

Role of stephen in cat's eye essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Stephen Risley is the brother of the main character and focus, Elaine Risley, in the novel *Cat's Eye* by Margaret Atwood.

Stephen is a prodigy as a child and becomes a top physicist later in life. Much of the science in *Cat's Eye* comes through Elaine's brother and he has an impressionable impact on her growth in the first years of her childhood.

Growing up as nomads in tents, Elaine and her family were largely secluded from the 'real world', but through her brother Stephen, his games and casual physicality, Elaine learns to socialise and communicate with others, and she instinctively learns how to understand boys. "I know the unspoken rules of boys." Thus, Elaine relates to the world she entered better than the world of girls to which she actually belongs. "I'm not used to girls."

"Although Stephen has aided Elaine to be competent in socialising and playing, it puts her at a disadvantage when moving to Toronto and being separated from her brother at school. "Curious about the BOYS door" "How is going in through a door different if you're a boy? Elaine is forced to mix with the girls in her year, but finds it hard as growing up with her brother for eight years makes it challenging for her to adapt to girls and how to understand how they diverge away from boys. "With girls I sense that I am always on the verge of some unforeseen calamitous blunder." In moving to Toronto, Stephen's easy acceptance by the other students, contrasts with the difficulties that Elaine has trying to 'fit in' with the girls her age. Stephen goes through "the fights that are required of any new boy. And Elaine finds herself cut-off by her brother as he joins in a "noisy whirlpool of older boys." Elaine, on the other hand, never truly settles in with a group of friends, she

is always struggling to win their approval, becoming the person she is expected to be within the group.

Stephen, named after Stephen Hawking contributes largely to the science represented in *Cat's Eye*. Elaine learned from her scientist brother that "matter is not really solid it's just a widely spaced atoms moving at greater or lesser speeds." This subatomic picture is used by Atwood's heroines to express their everyday fears. Elaine voices her insecurity and lack of support as a fear of "the spaces between the atoms you could fall so easily through". Elaine's brother can be seen as a more interesting character than Elaine in *Cat's Eye*. It is often Stephen who causes the reader to pause and think, i.

e. when he is expressing his views about the 'tendency of matter to exist,' or whether or not the universe contracts or expands, and what does infinity really mean? Stephen's inquisitive personality contrasts him to Elaine's soft, gentle and weary personality. Stephen appears to have more depth to his thinking and he interests the reader further in his thoughts.