

The essence of change in a person in johnny tremain

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In life, nothing will ever stay the same – including yourself. Whether the change is due to uncontrollable circumstances or it is voluntary, it will happen. Esther Forbes' Johnny Tremain, a historical fiction novel, captures the essence of change in a person. When the book begins, Johnny Tremain, a talented 14-year-old boy, is apprenticed to a silversmith and has a bright future. There is only one problem – Johnny is lofty, egocentric, and selfish. As life takes Johnny on innumerable twists and turns, Johnny transforms from his boyish, immature self to a patriotic, mature young man, willing to sacrifice himself for his country and friends.

At fourteen, Johnny Tremain has everything a teenage boy could ever want. He is the main breadwinner at the Lapham's, which means that he is much too valuable for chores. He has the respect of the other boys on the wharf, and his future looks very promising. Johnny lives in a small world, his life revolving around work, tormenting Dove, a fellow apprentice, and dreaming of when he will have his own silver business. This small world at the Laphams' makes him largely unaware of the political strife going on between Britain and America.

However, Johnny's big mouth and prideful attitude often get him in trouble. Johnny knows he is talented and smart, and he acts it. Everyone at the Laphams' knows "that Johnny Tremain was boss of the attic, and almost the house" (Forbes 2-3). Johnny's bossy treatment of the other apprentices draws the criticism of Mr. Lapham, who repeatedly corrects Johnny's attitude. As well, Johnny's constant insults provoke Dove's hatred.

As well as his bad traits, though, Johnny is reliable, loyal and caring. Every morning, Johnny is the one that urges Dove and Dusty out of bed – he is the first one of the apprentices dressed and ready for work, and the first one at the shop each day. Another trait that proves Johnny is a dynamic and round character is loyalty – although Paul Revere offers him a position in his shop, Johnny stays with the Laphams, recognizing that they need him to provide for the family due to Mr. Lapham's failing health and Dove and Dusty's inability. Johnny is also caring. There are several displays of this soft characteristic in Johnny's hard personality – one would be when Johnny carried Cilla's sick sister down the wharf to get some fresh air in the middle of the night – although tired, Johnny did so anyway out of pure love for the girls.

Johnny's life drastically changes due to a crippling accident. Johnny is working on a sugar basin in the workshop. As the time to cast it nears, Johnny orders Dove to pass him a crucible. As revenge for Johnny's dictatorial behavior that day, Dove hands Johnny a cracked one. The fire's heat makes the crucible collapse, and Johnny lunges towards the scalding silver. He slips, and his hand comes down on top of the silver. Johnny's hand will never be the same.

After the burn, Johnny lies in the dark for days, depressed and numb. One glance at his crippled hand is enough to know that his life as a silversmith is over. Life continues, though, and soon Johnny must start looking for new work. However, Johnny does not want to find a job and accept his old life as over. He diminishes his chance for work by being rude and arrogant. At the

Laphams', Dusty and Dove make fun of him and Mrs. Lapham throws insults at him. She is convinced Johnny has become a criminal. Although Johnny has done nothing dishonest, " If pushed a little further, he might have taken to crime" (Forbes 116). Johnny has never felt more worthless.

Life eventually brings Johnny to the Observer, where Johnny becomes a horse boy. Johnny's new life is very different from his old one at the Lapham's. Mrs. Lorne never ask him to do chores, and he has most of the week to himself - he only delivers papers Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Johnny spends the rest of the week riding express for the Afric Queen, devouring novels in the library, and spending time with Rab.

Rab is Johnny's role model, and he influences Johnny in countless ways. One thing Rab teaches Johnny is to think before he speaks instead of immediately becoming heated. Johnny realizes that this works to his advantage when a servant accidentally douses him in water. By holding his tongue, he gets some apple pie and meets Sam Adams.

Another change that comes over Johnny is to do with politics. "...he changed from knowing little enough about the political excitement, and caring less, to being an ardent Whig." (Forbes 109). Johnny becomes politically informed by reading the Observer, listening to the leaders of the revolution, and living with the Lornes.

Johnny experiences a wake-up when he realizes what a beautiful young lady Cilla has become. Johnny realizes that he is now a young man as well, and it is time for him to go courting young ladies. Even so, Johnny never thought

that the person who would make his spine tingle would be Cilla, the gawky girl of his childhood.

Throughout Johnny's entire time at the Observer, the revolution grows in strength and size. Johnny quickly becomes a part of the revolution, taking part in the Boston Tea Party and being a messenger and spy. As the war draws nearer, Johnny's roles become bigger. At the beginning of Johnny's life at the Observer, Johnny's involvement in the revolution is being there for the Observer meetings and running small errands when needed. By the end of the book, right after the war has started, Johnny puts his life at risk without a second thought to relay messages to Dr. Warren. The roles Johnny plays in the war help him realize that he is a part of something much bigger than himself, and that nothing revolves around his comfort and happiness.

Throughout the entire book, Johnny undergoes many changes to his personality. Some are due to the war, others simply due to meeting the right people. Even when faced with the prospect of a restored hand, Johnny thinks only of being able to fire a gun for his country instead of his own personal gains - Johnny is no longer the selfish, arrogant, naive and temperamental young boy he once was. He is a patriotic, selfless, and mature young man. I believe that Johnny is a truly dynamic, round character who we can learn valuable lessons from.

Works Cited

- Forbes, Esther. Johnny Tremain: Harcourt Publishing Company, 1943.

- Johnny Tremain. SparkNotes, [https://www. sparknotes. com/lit/johnnytremain/character/johnny-tremain/#targetText= When %20we%20first%20meet%20Johnny, talented%20young %20silversmith%20in%20Boston.](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/johnnytremain/character/johnny-tremain/#targetText=When%20we%20first%20meet%20Johnny,%20talented%20young%20silversmith%20in%20Boston.)