

The natural

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



“ Roy, will you be the best there ever was in the game? ” “ That’s right. ” (p. 33) In *The Natural*, by Bernard Malamud, Roy Hobbs intends to be the best baseball player there ever was, breaking all of the records and enjoying the fame that came with it. He started playing for the Knights under the management of Pop Fisher as a rookie at the age of 34. His career started slowly but eventually he became the most liked and most watched player in all of baseball leading his team from last place in the standings to the best team in baseball.

In 1984, Mark Johnson took the book and produced it into a movie. While there were plenty of small differences, a few major changes were made. These changes ultimately led us from the book where we didn’t like him or want him to succeed to the movie where he was loved and people wanted him to succeed. Two differences in the movie from the book that gave a different mood and an extremely different outcome are Roy’s childhood in the movie and Roy’s relationship with Iris. At the beginning of *The Natural* movie, the additional portrayal of Roy’s childhood leads him to future success.

In the book there was no portrayal of Roy’s childhood, and, therefore Roy did not achieve success to the same degree in the movie. The movie gave the viewer the impression that Roy had a family (including a father) and friends that were supportive and loving. We later find out that Roy’s friend in the beginning of the movie is Iris Lemon. Her role in the movie and the novel are different only because in the movie she had a relationship with Roy prior to him leaving for Chicago however, she plays an important character in both. The book begins with Roy, at age 19, on a train to Chicago to try out for the Chicago Cubs.

In the book Iris is visually a complete opposite of Iris in the movie. Iris is described as plump although appealing, with a head full of red hair, yet in the movie she is a skinny, relatively attractive, and blond. Since Roy had a previous relationship with Iris in his childhood, his relationship with her now is much different than it is in the book. In the book, Roy is not very attracted to her and in addition she is a grandmother which does not appeal to Roy because he wants to feel young and that he has many more days as a baseball player.

This shows Roy's personality in the book because he ends up sleeping with her anyway, even though he has no real feelings for her. In the movie, Roy was struggling choosing between Iris, the girl he actually loves, and Memo, the girl he thinks he loves because of her looks. In the novel, Roy was much more drawn to Memo. Her appeal and his lack of self control made him vulnerable to her, “ Roy was thinking about Memo. If not for her he wouldn't be here trying to make himself at ease with this one. ”(p. 146). Roy sleeps with both girls in the book to satisfy his pleasures, but he only sleeps with Iris because he is obsessed with sex.

At the final game, Iris explains that she is having his soon, “ ‘ Darling,’ whispered Iris, ‘win for our boy. ’ He stared at her. ‘What boy? ’ ‘I am pregnant. ’ There were tears in her eyes. Her belly was slender . . . then the impact hit him. ‘Holy Jesus. ’” Roy was visually upset because now not only was he a father, but also he was now a grandfather. Roy really does not want to be stuck with Iris and a child as he is trying to grow his career. In the movie, Iris is a romantic prospect for Roy from the beginning. They grow up

together as friends and they are quite in love before Roy leaves on the train to play baseball.

When Roy becomes famous, Iris finds his name in the newspaper and decides to see one of his games. In the novel, we first see Iris when she is in the stands at one of Roy's games. These differences change Roy and Iris's relationship in the novel and the film which ultimately helps decide the outcome of the story. In the film she is romantically linked to Roy which provides him with self-esteem and a reason to become the best he can be. Yet in the book, Iris supports him but he blows her off and his lack of proper feelings towards her ultimately contributes to Roy's self-destruction of himself and failure.

Malamud never intended on writing *The Natural* as a happy ending however with some changes, the film has a totally different meaning. The mood and outcome of the novel and the movie is changed by alterations made to adding a scene to the beginning of the movie and Roy's relationship with Iris. Roy had to make decisions in both the movie and the book that either benefited or destroyed him and his career. His actions when he was focused on himself and his pleasures the outcome was destruction, but when influenced by love, hope, and incentive Roy is led to victory and success. Roy fighting against all of the corrupt people trying to buy him out.

However, the book tries to make the reader perceive Roy as a very flawed person who is almost in league with others in destroying himself. This incident is also questions Roy's relationship with Memo in the novel and the film. Roy seems very wary of Memo in the film and it seems as if he has a suspicion that she is plotting against him. When he does end up poisoned it

appears that he does realize that it was Memo who did it in order to keep him from playing. Nevertheless, in the novel Roy seems more trusting towards Memo, who uses him for her own greedy ideas and persuades him to throw the game in order to get the money.

The quote " Memo helped. 'Don't be stingy, Roy. ' 'Pile it on honey. ' 'You sure are a scream the way you eat. ' " shows Roy's trust in Memo and how she simply helps him destroy himself, without any remorse whatsoever. The naive Roy is fooled by Memo's looks and charm, and only realizes what he has done at the end of the book when it is too late to be fixed. Overall, this incident questions Roy's relationship with Memo and comments about his own personality, which is tremendously different in the film, compared to the novel.

Regardless of everything else in both the film and the novel, it is undoubtedly the ending of both works that cause the themes in them to be so dramatically different. The book's ending involves Roy accepting the bet and appearing to throw the game. His career then heads in a downward spiral as Max Mercy publishes the information about his past and his selling out. In one of the last scenes Roy confronts the judge, Gus and Memo, apparently regretting what he did, but it is too late for him to change his future.

The last line of the book is " When Roy looked into the boy's eyes he wanted to say it wasn't but couldn't, and he lifted his hands to his face and wept many bitter tears. " This fittingly ends the story since Roy has finally felt the repercussions of his actions and realizes his error. Since he confided in people who were innately evil and did not rely on himself and others who

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really cared about him he failed. However, the film's ending is completely different since Roy does not miss the game and ends up winning it for his team.

He is regarded as a hero and we assume that he marries Iris and stays with his son from the short ending scene. The difference that this points out is that if a person has confidence in himself and realizes what is really important in life he can really strive to succeed. Roy used Iris and his son as a catalyst to propel him to victory and at the same time utilized his own important characteristics such as perseverance and self-assurance. Altogether, the ending is very different and thus makes the themes of both works very different with one making use of love and dedication while the other falls victim to deceit and impulsiveness.