

Jack arnold: more than what meets the eye? essay sample



In a relationship between a father and his children, the father wants nothing more than to be a hero to them. The father would give anything to be “king” for a day. Jack Arnold, who plays the father in the television series, “The Wonder Years”, also wants to be a hero to his children. However, as his children grow up he realizes that the distance between him and his children keeps on increasing. Jack struggles to adapt to the changing times in which this series takes place: the socially turbulent, late 1960s and early 1970s, when traditional values were challenged and generations clashed. He has different views and opinions than his growing children, and often times this is a big contributor to most of the arguments that take place in the Arnold family. It is a constant challenge for Jack to stick to his traditional values, hardworking nature, and pertinacious habits, in the face of changing family dynamics. Throughout the show, Jack is an important and dynamic character, but one thing that never changes about him is the affection and care he shows towards his family. This affection is illustrated in a moving way between Jack and his family, including Norma, his stay-at-home wife; Karen, the rebellious, oldest daughter; Wayne, the mischievous, middle son; and Kevin, the youngest son who narrates the show as an adult fondly looking back at his childhood memories. In Kevin’s perspective, Jack comes forth to be a serious man, brought up and raised during the Depression, and hardened during his time in the army. All these factors make up who Jack is. To begin with, Jack is a traditional man. He adheres to his values and family traditions in the face of changing family dynamics. He has developed certain values and traditions that he is not willing to give up and also expects his kids to follow. Problems start to arise when Jack’s three teenage children

have contrasting views on his values. For example in the episode, "The House That Jack Built," the exchange between Jack and Karen set straight how important his values are to him. Jack cannot approve of his unmarried nineteen-year old daughter living with a man while attending college. It does not follow his morals. JACK. Your mother and I did not raise you to live this way.

Karen. Dad, these aren't the Dark Ages. Times have changed. Things have changed. JACK. I haven't changed! I raised you with values! I raised you to have better values than this. This conversation shows that Jack is struggling with his kids, especially Karen who is pushing against his traditional principles. It's hard for him to see that his kids have values that are different from his. It makes him realize his biggest fear: he is losing touch with his children, and things are changing. In the end, Jack's biggest struggle is to accept this fact and move on with life.

However, in many episodes he shows this understanding. In the episode, "The Fishing Trip," Jack grasps the reality of how tradition sometimes can change. First of all, the bait shop owner whom they always visit before going fishing is dead. The road to their favorite fishing spot is closed off. Wayne wins at cards, which he never did before. Jack, Wayne, and Kevin do not fit in the tent anymore like they used to. These are all signs that tradition has changed. During the episode, Wayne and Kevin say, "Who thought of this stupid trip anyways?" but Jack tries to ignore the statement. At the end of this episode, Jack admits it himself when he says, "Who thought of this stupid trip anyways?" Finally, he acknowledges what has been clear all along: the tradition is over. When he says the same thing, it shows that he <https://assignbuster.com/jack-arnold-more-than-what-meets-the-eye-essay-sample/>

knew it all along but he was trying to force it anyways for the sake of tradition. He always works persistently to preserve the traditional values that mean so much to him, but throughout the television series he illustrates that he understands there are changes taking place around him, and it is at least inevitable that he has to support it. Although he comes to the realization that traditions are changing, his hardworking nature stays intact. Jack is the kind of man who values the dollar and values hard work.

This is heavily shown in the episode, " Cost of Living"; he really wants Kevin to realize that money should be earned through work. In the episode, " Heroes," it is proven that to Jack work comes before play. When Kevin asks his father whether Jack wants to go watch the basketball game with him, Jack simply replies, " Somebody has to put food on the table." He has a strong work ethic, and he expects his kids to have one as well. A lot of times, his kids resent him for having this trait, but at the end they always respect him for it. No matter what, Jack is true to his nature. Jack illustrates this persistent reluctance to change throughout the show. It is shown that Jack is a very hard person to budge. He could be considered as an immovable object. In the episode, " Road Trip," Jack and Kevin leave to go to a store to buy Kevin a new suit. Jack refuses several times to take Norma's directions, insisting that he knows where the place is. When Jack and Kevin get lost, Jack refuses to ask anyone for help. On their way back to the house, Jack and Kevin come across a flat tire. Jack is unable to budge the lug nut to remove the flat tire. Kevin insists on helping him, but Jack repeatedly refuses.

