

# The reluctant fundamentalist essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the novel, “ The Reluctant Fundamentalist”, we see characters respond to change in many different ways. From the main character Changez’s realisation of self and expression of true nature, to a character like Erica who re-seeds into herself, the response to change is evident.

Although these two characters show mental, physical and sociological changes, other characters like Jim show no reaction at all to change and continue their lives in the same way no matter what the circumstance. Before the “ 9/11 attacks”, Changez not only embraced but was almost consumed by the idea of the “ American Dream”. To satisfy his obsession Changez cut off all ties to his homeland and by his own recollection he attempted to “ act and speak more like an American”. This troubled him greatly.

As Changez himself stated that this persona he took on made him feel “ ashamed”. Like the cravings of a smoker attempting to quit cigarettes, his link to his homeland returned time and time again. It became predominant while he was in a limousine with an American co worker and thought to himself “ you are so foreign”. this suppression of his true self would be brought to an end with the change that was brought on by the “ September 11 terrorist attacks”.

The first glimpse at the coming out of Changez’s character was first seen when a smile came to his face after seeing the attacks. It continued more and more as the novel progressed from his growing of his beard as “ a form of protest” to feeling rage whilst watching the invasion of Afghanistan on the news. The change brought on by “ 9/11” had turned Changez from a starry

eyed embracer of the “ American dream” to a person who both loathed and resented the very “ americansess” he had once embraced. Erica’s change from before the attacks to after the attacks was also quiet extreme. Although somewhat damaged, Erica was a functioning quiet normal upper class girl. Changez described her as being “ like a child who could only fall asleep with the lights on” due to the fact that she could only truly recede into herself with other people around because then she could find her way out of herself.

After “ 9/11” however it had seemed that the lights went out. After the attacks we see a much different Erica than the one portrayed earlier in the novel. It had seemed that the changes brought on by the attacks had brought up a strong longing for her lost childhood love Chris, Changez’s deceased adversary in the battle for Erica’s heart. This nostalgia for the past brought on extreme introspective behaviour to Erica. So extreme in fact that her physical state became unattractive to even Changez, who was completely infatuated with her.

Change in her world resulted in her final destruction with all signs pointing to Erica having met her doom by her own hand. The character Jim, unlike the other two characters, has no reaction what so ever to the change brought on by “ 9/11”. His attitude acceptance of change becomes clear when he states “ time only moves in one direction. Remember that. Things always change.

” this attitude may stem from his job at Underwood Samson, a valuation firm, where the main objective is to “ stick to the fundamentals”. By sticking to the fundamentals, Jim avoids any emotional reaction to “ 9/11” and to everything else for that matter. He professes that his nick name was “ the

shark”, being likened to an animal which shows no compassion in its pursuit of its goal shows Jim’s true character. In conclusion the characters in “ The Reluctant Fundamentalist” react to change in their own personal ways.

Much like people in the real world, they have no one standard reaction.

Where Changez exposed his true self outwardly, Erica receded into herself so much so that she wished not to live anymore. We also see a cold “ shark” like Jim who even when faced with an extreme a change as that brought on by “ 9/11”, simply continues to stick to the fundamentals. Each character reacts individually.