

# Which is the desirable society essay



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In *The Chrysalids* by John Wyndham creates two comparable societies, Waknuk and Sealand.

These two settlements are vastly different; Waknuk is trapped in a static state of development, while Sealand is rapidly progressing forward. When these two societies are compared Sealand is the more desirable community to live in for the following reasons: Sealand is technologically advanced, and they treat their women as equals rather than an inferior being. These two points go hand in hand; as a society evolves the people recognize the importance of others, and the value of every person. Waknuk on the other hand is existing with very little technology, and its level of development is similar to that of pioneers. Waknuk also belittles the abilities and accomplishments of the women in their community. Based on those points it is easy to see why Sealand is the preferable community to live in. Sealand is the more sensible choice of residence when compared to Waknuk. Although Waknuk is set many years in the future it is not technologically inclined.

The people of Waknuk do not recognize machines that people today would be familiar with. This is shown in the following passage when David dreams of a society much like ours is today, yet he can identify nothing: And the buildings were quite unlike any I knew. The traffic in the streets was strange, carts running with no horses to pull them; and sometimes there were things in the sky, shiny fish-shaped things that certainly were not birds.... I could somehow be dreaming about times long ago.... it might be that what I was seeing was a bit of the world as it had been once upon a time- the wonderful world that the Old People had lived in; as it had been before God sent Tribulation. (Wyndham, 7) This quotation proves that David's community

is not advanced when it comes to science or simple machines. The reader can assume that the Old People are the people of today, and if David is unable to name the machines that seem so obvious it proves that the community he was raised in is not using such machines. This quotation also shows that David knows no other transportation methods other than horse-drawn carts and this demonstrates Waknuk's lack of knowledge.

As the plot continues the reader can see that Waknuk is not evolving into a better community either. Instead, Waknuk refuses to advance further; they are a stagnant community that can't see error in their ways. The people don't see any reason to change so they don't; this leaves their nation in a static state, unable to evolve into a greater nation. There could be many reasons why the people of Waknuk refuse to develop their technology, but one possible reason is that they are a God-fearing community. God sent Tribulation down upon the Old People, who were believed to have been very advanced, and now Waknuk is afraid to expand their technology in fear that they will offend God. David's community is not advanced, and refuses to progress, leaving Waknuk an objectionable choice of dwelling. Sealand, on the other hand, has an exceptional range of machines and other forms of technology making it a pleasant place to live. Sealand is also a place of change; they are not following in the direct footsteps of the Old People like Waknuk and because of this they are free to expand their society.

This fact is proven in the following quotation: "' We are the New People...The people who can think-together. We're the people who are going to build a new kind of world- different from the Old People's world,..."' (Wyndham, 156) This excerpt occurs when the Sealand Lady is identifying herself to

Rosalind, it shows that Sealand is a place of change and a place of pride. It shows that Sealand is advanced enough in their technology that they recognize the need to evolve further. Wyndham portrays Sealand as a technologically advanced society in this passage: Small boats, some with coloured sails, and some with none, were making for the harbour already dotted with craft. Clustered along the shore, and thinning as it stretched back towards the hills, lay the city with its white houses embedded among green parks and gardens. I could even make out the tiny vehicles sliding along the wide, tree-bordered avenues. A little inland, beside a square of green, a bright light was blinking from a tower and a fish-shaped machine was floating to the ground.

(Wyndham, 199)The above quotation shows that Sealand is a land much different and much more progressive than Waknuk. It shows that Sealand is rapidly proceeding forward. Sealand may be so technologically inclined because of that their telepathy, which gives them an advantage by permitting them to think together and collectively move forward. Many people thinking together and contributing their ideas to a common subject would definitely benefit Sealand's progression. That may be why Sealand is the preferable place to live when it is compared to Waknuk. Other than technology, or lack there of, Waknuk is also distasteful because it is a community that discriminates against women, and doesn't treat them as the equals that they are. The women of Waknuk are mistreated by the men, who feel that they are superior. In Waknuk the men decide who to take as a wife, and they can turn to leave her as they fit.

