

Tom brennan and witness



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

From your studies what are the major influences that shape one's identity? Identity can be defined as the distinguishing characteristics of a person that makes them unique. Identity is shaped by major influences such as the challenges faced by a catalyst, the relationships formed with different individuals and the transformation of individuals forced to embrace the change occurring. This forms the basis of the development of one's identity and this is clearly evident in the novel the story of Tom Brennan and film Witness. One of the major influences that shape one's identity is the concept of a catalyst for change. In the story of Tom Brennan, Tom's brother Daniel causes a significant change with the people around him due to the car crash. Tom's world is turned upside down due to the consequences of the crash as the town shifts the blame and hatred towards the Brennan family.

Tom shows his disbelief of the negative response shown by the town from the result of Daniel's horrific car crash by describing the town of Mumbilli's present attitude towards Tom's once respected family, "Past the ugly words that told us that we were no longer wanted". This emphasizes Tom's struggle to cope with the extraordinary events that have plunged his world into a future of uncertainty. Tom before the accident was proud of the family name Brennan as the name was well respected and becoming better known due to the Brennan brother's outstanding rugby talents. This however was contrasted with the events after the accident in which the name was constantly linked to "killer" and Tom felt that the name was beginning to become a burden because the name was destroying his identity and good reputation.

Tom desperately needs a fresh new start so that he can shape his identity that was held in high regard prior to the accident in Mumbilli. In Witness, similar comparisons can be drawn from Tom Brennan's counterpart John Book. Book experiences a catastrophic murder that acts as a catalyst of change and he seeks to find a new environment so that he can protect the innocent child who witnessed the murder. Book prior to the murder was a well respected police officer but due to the corruption within the police force Book is forced to hide and blend into a new world until it is safe to go out into the violent westernized world. He develops a protective stance over Samuel as he is well aware of the consequences of his discovery, "If they find me, they find the boy". This establishes the Amish's trust in Book as they help him recover and integrate into society. At first, the Amish create a preconceived opinion about Book claiming he's just "one of them English" which symbolizes that because he is foreign to their culture and values that he is an outsider to a community that prides itself on its independence from the modern world.

Book's identity is tarnished due to the violence and corruption present in the modern western society. The Amish consider him just another individual engulfed by the problems present in the modernized world. A key influence of the text is also the notion of relationships that is heavily present in text as individuals require support from a mentor to deal with the emotions of change.

This is clearly seen in the story of Tom Brennan, where Tom struggles to adapt to the world he has been placed in. Tom experiences grief, depression and anger as he struggles to understand the influence of the car crash on

the Brennan family lives. "Didn't they realize we weren't like everyone else here?" shows Tom's inability to relate to the Brennan family as "killer" and "criminals" as he looks to his tormenting past by showing guilt for allowing the situation to occur. The listing of words such as "should of" and "could of" when Tom describes the crash symbolizes the notion that Tom feels partially responsible for the situation that occurred and he struggles to deal with changing from perfect Mumbilli to boring Coghill. Tom is dwelling too much into the past and this is affecting his ability to establish a new identity in Coghill. Tom alone is unable to recuperate emotionally on his own and it is only through the establishment of key relationships with Brendan and Chrissie that allow Tom to discover his new path of redemption. Tom's uncle Brendan is a significant influence on Tom's ability to overcome his problems in the past and establish a new identity for the future. Brendan acknowledges the idea of forming a close friend relationship in order to encourage Tom to start a new life in the new surroundings of Coghill.

Brendan assists Tom in recovering emotionally as he identifies the activities of training for rugby; keeping fit and a holiday in Nepal are important distractions to help Tom keep his mind off the problems in the past. He is also influential in encouraging Tom to form a romantic relationship with Chrissie who helps further establish the work done by Brendan by encouraging Tom to form a new identity. Chrissie demonstrates friendship towards Tom after showing concern towards Tom as a result of Kylie's speech. Tom struggles to cope with the actions of Kylie's speech because of the fears that the people of Coghill will react similarly to the angry and

abusive townsfolk in Mumbilli. The speech although is a turning point in Tom's life as he learns that many people in Coghill already know about the accident and don't hold a grudge against him. She is very supportive of Tom when he plays in the rugby match against Mumbilli as he struggles to cope with the St John's player's abuse as he refers to Tom's last name as 'killer'. Memories of the abuse shown by Mumbilli cause Tom to run away from the rugby match after the game but Chrissie's intervention helps Tom keep his mind off the game by being very understanding and supporting of his situation. Tom kisses Chrissie that day but the key factor of their meaningful relationship is the effect it has on Tom's identity as she sees him for he is now and not the man who was unfairly criticized for the actions in the past.

Chrissie also shapes Tom's identity for the future by stressing the idea of 'talking about it'. She acknowledges that Tom's identity is torn between past and present and emphasizes that 'it'll always be with you' unless Tom lets go of the past. This is of increasing importance in the way that Witness highlights relationships with the protagonist John Book who experiences a change of different worlds. Book is forced to flee his western surroundings because of his involvement in the murdering of a police officer. He is portrayed as an outsider by the Amish that assist in his disappearance from the police force but he loses his police identity that challenges and strips away the only identity he has in the western world. It establishes the chance for Book to forge a new identity and change the Amish's perception of him in which they see him as 'one of them English'. This quote emphasizes the view that the Amish perceive the

English as deceptive and violent. Book struggles to establish and integrate into his new Amish identity as this is symbolized by the Amish costume in which his pants are too short and he looks stiff and uncomfortable.

This highlights that Book doesn't fit into society and the Amish culture is alien to the values established in his western identity. Book is unable to blend into the Amish society on his own and it is only through the establishment of the relationship with Rachel that Book starts to understand and fit into the Amish community. She provides book with Amish clothing so that he doesn't stand out among the Amish and helps establish set values for book to follow. This is evident when book hands over the gun which is a symbol of the violence within the western world over to Rachel. The removal of the gun highlights the last piece of identity he has within his police force duties in the western world but his gradual change over time helps book mature and respect the values set out by Rachel. She is the catalyst for Book's change and his new identity is also clearly evident in the Amish community building a barn scene.

Book establishes new values as he experiences the community spirit within the Amish and learns the ability to establish teamwork within the group. Book's involvement in the building of the barn helps Book receive a well respected identity among the Amish, as the owner of the barn shows his gratitude towards Book by stating "You was hot shot". John's identity that was heavily supported by the influence of Rachel helps book diminish his status as "a loner" and helps him embrace the role of being part of the community. There are many significant influences that impact on one's identity such as challenges faced due to a catalyst and relationships that

form changes to the identity and perception of an individual in a given environment.

This is clearly evident in Witness and story of Tom Brennan as both protagonists experience a change for a greater and better future. Book understands the meaning of forming close relationships and taking time off police work to experience the little pleasures of completing his own activities to create a perfect balance to change his identity for a brighter lifestyle in the future whereas Tom experiences similar realizations to Book as he also discovers that there is hope for a better future through his mates, rugby, trip to Nepal with Brendan and his supportive girlfriend Chrissie that will help Tom recreate the identity lost before the accident so that he too can look forward to a brighter future.