

Change and inner journey

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“ Any Journey includes both realities and possibilities”, the three texts that we have studied in class, the film 'Pleasantville' by Gary Ross and the poems 'Road Not Taken' by Robert Frost and 'Journey to the Interior' by Margaret Atwood, support this idea as these texts include the protagonist having embarked on not only physical and interior journeys in reality but also imaginary.

The journey is known to be imaginary for the audience, but for the characters of the text these journeys have led them to be in a different stage in life, not only physical but internally, evolving into different people or having what become completely different people due to these journeys. In the 1977 film 'Pleasantville' by Gary Ross, the protagonists, David and Jennifer begin their physical journey when they are “ sucked” into the 1950's television program “ pleasantville” when it becomes imaginary; impossible.

When their journey was first embarked David and Jennifer were very different characters which is juxtaposed with the fact that they are brother and sister. At the beginning of the film David is portrayed as an awkward teenage boy, not being the popular one at school and definitely not having many friends. David is shown as being unhappy with his life and is therefore outlined using the television program “ pleasantville” as an escape.

In Ross's film this is shown in a scene between David and his mother, David's mother is shown on the phone arguing to his father about who received custody of the children on that weekend, the audience can see the distance between the children and parents, this is one of the complications in David's life. David is depicted sitting in the next room watching his favourite T. V

program " Pleasantville", a close-up is used on David's face to show his intense concentration on the program, he attempts to block out his mothers voice as she becomes louder by also increasing the volume of the television.

What David longs for is to be a part of Pleasantville where there is zero negativity. Opposed with David is his sister Jennifer. Typical 90's teenage girl, Jennifer wears the latest clothes, and dating the " coolest" boys in school, her main priority is increasing her rank in the social ladder. These differences are depicted in a scene from the playground when David sits and talks to his friend about Pleasantville, the camera then pans the playground to the opposite side of a fence, where Jennifer is seen alking to her friends.

The pan shows the distance between the two characters, whilst the objective of the fence is to act as a symbolic object symbolising their differences. Once they are transported into pleasantville, physical and imaginative journey, David takes the role of " Bud" one of the protagonists in the program and Jennifer now taking on the role of " Mary Sue", the roles of David and Jennifer have changed as David understands all the values of pleasantville, but it is all new to Jennifer.

Due to Jennifer's lack of knowledge she doesn't care about Pleantville like David does and she begins to make changes, David isn't happy, " we have to play along or we will alter their universe". Pleantville is David's fantasy and he doesn't want it to change in any way, " maybe it needs to be messed with" said by Jennifer demonstrates her opposing views. This gives the audience the knowledge that things are going to change. These changes are

caused when the relationship between Jennifer, " Mary Sue" and Skip, captain of the basketball team, begins to advance.

The beginning of change is depicted by a red rose in the alternate black and white world. Colour is very symbolic in " Pleasantville", it signifies not only physical change of pleasantville but also the inner journeys each character undergoes. The values of Pleasantville also change with the physical changes. Individuality is not tolerated and these changes increases the characters ability to have their own thoughts and beliefs.

David and Jennifer have remained black and white, even though they have been the cause of all the changes in pleantville, this symbolises that they are also in need for change. The intolerance for individuality is demonstrated when Betty, mother of Bud and Mary Sue, feel the need to hide the fact that she has also become coloured to conform to the norms of society, " I cant go out there looking like this" the grey make up is juxtaposed with the colour. Betty's personal inner journey deals with her appreciating her individuality therefore her colour.

Her values as a housewife are also tested. David and Jennifer's values and characteristics are also shaped and moulded, these changes occurred in when their physical journey became and inner journey. David is more confident and content with who he is, and Jennifer also begins to appreciate herself a lot more and begins making personal changes such as studying and reading books. Once the two protagonists have reached the end of their inner journeys, they too become coloured.

At the end of the film the audience is presented with the understanding that David and Jennifer have gone through a physical and inner journey not only in reality but in possibilities. "The Road not taken" by Robert Frost is an analogy of an inner journey in the form of a physical journey. "two roads lay in the yellow woods" this allows the reader to see the obvious possibilities involved in the journey the protagonist is undergoing, it also gives the reader the appearance of a physical journey.

The audience will then come to an understanding that it is also an inner journey, the fork in the road outlines the decisions and options one must make in life, and there is always more than one. Robert Frost creates the atmosphere that one can only choose one path in life and it determines everything, one must choose the path that is best suited for themselves although you may not know what the future holds, "looking down both, not seeing past where the path meets the undergrowth".

The path that is chosen will grow and change the character of the person, therefore being an inner journey. The "yellow woods" are symbolic as they represent maturity. "I choose the one less travelled by and that made all the difference" this quote suggest that Frost has chosen the less popular option in his life, maybe utilising harder work, but that made all the difference in his future. The readers have great feeling that he has also grown as a person. "Journey to the Interior" by Margaret Atwood is another analogy of an inner journey in a physical journey.

Atwood uses the Canadian landscape to describe her conscience, she describes it as being "dark" and "spindly" also calling it "poor land".

Atwood allows the reader to feel as if inner journey to find oneself are treacherous and dangerous, and if undergoing a physical journey which will eventually be part of the inner journey one is presented with many distractions, a person may also feel completely lost and incapable like being caught “ in tangles of branches” or an “ invincible net of air”.

Like Robert Frost, Atwood makes the future seem uncertain, full of possibilities that one can not prepare for she describes the future as “ not the easy going from point to point, a dotted line on a map... ”, she also mentions that one can not take directions from others on their own personal journey, they must be their own guide “ a compass is useless... ”.

In her poem Margaret Atwood explains that a person must make time to find their inner self, keeping focused on the journey they began “ whatever I do I must keep my head”, causing changes and becoming a better and happier version of their former self. These three text have outlined that any journey includes both realities and possibilities as there is always more than one option in life and in any situation presented. These possibilities and realities are also determined with the individual and how far they plan to exceed in their journeys.