

Mean girls essay



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Teenage years or adolescence as the more appropriate term is marked by the adjustment, excitement, and misadventures in high school. This is the main theme of the movie “ Mean Girls,” which is about the struggles of an average high school girl in order to belong to the crowd of popular teens in the campus. At the end of the day, this girl eventually learns not how to fit herself in, but to be herself and to find her own identity. The story revolves around Cady Heron who is a girl in her pubescent years. This stage marks the onset of having crushes, fashion idols, and mortal enemies.

Cady has undergone and experienced all those inevitable things which involve the life of an adolescent. She has gone from being a non-popular kid, to someone who equals the most hateful famous girl in the crowd, and back to her rational and intelligent self. Her life battles are affected by intervening factors such as her peers, her parents, her environment, and of course, her own discretion. Finally, by the end of the story, she has been able to settle her issues and discover her own strengths which do not compare to any other.

According to Erik Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development, adolescents confront the crisis on identity versus role confusion. In this stage, teens experience the need to establish their unique sense of identity. They would like to be known for who they are and they would want to be accepted in the society or in the crowd to which they belong. This is exactly what happened to Cady as she entered a new stage in her life. Because she is relatively new to the crowd and is currently adjusting to fit in with her peers, she still could not figure out which role she would play.

She became doubtful of her personality, her strengths and weaknesses. Her fascination with what is “in” and admirable made her long for the same status and popularity which entails her to develop certain values which she still needs to develop. However, the problem sets in when she became confused with the role she had to take. Instead of creating her own identity, she turned obsessed with imitating the ways and attitudes of the girls belonging to the higher class. She developed the same behaviors that these girls called “plastics” possess, when in fact she used to abhor these negative attitudes before.

When she was still not part of the group, she was still timid and caring. However, when she forced herself to belong, she became mean and discriminating. She was able to leave all her good friends behind, taking them for granted; to steal somebody else’s boyfriend and not be guilty about it; and to make herself corrupted in all the possible ways. As Erikson said, there are three main issues that an adolescent must face and resolve so that he/she could realize his/her identity: 1) choice of occupation or role, 2) adoption of values, and 3) development of a sexual identity.

Cady had struggled in all three facets in search for her own identity. Nevertheless, in the latter part of the movie, she was able to resolve her inner conflicts by engaging herself to a commitment. After being reprimanded due to circumstances getting out of hand, she committed herself to be part of the school team to compete in a Mathematics competition. Through this, she had discovered that she has so much more to offer and that this is who she really is. Moving on to Piaget’s Stages of

Cognitive Development, Cady belongs to the highest level of cognitive development, which is the formal operations stage.

Being in this level means that the person has the capability to create abstract thought: make future predictions, engage in hypothetical thinking, use symbolism, comprehend metaphors and their meanings, and fully grasp non-empirical ideas. Clearly, Cady has matured in her cognitive development. Being part of the “ Mathletes” team, she had exhibited her ability to abstractly through her expertise in solving algebra and calculus problems. She was able to use symbols to stand for other abstract ideas and she could likewise solve mathematical problems mentally.

When it comes to non-academic related cognitive processes, the indication that her thoughts had developed is that she was able to formulate plans and systematically solve life problems. She and her friends had built a plan and laid out their options so as to defeat the villain in the story. They were able to make hypotheses and test them out to see if it would be effective. Indeed, the adolescents’ brain has moved on to a next higher level when it comes to cognition and the processes that are involved in it. However, since the teenage years are an adjustment phase, they still could regress to the lower level every once in a while.

In the story, the plot climaxed to the point that Cady was not able to control things and take them out of her hand. She was not able to foresee the possible negative consequences of her actions. Hence, she had to face the grave outcomes of her evil plans. Nevertheless, by the end of the movie, she still was able to realize the importance of abstract ideas such as friendship,

truthfulness, and honesty. This brings this discussion to Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development. Kohlberg believes that a person's morality likewise matures as he/she ages.

When this person reaches the age of 10 and above, he/she is now in the second level of moral development which is the stage of conventional morality or morality of conventional role conformity. It is further divided into two sublevels: maintaining mutual relations, approval of others and maintaining social order. Even if there is a higher level which starts in adolescence – postconventional morality – it is believed that some adults do not reach this stage and get stuck instead with the second one. The reason behind this is that the third one rests on moral standards of justice, fairness, and what is right and wrong.

Relatively, this is more difficult to grasp even for adults who had developed their cognition to its fullest. For conventional morality, people having this have already realized the power of authoritative figures. The main concern for adolescents and adults is that they appear pleasing to other people, more so to their peers. They would like to have smooth relations with the people with which they mingle around everyday. They would like to be accepted in the group so as to maintain a socially orderly environment. This was clearly seen in the movie, having a primarily teenage group as the main characters.

The biggest hurdle that Cady had encountered was her struggle to belong in a group, and this required her to use her moral judgment. She had expectations coming from her family, closest friends, and teachers. However, she likewise had to keep up with her social needs. She seeks approval of her

peers and so she figured out that she had to follow the rules and behaviors of this popular girl group. At this point, she might have made wrong decisions, perhaps because her moral development still has not matured enough for her to make right judgments.

Again, nevertheless, by the end of the movie, Cady had realized that she had made a lot of wrong choices in life and she had to reassess her decisions, priorities, and the values that she must further develop. She had learned to make the proper judgments when it comes to assessing the intentions of other people. Also, she was finally able to grasp the concept of what a real “good” person is and the right attitudes and behaviors that she must possess, especially when it comes to dealing with others.

Finally, she had likewise understood that she must respect her parents and people of higher authority like teachers and other school officials and that she must not break their rules in order to promote social order. Overall, the movie showed Cady’s maturity – morally, cognitively, and emotionally – as an adolescent. As a starting teenager, she had been stuck to some of the lower levels of moral, cognitive, and psychosocial development. She faced issues and crises which tested her capability to adapt to real life challenges. In turn, these struggles had helped her to further, if not fully develop her own personality.

In reality, people likewise undergo these psychosocial changes together with their physical maturation. Not only do these things happen in dramas but it is also something that occurs inevitably to people in real life. Each person jumps from one level of development to another. However, some move

relatively faster or slower than the others. Some have advanced progression but some continue to be stuck and regressed in a lower level. Nevertheless, each and everyone definitely would have to follow these stages, theoretically or in reality, regardless of the rate of their advancement.