

# Bernice bobs her hair

[Environment](#), [Air](#)



“ Bernice Bobs Her Hair” Have you ever at one time or another felt like an outsider? Many people do, trying desperately to fit in with their social counterparts. Whether it be in school, at work, or life in general, many yearn to be accepted by their peers and feel as though they are a part of some sort of “ club” that is viewed by others as the “ in” crowd. F. Scott Fitzgerald tries to express this turmoil with the short story “ Bernice Bob’s Her Hair”. He attempts to show the inner workings of the popular youth and the means in which one can successfully enter it. By creating the distinct characters of Marjorie, Bernice and Warren, one can see the realistic lives of youth in America and what they do when it comes to achieving and successfully maintaining one’s popularity. In the world of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Marjorie is portrayed as a self assured, popular young woman. This was shown very early in the story, during which a party was taking place. After noticing that Bernice, her dopey cousin, was consuming much of Oswald’s time, she proceeded to Warren to ask if he could take over being Bernice’s company and dance with her. Warren submissively said yes, even though he desperately wished to spend time with Marjorie. As he did so, Marjorie was whisked away by a boy to dance, the second or third of the evening. Her status gave her the convenience of asking favors, with the confidence of knowing that they would be carried out without resistance. This confidence also emerged after she told Bernice what a drag people like her are to be with. When Bernice went up stairs later on that day and announced to Marjorie how right she was, Marjorie's immediate response was “ I know”(1). This “ know it all” attitude arose again when she declared that the reason Madonna did not smile in her world renowned portrait was because her teeth

were crooked, even though it is widely assumed and most probable that it was due to that period in time; at that time it was very uncommon to smile for a portrait since it did not look dignified or proper. She also felt confident after noticing that her achievement in bringing Bernice into the popular realm started to surpass her own popularity. As she saw that Bernice was wooing Warren away from her at a picnic gathering, her reaction in the park was “ I can get him back” (1). It seemed Bernice had “ stolen private property” which allegedly belonged to Marjorie (1). Sometime being popular will make one more territorial and suspicious of others which might hurt them in the long run. Without Marjorie’s guidance, however, Bernice would have stayed the naïve and shy, thus keeping her from being accepted by the popular crowd. It was evident in the very beginning of the story that she was uncomfortable in social situations. When Warren asked her if she would like to dance at the party, she immediately told him that it was too crowded to dance and when asked to go out to the veranda, she muttered that it was too hot and proceeded to stand there. It seems that Bernice, being a poor conversationalist, feels too uncomfortable being with others. In a group Bernice is more likely to be stay inconspicuous and just listen rather than beginning or entering a conversation. Another example of her shy persona was when Warren and Bernice sat down on the veranda. It was apparent she was very nervous about the situation; her knees were pressed together so tightly one could have cracked a nut between them. Bernice is also very naïve and Marjorie took full advantage of that. Her innocence led her to believe that Marjorie could make all her dreams come true, question nothing, and following all orders from her. This is apparent at the dinner table when

she announced that she was going to bob her hair in the near future, which was seen as an act of sheer rebellion against the cultural norm at that time. This is what brings the youth to take interest in her and is the tactic Marjorie thought would bring Bernice attention. Another specific instruction Marjorie gave to Bernice was to ask the boys what they thought of the idea. So right after her proclamation, Bernice unwaveringly asked Charley Paulson, making everyone wonder whether she was actually going through with it. Later on it would come to be a true when Marjorie, jealous of Warren showing interest in Bernice, comes out to say that the bob idea was a joke and “only a bluff of hers”(1). This backed her into a corner. Telling them the truth would result in the loss of her friends, while going through with bobbing her hair would also have the same consequence. It was a lose-lose situation and Bernice as well as Marjorie knew it. She was completely shocked by what Marjorie did, thus showing how naïve Bernice really was. Bernice should have known that Marjorie would back stab anyone who threatened her in any way. In the end, however, she had an increased confidence and more of a thick skin. Her involvement in Marjorie’s experiment enabled her to get back at her by cutting off her braids in her sleep, which was something she would have never done when she first arrived at New Haven. It is anyone’s guess why Warren, an immature and self-involved boy, would ever seem attractive to Marjorie or Bernice. This immaturity can be seen when he is conversing with Bernice in the back of his car. On the topic of Marjorie, he admits to Bernice how skeptical he is on ever having a serious relationship with her, stating that her cartwheel incident a while back was embarrassing and would not want that kind of girl as the mother of his children. He’s so worried about

how Marjorie will make his look to others. He even asked Bernice “ what will the children think?” when discussing Marjorie’s flamboyant persona if they were to have a family together (1). Also, his self- centeredness appears when he discusses his life in general. Worried about the future, he informs Bernice how old he has become and how stressful it is to know that life has passed him by considerably. Everyone knows that at nineteen years old, he is still a very young individual, apparently too young to understand how idiotic his statement about his situation was. Also, he seems to always need reassurance when it comes to his appearance. An example of this was seen when, in the car, he asked Bernice which side of his head his hair looked best parted on. Even in this day in age the common response to such a question would be that it does not matter and that who would even care; yet apparently Warren seemed to believe that there are people out there that would notice and would actually care about such things as frivolous as that. People like Warren are too self conscious and would most likely grow up without a sense of identity. It is said by many that it does not matter in life whether one is popular or not. I beg to differ. Sure, one does not necessarily need to be popular in order to be successful in life, but popularity does bring its advantages. For one thing, being likable can get one a better chance at career advances or even getting a job at all since employers tend to hire employees they feel most comfortable with. Also, being likable means being able to easily make friends which, in the working world, could mean an increase in the amount of connections one might make as well as an increase in one’s level of connections. No one should ever discredit popularity as being a cruel concoction created by children who wanted to

feel better about themselves. It can indeed help one down the road of life if he or she uses it wisely. Works Cited: 1. Fitzgerald, F., Scott. “ Bernice Bobs Her Hair”.