

Am i blue



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## Personal Conflicts in " Am I Blue"

The author of Am I Blue, Beth Henley begins the play with the seventeen-year-old protagonist John Polk sitting alone in a bar. John contemplates on the red and black card in his hand. From the street, a sixteen-year-old girl whose name is Ashbe sits next to him. She hides under his raincoat because she stole two ashtrays from a local inn. Ashbe is a social person and soon begins a conversation with John. Through persistent questioning, Ashbe discovers John is in a fraternity. John admits the fraternity is not solving his problems like his brother told him it would. Ashbe, noticing the red appointment card, asks John why he has an appointment with a prostitute. John responds " Yeah, I like to give myself a treat"(line 50). Ashbe knows the girl John has an appointment with and explains what the girl looks like. John makes a comment that he needs to go to a cheap bar so he can stay drunk. Ashbe says she has a bottle of rum and invites John to her apartment. While at Ashbes apartment, she entertains John with a blue rum drink, her voodoo doll, and making him a paper hat. Ashbe asks John about his aspirations in life. John is unsure what he wants to do with his life, but his father is pushing him to help manage the soybean farm. As the conversation continues, Ashbe accuses John of being normal. She says he only acts the way he does because its expected and makes everyone happy. She wants him to be himself and not try to fit in with everyone else. John soon after realizes Ashbe is right, and the so called fraternity friends only set him up with the prostitute because it is the cool thing to do. Later, while the two talk about dancing, Ashbe asks John to make love to her. John says he could not even kiss her with a clear conscience. After Johns comment, Ashbe views herself as undesirable. John tells her he likes her too much to make love to her. John

decides to break his date with the prostitute and dance all night with someone he cares about, Ashbe. John Polk experiences three personal conflicts in Am I Blue: his difficulty of adjusting to adulthood, his ambitions in life, and his attempt to develop individuality.

John Polks first conflict is his difficulty of adjusting to adulthood. John is attending college, and he is involved with a fraternity. John realizes the adult world looms ahead, and he exercises poor judgment. Life on the soybean farm is different from fraternity life. John is overwhelmed with this new fast life " of parties, booze, honking horns"(line 34). John states " Oh, God, I need to get drunk"(line115). John resorts to drinking alcohol when he thinks about his problems. The party life of the fraternity fuels the fire. John drinks alcohol throughout the play to escape from his worries. Toward the end of the play, however, John makes some adult decisions. John refuses to make love to Ashbe because he cares for her. Also, instead of going to the prostitute, John stays with Ashbe for the night.

John Polks second conflict is deciding his ambitions in life. Ashbe asks John what he is studying to be, and he answers indecisively. His dad wants him to attend business school and help manage the soybean farm. However, John wants to do something else with his life. John states " I dont know. I wanted to be a minister or something good, but I dont even know if I believe in God"(280). John wants to be a minister or something good. However, his problems in life are breaking his spirit. His belief in God disappears as he fills his life with immoral acts. John says " I never used to worry about being a failure. Now I think about it all the time. Its just I need to do something thats ... fulfilling"(line282). John does not believe managing the soybean is

fulfilling. Even though he does not want to work on the farm, John feels obligated to make his dad happy. Ashbe believes in developing individuality. She wants John to explore his own ambitions and not allow others to make his ambitions for him.

John Polks third conflict is attempting to develop individuality. John allows others to make his decisions. When Ashbe asks " why did you join?"(line 35), John responds " I dont know. Well, my brother ... I guess it was my brother ... he told me how great it was, how the fraternity was supposed to get you dates, make you study, solve all your problems"(line 36). John realizes he is not happy in the fraternity. The fraternity is not solving his problems; instead, it is adding to the problems. Ashbe says in an argument with John that he is only in the fraternity because it is expected. John resents the comment, but moments later he realizes he is being normal. John says " About me, you were right. I am a sheep, a normal one. Ive been trying to get out of it but Im as big a sheep as ever"(line 276). John knows he does what others expect. He says he can not deny wanting to become normal. John does not want to experience rejection for thinking or acting against the crowd.

John Polk faces personal conflicts throughout the play. Ashbe, the free spirited girl, changes John Polks life. Ashbe is an artistic individual. Whether she is putting food coloring in water or making paper hats, Ashbe expresses her individuality. She makes him see how important being himself is. She introduces him to a new light of individuality, ambitions, and adulthood. By John Polk not going to the prostitute, he shows how he cares for Ashbe and

not what the fraternity guys think. For the first time, John Polk does not follow the crowd. He decides to follow his own heart.