

Differences in perspectives: an analysis of oryx and crake and maddaddam



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

If one were under a small tree and were hit by an apple that dropped off a branch, the main conclusion one would reach might be that the event was slightly annoying and random. One would then stop thinking about it and go back to doing whatever one had been doing. However, for Isaac Newton, an apple falling from a tree inspired some of the important laws of modern physics. After all, an event that does not seem significant to one person can be the inspiration for others; it largely depends on the perspective of the individual. In line with this example, many aspects of life and literature can also be interpreted in completely different ways. The worlds constructed in *Oryx and Crake* and *MaddAddam* by Margaret Atwood demonstrate this, since the worlds according to Jimmy and the Crakers are completely different.

For Jimmy, the world has become vastly different from the one he has known. In the previous world, there was structure via social institutions, although these structures were rife with corruption. Corporations such as the Corpsecorps and Happicuppa ran amok, leading readers to view Atwood's created world as dystopian. Science has no boundaries, as demonstrated by the Pigoons, pigs created by fusing human and pig DNA. Jimmy is often disgusted by what he sees, as when he sees how the meat people consume is grown: "' That's the head in the middle...No eyes or beaks or anything, they don't need those...The thing was a nightmare'" (*Oryx* 202). However, even though he has disgust for what is happening, his disgust never transforms into active dissent. He is repelled by seeing how things are done, yet does not do anything in an attempt to solve particular social ills. This is why, to Jimmy, the world around him is not a dystopia; he disagrees with

certain methodologies within his culture, but does not strive to find ways to reject the system. Thus, he is complicit in it, adopting an approach that is problematic since it allows the existing harms to be perpetuated.

Although he was okay with the world before the apocalypse, Jimmy is extremely dissatisfied with what is left of the world after the Waterless Flood. Everything is problematic for him; he finds that the weather has become too hot and the food harder to find. He refers to himself as “dead meat,” which indicates that he is walking but not living. He physically exists, but his ontology as a social human is dead. His new name also symbolizes the status of his existence in the new world. The name “Snowman” indicates obscurity; “The Abominable Snowman” in human culture has been known as a creature whose existence is ambiguous (and actual snowmen have fleeting existences in any case). To humans, the creature seems to be a primitive monster who wanders the margins of society, appearing at times and disappearing at others. This background is relevant to the status the new world has bestowed upon Jimmy: he could be the last human whose relevance in the new world is questionable. Unable to deal with a world not meant for him, Jimmy becomes sick and, as his condition worsens, begins to hallucinate. Indeed, this sickness symbolizes the fact that he does not belong in the post-human world; the conditions of his existence do not match up with the conditions that the post-Flood world offers.

The perspective of the Crakers is different from the perspective dictated by Jimmy’s human approach. The Crakers have been created for the new world: they have UV-resistant skin, live in harmony with their surroundings, naturally ward off mosquitoes, and have short lives that would solve

<https://assignbuster.com/differences-in-perspectives-an-analysis-of-oryx-and-crake-and-maddaddam/>

population problems. They are described as creatures built to live in harmony with their surroundings. They even have extra thick skin on their feet so that they can avoid wearing shoes. All the tools they would need are built into their biological makeups, in sharp contrast to how humans must burn through the environment to create the tools they need. What makes the Crakers symbolically unique is that they represent the perfect combination of technology and man. Whereas humanity coincides with technology, the Crakers have become the ultimate post-human being by living within a landscape that blurs the lines between nature and culture. Jimmy's dystopia is their personal utopia, as the world has been created for them. The difference between Jimmy and the Crakers can be contextualized through their interactions with the Pigoons. When Jimmy first sees the Pigoons at his dad's lab, he feels disgusted about how they are being treated: " He didn't want to eat a pigoon, because he thought of the pigoons as creatures much like himself. Neither he nor they had a lot of say in what was going on" (Oryx 24). He empathizes with these creatures, but he does not take any sort of action to prevent the pain that is inflicted upon the animals. He takes the role of a bystander, watching the events that are happening but not attempting to stop them. However, the Crakers completely outdo Jimmy's weak connection to the creatures; whereas the humans cannot talk with the Pigoons, the Crakers are able to communicate with them. This is shown through Blackbeard's interaction with the Pigoons: " The Pigoons...trot over to Blackbeard. ' They say the three men have been there. But they are not there now,' he says" (MaddAddam 279). This quotation demonstrates a stronger connection with nature than Jimmy is able to have. This is why the characters' perspectives on the world are so

<https://assignbuster.com/differences-in-perspectives-an-analysis-of-oryx-and-crake-and-maddaddam/>

different, since the Crakers have a connection with the earth that Jimmy lacks altogether.

In pessimistic interpretations of the status quo, society has become too infatuated with its productive modes to be able to separate itself from the larger structural problems that plague human culture; greed and selfishness drive the economy and shortsighted desire motivates people at large.

However, contrary to popular belief, Atwood's trilogy may not be predicting the end of human society. Rather, it explains how society can escape that fate through the Crakers. The Crakers are representative of mankind's ability to embrace technology along with nature to create the balance that would allow Earth to sustain itself. As Jimmy, representative of humans, becomes more obsolete, the Crakers are able to re-conceptualize what it means to be human.

Works Cited

Atwood, Margaret. *MaddAddam*. New York: Anchor Books, 2014. Print.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Year of the Flood*. New York: Anchor Books, 2009. Print.