

Masow's hierarchy of human survival essay



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In modern society, we as humans don't typically have to worry about meeting our fundamental needs. Because the majority of people are born into loving families, it is common to live a comfortable life. Abraham Maslow was an American psychologist who is known for his theory of psychological health based on the fulfillment of essential human needs by priority, resulting in self-actualization. As he developed his theory of the essential human needs, he created the well-known Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Because of the rarity of life-altering disasters, most of society has never experienced a loss of their fundamental needs, therefore allowing us to have humanity in the form of a moral compass.

What keeps us human is love and relationships, and when you experience a complete loss of those, you lose your moral humanness. In Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, we get to know two characters; a father and a son. Throughout the story we experience their relationship and its growth as they journey through the post-apocalyptic world.

Both of the characters have an innate "goodness" about them, given the circumstances that they are stuck in. In the world that they are a part of, cannibalism and torture have become commonplace as means for survival.

"Huddled against the back wall were naked people, male and female, all trying to hide, shielding their faces with their hands. On the mattress lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt. The smell was hideous." (McCarthy 168.) The Father and Son have sworn that they will never resort to cannibalism.

They label the cannibals as “ bad” due to their decision to cause suffering to other humans for their own personal gain. The story encompasses the human reactions to loss and survival. The father In The Road sees his son as the only remaining sign of God's existence. “ He knew only that his child was his warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God, God never spoke.

” (McCarthy) While the father and son battle with their desire to survive versus the decision to simply die, others face completely different battles. The father is surviving for the son while the son is surviving for the father. The one thing I can tell you is that you won't survive for yourself. I know because I would never have come this far. A person who had no one would be well advised to cobble together some passable ghost. ” (McCarthy 49.

) Having someone who depends on you gives you a reason to fight for survival In a seemingly doomed situation. In their experience of the apocalypse, it appears as if losing what you have to fight for causes a loss of morality. While we don't get to know any of the cannibals, we can assume that they have lost their sense of humanity do to their human-eating behavior. .

.. All stores of food had given out and murder was everywhere upon the land. The world soon to be largely populated by men who would eat your children In front of your eyes.

.. ” (McCarthy 250.) Like the father and son, the “ bad guys” are fighting for survival, however they are doing it in ways harmful to others.

By killing humans, they are depleting the already very diminished population. According to Abraham Maslow's theory and his developed hierarchy of needs, when a human is lacking in any one of the fundamental needs, they will react in a negative way.

The very first and most important need for human survival is physiological needs, being fighting for their physiological needs in any way they can. While the father and son find temporary solutions to a lack of food, like eating snow, others resorted to much more drastic measures such as cannibalism. I personally think their reactions to a loss of physiological needs are due to a loss of other areas of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, specifically love and belonging.

According to Maslow, humans need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance among their social groups.

They need to love and to be loved. In essence, Maslow is saying that a basic human need is love and relationships. The father and son in *The Road* have each other to love and rely on, but are still very much alone in the world. We can conclude that this means the majority of the remaining human population is alone as well. Because there is a huge lack of trust in their state of society, there doesn't appear to be any relationships between non-family members.

" Well, I don't think we're likely to meet any good guys on the road.

(McCarthy 224.) The lack of relationships is detrimental to completely establishing Maslow's hierarchy of needs resulting in their negative reaction to their conditions. In *The Art of Loving*, Erich Fromm shares his theory of the

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ways in which we can achieve the third tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs- love and belonging.

Bloom's attempt to determine our most basic need in life results in his theory that a man's greatest need is "union" or "togetherness. Man must have this in order to escape from the feeling of aloneness.

The experience of being alone, or the lack of unity, from states, is the central cause of anxiety and despair. Due to a lack of human interaction and no development of new relationships, humans have no need or desire to be good. This lack of human interaction combined with a lack of physiological needs caused normal humans to resort to any means possible to acquire food. When they lost their ability to develop relationships, their moral compasses were diminished resulting in their viewing of humans not as peers to respect and care for, but a means for survival.