

Hypocrisy at its finest:
evil in the chrysalids



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mankind's intense fear of evil is capable of provoking humans to commit grotesque acts of malice in order to get rid of "evil" in their daily life. John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids* effectively exposes the hypocrisy and the ludicrousness of a society that executes its members based on their physical appearance in an attempt to remain pure and moral. The citizens of Waknuk in essence commit vicious acts of evil in order to restrain the growth of mutants in their society whom they consider 'evil'. Firstly, in order to ensure that Sophie does not spread her mutations, they deny her the right to conceive babies. Despite being a small girl, they sterilize her and thrust her into the fringes naked. Secondly, the residents of Waknuk ruthlessly torture Katherine to learn about the 'Thought shape group' so that they can eradicate it. Lastly, they hunt down David, Petra and Rosalind; trying to murder them in order to ensure that no one with telepathic abilities is present in their society.

The Wanukians tirelessly try to hunt down David, Petra and Rosalind in order to eradicate all remaining mutants with telepathic abilities in their society. The imminent threat to their lives is starkly visible in the lines, "The man cannot have had a moment's doubt who we were, for even as he saw us he dropped his reins and snatched his bow from his shoulder. Before he had a shaft on the string we had loosed at him. The motion of the great horse was unfamiliar, and we both shot wide. He did better. His arrow passed between us, skinning our horse's head" (*The Chrysalids* 139). This significant piece of quotation vividly portrays the overwhelming danger to the lives of David, Petra and Rosalind. The arrow that passed between them could have passed through them!. Evidently, the Wanukians, who consider themselves to be the

true representation of god conduct a malicious act by attempting to murder three innocent people. Furthermore, in order to get to David, Petra and Rosalind, the citizens of Waknuk wage a war against the people of the fringes resulting in the sorrowful deaths of Sophie and Gordon. Clearly, Wyndham has penned down a thought provoking novel ridiculing the Wanukians by presenting them as grotesque hypocrites who on the pretext of eradicating 'evil' conduct much more devilish acts themselves.

The citizens of Waknuk brutally torture Katherine in order to gain vital information about the whereabouts of the thought shape group. Her legs are barbarically burnt with "hot irons". Katherine's painful plight is starkly portrayed through Sally in the lines, "They've broken Katherine. They've broken her...Oh, Katherine, dear... you mustn't blame her, any of you. Please, don't blame her. They're torturing her. It might have been any of us. She's all clouded now. She can't hear us.. Oh, Katherine, darling..." (The Chrysalids 130). Sally's dramatic pauses and disturbed tone of voice give the readers a vivid insight into the pain and anguish Katherine had to endure. Furthermore, Wyndham incorporates evocative imagery in this piece of quotation to starkly portray the barbaric torture Katherine had to go through. Clearly, we can see that Wanukians have no qualms about using violence in their fight against the unknown. They themselves committed an evil act by "torturing Katherine" in an effort to remain moral and pure.

Throughout her somber and sorrowful life, Sophie has had to suffer from overwhelming discrimination and prejudice from the Wanukian society. The Wanukians ensure that Sophie is unable to spread her mutation by sterilizing her so that she is unable to conceive babies; in turn denying her the birth

right that god had granted her. Despite the evident fact that Sophie was a small girl, she was still forced to spend her life in the terrifying and inhabitable fringes which caused her much pain and anguish. Sophie's horrendous living conditions are vividly depicted in the lines "The place was a cave about fifteen feet deep and nine wide... the entrance was covered by a skin curtain hooked across it. In one corner of the inner end there was a flaw in the roof from which water dripped steadily at about a drop a second In the other inner corner was a mattress of small branches, with skins and a tattered blanket on it. There were a few bowls and utensils..." (The Chrysalids 169). This significant piece of quotation starkly paints a disturbing picture in the reader's minds about the hardships that Sophie had to endure on a daily basis. Sophie, was clearly the most tortured character in the Chrysalids who had to endure numerous hardships and sorrow throughout her entire life. Sophie's pain and suffering is effectively portrayed in the powerful quotation "If she (Rosalind) were to give him children, he (Gordon) wouldn't want me anymore," (The Chrysalids 167). This powerful piece of quotation effectively portrays how the Wanukians have deprived Sophie the joy of motherhood.. Evidently, Sophie is likely to soon be deprived of Gordon's love as she will be unable to give him babies because she was sterilized by the Wanukians. To be any kind of deviant is to be hurt; in the end, Sophie was unable to experience any joy that a woman of her society would expect to receive. Ultimately, she had to die a sorrowful death. In conclusion, Wyndham starkly pens down the grotesque and evil act the citizens of the society of Waknuk had committed by forcing a young, innocent girl to live a terrifying life in the fringes in order to get rid of "evil" in their society.

Through *The Chrysalids*, Wyndham effectively exposes the mendacity of the Wanukians who, in a desperate effort to restrain the growth of “evil” in their society, end up committing much more horrendous acts of evil themselves.

Firstly, the citizens of Waknuk sterilize Sophie so that she is unable to conceive babies and spread her mutations in the Wanukian society.

Secondly, they brutally torture Katherine in order to extract information about the members of the thought shape group. Katherine’s suspicious silence towards the end of the novel can be indicative of the fact that she may have been executed by the Wanukians. Lastly, the citizens of Waknuk ruthlessly attempt to murder David, Petra and Rosalind in order to eradicate all the mutants with telepathic abilities present in their society. Evidently, John Wyndham is able to effectively expose the hypocrisy of certain societies who commit grotesque acts of malice based on the ludicrous idea of erasing “evil” in their lives. The inability of Wakunians to accept the concept of change around them ultimately led to their sorrowful demise in the fringes. *The Chrysalids* thus portrays a vital truth that acceptance of change is an important key in successful functioning of any human society.

Works Cited Wyndham, John. *The Chrysalids*. England: Penguin Books. 1958.