

# The impact of ellen's choices on her own life

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The novel *Ellen Foster* by Kaye Gibbons is about the life of nine-year-old Ellen up until she is eleven. Ellen seems to have no luck as her mother is ill and her father is a raging alcoholic. The downward spiral of events continues. Ellen's mother commits suicide leaving her with her drunk of a father as her only guardian. It is a stretch that he even be called a father seeing as Ellen takes over the parental responsibilities.

Ellen nearly becomes the parent she was lacking and kept up this life for as long as she could. It isn't until her father drunkenly assaults her that she realizes she was not able to stay in that environment anymore. She had no other choice but to find another place to live and create a new life for herself. Throughout the novel, Ellen proves time and time again that although her life isn't the easiest she was able to control a great deal of it through the decisions she made. In the early stages of the novel, Ellen's life is deteriorating before the reader's eyes. Her mother commits suicide.

This leaves Ellen stranded with a joke of a father to take care of her. Ellen would have been better off on the street than with her abusive alcoholic so-called father. He leaves Ellen to tend to everything, including the bills and all household responsibilities while he is too busy getting drunk with his friends. It is hard enough for a nine-year-old to cope with the death of a parent not to mention the additional concerns of trying to replace the parent that has been lost. Ellen opens the book with the line, " When I was little I would think of ways to kill my daddy." after reading more and more of the book this thought becomes more and more understandable.

Ellen does the best she can to keep her life on track but after her father abuses her she makes the decision that led to her overall well being: leaving. All the events that transpire in the beginning of the novel were well out of Ellen's control; she was dealt a bad life and she had nobody to rely on to fix it other herself. The first step to the recovery of her life is when Ellen leaves her father and takes shelter in her friend Starletta's home. Immediately after arriving at Starletta's home Ellen states, " I do not care for the extras like food or the toilet. I know this is not a hotel. (39)" Ellen is not in a safe environment, therefore, she is trying to be less of a burden to ensure she will be able to stay away from her home.

Although Starletta's parents are more than accommodating of Ellen, after her teacher finds a bruise on her arm she is sent to live with the art teacher and her husband Roy. This is completely out of Ellen's control and at this point she is being dragged around. She stays with Julia and Roy for a while until her grandmother obtains custody of her. During the duration of her stay with her grandmother, her father dies. Ellen officially has no parents; she chooses to shed no more than one tear. A short time after her grandmother dies, Ellen must move in with her Aunt Nadine and cousin Dora.

Thus far Ellen has done her best to take control of her life, unpredictable event keep occurring but Ellen continues to persevere. At this stage in the novel Ellen really gains control over her life and whom she chooses to be in it. Ellen tries her best to make the best life for herself at Nadine's house. Nadine and Dora look down upon Ellen. Amazingly enough Ellen tries to be the bigger person and get along with Nadine and Dora. Ellen says, " It looks good but it is not something I would have in my own house.

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But as long as they like it. (106)" speaking of the painting she painted for Nadine and Dora. Ellen puts an great amount of thought into this gift to please the two. Sadly, Ellen was disappointed to overhear Nadine and Dora criticizing her artwork. After several attempts at pleasing the two, Ellen explodes which results in her being kicked out of Nadine's home.

For the first time since she goes to Starletta's home Ellen was able to control her own life and decide what her best move was. Ellen has full reign over her own life and she decides to take shelter at a local foster home. She wears her best dress and offers the foster mother all the money she could get her hands on. Ellen is gladly welcomed into her new home, where she can finally maintain a steady shelter. Ellen is done moving and has finally found a place where she is happy and safe.

It wasn't until her life was put into her own hands that Ellen's life continued on a good path. Ellen was finished being told where she was to live. She found a foster home and took it upon herself to find a good environment. If it were not for her own personal will, she could have continued moving from home to home or even worse, end up on the streets. When she lets fate determine her life, Ellen is never happy.

She persevered through all the moving which lead her to the end result of a real family. Throughout the novel Ellen proved time and time again that although her life wasn't the easiest she was able to control a great deal of it through her decisions. She had to overall control of where she ended up. This novel shows, you only get as much as you put in. Ellen's decisions controlled how happy, safe, and welcomed she was in her situation. Had it not been for

her personal will Ellen could be anywhere rather than on the path to a promising life.