

The chosen: identifying a protagonist

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Silence is the way to the Heart

In today's society, silence is known for its intimidation and awkwardness, thus giving a negative connotation. However, it can serve as a positive influence as well. The protagonist of *The Chosen*, Reuven, goes through many obstacles in order to understand what he really wants to do with his life. The complications range from physical injuries such as "the pain in [his] left eye" to deep emotional conflicts like Reuven misunderstanding the "silence...what do you mean, Danny is being brought up through silence?" (34-161). Throughout *The Chosen*, Chaim Potok develops tension and mood to demonstrate that silence can be a way to connect with the inner soul.

In the novel, Potok uses tension, lying mostly with the relationships between Reuven, Danny, and Reb Saunders, to link the mind to the heart. Reb Saunders, paying full attention to Reuven, says "words are cruel, words play tricks, they distort what is in the heart, they conceal the heart, the heart speaks through silence" which intensifies the pressure on Reuven, and it creates a deathly silence throughout the room that reveals their true feelings (265). After Reb Saunders leaves the study room, Reuven just "sat and listened to Danny cry," as Danny "held his face in his hands, and his sobs tore apart the silence of the room and racked his body" (267). The tension with Reb Saunders has diminished once Danny feels his father has accepted Danny's dream. Danny truly understands himself when he is able to hear the silence. Through tension, Potok conveys that silence is the stepping stone to a deeper understanding ourselves.

In addition, the lesson is also portrayed by mood in *The Chosen*. As Danny is uncontrollably crying, Reuven “ was crying too, crying with Danny, silently, for his pain and for the years of his suffering” demonstrating a gloomy mood as their silent tears illuminate their suffering (268). After hearing about Billy’s status, Reuven is in shock and goes “ out onto the porch, [sits] in the lounge chair, stare[s] across the yard at the ailanthus. Its leaves were bathed in sunlight, and its musky odor reached me faintly in the breeze that blew against the back of the house.” The leaves that are “ bathed in the sunlight” highlight the hopeful mood as Reuven “ stares across the yard” and thinks this is a “ crazy world. Cockeyed” (164). In this moment, Reuven takes a time of silence to think about how the world functions and hopes for the best from the bottom of his heart, hence, the hopeful mood.

Regarding the use of tension and mood, Potok helps the reader understand that silence is a way to fuse the mind to the soul. However, most people nowadays do not stop to think about their heart’s desires, but instead strive to achieve goals that will impress others. These same people are always rushing through life getting one goal done and going to another without ever thinking about what they really want. Although, taking the time to reflect on what the heart aspires may seem pointless, it will help achieve a deeper level of inner peace.