

Character development in flight



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Throughout the book *Flight* by Sherman Alexie, the main character Zits is in search of where he belongs and why people have mistreated him throughout his life. In the midst of the action in the novel, Zits begins to experience character jumps, where he is trapped in the body of different characters. Each character jump that Zits has contributes to his growth into becoming more mature by allowing him to expand his perspectives and reflect on his own ideology. The most significant character jumps are into the bodies of the little Indian boy, Jimmy and his father. These jumps force Zits to develop his present ideas about revenge, violence, and forgiveness. One of the first characters that Zits becomes is a little Indian boy. When first describing his experience as the boy, he is very critical and unhappy about the situation. He is nearly naked, hot, and surrounded by a lot of Indians who are speaking in a language he cannot understand. While this is true, he is comforted by the fact that he has a father who loves him. In the start of the novel, Zits talks about his father who has left him when he was born. He constantly attempts to understand this betrayal in the story. While he has a father in this section, one is able to identify Zits's desires to have a father in his life. It seems to be the only true way that he can be happy. Zits says, " This guy loves me...I wonder if this is Heaven" (65). He wants a father and having one is comparable to paradise. He says that this is the first time in his life that he is happy. Before he can enjoy this bliss for too long, Zits realizes that he is at the camp of Little Big Horn before attack and he becomes interested in what is happening. He witnesses a lot of killing and brutality and is disgusted by what he sees, saying, "[he] feel[s] sick in [his] stomach and brain...in [his] soul" (72). He reflects on the idea of revenge at this point and begins to attempt to justify it. Saying that it is war and is just self-defense. He is forced

to think about it more in-depth though when the father of the boy prompts him to slit the throat of a white boy to get revenge for his own. He reflects and realizes that taking revenge on people is not the optimal thing to do to replace his own loneliness or hurt. At this point, Zits becomes a more sensitive and reflective person. After he commits murder in a bank robbery, Zits is transported to the body of a FBI agent Hank Storm, where he reflects on violence, death, and morality. In this body, Zits is forced to shoot a man who has not given enough information after he is already dead. If he does not shoot him, he will be killed himself, so he chooses to shoot him. Once he does this, Zits begins to reflect on murder and how cruel it is. While he does, he develops a more sensitive idea about taking the lives of people. At a later point in the novel he says, “ Maybe you’re not supposed to kill. No matter who tells you to do it. No matter how good or bad the reason. Maybe you’re supposed to believe that all life is sacred” (162-63). Zits begins to understand that killing is not okay, no matter how much revenge you want to take or how messed up your life is. He develops a sense of morality and questions his previous ideas about murder. The final character jump that Zits has is into the body of his father. While in this body, Zits is forced to understand why his father left him. He is able to expand his perspective and see where his father is coming from. He understands that his father became a product of his environment and society’s oppression on Indians who are always drunk. Zits’s grandfather treated Zits’s dad badly, because he was an alcoholic and after being in this body, Zits understands that his father was just trying to protect him by leaving. He didn’t want to trap Zits in the same alcoholic cycle that he was in. Zits’s father shows a picture of himself in his wallet. Zits, while looking at the picture, thinks that the picture is one of his

father, but then realizes that it is of him. He realizes that his father does care for him in some type of way because he carries a picture of him around. The realization that someone cares for him enables Zits to be more at ease with his life. He truly just wants people to love him and respect him, and by being in his father's body, he is able to realize that someone does love him enough to do well by him, even if leaving was the only way that he could do well. Overall, the character jumps in Flight offer Zits an opportunity to become surer of himself. He is able to reflect on the ideas and values that he had prior to the jumps, as well as establish a new sense of morality and justice. He becomes a more wise person by expanding his mind and ideas on these subjects. Zits seemed to have been struggling with ideas about revenge, violence, and forgiveness throughout the novel. He was always being hurt by different people, and being that so, he always had a bittersweet outlook on life. The journeys he had and the information he gained from these jumps have made it easy for Zits to transition into Michael.