

Minimum of two
suggests that family
can be both a
blessing and a curse

[Family](#)



In Tim Winton's collection of short stories, 'Minimum of Two', family is a major, recurring theme. Winton displays his interest in exploring the idea of family within each story differently, containing the positive and negative influence that family has on the actions and emotions of the Nilsam family and his alternative protagonists. In 'Distant Lands', he deals with the feeling of obligation towards and the traditional expectations of family whilst in 'The Water Was Dark' the focus is on a need to separate oneself from negative family completely. 'Laps' focuses on how family can help you move on from her past. Winton has a strong belief that family shapes the kind of person one becomes, regardless of whether that is a good, or bad natured person. Within the short story 'Distant Lands', although it is portrayed subtly, family plays an important role. We are told of Fat Maz's parents; her mother, who sits in the family shop for the majority of her day, emitting 'dull thudding' sounds from the register and Maz's father, who is portrayed as a hot headed, intimidating individual.

As Winton goes on to display Maz's character, which contains attributes the likes of reserved, self-conscious yet quietly ambitious, we are made to create a link between Maz's persona and her parents, that of which one is silent and dismal and the other unapproachable, and the realization that it was the impact of her family that has built the aspects her character by failing to restore her confidence and paying little to no attention of whether Maz had her own ambitions. This contributes to her overall quietness. 'The Water Was Dark' has its protagonist, 'the girl', who is struggling to escape from the negativity of her mother. The girl lists her mother's many faults bitterly and her mother's poor decisions' impact show heavily as we read in to the girl's

thoughts. The girl has no actual stability that she feels in her life and she is angry at her mother because her mother is to be blamed. She actually says in many a sense that her life would collectively improve if her mother rid herself of the poisonous things in her life, like drinking and being isolated.

Basically, the state of the girl's family is so ruined that she herself becomes destructive. Despite the lack of encouragement, in 'Distant Lands' Maz's parents actually follow the traditional expectations associated with family. They give Maz a roof over a head and a secure, paying job in a small town. It is not what Maz wants however it is a safe, stable environment and so Maz feels a sense of debt towards her family. 'Laps' revolves around Queenie and her family.

Queenie's daughter Dot provides a great contrast in regards to most of the adolescents Winton writes. She is not only in a secure and stable lifestyle, but she is content. It could be argued that this is because she is younger than other characters explored by Winton however given that Queenie and Cleve are in a healthy marriage and they openly show their pride, care and love towards their daughter, it is clear that Dot will be provided with a more normal, happy life.

Every Family is different from the other. Certain are functional and certain are falling apart at the seams. The short stories of Minimum of Two explore this through different experiences and circumstances which directly reflect on how the characters are portrayed. Family is a huge aspect of a person's identity. Throughout the stories, Winton gives us examples of how the

support and love of family are required for one to be fully satisfied with life and truly be aware of their identity.

The absence of this supportive, healthy family will most likely outcome in a never-ending negativity for the members within that family. In most instances, the impact of family can either act as a curse that increases one's isolation and negativity or a blessing that provides a sense of belonging and contentment, not only with the family itself but also with the broader world. Mainly, the stories of Minimum of Two suggest that regardless of being moral or immoral, family shapes oneself.