

The chosen:  
blindness is a real  
eye opener and the  
sound of silence is  
deafening

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Often in early adolescence, one wonders what the blind see. Is it a black sheet of oblivion? Or is it the mind boggling concept of nothing, Yet often times when one is 'blind' they really are the ones with impeccable vision and heightened senses. One can indeed learn from being blind — perhaps even go as far to say-blind people have an advantage because of the new perspective they gain. “ I lay still and thought about my eyes. I had always taken them for granted, the way I took for granted all the rest of my body and also my mind” (Potok 57). Although one potentially has an advantage, the absence of appreciation hits hard. Blindness, an evident and effortlessly identifiable affair in the novel. As a result of these silences and moments of blindness, Reuven Malter and Danny Saunders both gain the ability to see farther than what just meets the eye. Throughout this it is also apparent that both protagonists create strong relationships that ultimately prosper. In the novel *The Chosen*, by Chaim Potok, Reuven Malter and Danny Saunders greatly mature and develop through each of their moments of silence and blindness.

Foremost, the theme recognized in the novel are the silences that multiple characters undergo. The fashion in which Chaim Potok illustrates the silences through Reuven and Danny constructs the majority of the later plot. Overall, additionally refining the concepts throughout the novel. The first silence addressed is the existing silence between Danny and Reuven. This is a silence in which it is enforced between Reuven and Danny by Reb Saunders. Reb Saunders would not allow Danny and Reuven to spend time together or even speak. This silence was primitively caused by Reb Saunders and David Malter, their discrepancy in sentiment over religion and beliefs. A quotation

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in the novel that directly suggests this theme of forced silence between them, “ There had been an explosion yesterday at breakfast, last night at supper, and this morning again at breakfast. Danny was not to see me, talk to me, listen to me, be found within four feet of me. My father and I had been excommunicated from the Saunders family” (Potok 231). This quotation sincerely epitomizes how it separates the two and causes such an issue between the families. Reuven is also quite infuriated by this silence, for he did not condone or create it, he was so upset with Reb for tearing apart their friendship. Another important silence featured in this novel is between Reb Saunders and Danny Saunders. Reb raised Danny using silence to teach compassion and grow from it; growing up under his scrutiny. “ Saunders hopes that he can teach his son valuable lessons through such silence, but Danny often feels intimidated by his father and alienated from his father’s values” (Evans). Danny strongly believes that silence can sometimes be a beautiful thing as stated in the novel when not harshly constrained upon. “ You can listen to silence, Reuven. I’ve begun to realize that you can listen to silence and learn from it. It has a quality and a dimension all its own. It talks to me sometimes. I feel myself alive in it. It talks. And I can hear it”(Potok 262). This quotation depicts how Danny has grown after being surrounded by silence for the majority of his life. The way Potok employs silences can drastically alter the intentions of character. As for Danny, in this situation it carries a positive connotation with it. However, when it is used with Danny and Reuven forced by Reb it shares a negative connotation with it. When these silences are applied, they can cause further development to the plot and enforce feelings within the characters.

Next, the second apparent theme within the novel is the theme of blindness and how it plays a key role in creating the plot. Blindness exhibits how one is unwilling to perceive something the way it really is. In a world that so honors knowledge, the ability to perceive and receive information regarding both the outside world and oneself is of great importance. The novel is punctuated by moments of single-minded hatred or blind misunderstanding, which can only be overcome through careful observation. Mr. Malter also uses the eye as a symbol of life when he lectures his son on the need to make an impact during his short time on earth: "the eye that blinks, that is something" (Potok 3). Potok adds power to his use of the eye by depicting them as a means of communication as well as perception. Reuven identifies his appearance as almost stereotypically Jewish, though he also realizes that because of Billy's blindness, both literal and figurative (he doesn't 'see' Jewish culture), he must adjust his words and perspective. (Bloom). Already, because of the injury, Reuven himself is 'seeing' differently. Billy explains that he's getting an operation so that he might see again. Reuven and Danny communicate with their eyes when they are not allowed to talk; Mr. Malter's eyes become dark when he is angry; and Reb Saunders asserts that he knew of Danny's choice to become a psychologist by stating that he could "see his eyes" (Potok 287). The symbolism of Danny's eyes goes hand in hand with the symbolism of blindness; the fact that several figures in his life are able to communicate through the movement of each other's eyes indicates just how important his eyes are to him. It also shows how blindness is a detriment to the liaison in communication with their eyes.

All things considered, Reuven and Danny greatly illustrate how one can mature through practices of silence and through near blindness. Living through matters like these of such great intensity, are not only harrowing, yet instances to learn from. Each of these factors open up, and strengthen one's senses when the overall ability is gained again. Chaim Potok does wonders exhibiting how one can truly hear through silence, and see through blindness.