

The promise of hope and redemption in Catharine Hayes pay it forward book review ...

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Pay It Forward is a novel about simple hope and the belief that a charitable act can cause good things to happen for multitudes of people. In chapters 18, 19 and 20, Catharine Hyde presents an array of characters that embody that poignant notion. Young Trevor McKinney decides to try helping people and, in so doing, encourages them to return the favor for others. Trevor's determination gradually yields results and it slowly becomes obvious that he has touched the lives of thousands. Pay It Forward is an uplifting story that reminds one that simple acts of kindness have the power to change and heal.

Keywords: Pay It Forward, Catharine Hyde, Trevor McKinney.

The Promise of Hope and Redemption in Catharine Hyde's 'Pay It Forward'

Catharine Ryan Hyde's novel Pay It Forward is a story about ignoring one's inhibitions, of suspending adult preconceptions about how to relate to one's fellow human beings. In Chapter 18, there is an exchange between Reuben and Trevor that neatly sums up what this charming tale is all about. Reuben asks Trevor what it means to pay it forward:

Reuben: " I was wondering how I'm going to do that. How do you do that, Trevor?"

Trevor: " What do you mean? It's now a ' how,' exactly. You just do" (Hyde, 179).

Trevor goes on to explain that it's a simple matter of " looking aroundUntil you see somebody who needs something" (179). In one of the book's most

telling lines, Reuben wonders how far one has to look to find someone in need, then thinks that it must be easy if one is a child. In this, Reuben unwittingly puts his finger on the child-like philosophy that enables Trevor to help thousands of people by simply reaching out to a few. In these few lines, the book's true meaning is cast in stark relief, as though the characters are saying "this is the most important thing this book has to say."

In Chapter 19, Arlene's ex-husband, Ricky, returns with the intention of reclaiming his family, with the promise that his days of alcohol abuse and violence are behind him. This is the basis for his intended reconciliation with Arlene, though in an important precursor to what follows, Ricky's aggressive stance with Reuben gives us a sense that this character is still a source of trouble. Reuben is surprised not only at the stranger's sudden appearance at the door, but even more so at the extreme reactions that this man elicits from Arlene and Trevor. Reuben realizes that he is significantly bigger than this wiry, short man and would tower over him if he were to stand up and face him. And yet Ricky is a figure of unknown menace, not only in what he himself represents, but in what his appearance means for Reuben's relationship with Arlene and Trevor.

In Chapter 20, Gordie experiences both cruelty from his stepfather and kindness from a police officer, who offers him a handkerchief. Out to meet a man he came across on the Internet, Gordie is done up in makeup and satin shorts, which are fastened in the back. He is clearly full of trepidation and uncertainty not only about how the evening will go, but about the abuse and scorn he will have to endure. Experience taught him how to cope with

prejudice, to avoid eye contact the way a gorilla might in order to avoid encouraging an aggressive response. Gordie is desperately need of understanding, of someone who will show him kindness, but the circumstances of his life, the presence of an abusive stepfather and a weak-willed mother paint a bleak picture. Gordie is the kind of person that Trevor meant when he told Reuben that it isn't necessary to look far to find someone who needs help – such people are all around.

Pay It Forward affirms the hope that the world can be transformed by a single act, that people can be profoundly affected and inspired, even by a young boy with a naïve idea based on little more than simple faith. Hyde's novel is an uplifting reminder that one should not give up on the idea of helping others, of paying it forward even when it seems that personal generosity and spirit has little chance to affect anyone, let alone the entire world. Even Trevor's death, despite its sadness, is a matter for hope as he dies attempting to help someone else. In a world that often seems lost and hollow, Pay It Forward reminds us that good can happen just when we expect the worst.

References

Hyde, C. R. (2000). *Pay It Forward*. New York: Simon and Schuster.