

The evolution of equality: a self- liberated character



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Anthem by Ayn Rand encourages readers to delve into the possibilities of a society devoid of human characteristics. The story is based in a society that worships collectivism, causing everyone to be the same, and raised as if they were livestock. There are no choices, no preferences and no emotions, the citizens only need to work for the good of their brothers. However, the main character, Equality, is different. Equality feels emotions and has preferences and wants to make choices for himself. When he first discovered that he was different, he was scared and he wished to be the same as the rest of his brothers. As the book progresses, Equality learns to accept his differences and goes through many changes of thinking. Equality changes throughout Anthem by; learning to love, embracing his curiosity, accepting himself, and finding his passion.

First of all, throughout the novel Equality learns how to and what it means to love. Equality meets a girl named Liberty while out doing his job as a street sweeper. Equality was immediately captivated by her, “ And the following day... we kept our eyes upon Liberty 5-3000 in the field. And each day thereafter” (39). This shows that each time Equality saw Liberty, he was drawn to her. He had been taught his whole life not to take notice of women. Yet, he still took time away from his job, time that could have been spent contributing to his society, to stare and unintentionally fall in love with Liberty. Later in the novel, Equality’s love for Liberty becomes more evident, “ We seized their body and we pressed our lips to theirs... had never known what joy is possible to men” (83). This shows that Equality changed because at this point in the book is is made plainly obvious that he loves Liberty and that he is learning what love is. Also, there is no previous knowledge of

Equality being taught what kissing was or means or even how to express love for an individual. This leads readers to believe that Equality was acting on instinct and embracing the emotions he feels for Liberty.

Another way that Equality changes throughout the novel is that he embraces his curiosity. Equality has always been curious and questioned the things around him. This is considered a crime in Equality's society, unless a person is chosen for the job of Scholar. Equality wishes to be free to ask questions and explore the secrets of his world so he holds on to the hope that maybe he will become a Scholar. Equality expounds, " We wished to be a Scholar" (25). However, when Equality does not get chosen to be a Scholar, he does not let it get him down. Instead, he discovers a secret tunnel where he is free to perform experiments and embrace any and all questions that he has. What Equality does in his tunnel is considered a crime and he knows it. Equality knows that what he is doing is wrong and yet he explicates, " there is no shame in us and no regret... We have built strange things with this discovery of ours" (37, 53). This shows that Equality goes against the law to embrace those questions in his head. Equality knows and understands that if he were to be caught in his tunnel, his actions would come with a high price. Still, Equality does not conform, he finds a loophole and with it, a way to satisfy his desire to question the world, all the while embracing his curiosity.

In addition to learning to love and embracing his curiosity, Equality also learns to accept himself throughout the novel. At the beginning of Anthem, Equality is terrified of the idea of being different and tries to suppress himself. Equality implores, " We strive to be like all our brother men, for all must be alike" (19). This shows that there is an immense pressure on

Equality to fit in. Equality even feels that it is just when he is not chosen to be a Scholar, “ We knew we had been guilty, but now we had a way to atone for it” (26). This shows that Equality believes that not being a Scholar is a fit punishment for being different from his brothers. It also demonstrates how much Equality’s society demands that its citizens give up including their own happiness. Equality’s society believes that working for the good of the society and for a person’s “ brothers” should be enough to make a person happy when in reality there is more to happiness. There is happiness that is brought on from personal growth, development, relationships and participating in what makes an individual happy. Equality realizes this and this realization is what leads him to embrace himself and his differences. This is shown when Equality announces, “ International 4-8818 and we are friends” (30). Equality knows that this is considered a Transgression. And yet, Equality does not care because he knows that it is true in his heart and so he continues to think and believe it no matter if it makes him different from his other brothers or not.

A final change that Equality goes through is, that he finds his passion in life. Equality was assigned a Street Sweeper job at the beginning of the book. This is not the job that Equality wanted, but he could not change it since it had been assigned to him. Equality’s life as a Street Sweeper is dull until he discovers his tunnel and begins experimenting, it is here that Equality first begins to discover his passion. As he tinkers, Equality expresses, “ We do not know, but we shall learn. We cannot stop now, even though it frightens us... We forget all men, all laws and all things save our metals and our wires. So much is still to be learned! So long a road lies before us, and what care we if

we must travel it alone” (54). This proves that Equality is finding his passion in life because when he is experimenting and learning, nothing else matters. Equality would be content to spend his whole life inside the tunnel. The only thing that scares Equality is discovering wonderful things and then never sharing them, never having them be known to be true.

Eventually, Equality runs away from society. However, it is outside his society that he discovers the word “ I”. Equality had been groping for this one word for the entire book and when he finally found it he illustrates, “ I saw the word ‘ I.’ And when I understood the word... I wept” (98). Equality realized how important the discovery of this word is, to him, and also how important the word could be to so many other individuals if they understood it and lived by its meaning. The very meaning of the word, ‘ I’ summarizes Equality’s beliefs. Equality believes in taking care of oneself and one’s needs. He believes in having preferences and building relationships, in being free to question oneself and others, and in expressing oneself in any and every way that a person sees fit without questioning oneself or having to conform to rules and standards. The word ‘ I’ encompasses this all and for that reason Equality makes this word and the spreading of this word his life’s mission, “ For the coming of that day I shall fight, I and my sons and my chosen friends. For the freedom of Man. For his rights. For his life. For his honor... The word which can never die on this Earth, for it is at the heart of it and the meaning of glory” (104-105). This shows that Equality will spend his life preserving this sacred word, and he will pass on the meaning and significance of this word to his children and his children’s children. Equality found his passion in life and he wants to make sure that it holds meaning and significance to

people forever. Equality's society tried to create the perfect world in which there was no conflict and people worked together for the greater good. They got rid of anything that might cause disagreement including choices, preferences, relationships, and emotions. However, in the process of trying to create the perfect society, they got rid of the key elements in a society that make people different.

Equality's society transformed the beautiful, diverse, and ever changing creatures that humans are into an empty shell. However, as it is in nature creatures adapt to their surrounding in order to survive. This is exactly what Equality did. Equality went through an evolution from the first, to the last page of this book. Through these changes, Equality was able to revive and preserve the idea of individualism and what it means to be human.