

Relationship's influences in kathryn stockett's novel the help

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The environment that surrounds a particular person can be either detrimental or beneficial. Specifically, the people who one grows up with can be a great influence. In Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*, one can easily see many relationships between the different characters. Besides the obvious family relationships, there seem to be other relationships that are built after the mother-daughter relationship structure. These influences serve to effect one's identities and lives, whether they be a character's or our own.

A relationship between a mother and daughter can change one's life, for the better or the worse. In Stockett's novel, *The Help*, there were several characters that played a motherly like role within the novel. Aibileen happens to be one of these loved characters. We are almost certain that Mrs. Leefolt does not really seem to love her daughter, Mae Mobley, and is almost always seen reprimanding her for the smallest things. In an early part of the book, Mrs. Leefolt is seen talking on a telephone with Mae Mobley pitifully reaching up to her, wanting attention. Mrs. Leefolt does not even glance her way, until Mae Mobley yanks the telephone cord. At this, Elizabeth hits her and yells at her and leaves her girl crying. Aibileen comforts her after this ugly incident. "When we make it to Mae Mobley's room, I set in the rocking chair. She sob on my shoulder and I rub her back, glad she can't see the mad on my face. I don't want her to think it's at her." (p. 22). This particularly mother-like moment makes us see that Aibileen is more of a mother to Mae than Elizabeth is. Additionally in other parts of the book, we can see Aibileen constantly encouraging the quiet girl and always reminds her that she is smart, kind, and important. Because of Aibileen's constant encouragement, we can see Mae Mobley "inherit" some of Aibileen's characteristics. In fact,

Aibileen can see the woman that Mae will become in the future. " She is tall and straight. She is proud. She got a better haircut. And she is remembering the words I put in her head. Remembering as a full-grown woman." (p. 521). If it weren't for Aibileen treating Mae Mobley like her own daughter, one can easily assume that Mae Mobley will grow up facing many difficulties such as depression and anxiety.

The relationship between a motherly figure and a child is indubitably the strongest relationship there is in a family setting. Throughout several instances of *The Help*, one can see Skeeter Phelan constantly badgering her biological mother about the whereabouts of their old maid, Constantine. Skeeter seems to be on good terms with her biological mother, but unquestionably has the strongest tie with her old care-taker. Like Aibileen for Mae Mobley, Constantine was always there for Skeeter and continuously gave her advice, pep talks and showered her with love. Skeeter grew up influenced by her maid, and was thrown off of track when she heard about her disappearance. After that shock, one can see Skeeter as a twenty-four year old woman continuously making important decisions with Constantine in her mind. For one example when Skeeter is writing the newsletter for the Bathroom Initiative, she begins to think about Constantine and tries to imagine Constantine's response would be to what she was doing. " All I can think while I'm typing is, What would Constantine think of me?" (p. 332). From this one moment, we can see that she still misses Constantine extremely and still tries to go by with what Constantine would have advised her to do. This proves the theory that the relationship between a mother and

child is unquestionably the strongest relationship within the family and can influence one's life.

Any relationship between a motherly person and a child can drastically change one's identity. I myself can speak for this. When I was younger, both of my parents were always out working. My mother decided to put me in some nursery school, and I admit that I was quite a bit of a brat. I almost never listened to my day-care teacher, broke things by accident and never seemed to follow rules. My parents saw that this wasn't working, so they pulled me out and asked my grandparents for help. My grandparents agreed with helping my parents and stepped in the difficult task of raising the three of us. I was close with both of my grandparents, but I felt like I connected more with my grandmother. She taught me about manners, pushed me to look after my brothers and showed me a million other things that were all equally important. She drilled those lessons inside my head for fifteen years until she decided to move to Fort Lee with my grandpa and aunt. Even though my mother has become much more active in my life lately, nothing she says really pushes me to change the person that I've become today. I have no doubt that if my mother had swapped places with my grandmother, I would have grown up with a completely different identity and personality. The mother-daughter relationship can really influence our identities.

Though there are billions of different relationships that are in this world today, the mother-daughter bond still is the strongest of all. Looking from the experiences of the characters in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* and my own

life, I can confidently say that this particular relationship will influence our identities and lives.