Women have no say, and are blamed for things that are not their fault, such as giving birth to a blasphemed child. The following passage occurs when Harriet is begging for Emily's help to save her child: ' This is the third time. They'll take my baby away again like they took the others. I can't stand that-not again. Henry will turn me out, I think. He'll find another wife, who can give him proper children. There'll be nothing-nothing in the world for me-nothing.'(Wyndham, 73)This excerpt shows that because Harriet delivered a baby that deviates from the norm Henry will most likely leave her because he has dubbed her unworthy.

But it takes two people to make a baby. The father contributes an equal amount of the inherited material that creates the child, and yet there is no consequence for the father. Harriet has no control over the state of her child and there should not be prejudices against her. Waknuk's mistreatment of women may be a result of men feeling superior over the female population. The men feel as if they are the alpha gender, and they feel the need to put women in their place. These feelings of male chauvinism may be derived from Waknuk's literal interpretation of the Old Testament. The patriarchal dominance is clearly stated in the following passage: " Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception;...and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Genesis 3: 16).

That excerpt depicts women as an inferior gender and gives men the feeling of power. But that is no excuse for the men's behavior, and it makes Sealand look even more attractive next to Waknuk. Sealand treats both genders with equal amounts of respect. The prejudices of Sealand mainly lie in telepathic abilities rather than gender. The people of Sealand believe that they are the

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superior variant because they have the ability to communicate with each other through their minds, and they understand each other on a deeper level. Petra's Sealand friend is a woman, but she is also in a high-ranking position. This proves that women are not discriminated against because of their gender. This is further proven with the next quotation: 'It was not simple to get permission to come.

Such an immense distance: more than twice as far as any of us has been before. So costly to send the ship: they could scarcely believe it would be worth it. But it will be . . .' (Wyndham, 193) This piece of text shows that the Sealand Lady is in a position to propose extremely important requests. It shows that she is not in the highest position, but she has quite a bit of power to be able to sway the council in her favor. It is believed that the reason why women of Sealand are treated as equals is because of the strong, mental connection between the population.

Since they are all connected men recognize the talents and value of women and do not find it necessary to belittle them in any way, shape, or form.

Since women are not treated as a substandard gender in Sealand it causes a more peaceful balance and understanding between the people. As a result Sealand seems to be a wonderful place to live. Sealand and Waknuk are two of the societies that Wyndham describes in his novel *The Chrysalids*. When these two communities are examined it is easy to decide which the more fitting place to live is, and that place is Sealand. Waknuk is surviving in a very basic bubble of technology, and they refuse to deviate from their beliefs in order to expand. Sealand is the opposite; it is a socially and technologically advanced civilization that is open to progression. Sealand

might be drastically different because it is a place where telepathy is the standard and because of this they can work together to move forward.

Waknuk is also a lesser community because it abuses the female population it is full of strict rules and prejudices and it seems to be a very dismal place to live. Again Sealand is the desired society because it treats its women with fairness and respect. But although Sealand is the more preferable community it is not a utopia. Even though Sealand does not discriminate against women it still has a prejudiced community. The people of Sealand base their opinions of people in telepathic ability. Their society follows a strict caste-system, the better the ability the higher the rank and the people without telepathy are pitied. At the end of *The Chrysalids* David, Rosalind, and Michael are not treated as equals compared to the treatment the Sealanders give Petra. The Sealand Lady traveled to the Fringes not because she wanted to rescue them, but because she recognized the value of Petra's ability.

When she arrived she was eager to take Petra, but relatively indifferent toward the others. When Michael expressed his concern for Rachel the Sealand Lady blatantly refused to get her, and Michael was forced to stay in Waknuk to help Rachel. Despite Sealand's flaws it is still a superior society when contrasted against Waknuk.