

# Judgment, discrimination, and alienation



In *The Chrysalids* by John Wyndham, Waknuk is a community throughly brainwashed by tribulation that causes the citizens to believe “normality” is the main focus in life. Consequently, Waknuk became a hostile environment totally intolerant of differences, which causes judgment, discrimination, and alienation to occur in everyday life. This quality of life is clearly evident firstly by the thought group’s constant threat of being discovered, secondly, the brutal treatment of those who are discovered, and last but not least, the never-ending conflict between Waknuk and the Fringes. These evidences contributes to the constant uneasiness of the people in Labrador.

Throughout more than half of the novel, the thought group is under a constant pressure and threat of being discovered by the community of Waknuk and this had created an evident proof for the society’s sinister views. Even though the group of eight children physically appear to be a norm, they have special telepathic powers which makes them deviants. Therefore, they believe they should not ever be revealed to the community of Waknuk because it depended on their lives. David Storm had said: “Still our whole consideration if we were to survive must be to keep our true selves hidden: to walk, talk, and live indistinguishably from other people” (Wyndham 86).

This quote from David, the protagonist of the story, further explains his views about how they should behave to survive. The author uses the first person’s view of David to explain the seriousness of their situation and the danger of Waknuk. This constancy of fear and worry from the thought group supports the idea of judgment, discrimination, and alienation demonstrated in the novel. However, the brutal treatment of those who are discovered

extends their fears and it further exemplifies discrimination. When the treatment of deviants are revealed, not only does the novel's plot greatly intensify, it also allows the readers to fully understand the true feelings behind all the deviant characters who are introduced. The blasphemies and offenses discovered by the Inspector or Joseph Storm always had a devastating fate because according to the community, the blasphemies and offenses were sent by the Devil.

The deviated crops and other forms of plants would simply be set on fire to prevent spreading. As for blasphemies, the people would be uncertified, outlawed, then sent to the Fringes without any possessions. For example, Sophie's life had completely changed after her six toes were revealed. However, this conventional law did not apply for thought groups when they were discovered. When Katherine was discovered by the community, hot irons were used to force her to reveal who else had telepathic powers.

This torture that led to her death is an example: "They are torturing her. It might have been any of us. She can't hear us" (Wyndham 130). The thought group is terrified and worried about Katherine, but they can not do anything because they must be hidden.

This shows one of many tragic results faced by deviants which resulted in a conflict between the Fringes, and Waknuk's people. The never ending conflict between the people of Waknuk and the Fringes is another major evidence that reflects their selfish judgments. Since the time of Elias Storm, the two communities held grudges against each other and they have been violent, using weapons, threatening words, and discrimination. The deviants

from the Fringes would come in to the Waknuk territory to steal food, clothing, weapons, tools, livestock, and if they could, they even carried off children.

Also, when David escaped Waknuk with Rosalind and Petra, his father, Joseph, intruded the Fringes with an army of people. Consequently, a war occurred between the two groups and many were killed just because of their unintelligent behaviours and thoughts towards each other. As far as the Waknuk district was concerned, the threat from the Fringes was a menace” (Wyndham 21) When David was describing the history of attacks from the Fringes, his quote told the readers how dangerous and frightening they can be. The views from David helps the readers understand what the outcome can be if one discriminates and judges another person.

The never-ending conflict between the two groups originated all because of their selfish acts and beliefs on how norms should look like. The Chrysalids is an exceptional novel that can relate to judgment, discrimination, and alienation that occurs due to one’s ignorance. The messages were effectively carried out by the author from various events that occurred in the book. The thought group’s constant threat of being discovered, the brutal treatment of deviants, and the conflicts between the two groups have resulted in a community that has become a hostile atmosphere, intolerant of differences. In conclusion, the unnecessary attitudes and behaviours from these people are the reason why there is a constancy of uneasiness hovering over Labrador.