

# Comparison of howard roark and peter keating



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The relationship between Roark and Keating dominates the first two parts of *The Fountainhead*. Rand uses the comparison between Roark and Keating to express two polar opposites. Roark is Rand's hero, the epitome of everything Rand attributes to be good. He abides by ideals of honesty, integrity and hard work in a world that is wrought with personal and social corruption. Despite situations of joblessness and penury he is always guided by his individual opinion and makes extremely difficult choices with stolid courage. Peter on the other hand represents everything that Rand finds to be hollow or worthless. He is portrayed as a man motivated by the praise and approval of others. With no sense of personal integrity, his only means of self-identification is success, which he achieves primarily through manipulation, sycophancy and hypocrisy. The extreme contrast between these two characters acts as a foundation stone for the beginning of the novel and Rand uses it to develop Roark's character as that of an extremely objective and individualistic man guided by the desire to actualize himself through his work. This becomes clear at the very end when Roark is asked by Guy to make the biggest and best building New York might ever see, "a monument to [his] spirit" and Roark's biggest ever project. Both Keating and Roark start their journey into the professional world from Stanton Institute of Technology. Peter is the teacher's pet, a competitive youth, inspired to achieve greatness through the accomplishment of all the social parameters that define it. He graduates top of the class and is offered an extremely lucrative job at the biggest architectural firm in America. At the same time Roark is expelled from school for insubordination and non-conformism. He is understood to be talented however his lack of compliance with traditional architectural techniques makes him appear as a "disobedient" and "

arrogant" individual. Despite the appearances, internally Peter finds himself to be a little unsure about what he wants for himself. He has problems making decisions about his future and decides to take up a particular job position only when his mother suggests that if he didn't it would certainly go to his arch rival Shlinker. Roark on the other hand is calm and clear headed despite his expulsion and the uncertain professional future that looms in its light. When Peter asks him for advice he tells him that " If you want my advice, Peter, you've made a mistake already. By asking me... Never ask people. Not about your work..." This demonstrates a fundamental difference between their approach to interpret life events and the philosophies which continuously guide them through their career paths. At Francon and Heyer, Keating continues to be a conformist. He believes that his success depends completely on his worming as close to Francon as possible. He uses Francon's every weakness, be it his dislike for Stengel or his lack of design ideas, to achieve this goal. Keating takes up the role of Francon's best ally, by conforming to Francon's professional, social and personal standards completely. His relationship with Francon is fundamentally based on manipulation and connivance. When it comes to designing however Peter finds himself entirely at a loss, unable to put all his achievements and accolades to any real use. Howard Roark goes to study under Henry Cameron, a modernist now considered a have been. Roark's motivation to work under Henry is not guided by any social opinion. He goes to Henry solely out of respect for his work and with the aim of learning architecture through design which would essentially mean buildings from scratch. At Henry's, Roark's days are full of intellectual challenge and physical labor. In contrast with Keating, Roark does not weaken Henry but strengthens him by

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being an example of courage and solidity. Howard has a profound impact on Henry too. Henry starts believing in the value of individual work again and at his death bed says to Roark: " Do you remember the day when I tried to fire you? ... Forget what I said then... It was worth it." indicating that he was wrong in being pessimistic about the world. Where Henry symbolizes individualism and integrity towards work Francon represents moral loss and degradation. Roark never used Henry as Peter uses Francon. On the contrary Roark brings certain stability into Henry's life while Henry helps him complete his understanding of architectural design. Peter quickly acquires popularity after entering his profession and proceeds to festoon himself and everything representative of him with luxuries that help him identify with the most successful men of his time. At a certain point in the novel Peter ends up blackmailing Heyer to his (Heyer's) death in an effort to further his own career. It is an important milestone in Keating's life. He reaches a point where his desperation to control people grows to a highly immoral capacity. Rand uses this event to establish that his manipulative antics have a serious criminality to them and are not just innocent, helpless attempts at gaining social approval. Roark unlike Keating does not adopt or enforce upon himself any false social practice to gain commissions. He does not patronize clients by attending parties or joining guilds, neither does he compromise on his designs to incorporate irrelevant elements of popular architectural forms in order to impress his clients. He continues to work and think that his very work will help him acquire more challenging assignments. Rand freely used dialogues and speeches to express important aspects of her philosophy. Toohey and Wynand have important career-based relationships with both Roark and Keating. A comparison of their contributions to both Roark's and <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-of-howard-roark-and-peter-keating/>

Keating's professional meanderings proves to be a powerful means for analyzing the subject of this discussion. In *Toohey*, Peter seeks redemption and solace. He wants to blind himself from the Roarks of the world and reassure himself that being imperfect and dishonest is a common practice and thus not wrong. Toohey expresses that the disabled need to be given preference over the able minded and able bodied and that mediocre individuals need to be loved not denigrated. These ideas make Peter feel both better and worse about himself at the same time. Peter started his career with manipulating others and now ends up getting used and manipulated by Toohey till the extent of complete annihilation of Peter's real self. Although Toohey aggressively campaign's against Roark and his ideals, Roark unlike Peter is completely unaffected by him. When Toohey successfully destroys Roark's version of the Stoddard Temple and asks him on a certain occasion about what he thinks of him Roark only says " But I don't think of you" Guy Wynand offers projects to both Keating and Roark but with different motivation. In giving the Stoneridge project to Keating, Guy performs an act of indifferent derision whereas Roark is offered each project out of respect and friendship. Roark does not have to exchange anything with Wynand for his commission but Peter is encouraged to exchange his wife for the project. Peter decides to end his relationship with Dominique and literally sell her to Wynand only for the purpose of obtaining the Stone Ridge Commission. Peter's career path is fundamentally different from that of Howard's since Peter lacks integrity and courage. He evades taking risks and cannot separate his identity from people's opinions. Thus he is a helpless slave of others' fancies. Roark has a strong and clear philosophy and he consistently abides by it. His only means to success is honest work and thus

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he struggles to find a place for himself in a world averse to change and only emerges as a splendid paradigm shifter by the end of the book. Both Roark and Keating achieve success because they are able to establish themselves as architects of acclaim. However Keating is never able to save himself from the path of moral degradation and personal corruption he chooses for himself by losing himself in a quest for social success. Keating's struggles and sorrows come from inside his being and he loses miserably because he never listens to his own individual self. On the other hand, Roark's battle is with the imperfection of the outside world. He does not struggle with himself but with the people around him. His battle is a battle of consistency and patience. He wins because he learns to remain unaffected by others. Rand's objective in telling the story of Fountainhead lies somewhere in expressing that the only success that is real arises through self actualization and that social parameters of success are unreal, false and deceptive. Roark understands this and continuously struggles to work in consonance with his objectivist and individualistic ideals. Although Rand refrains from introducing any of Roark's psychological reactions to the general lack of commissions and various rejections and court cases he is subject to one can observe that Roark somehow remains unaffected by the counterproductively of the world, a lesson also learnt by Dominique at the end. Roark's success is real because it makes him feel whole and gives meaning to his life. On the other hand Peter's success is only a façade which hides his inner destruction and moral corruption.