

The man with the skewed thoughts vs. the man with the straight facts

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Everyone in the world is either a realist, a romantic, or a combination of the two. A word to describe romanticism is ignorance. Ignorance can come in the form of avoidance of the truth for one's own benefit or satisfaction.

Romantic people lie to themselves, pretending that everything is wonderful despite being in a world full of horror. They ignore the bad and focus on the good of life. They are blissfully ignorant of what is real simply because they want to be. Realists, on the other hand, do not skew facts; instead, they accept them for what they are: the truth. Contrary to a romantic, a realist does not fantasize about what the world could be, but instead faces what the world is. The majority of people in the world are neither a realist nor a romantic, but instead are both.

Enjoying sadness is against human nature, but lying, including to oneself, is morally wrong. Humans choose between the two depending on each individual situation and the consequences that may come of the side chosen in such a situation. Throughout John Steinbeck's novel, *East of Eden*, the characters portray many different levels of reality. Some characters in the novel represent farther ends on the realist/romantic spectrum whereas others meet more in the middle. Steinbeck's novel takes place at a time when lying was unacceptable, but so were speaking out about one's thoughts if they went against the thoughts of others. Despite the difficulties of living during such a time, the characters each manage in their own way.

Some of the characters choose to face facts, such as Cal who accepts the fact that his mother is a whore and is still alive despite being told all his life that his mother is dead. His brother, Aron, represents the romantic type of

character shown in the story. While Cal tells Aron that his mother is still alive, Aron refuses to believe him because he didn't want to believe that she was alive. He would rather think his mother is dead than face the fact that his mother, Cathy, abandoned him. Samuel Hamilton, a respectable country man, is an example of one of the people in the story that falls in between realism and romanticism.

He notices the good in life but does not believe that there is good if it is absent. There are many other characters in the novel that show different levels of realism and romanticism, but none show the contrast better than Charles and Adam. They are two brothers in the story that have great impact on the novel by being so contrasting with each other. Adam and Charles Trask make the perfect foils who show the differences between romantics and realists because of their childhood characteristics, their demeanors, and their levels of acceptance of reality. Adam and Charles show the difference between realisms and romantics by their response to childhood events.

Sigmund Freud's theory of childhood development states that the events in a child's life affect the decisions and actions they do later during adulthood.

His theory is proven in many ways, including the fact that most adults that abuse others were abused themselves as children. Adam and Charles' father, Cyrus Trask, abuses his kids by being unnecessarily hard on them. The harshness of Cyrus causes Charles to feel the desire to be loved. Growing up, Cyrus appreciated Adam more than Charles. When Charles gives Cyrus a knife which Charles had worked very hard to earn enough money for, Cyrus does not appreciate it as much as he does the puppy that Adam gives him.

Charles says to Adam, "Remember the present I gave him, the pocketknife? I cut and sold a load of wood to get that knife. Well, he didn't even take it to Washington with him. It's right in his bureau right now. And you gave him a pup. It didn't cost you a thing. Well, I'll show you a picture of that pup.

It was at this funeral. A colonel was holding it - it was blind, couldn't walk. They shot it after the funeral." (64). In this quote Charles shows that even though it seems like a relatively meaningless action of Cyrus to prefer the dog over the knife, an action that caused Charles to resent both Adam and Charles. The behaviors of Charles and Adam are permanently affected from childhood to adulthood causing them to differ in their personalities, thereby starting their realistic and romantic behaviors.

When they become adults, Charles and Adam have very different personalities. While Charles is harsh towards others, Adam remains unnaturally fond of people and has a hard time seeing reality. Charles believes that their father lies to them about his military career. Adam, however, refuses to believe that their father would ever have lied about such a thing. Charles, upon receiving a letter telling of his father's death, asks Charles if he believes that their father was dishonest to them. Adam replies, "Look what he got to be.

Stayed overnight in the White House. The Vice-President came to his funeral. Does that sound like a dishonest man?" (65). This shows that Adam wants to believe that his father was honest and not untruthful whereas Charles looks to the evidence pointing towards his father's guiltiness. These characteristics

of Charles and Adam show the difference of characteristics between realists and romantics.

Their levels of acceptance of the truth, just like their characteristics, greatly differ between Charles and Adam, showing the difference between realism and romanticism. After Cathy is beaten by Mr. Edwards, Adam takes care of her and nurtures her whereas Charles does not due to his suspicion of her. Charles says to Adam, " I don't trust her. There's something - something- I don't know what it is, but I don't like it." (122).

Adam thinks of Cathy as a damsel in distress, but never questions how the damsel came to be in distress. Even Samuel, the most kind of all the characters, sees that there is something wrong with Cathy; Adam does not see this. He thinks Cathy is an angel. She does nothing good for him, doesn't even say a single kind word to him, yet he thinks they are both madly in love with each other. After a few months of marriage, Cathy tells Adam that she wants to leave.

Adam denies this and tells her that she doesn't really mean what she is saying. Charles, unlike Adam, accepts the truth. He knows that Cathy is evil, even though he doesn't know exactly what it is that she did that made her evil. She looks suspicious to him, and he isn't afraid to make his suspicion obvious. He does not lie to himself the way Adam does.

He accepts what is true rather than what he wants to be true. This is probably the most significant distinction between realism and fanaticism. Adam fantasizes about what he wants to be true; Charles sees what is

actually true. Despite being brothers, Charles and Adam could not possibly seem any more unrelated. Their contrasting characters represent perfectly the different personalities people can have, being romantic or realistic. Through their childhood actions, their personalities, and their reasoning of facts perfectly show them for what they are: complete opposites on the romanticism/realism spectrum; Adam the man with the thoughts and Charles the man with the facts.