

# [Themes of identity loss in truman capote](https://assignbuster.com/themes-of-identity-loss-in-truman-capote/)

[Food & Diet](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/food-n-diet/)

Loss of identity can be both a fascinating and very painful trait for a person to possess. Throughout his work, Truman Capote consistently employs characters who are far from self actualization. This can be seen through his use of descriptive imagery which often illustrates the different ways that someone far from self actualization can be perceived by both themselves and others. Breakfast at Tiffanys is the story of a young writer, Paul Varjaks encounter and eventual love affair with his enchantingly eccentric neighbor Holly Golightly.

Those who dont know Holly all that well receive the impression that she is not much more than the beautiful, carefree facade she puts forth. With a closer look, Paul finds that she is not who she seems to be. Holly has always struggled to find her identity and plays whatever character suits her fancy. Other Voices, Other Rooms is about Joel Knox, a twelve year old boy who, after the death of his mother receives an invitation to live with his absentee father on Skullys Landing. Not only is the landing itself isolated, but so is Joel. Due to his dainty femininity he has always been alienated by his peers. Joels feelings of isolation combined with a lack of knowledge about his living family create a lot of identity problems for Joel during his formative years.

Holly Golightly, while not the narrator of Breakfast at Tiffanys remains the main focus of the novel. When describing her through the eyes of others using imagery to minutely describe his physical appearance Truman Capote often draws upon her beauty and her seemingly magnetic aura that draws people in “ The ragbag color of her boys hair, tawny streaks, strands of albino-blonde and yellow caught the hall light” (13). illustrates how she often catches the light and portrays her as a shining beacon of sorts.

The many colors in her hair can also be viewed as symbolism for Hollys many personalities, all characters that she puts on for people to see. Other times, Holly lets small pieces of her insecurities show through what she wants everyone to believe her handwriting for instance is described as “ freakishly, awkward kindergarten hand” (28). It is in these minor flaws where one can realize that Holly is not the image of perfection that she often seems to be. Those who know Holly better realize that she is a fake, and somehow appreciate her all the more for it. Her agent O.

J. Berman states “ Shes such a goddamn liar maybe she dont know herself anymore” (32). Capotes use of Hollys elusive past helps to draw the reader in by sparking curiosity, the novel is set up so at the beginning readers will believe in Hollys false image and can experience an unravelling of what they originally believed by the end. For most of his life, Joel has been is isolated from his peers due to his femininity. throughout the novel Joel encounters issues finding a gender with which he more identifies. he is even more confused when he encounters his cousin Randolph, a transvestite which arises the question of whether or not he is required to behave in the manner that society would rather he behave. Idabel, a tomboy that befriends Joel senses that Joel may be harboring romantic feelings towards her which angers her quite a bit ” you either behave like were brothers, or you dont behave at all” (174). This arises the question of Joels sexuality, although Idabel is in fact a girl, she is on the manly side.

This also arises the question of Idabels sexuality if she is against the idea of a boys romantic affection it is possible that she may be a lesbian. The rejection that joel receives further increases the sense that Joel is an outcast. In Breakfast at Tiffanys there is the question of whether or not Holly realizes she is a fake. At times Holly seems fully aware of her identity issues but Often she lies to herself as well as others by convincing herself that she is merely the character she plays in the grand spectacle of the life she leads. When she states: “ Im always top banana in the shock department” (61), she is plainly stating that she makes an attempt to shock people in order to keep their attention.

Although Holly clearly cares about the reactions of others, at times she seems to not consider any of the consequences of what she says to others. “ ive had a little go at marijuana, Its not half as destructive as brandy, cheaper too” (92), she is unabashedly getting herself into trouble through her disregard for the reactions of others. Her awareness of these issues is also displayed in her embracing of spontaneity, “ of course well be married, ive never been married before” (67).

This shows Holly is willing to try anything new in hopes of finding out who she is and what she truly wants from life. Joel, often questions his own identity, he has no mother and a mysterious father leaves him basically without any traditional father figure. Similar to Holly, Joel often re-invents himself without realizing that the impression he creates is a false one. Joels inner dialogue states: “ Somehow, spinning the tale, Joel had believed every word” (59). When Capote pens: “ It was as if he lived those months wearing a pair of spectacles with green, cracked lenses, and had wax-plugging in his ears, for everything seemed to be something it wasnt, and the days melted in a constant dream” (10), it perfectly exemplifies Joels awareness of his constant state of ignorance, the use of colored glasses is also used as a symbol for ignorance when Idabel states: “ take my colored glasses, Idabel offered.

everything looks a lot a lot prettier” (127). truman Capote successfully conveys the toils of life with no identity, through his work. in both Breakfast at Tiffanys and Other Voices, Other Rooms characters are exposed for being something other tan what they seem to be.