

Dean moriarty in jack kerouac's on the road

Philosophy



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Jack Kerouac's novel, *On The Road*, main protagonist Dean Moriarty symbolizes an "almost" immortal flame of youth that embodies the rebellious generation of uncertainty that describes 1950s Beatculture. Desirable of everything at the same time, from his numerable fixations with drugs, his incalculable romantic entanglements with women, or his superficial preoccupation to be seen as an intellectual, we get to know Dean's liberating and pioneering personality as the "Holy Goof" as well as an apparent figure of Beat culture.

Though it is not until a series of passages at the commencement of the novel that the "crucifixion" of Dean Moriarty's youth takes place, forcing upon him a revelation; forcing him to relinquish his naive, rebellious ways into a life of real uncertainties and real problems. In one of these passages, at what first seems to be a light hearted conversation between Dean and Sal in a restaurant bathroom, soon evidently becomes a foreshadowing of Dean's diminishing youth: "We were both exhausted and dirty...I was at a urinal blocking Dean's way... and said to Dean, "Dig this trick. "Yes, man," he said, washing his hands at the sink, "it's a very good trick but awful on your kidneys because you're getting a little older now every time you do this eventually years of misery in your old age, awful kidney miseries for the days when you sits in the parks. "It made me mad. "Who's old? I'm not much older than you are! " "I wasn't saying that, man! "

"Ah," I said, "you're always making cracks about my age. I'm no old fag, you don't have to warn me about my kidneys"...I said to cap my anger, "And I don't want to hear any more of it. And suddenly Dean's eye grew tearful and he got up and left...Dean stood outside the restaurant for exactly five

minutes... " Well," I said, " what were you doing out there? ...Go ahead tell me..." " I was crying," said Dean. " Ah hell, you never cry. " " You say that? Why do you think I don't cry? " " You don't die enough to cry. " Every one of these things I said was a knife at myself. Everything I had ever secretly held against my brother was coming out... (Kerouac 215)

Here, for the first time and only time in the novel, do we see the hero, Dean, reach his threshold, and break down to cry. It is a symbolic point in the novel in that we are witnessing Dean beginning to change; we see his " eternal flame" begin to wither away. When Sal says, " You don't die enough to cry" he is basically telling Dean he does not experience true life. A life that is filled with lows and highs, easts and wests, positives and negatives; a life that isn't always " Ah! Whee! " (Kerouac 119) moments in which until this point Dean's life as we know it had evolved around.

Opposed to the Dean we know in the beginning of the novel, " mad to live, mad to talk" and would " never yawn or say a commonplace thing but burn, burn, burn..."(Kerouac 291), we now see a growing sense of distress and misfortune through this passage. We can even detect a sense of maturity through Dean's actions. He has hit rock bottom, his body gives up and he allows himself to cry. While Sal, previously inspired by Dean's unknowing nature, is for the first time realizing all of his time spent searching for life has in actuality been time spent running toward death with Dean as to escape his own life.

All this time, Sal has been desiring to be with Dean, craving his eternal madness, and it isn't until now that he realizes by following Dean, he's been ignoring reality and altering the way in which he experiences the world.

<https://assignbuster.com/dean-moriarty-in-jack-kerouacs-on-the-road/>

Dean's crying scene is the death of his youth and the birth of this novel's martyr. This passage embodies the not-so-immortal flame of youth that defined both Sal and Dean's generation. It is here, through Dean's "martyrdom" that we see Dean begin to accept life as a "risen hero" of the road, his old philosophies and ways of life serving no longer an inspiration for those lost, or soon to be lost.

Upon finishing this novel, I concluded that this passage's reference to Dean's immortality is also manifested in the book's ending in that there is no true closure to this novel. There is no closure to the ideas, beliefs, or the "eternal flame" that Dean represents. An open ending to his life and what happens to Dean Moriarty allows him to remain immortal. Even through Sal's dialogue at the very end, we are left with the sense that Sal will eternally be thinking of him as he walks away "across the land." The book itself, much like Dean's character, has embodied the uncertainty of what lies ahead, and has manifested Dean's personality into the story itself. Sal's description at the end of the novel of a star in the distance becoming less bright as it "sheds across the night" sky represents the eternal legacy of Dean Moriarty becoming less bright and the diminishment of his naive and rebellious youth. This image of the shedding star, along with the novel's absence of a resolution, resonates with his entire philosophy and way of life, a life of spontaneity, a life of never knowing your future - and loving it.