

A theme of support from a loved one in novel "the testing" by joelle charbonneau

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



In the dystopian novel “ The Testing”, Joelle Charbonneau uses characterization to establish the theme that when a loved one is in a troubling situation an individual will exert actions they wouldn’t normally in order to help the one in need and to keep the feeling of family relevant and continuous. Cia Vale, the main character is chosen for The Testing, a series of tests that qualify you to attend The University. Cia, being only 16 years old, is tested on all of her different abilities along with 108 other candidates her age. Right away Cia faces many obstacles and has the constant reminder that one wrong decision could leave her dead. Her friend Tomas, plays a huge role in her decision making since their budding relationship means as much to her as passing the tests. With the progression of the plot, the reader will see the progression of the theme as well.

The theme first emerges in the beginning with Cia and her father. Cia’s father is a former testing candidate, he passed The Tests and is now a very respected man throughout the country. Early in the novel we learn that Cia looks up to her father. When Cia is chosen for The Testing, she is surprised by the reaction her father possesses. She expects him to be much more enthusiastic since being chosen is an honor and she’s worked her whole life for this. When Cia’s father finally expresses his reasoning for acting the way he did, Cia understands. He tells her about the nightmares he’s been having about bombs going off and people dying. He says he thinks it’s related to the tests and something that had happened there. The Testing officials wipe the memories of all the candidates so he can’t say for sure if his hypothesis is valid. Regardless of Cia’s worries, she has no other choice than to go on to The Testing and step into the unknown. Cia’s father worries deeply about his

daughter. He never saw his family after The Testing and knows that the likelihood of the same thing happening to Cia is high. Charbonneau emerges the theme by using this dialogue between Cia and her father, “ But if there’s a chance they aren’t, it is better you know. Better than you go to Tosu City prepared to question everything you see and everyone you meet. That might be the difference between success and failure.” While it’s clear that Cia’s father is simply warning her, it’s important to note exactly why he is warning her. Telling information like this is against the law because it can give candidates a leg up so the officials wipe the memories of the candidates in attempt to avoid this. Cia’s father is a very successful man, if he were to get caught, he could lose everything and possibly be in danger proving that he wouldn’t normally do this. He loves Cia very much and wants her to be safe. His words will resonate through Cia’s mind throughout her tests and will keep the feeling of family with her mentally as she will be using them to guide her. Cia’s father decided to risk everything, which is something he wouldn’t normally do, to help Cia, someone he loves, to keep the idea of family relevant to Cia through his words. The characterization shown here is how Cia is young and still learning many things, we know this because she was oblivious to the dark cloud looming over The Testing. She is inexperienced since it is the beginning of the novel. The government in this fictional world is very powerful. People like Cia are very easily taken advantage of her. At this point of the book, Cia needs someone else to help her to survive. She needs that feeling of family from someone else. She is looking to another individual. We will see her grow as the theme and plot progress.

Another pivotal moment that adds to the theme is when Cia tends to Tomas' injury. Tomas and Cia are well into their final round of tests. The task is to survive a journey over 200 miles to Tosu City, the capitol. The candidates, or what's left of them, are put up against hidden explosives, poisons, wild mutated animals, and the other candidates which are armed. Cia find Tomas and they form an alliance with each other and form a relationship. The readers learn very early in the plot that there are feelings between them. Later, the readers find out they have fallen in love. At one point in the story Cia and Tomas were in desperate need of water. They had been struggling to find clean and drinkable water. They come across a pond that seems to be perfect with its round figure, almost too perfect. Right away, something in Cia's mind tells her that it is too good to be true. This shows her characterization progressing because she is now more aware and questioning things she wouldn't have in the beginning. Tomas doesn't listen to her when she tells him not to trust it and sure enough, it blows up leaving him deeply impaled in his left thigh. Quickly Cia jumps to her feet to do anything she can to help him. She remembers seeing something the doctor did at home on a patient when an injury similar had occurred. She plans to heat a knife and apply it again and again to fuse the flesh together around the cut and stop the bleeding. She doesn't want to do it, or doesn't even know if she can, but proceeds, knowing it will save Tomas, the boy she loves. The author uses Cia's inner thinking to move along the theme. Cia is having a hard time going through with her plan and thinks to herself " Now I just need to muster the courage to go through with my plan ...Tears run down my face. My chest tightens so I can barely breathe. Tomas' muted screams

rip through my heart as I heat the metal and apply it to the wound again and again." This strongly develops the theme because while it's clear that it was hard for Cia to do this, it's important to note that she did it anyway.

Considering Cia's struggle in doing this for Tomas, it's obvious to the readers that this was something she would not normally do. It was a struggle for her to do this and it hurt her more to hurt him back. The only thing that kept her going was the fact that she loved him and couldn't go on in the journey without someone to keep the feeling of family with her. She needs the assurance and support system that family gives her and Tomas gives her the feeling of family. If this were any other candidate, I know she would not go to such great lengths to save them, after all, it would help her in the end. Cia did something she would never normally do, to Tomas, the boy she loved, because she wanted to keep the idea of family relevant and continuous. This shows her characterization because she is now providing that feeling of family to another person, rather than seeking it from someone else. She acted as a mother figure to give Tomas the feeling of family.

In conclusion, Cia needed a supporting and loving figure in her life in the beginning. She needed someone else to give that to her. She received this through her father. Her father chose to break the law and give Cia the feeling knowing he couldn't give it to her much longer and she would need it.

Towards the end of the story, Cia grew so much an individual that she could now go on to give someone else the feeling she used to have to look for in other people. This exemplifies how the author used characterization to develop the theme. Cia provided the feeling of family to Tomas and when he

was injured, she went to great lengths to save him just to have that feeling relevant for him when he needed it. This is something us readers can learn from. People, no matter what position they are in, always need a loving figure. No one can survive without it. For me, I have many people in my life I can turn to for guidance and support hopefully one day, I will go on to provide the same for others.