses. Not dying. Dying is so easy. Sometimes it only takes ten seconds to die. But living? That can take you eighty years and you do something in that time, whether its giving birth to a baby or being a housewife or a barrister or a soldier. To throw that away at such a young age, to have no hope, that is the biggest tragedy. And the other was by Ivy: " It wasn't our fault Josses. Not yours or mine. It was always John.

But I feel like crying because people will always remember the way he died not the way he lived. " It was because of John's death that Josephine realized that each person has to make their own decisions about living or dying, and that feeling responsible for the lives of other people is only natural, but impossible in the end. In conclusion, Looking for Libidinal was indeed a book that left us with things to say. The way Merchant conveyed the difficulty of the living standard [for legitimates] only 20 years ago have completely opened our minds and touched our hearts.

She has left us to think of how different our Australian society is now, and how multiculturalism might be one of our strongest point to become one united country, and how we have completely accepted that. Not only that, but to describe to us that we must become independent and to stop being conformed to what we want to do, and to think of others but setting our own limits at the same time, to describe this all in one book, I believethat this

definitely has to be a book that has influenced us greatly and left us with thoughts in our minds.