

Looking for alibrandi and breath by tim winton essay



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“ The process of changing perspectives inevitably contributes to personal growth. ” Analyse how this idea has been represented in your prescribed text, “ Looking for Alibrandi”, and one related text of your choosing. As individuals, when faced with gruelling or traumatic experiences, we are often compelled to feel a sense of loneliness and seclusion. However, it is precisely these times of isolation, through reflection and a willingness to embrace the situation that can force us to reconsider the original outlooks we hold, often resulting in a greater appreciation for life and a deeper understanding of who we truly are.

This idea is clearly communicated in the feature film ‘ Looking for Alibrandi’ (1999) directed by Kate Woods, and the bildungsroman print novel ‘ Breath’ (2008) by Tim Winton; both texts exploring the various life-enhancing outcomes of adversity and how such seeming setbacks can often eventually contribute to personal enrichment. Looking for Alibrandi immerses the audience into a year of the life of main protagonist Josie Alibrandi, a 17 year old, third generation Italian Australian teenager whose initial identity is predominantly based around her seemingly adamant social ambitions.

Woods’ clever use of a sepia filtered lens at the beginning of the establishing scene, used in conjunction with a voiceover, “ I have got to get out of here,” clearly identifies Josie’s original dismissive attitude in relation to her family and cultural heritage and evidently portrays their anachronistic irrelevance to her. Josie, submerged in her own future self-identity and longing for cultural freedom, is initially oblivious to the importance of family and the other key aspects of life.

In contrast, in Tim Winton's novel *Breath*, protagonist Bruce 'Pikelet' Pike narrates the story of his youth, reflecting on certain significant events of his past. The novel particularly focuses on the various risk-taking exploits he partakes in order to escape the loneliness of everyday life, living as an only child with unstimulating, elderly parents, and to satisfy his addiction to adrenalin. Through the use of emotive language Winton communicates Pikelet's initial feelings of isolation, provoking a sense of empathy from the reader: " I was a lone child and solitary by nature....

I felt that the age of my parents singularly marked me out somehow. " Echoing Josie's original perspectives, Pikelet holds little regard for family, eventually abandoning his parents to embark in activities driven by a burning desire to become extraordinary. He pushes the boundaries to extreme levels and beyond personal danger. This is later described as " rebellion against the monotony of drawing breath," breath and the concept of breathing being a recurring motif throughout the novel.

Like Josie Alibrandi, Pikelet is living a self- indulged life, driven by ambitious behaviour, unable to recognise the values that provide life with real meaning. Significantly, it is the confrontation with a series of catalytic life changing experiences that provide both protagonists with the opportunity to discover a deeper appreciation for life and to grow as individuals. Hence, the sudden death of John Barton serves as a major pivotal point in Josie's life, painfully forcing her to re-evaluate her original preconceptions in relation to her self identity and the importance of family.

Woods has purposely included the funeral scene to evocatively communicate the significance of John's death for Josie. The lugubrious atmosphere has been reflected through the use of slow tempo, low pitched, pleonastic music and non- diegetic lyrics " I can't live, with or without you", as John's coffin is processed through an aisle of grieving friends and family. A close up camera shot of Josie's languishing facial expression as John's body passes by, suggests the inner emotional turmoil she is experiencing, yet simultaneously the passing coffin signifies her acceptance of him slowly moving away from her, out of her life.

The idea of her acceptance of John's death is further reinforced at the end of the scene through Woods' use of symbolism. The subsequent shredding of his letter, followed by the release of the pieces out of the window symbolically serve to represent her ' letting go' as well as allowing John the freedom that he has always longed for. Josie's feelings of isolation and separation following John's death are captured during the bus ride scene where a closeup camera shot of Josie's facial expression is juxtaposed to that of a group of laughing boys, totally oblivious to the inner turmoil that she faces.

It isn't until towards the end of Winton's novel that Pikelet is confronted with the spontaneous death of his father, a significant catalyst that simultaneously compels him to irrevocably reconsider the importance of family; suddenly being left with only a mother, and helps him to develop a greater appreciation for life by understanding the instantaneous nature of death- " My father's death hit me with a force that seemed targeted and personal. " The metaphorical portrayal of death here, clearly communicates <https://assignbuster.com/looking-for-alibrandi-and-breath-by-tim-winton-essay/>

the severity of the impact on Pikelet caused by his father's death, as though the force was alive and trying to signal him something.

Pikelet's transformed state of mind regarding the vitality of one's family and the importance of human life is clearly represented by Winton. Contrasting his original views at the beginning of the novel, of being mentally and physically driven by the thought of becoming extraordinary, Pikelet's new attitude is portrayed in his own words: "Driven by a desire to compensate my mother somehow.... I did my best to be a dutiful son." The respectful, caring connotations associated with 'dutiful' serves to further enhance the shift in perspective Pikelet has undergone.

The mid- life u-turn he experiences is furthermore captured through the use of metaphorical language, "I went on and had another life," supported by the decidedly, optimistic tone, "I'm gunna put it all behind me and move on." Josie's newfound respect for her family and an eventual acceptance of her cultural heritage is poignantly portrayed in Wood's utilisation of a framing device, the final scene of Tomato Day marking the one year passing in the life of Josie.

Woods has strongly juxtaposed this scene to the opening scene in order to evaluate Josie's new personal outlooks on the various aspects of life in comparison to her initial, superficial values depicted during original Tomato Day scene. The positive mood created through cheerful, pleonastic music, dialogue between characters, diegetic sounds of laughter and conversation, comfortable body language between characters, and equal spatial positioning all assist to communicate the idea that although the notion of

changing one's perspective can be a painful and confronting process, it is often associated with a beneficial outcome.

The voiceover of Josie, " I'd always dreamt of being someone really impressive and famous. Someone people could sit back and envy.... But I know now that what's important is who I feel I am," reinforces her changed outlook, clearly distinguishing her deeper understanding of herself and her newfound life values.

The notion that the confrontation of gruelling or traumatic life experiences, when embraced, will often lead a person to develop a greater appreciation for life and a deeper understanding of who we truly are is clearly communicated through the two texts " Looking for Alibrandi" and " Breath. " Both protagonists being delved into a state of flux are forced to gradually but surely reinterpret their original key values of life. This shift in perspective inevitably results in the personal enrichment of the individual.