

A prayer for owen meany by john irving

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The concept of incompleteness in the novel “ A Prayer for Owen Meany” by John Irving is one which prevails throughout the novel. This is defined by various objects that are in the novel as well as through the character of Owen Meany. The idea of incompleteness is significant with the characters and objects because it defines the idea of everyone living a life that seems incomplete because of the inability to live with different ideologies. These are based on personal beliefs, holding onto the past and other characteristics which cause a sense of fragmentation that is associated with one’s life. Irving’s thesis is to define ways in which an individual makes each incomplete within their own life through circumstances or other ideologies which happen. The first symbol of incompleteness which Irving shows is the claw that is removed from an armadillo by Owen Meany. The initial description of the armadillo is based on an unusual object that haunts Owen because it is always in a closet and continues to reappear when he is a child. At the same time, Owen is gifted an armadillo that he can’t be without because it becomes a representation of who he is. The representation of the armadillo becomes something which is incomplete because it is unknown and feared because of this. Taking off the claw and causing more incompleteness then leads to the armadillo keeping the mystery of what it is, what it will do and how it’s characteristics are not completely understood. This is not only defined by taking off the claw but also through characteristics of the armadillo. “ Anyway, the armadillo was packed in a box designed for transporting chisels – for something Owen called wedges and feathers – and Owen solemnly promised that no harm would come to the diminutive beast” (Irving, 66). This excerpt shows that the armadillo

becomes fragmented because his characteristic is not understood and he becomes incomplete through this. The representation of the armadillo then links directly to the understanding that the misunderstood characteristics and perceptions cause the animal to become beast like and incomplete. The second representation of incompleteness that is noted through the book is the statue of Tabby's model without arms. The first way in which this relates is through Tabby, Owen's mom, not liking to model or dress and often considering this a strange characteristic. The model without arms that was used instead was reflective of the characteristic of his mom not being complete. The incompleteness of not having arms is also based on not being able to do what others are capable of and having a disconnection to basic characteristics which mothers should have. This is similar to other models that are related to Tabby or to other presentations, all which have been mutilated or remain complete and without specific characteristics. " Joseph had lost his hand – perhaps he had hacked it off himself, in a jealous rage, for there was something darkly smoldering in his expression" (167). These instances of dolls having incompleteness become based on characteristics which they carry or which cause them to be unable to define their true presence and ideologies. The concept of incompleteness not only reflects the lost characteristics and fragments of objects. This links to Owen Meany and his main expressions of life and the belief that he is always incomplete. This comes with his obsessions from the past, links to his current state and the belief that his spirituality and expressions are incomplete. The internal beliefs then reflect his characteristics of incompleteness that don't allow him to grow into his own personality. The incompleteness is one which is

based on his character and inability to become himself. This complexity is stated through the beginning of the book when speaking with his grandmother. “ The more recent the memory was, the more poorly remembered. ‘ I remember you as a little boy,’ she told me, not long ago, ‘ but when I look at you now, I don’t know who you are” (43). This statement is one which shows the fragmentation of Owen because of his difficulty of holding onto the past and trying to move toward the future. This combination then leads to a different understanding based on the ideology of incompleteness that is a part of Owen. The concept of Owen Meany and the incompleteness that is in the novel is one which is based on the understanding of fragmented personalities. The objects and characters all show a sense of incompleteness. This occurs from the characteristics which are known and unknown about the character or object as well as the misunderstandings that are a part of the character. This is furthered with the misperceptions that link to the incompleteness of the characters throughout the book. Breaking off, fragmenting and separating the characteristics through the book then become a main component that relates to a loss of relating to the complete individual and what this means when identifying the individual and their life.

Works Cited Irving, John. A Prayer for Owen Meany. Penguin Books: New York, 2000.