

Prejudiced society in the chrysalids by john wyndham



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.” — Martin Luther King Jr. The topic of my essay is how and why the society of Waknuk is prejudiced, in *The Chrysalids* by John Wyndham. My first argument is about the people of Waknuk's hate towards the chrysalids. My second argument focuses mainly on Joseph Storm; his character traits, and his actions. My third and final argument talks about the atmosphere that the main character David had to grow up in. Through several literary elements, Wyndham has created a prejudice society in *The Chrysalids* which has an obsessive devotion to conformity to the norm, resulting in opposition to change or deviation from the norm.

Prejudice is also seen in Waknuk from the hate that people have expressed for the chrysalids in more than one way. Right after Katherine and Sally confirmed that David, Rosalind, and Petra are telepaths, their certificates of normalcy were then immediately revoked even though they had lived with them for almost twenty years. After Micheal told David and Rosalind that Sally and Katherine had confessed he told them that “ They could pass for normal anywhere. So a proclamation was posted, describing the three of you and officially classifying you as deviants”. This shows how quickly the people of Waknuk will change their views on you even after they trust you for so long as they actually did in the story. Equally important, everyone in or outside of Waknuk was told that there is a reward for anyone who can report and confirm the deaths of David, Rosalind, and Petra. We know this from Micheal informing the chrysalids that “ Anyone may shoot them on sight without penalty”. He also told them that “ There is a small reward if their

deaths are reported and confirmed". Taking away their certificates was enough but on top of that, giving out a reward for the death of the chrysalids just because of something they can do only adds more proof as to why Waknuk is a prejudiced society. In more brief words, the people of Waknuk can and will change their views on someone based on their physical appearance or something that they can do. They also have a mindset that someone who they consider not to be human does not deserve to have basic rights or even to live.

Another way that prejudice is shown in the society of Waknuk is through the acts and characteristics of Joseph Storm, the preacher of the church at Waknuk and the son of Elias Storm (the man who founded Waknuk). Joseph is also the father of the main character, David. Firstly, Joseph Storm ordered a cat that he had found to be killed because he saw that it did not have a tail. Soon after the poor cat had been killed it was proved not to be a blasphemy. "It had somehow come to his knowledge that Ben Dakers' wife had housed a tailless cat. He investigated ... and ordered the inspector to make out a warrant for its destruction as an offence ... then a notification subsequently arrived stating that there was a recognized breed of tailless cats". Clearly, this quote shows that Joseph saw a cat without a tail and then, did minimal research about it and immediately ordered it to be killed. It proves that Joseph wants to get rid of anything that is out of the ordinary or does not look exactly like the "norm". Secondly, Joseph also yelled at his own son for just saying that if he had a third hand he could have tied a bandage more easily. Right after David said that his father yelled: "What was that you said, boy?". From this, we can say that even the mere mention

of deviations can enrage Joseph because David was just saying that if he had a third hand he could have done something more easily and Joseph got very angry and yelled at him. Joseph started accusing David of showing dissatisfaction with the body he has and wishing for another hand from the devil. Similarly, the comparison of the devil and deviations from Joseph shows that there is a distaste for deviations in the eyes of Joseph too. In other words, Joseph Storm is a very forceful man who wants to get rid of anything that looks like it is out of the ordinary and the smallest mention of a deviation is enough to make Joseph raise his voice setting an example for everyone else in Waknuk.

The society of Waknuk is shown to be prejudiced because of the atmosphere that the main character had to grow up in. To begin with, every wall and piece of furniture in David's home are all painted white. We know this because David stated that "The furniture was whitely-scrubbed tables and stools, with a few chairs. The walls were whitewashed". The white furniture and walls are used by the author to represent purity in the house of the Storms. They sought purity by only following and believing in the "norm" which is defined to them only by Nicholson's Repentances (the main religious text in *The Chrysalids*). Additionally, there are also wooden panels with sayings from Nicholson's Repentances. David also said that there "was a number of wooden panels with sayings, mostly from Repentances, artistically burnt into them ... The largest was the one on the back wall, hung to face the door which led to the yard. It reminded everyone who came in: WATCH THOU FOR THE MUTANT!". The largest wooden panel is the first thing that is seen when walking into the house. This is significant because it tells whoever

enters the house that the Storm family takes pride in Nicholson's Repentances and does not support deviations whatsoever. Another saying "THE DEVIL IS THE FATHER OF ALL DEVIATION" supports this claim further by showing that the Storms have such a high distaste for deviations that they compare all of them to the devil. In shorter terms, the white walls and furniture in David's house symbolize purity and the sayings from Nicholson's Repentances hanged onto the walls illustrate the bias between deviations and the "norm".

In *The Chrysalids*, by John Wyndham, the society of Waknuk is extremely prejudiced due to how they treat anyone who is different from what they consider normal, the way that their leader acts, and also because of the atmosphere that people have to live in. For instance, the chrysalid's certificates of normalcy and rewards were set up for the confirmation of their deaths showing how quick people are to judge you even after knowing you for your entire life. A couple of chapters earlier in the story, Joseph ordered a tailless cat to be killed and then later found out it was not a deviation showing the subjective character traits of Joseph. Joseph was also very outraged when his own son, David just spoke of having a third hand. There are also wooden panels with sayings from Nicholson's Repentances showing the Storms have a high distaste for deviations and they have also painted the walls and furniture white to tell everyone that their home is pure. In general, the society of Waknuk in *The Chrysalids* is prejudiced because the people hate anyone or anything that is born outside of what they consider normal, their leader does not like change one bit, and the atmosphere that

everyone grows up in is very suggestive of judging someone only by something that they can not control or have no power over.