

Into the wildexample essay



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The effect of society and experiences on one's identity The non-fiction novel Into The Wild, written by John Krakauer, deals with the development of Chris McCandless's identity and focuses on three major factors that had a large impact on his life:. First of all, the experiences he collected prior to his Alaskan trip with the friends he made had a great effect on him changing his whole view at life. Secondly, Chris' identity is affected by the restrictions and societal expectations which results in repulsion towards humanity from Chris. Eventually his good academic efforts and in general successful life makes Chris overconfident. The reasons for Chris McCandless' actions in Into The Wild are not genetically set, but instead are the result of the effect on his identity by his surroundings and experiences.

The people and friends Chris met during his stay before the great Alaskan adventure had an incredibly big effect on Chris' identity, which is expressed by the sudden change in his behavior. During his stay before the Alaskan adventure Chris wanted to undertake, he made several friends, like Westerberg and Franz.

In Chris early life, he mainly had negative experiences with society. Society makes you do things you do not want to do, does not help less fortunate people and also prevents you from finding your true self. Thus Chris values experiences over attachment and leaves his family.

But when Chris made new friends he collected fundamentally different experiences about humanity, which changed his way of looking at the world. Eventually, Chris knew people with whom he had an extremely good relation and they even “ asked Alex if [they] could adopt him” (55).

This shows the extreme closeness of the relationships he had. Instead of staying in contact with his family, he stayed in contact with Franz and Westerberg by writing letters. Additionally, compared to the leave-taking to Chris' family which occurred cold and silent, " he was crying" (68) when he said good-bye to Borah which again proves the good relation he had, but he also expresses his feelings of this good friendship.

Prior to these friendships, Chris thought that being alone in the nature and therefore being in the absence of humanity is that what he needed and desired.

However, while being in the wild in Alaska, he expressed that it became clear to him that " Happiness [is] only real when shared" (189), meaning that the happiness everybody looks for in their lives can only be found amongst other people, not in pure loneliness. This clarity he was looking for in the wild eventually causes the decision to leave the wilderness and go back to civilization. Therefore, Chris McCandless starts valuing attachment again and starts realizing that the best life to live is amongst other people.

This experience Chris collected before his great adventure utterly changed his view of life and now finally people start having an effect on him, which was not the case while he lived with his family.

Another main subject, which shapes Chris' identity are the strict expectations of society and his family. Early on in his life Chris seemed very happy and satisfied with his momentary status in life. However, the older he became, the more the expectations increased and simultaneously, the more

he felt dissatisfied and experienced the urge to leave his life behind and start a new one.

Chris did not like those restrictions at all because of two main reasons: Firstly, in Chris' opinion, he is not able to find his true self under those circumstances because those expectations affect him. Secondly, Chris does not enjoy it at all being ruled by somebody and thus antagonizes against the expectations of society.

For instance, Chris got “ an F, in high school physics” (109), because he refused to write his lab reports in a certain formatting. This subject, changing and shaping Chris' identity, is expressed in several ways.

This dissatisfaction with his current life led Chris to simply avoid society, and hence his problems, expressing his love for nature and at the same time his hate for society. This hate for society which impounded over all those years was not expressed with anger, but more with silent disregard, carried out by the unexpected and painful loss of connection to humanity.

This can be seen when Walt and Billie “ only got two cards from him the whole summer” (124).

The ‘ only’ represents the disappointment Chris' parents have, because Chris did not communicate his feelings like anger and hate in public, but rather kept it by himself or at the very most shared it with his sister. As a result, he really started enjoying nature, but contrary “ seemed introverted, almost cold” (120) in a societal environment. Another important influential subject shaping and having an affect on Chris' identity is the continuous success

Chris experiences in his life. McCandless was academically one of the best students “ receiving a high score on a standardized achievement test” (106) and Chris “ brought home A’s with little effort” (109).

This shows the ease with which Chris took life. Additionally, Chris was the best runner in the Cross Country team and experienced only success in the athletic area as well. Chris never experienced having any difficulties in his life and as a result possesses extraordinary self-confidence. This self-confidence had a major affect on Chris’ attitude about “ demeaning twentieth-century inventions” (114) like going to the university, or having an education in general. He thinks that this is just not necessary for him.

With every task he completed successfully, a test, a run or even an adventure, his self-confidence grew more and more. This self-confidence is reflected in Chris’ denying behavior to his family. Chris develops extremely fast the ‘ I can handle things on my own’ attitude and therefore does not need the help of his family anymore. Thus Chris thinks that he’s “ fine with what I got” (6) when he enters the risky Alaskan adventure and does not want to accept any help from his parents and other people including friends who tried to help him.

This extreme self-confidence was one of the main reasons why Chris was not scared about the upcoming adventure in Alaska but rather saw it as a challenge compared to the boring and uninteresting life he had before. This self-assurance also caused the refusal to accept and understand the suffering in the world. In Chris’ opinion, it is so easy to do well in life, which is

in fact very hard to achieve, and on account of this he can not understand the difficulties other people have about doing well in society.

Neither his parents, nor his friends, or people he knew could fight his self-confidence, and hence convince him to stay within civilization. In conclusion, these three very important subjects had the biggest impact on Chris' identity, whereas the results from the expectations of society and the relations he had with other people are contrary to each other, one creating repulsion and the other creating attraction towards humanity. But it can also be seen as the search for his true-self, and the finding of it.

On that account, it was the right decision to go in for that adventure. Even though he died it was it worth for Chris McCandless because he knew that it was a risky undertaking which could not end badly. These three influences on his identity caused Chris to react the way he did. Even though it was genetically set that he loves nature, without the hate towards his family and the extreme self-assurance he possessed he would think of this adventure as weary of life.