

# The girl next door

Family



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In "The Girl Next Door" there are several relationships explored. The contrasting themes of intimacy and distance as well as closeness and separation are depicted through the characters portrayed in the story. One relationship is between the protagonist and his mother, which appears to be close and intimate but also seems dysfunctional. Another relationship is between Brandi and her mother, which is distant and separate. The last relationship is between the protagonist and Brandi, a nine year old girl. The protagonist tries to transcend the class and cultural differences and be a positive influence in the girl's life, but is unsuccessful in his efforts. Through the examination of the narrator's experience with Brandi, we learn about the intricate and complex relationships in his own life and how that has influenced his response to the wider world. The story opens with dialogue between the mother and son. Immediately, the reader is thrust into the middle of a tirade by the mother. One can begin to see the dynamic of the relationship in action. This is seen here " Oh, no, my mother said. They're not to blame. Let's be honest now. She liked to take my problems back to the source, which was usually me. " The mother is portrayed as dismissive and combative to the son's problems. This lays a foundation for greater understanding of the protagonist's motives for trying to help Brandi. From growing up with a parent this dismissive it is easy to understand why the protagonist has sympathy for Brandi. It seems as though he saw a part of himself in her. While the relationship between the mother and son may not be perfect, the mother clearly does care for her son and wants to help him with his problems. On the other hand, the relationship between Brandi and her mother is very troubled. The central action of the plot revolves around the narrator's attempts to befriend his young neighbor, Brandi. Brandi and

<https://assignbuster.com/the-girl-next-door/>

her mother are very poor, low class and dysfunctional while the protagonist is from a wealthier, more privileged background. The contrast of closeness and separation is depicted in this description. " You had to feel sorry for a girl like that. No father, no eyebrows, and that mother. Our apartments shared a common wall, and every night I'd hear the woman stomping home from work. Most often she was with someone, but whether alone or with company she'd find some excuse to bully her daughter out of bed. " The neighbors do share something in common however, and they are very close in proximity but there is a fundamental difference in their outlooks in life and how they interact with the world. This separation prevents a true, honest and real relationship from developing between Brandi and the narrator. Brandi's mother is very selfish, neglectful and borderline abusive. " Given her home life, it wasn't surprising that Brandi latched onto me. A normal mother might have wondered what was up-her nine-year-old daughter spending time with a twenty-six-year-old man-but this one didn't seem to care. I was just free stuff to her: a free babysitter, a free cigarette machine, the whole store. "

Later in the story, when the narrator confronts Brandi's mother, she is hostile and takes offense at his advice. She refers to him as " some asshole", this dismissiveness echoes the narrator's relationship with his own mother, but Brandi's mother is on another level. She is a terrible mother and an awful neighbor. Despite his best intentions. It seems that the narrator did not heed the warning signs when it came to Brandi. " Before I moved in, Brandi's mother had used the couple downstairs, but you could tell that the relationship had soured. Next to the grocery carts chained to their porch was a store-bought sign, the " No Trespassing" followed by a handwritten " This means you, Brandi!!!! "" This is foreshadowing for when Brandi feels slighted

<https://assignbuster.com/the-girl-next-door/>

and breaks into the narrator's apartment to steal and vandalize the narrator's possessions. When being told the story, the narrator's mother recognizes the danger immediately, saying that Brandi seemed like bad news from the start. The narrator is more idealistic and thinks that his reaching out to Brandi will be a positive influence. He is a bit naive to think that his small gestures can undo the years of damage wrought by her mother. The narrator is well meaning but was doomed from the start.