However, it is Kevin who ends up budging the lug nut. In this episode, there is a key metaphor: when Kevin budges the lug nut, he actually budges Jack. <https://assignbuster.com/jack-arnold-more-than-what-meets-the-eye-essay-sample/>

Before Jack is insisting that no one can budge the lug nut, it is almost impossible to do so. He doesn't believe Kevin can accomplish this on his own. In other words, he is stubborn in accepting that Kevin is growing up and not a kid anymore. However, when Kevin does budge the lug nut it shows his capability and makes Jack realize that indeed Kevin is not a child. Another familiar phrase from Jack is, " I don't want to talk about it!" which also contributes to the idea that he is pertinacious. When he has his mind set on something, he usually holds on to it. However, the love he has for his children makes him realize that sometimes he will have to budge. This devotion that Jack has in loving his children so much is really the true reason why he is such an important character in the series. It is the fact that deep down, under his stocky, rugged appearance, he is actually a tenderhearted loving father. Jack and Karen frequently fight or argue with each other, but most of the time Jack tries to make up with her.

He doesn't simply say it, but it is obvious that all he wants is his kids to understand that no matter what he will always be there for them. In the episode, " Daddy's Little Girl," during most of the show, Jack and Karen argue, disagreeing on almost everything. However, when it is time to give presents to Karen on her eighteenth birthday Jack surprises everyone by gifting Karen his Army duffel bag, acknowledging he has to let his " little girl" go out into the world. Sooner or later, Jack comes to terms that he can never stay mad at his children because he cares about them too much. Another time when Jack softens up is during the episode " Road Trip," when he states, " We don't need it. We'll find our own way." Originally, Kevin takes out a map to make sure that him and Jack do not get lost like they did

before, however Jack stops him stating that they will find their “ own way”.

The bigger picture is that when Jack says this, he actually means they will find their own solutions to their problems. He realizes that he and Kevin have entered into a new stage in their relationship. He is a loving father, and tries very hard to prevent any troubles that may afflict upon his children. In addition to this, Jack does not want anything more than to be a hero to his children. He always worries whether they still consider him as one or not.

In the episode, “ Heroes,” Jack and Kevin have a very heated conversation on the matter of Bobby Riddle, the high school basketball star whom Kevin idolizes. During this episode, he realizes that Riddle is not a hero, but a jerk. After Riddle’s team loses the game, Kevin decides to comfort him thinking that they are friends, but Riddle completely blows him off. Kevin is left startled and confused and worst of all, his dad witnesses it all. Afterwards, Jack decides to take Kevin to a diner. Initially, Kevin is annoyed with Jack for his correct assumption of Riddle’s team losing the championship game. Kevin gets even more agitated when Jack compliments Bobby Riddle, saying he played pretty well in the game. Kevin feels necessary to set everything straight by saying a few things to Jack because Kevin does not want Jack to sympathize for him. However, the response Jack gives him takes him a back. KEVIN. Look Dad: in the first place, Bobby stunk ok? In the second place, he was never that good, ok? So I’m sorry you had to waste your time coming down. I’m sorry about the test. I’m sorry we can’t all be like you.

JACK. You’re a hard man to please, you know that? Let me tell you something

Kev. It’s not easy being a hero. In this conversation, Jack is talking about

himself and his attempts to remain heroic to his children. Kevin, as an adult,
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realizes that people like Bobby Riddle will come and go out of his life. Kevin sees that Jack is the only true hero he has ever known because Jack will always be there for him.

In conclusion, Jack Arnold turns out to be more than a man who is only glued to his rooted values, persevering nature, and tenacious ways. He is not only a tough, beefy, rugged guy, but also a loving and caring father. He has created lasting memories with his children. The memories his children wistfully look back on because they taught them valuable lessons in life and relationships. As Kevin recalls moments from the past, he realizes one thing about his father. In the end, Jack is a man who is more than what meets the eye: he is a hero.