

A trip of mixed emotions towards becoming an adult in marigold by eugenia w. coll...

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The Journey to Adulthood

Teens usually have mixed emotions about growing up and maturing into an adult. Some are excited and others are afraid or even anxious about their future. Either way, however, we all know that this stage of development can be difficult. In this phase, adolescents are faced with several challenges that range from self-consciousness to depression. These challenges and the knowledge they gain in their adolescent years shape adolescents into adults. Teens truly become adults when they let go of their naivety and childish ways, developing themselves into better people. In the short story “*Marigolds*,” Collier portrays the idea that the transition between adolescence and adulthood can be a challenging phase. Collier expresses that children and adolescents embark on their journey to adulthood when they are encountered with the struggles of the real world, consider the feelings of others, and learn from their past mistakes.

By being revealed to the hardships of life, teens lose their naivety and their childish habits. In “*Marigolds*,” Lizabeth is “unaware of the world outside [her] community” (214) as she is “only vaguely aware of the extent of [her] poverty” (214). This shows that she isn’t exposed to what is happening in the world beyond her impoverished environment since she is still a child. After Lizabeth rips out the marigolds, she realizes what it is like to spend time and effort on something and the struggles Miss Lottie, the owner of the marigolds, goes through. With this realization, she lets go of her foolish ways of destruction and begins to develop into a mature adult. Others may believe that children today are well-informed about current events, but most

children can relate to Lizabeth since they aren't aware of what is happening in the world or even their own community. When I was younger, I wasn't aware of what was happening in life beyond my own little bubble since I never read the newspaper or paid attention to the news. Like Collier, Ray Bradbury also conveys the message of losing one's naivety in order to understand reality in his novel, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. Jim Nightshade and Will Halloway, two juvenile boys, are faced with the reality that the world can be an awful place. Mr. Dark, the antagonist, asks the boys if they think that being innocent will help in being victorious over the dark side. "Do you really imagine that innocence can harm me? Is naiveté really your armor?" (156). When Mr. Dark asks if their naivety is their protection, it shows how oblivious Will and Jim are to their surroundings and their current situation. But the boys let go of their childhood and naivety when they truly begin to grasp an idea of what is happening and realize that their battle against evil will be complicated due to the several struggles that they need to face. When teens are exposed to the struggles of the world, they lose their naivety and gradually mature into adults.

The moment adolescents learn to consider the emotions of others instead of only focusing on themselves, they take on the personality of an adult. For instance, Lizabeth becomes compassionate after she destroys Miss Lottie's marigolds since she realizes how much work and effort Miss Lottie has put into them. "The witch was no longer a witch but only a broken old woman who had dared to create beauty in the midst of ugliness and sterility" (223). It is after she becomes a woman that she truly values Miss Lottie's marigolds

because she understands that she needs to be considerate of others and focus on other people instead of herself all the time. As a child, Lizabeth would carelessly bully her old neighbor by ruining her precious flowers and only thinking about the joy that she would receive instead of what Miss Lottie, on the other hand, would feel due to her foolish actions. After her thoughtless act, Lizabeth lets go of her naivety by looking beyond her own feelings and being compassionate. As well as “ Marigolds,” “ Hanging Fire,” a poem by Audre Lorde, portrays that being selfless enables an adolescent to be one step closer to adulthood. In the poem, Lorde writes about the everyday struggles a teen is conflicted with, like their own lives, their family, and their friends. For example, Lorde writes, “ How come my knees are so ashy ... I have to learn how to dance ... my room is too small for me” (230). These lines show that the adolescent in the poem is self-conscious and cares too much about herself, without spending time to think about how others are feeling, like her mother who seems distant to her. It represents how modern day teens are too self-absorbed in their own lives and have no time to communicate with their peers around them. Some may argue that teens don’t need to understand other people’s feelings, but it is when an adolescent considers the struggles and emotion of others that he/she loses their childish personality and transforms into an adult. Both “ Marigolds” and “ Hanging Fire” show that a teen must be considerate about the feelings of others in order to take on adulthood.

Learning from previous errors that a teen has made in his/her life progresses them into adulthood. After Lizabeth ruins Miss Lottie’s marigolds by throwing

rocks at them, she doesn't feel guilty for what she has done since she is still a child. "The child in me sulked and said it was all in fun, but the woman in me flinched at the thought of the malicious attack that I had led" (220). This sentence shows how Elizabeth is stuck in a dilemma between her adulthood and childhood since she isn't sure how she felt about her actions. But the part of her that is still a child doesn't feel any pain or wrongdoing for her deed since that part of Elizabeth is still naive and immature. Teens and kids in this generation aren't affected by their mistakes since they don't see the importance that lies in learning from what they did wrong, like Elizabeth. But once they learn from their mistakes and wrong deeds, they enter the life of an adult. Additionally, Collier explains how after she destroys Miss Lottie's marigolds, Elizabeth instantly realizes what she has done and feels shameful. "I scrambled to my feet and just stood there and stared at her, and that was the moment when childhood faded and womanhood began" (223). Before, Elizabeth never felt guilt for her foolish deeds since she still had a sense of naivety in her. But now, since she is a woman, she understands her mistakes and learns from them, correcting herself the next time. Others may view learning from one's mistakes as futile since they believe that not all teens learn instantly. But possessing this characteristic can significantly develop a teen into an adult by relinquishing their naivety and learning from their errors.

In conclusion, Collier conveys that after being exposed to the hardships of the real world, becoming compassionate, and learning from one's mistakes, an adolescent begins his/her transition into adulthood and loses their

naivety. Although there may be obstacles along this rite of passage, a teen goes through several phases and attains new qualities and knowledge. The theme portrayed in “ Marigolds” can also be seen in teens nowadays since the message that teens lose their childish ways, or naivety, is a universal topic regardless of the generation or time era. Something Wicked This Way Comes and the poem “ Teenagers” are both pieces of literature that show several aspects of growing up and letting go of one’s childhood. To sum up, the short story “ Marigolds” reveals that an adolescent must lose his/her naivety in order to initiate their journey into adulthood.