

# Three important lessons in John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids*



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The *Chrysalids* by John Wyndham is a story about a dystopian future with extremely religious beliefs. The story takes place in Waknuk where they believe in the "perfect image", anything astray from what they believe to be a human is considered a deviation. We see this through the eyes of a boy named David Strorm. He discovers more about "deviations" and how the people around him feel about anything that is not the "norm". On his journey, David also discovers that he can telepathically communicate with others who possess his ability. From an exterior perspective, David and the group of 8 (the other people with his ability) appear to be normal. However, they must not tell anyone about their abilities. Because being different could get them sent to the Fringes. Throughout the text, there have been some important lessons that the author highlighted. These lessons can be taken and implemented/connected to our lives. These lessons are perfection is a concept, the importance of friendship, and morality.

Lessons in this book show how perfection is a man-made concept. The reader learns of the unjust actions towards the Fringes people, things are not always what they seem to be. The world is not a perfect place and nobody is flawless. There are 'perfect' characters in the book that treat the Fringe people unfairly throughout the story. It was not the fringe people's fault for looking different. It is theorized that a nuclear plant had exploded and the surrounding area was ravaged by the radiation. This resulted in the Fringes territory becoming seriously mutated. The plants, animals and people would be deformed within the secluded 'Badlands'. This is where the Fringes were forced to live. Often these areas did not have enough food because of the radiation. The reader can learn it is important to understand things fully

before making a judgment and putting things into action. The deviations can not just become a norm, David explains: ' She can refuse to respond. She's doing that now, like somebody refusing to talk - but to go on with it... It'd be like taking a vow of silence for the rest of her life. I mean, she can't just let herself forget, and become a norm. We can't believe that's possible". They believed that being different is not apart of the " Norm" or what they see as perfect. They do not understand how the Fringes people feel and think. Due to this lack of understanding, they are condemned and sent away. Just because they did not fit the Waknukians image of mankind... Moreover, if the roles are flipped and the Fringes people were the " Norm", would the concept of perfection be bestowed onto them? The Zealand Lady believes that people like her are more superior: " We are the new people-your kind of people. The people who can think-together We're the people that are going to build a new kind of world - different from the old people's world, and from the savages". Much like the beliefs of the people in Waknuk the Zealand lady thinks that non-telepaths are inferior. Infact, it is quite ironic. The people of Waknuk think they are better and the Fringes people see them as inferior. Maybe if the people of Waknuk did not believe in the " Perfect" image they could live in harmony with the " deviations".

At many points in the story, characters aid each other in hopes of achieving a common goal. We see this in a lot in the story, from David assisting Sophie when her foot gets stuck, to Uncle Axel aiding when he discovers David's abilities. The largest display of true friendship is when Michael stays in waknuk to not leave Rachel alone. " Rachel deserves just as well as any of the rest of us. All right, then; since the machine can not take her, someone's

got to bring her". Michael really cares about his friend Rachael. So much so that he gave up his chance to leave Waknuk for her.

The greatest theme in the story is morality. The book argues that even within societies that are morally corrupt, individuals have the power and responsibility to make their own moral decisions. While the actions of the Waknukians and Zealanders are morally shameful due to their racist and violent nature. Some people within this society are able to behave differently, despite being taught to conform. "It wouldn't be just murder, Uncle Axel. It'd be something worse, as well; like violating part of ourselves for ever.... We couldn't do it....". The group of 8 decides not to kill Anne even though she puts all of their lives in danger by getting married, and Michael gives up the opportunity to go to Zealand because he does not want to leave Rachel alone in Waknuk. In many ways, the morals of the group separate them from the people of Waknuk much more than any physical or mental difference. The fact that David, Petra, Rosalind, Michael, and Sophie are much better people than the typical person of Waknuk, yet are all classified as deviants, shows the hypocrisy of their moral code which is advised by Nicholson's repentances. "I shall pray God to send charity into this hideous world, and sympathy for the weak, and love for the unhappy and unfortunate. I shall ask him if it is indeed his will that a child should suffer and its soul be damned for a little blemish of the body.... And I shall pray Him, too, that the hearts of the self-righteous may be broken." Aunt Harriet is disgusted and upset by her own family. Her own sister will not aid her in her time of need because of their rules and beliefs. David's Mother took one look at Harriet's poor innocent baby and she was disgusted. She kicked her

sister and the helpless baby out knowing they would not be accepted in their community. A person with a strong moral foundation would not treat another living being like that. The whole community of Waknuk has this morality issue. If everyone had strong morals and could look past people's differences they could all live together in harmony.

This story overall was an excellent read. There were three main messages that John Wyndham was emphasizing in the plot. These lessons/messages correlate with real life and are things that can and should be used in everyday life. The three points are that perfection is a man-made concept, the importance of friendship, and having good morals. All 3 of these things can be applied to the real world and will make you a better and happier person in general. "The essential quality of life is living; the essential quality of living is change; change is evolution: and we are part of it."