

To kill a mockingbird identity essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Good morning ladies and Gentlemen. Do our surroundings and the people in our lives shape our identity? I will explore how this quotation is reflected in the novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee, the film 'Witness', by Peter Weir, and the film 'The Lion King' by Roger Allers. The meaning of identity is not easily defined. Identity generally refers to the stable defining characteristics of a person that makes them an individual. I will explore a number of parallel themes evident in all three texts; the influence of courage, violence, discrimination, religion and the revolutionary nature of the protagonists whose identity is shaped by these themes. Harper Lee explores the theme of identity in the novel 'To Kill a Mockingbird,' mainly through the protagonist Scout Finch, a stubborn tomboy, who struggles to comprehend the social strata in the discriminatory, devoutly religious town of Maycomb through a journey of self-discovery.

Her father's teachings and major events that occur in her life, allow Scout to explore the issues of racism, courage and integrity and her realisation that justice does not always prevail. The surroundings and the people in her life result in Scout losing her innocence and cause her to mature and understand how society works and to become a moral crusader. Scout develops a moral conscience through her exposure to events such as racial discrimination. Her father, Atticus Finch, instils in his children, a strong sense of integrity and fairness. This is evident through the quotation, 'I drew a bead on him, remembered what Atticus had said, then dropped my fists and walked away.... It was the first time I ever walked away from a fight. Somehow, if I fought Cecil I would let Atticus down.'

The members of the Maycomb society act disapprovingly even abusively towards Scout in relation to their moral stance on race relations, they also show gender inequality towards Scout for non-conformity. ' Aunt Alexandra was fanatical on the subject of my attire. I could not possibly hope to be a lady if I wore breeches' When Scout listened to the missionary society ladies talk about how black people are not as good as them she stated ... I'd let Tom Robinson go so quick the Missionary Society wouldn't have time to catch its breath'. Scout learns to look at life from all angles before drawing a conclusion. Scout's comments indicate her understanding that her father has taught her, of racial discrimination and injustice. Scout is exposed to gender inequality, social prejudice and racial discrimination, which she struggles to understand. This is also evident in the film ' Witness', by Peter Weir explores the development of the characters John Book and Rachel Lapp through the advances in their relationship.

These main characters are defined by their experiences throughout the film as Rachel is corrupted due to her exposure to Book's violent world and Book becomes respectful of the Amish way of life. Through Rachel's relationship with Book it is evident that her identity as an Amish follower diminishes and she becomes a non-conformist, which is represented when Rachel removes her bonnet and follows Book. Through her relationship with Book, Rachel develops into a passionate and courageous woman however she cannot break with her traditional connections to the Amish way of life. Another example of Rachel's identity being shaped by her relationship with Book is her pacifist ideology. As an Amish follower violence is strictly prohibited, regardless of the circumstances.

During the beginning of the film, Rachel's intolerance to violence is clear when she states that she doesn't 'like the idea of her son spending all this time with a man who carries a gun and goes around whacking people' however, as the film progresses, it is apparent that Rachel is more comfortable and accepting of Book carrying a gun. Discrimination is evident in the movie when Book defends the Amish when they are threatened by the English. He responds with violence, which indicates his empathy for the Amish and their vilification in society. However it also indicates his inability to denounce violence when he states 'It's my way'. Towards the end of the movie Book has demonstrated that he was able to forego violence in favour of a peaceful resolution. Book initially finds it difficult to assimilate into an Amish lifestyle. Having to live by their moral code sees Book as more accepting and respectful of their belief structures, as seen when he represses the use of violence when confronted by the English at the end of the film.

As outlined it is evident in the film 'Witness' that the main characters identities are shaped by their surroundings and the people around them.

'The Lion King' by Roger Allers features Simba, a young lion cub, struggling to find his place in 'the circle of life' who eventually matures into his father due to his strong influence shaping his identity. His father, King Mufasa teaches Simba the 'delicate balance of nature which bonds all animals together', and cautions him to prepare for the day he will be called upon to rule shown by the quote, "Everything you see exists together in a delicate balance. As king, you need to understand that balance, and respect all the creatures." Mufasa and Simba share a special bond and throughout the film

his identity begins to emulate that of his fathers. Simba develops a strong belief structure based on courage and respect due to his father's spirituality. Mufasa tells him that; " The great Kings of the past look down on us from those stars'. This affects his identity through his connection to his ancestors, which provides comfort and courage when he needs it most. After being wrongly accused of murdering his father due the violent and discriminatory Scar, Simba flees the Pride lands, and his responsibility as King.

Simba becomes acquainted with Timon, the meerkat and Pumbaa the warthog, and adapts a ' no worries' lifestyle, as the unlikely couple teaches him their morals of forgetting the past and living in the present and their philosophy of ' Hakuna Matata,' or ' No worries,' which they instill in him. Simba's inherent royalty and divinity had been forgotten through a combination of Scar's deception and his own interrupted initiation into adulthood. It is through the reflection in the water of his father's image that Simba is first able to see this inner quality and it allows him to make the final change necessary to complete his transition to be courageous and regain his kingship due to Mufasa's advice to Simba is to remember who he truly is, the son of a king. At the conclusion of the story, both Scar and Sarabi, Simba's mother, mistook Simba for his father. It was not only his physical resemblance, but his maturity that makes him appear as Mufasa. He has become like his father and obtained the wisdom of a true king. After Scar's defeat, Simba walks up the rock face to take his place as king.

As exhibited, it is clear to see that the protagonists in all three studied texts are influenced by their surroundings and the people in their lives. Their identities have changed through a process of maturity and reflection from

immature and naïve characters to socially responsible, moral crusaders to lead deeper more meaningful lives.