

Edie essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

‘ Without the influence of Edie, Terry would not have achieved redemption’.

Do you agree? On the Waterfront details the story of a reluctant hero, Terry Malloy, as he grapples with his conscience and ultimately attains redemption through an act of unbridled resistance against the corrupt waterfront union.

As Terry comes to terms with his burgeoning ethical imperatives, the influences of others, especially that of Edie and Father Barry are of paramount importance. However, it is Edie Doyle, who through her unrelenting quest to discover “ who is responsible for Joey”, provides the moral backbone for Terry, an inarticulate lowly longshoreman who once believed that his philosophy of life was to “ do it to them before they do it to you”. Through Edie’s love and moral guidance, Terry is able to transform into a person who acts with moral conviction, able to overthrow the union mob and garner the respect of the other longshoremen.

Terry’s transformation is not the result of his own conscience but it is the result of a multitude of external factors culminating in a distinct and respectable change. When Terry discovers he has been involved in Joey Doyle’s murder as he stands outside “ Friendlys Bar”, he demonstrates a palpable hint of remorse, demonstrating his naivety at the thought that “ they were just gonna lean on him a little”. Although appearing guilt-ridden and shocked at his involvement, Terry does little and continues with his “ cushy job” the next day. It is not until he and Edie express their diametrically opposing viewpoints at the bar the next day that Terry finally exposes the depth of his guilt. He appears unhinged at Edie’s request for help and displays his lack of confidence as he claims that there’s “ nothing [he] can do.”

As Terry speaks with Edie, he changes from displaying a false male bravado, which is encouraged by the waterfront code, to displaying something deeper within, as demonstrated when he dances with Edie. Through his meeting with Edie, Terry demonstrates the first hints of change as he decides to walk Edie home before going to see Johnny Friendly, thus showing his shift in loyalty. In many ways, Edie can be accredited with inciting Terry's initial break away from Johnny Friendly.

As the relationship blossoms, Terry's actions become more bound to his love for Edie, although not circumscribed by it. Without Edie and her support, Terry would not have rediscovered himself. Through his love for Edie, Terry felt a stronger desire to admit his wrongdoings, thus Edie's words and gracious acts of innocence, symbolised by her white gloves, begin to point over the older adages of the mob that raised him, especially Johnny Friendly and his brother Charley.

After witnessing Edie's desperation to discover the truth about her brother, Terry begins to take more notice of the homilies of Father Barry. As he speaks over the dead body of the whistle blower Kayo Dugan, he speaks with a sense of moral conviction bringing morality and "the love of man" into a world which many of the longshoremen including the union mob, thought it doesn't belong. Yet by demonstrating a strong desire to listen, as well as defending the Father against one of Friendly's "goons", Terry reveals how he has changed and hence now carries a different mentality to many of the other longshoremen. This change can be, in part if not all, attributed to the relationship with Edie, a relationship in which his love promotes and amplifies his own guilt.

It is a result of this guilt that leads Terry to admit his involvement in the murder, an act worthy of consideration as the “ new beginning” for Terry. Without Edie, even with the help of Father Barry, it would be unlikely that Terry would be able to reach this stage. It is not the product of a strong moral backing alone but is, in fact, the combination of love and devotion as well. It is through this love that Terry changes the most, but it is this love that is only present through Edie. Thus Edie’s presence and tenacity are tantamount to Terry’s transformation. Terry, through Edie’s influences, has demonstrated that his life is almost like writing in a diary with a pen, once written, it is impossible to change, yet once convinced, one may turn a new page and begin writing a new ending. It is Edie’s influence and love that sparks Terry to turn a new page even though he may have already wanted to. Therefore without Edie, Terry would have never been able to achieve his redemption.

Although important, Edie is not the only factor catalysing Terry’s transformation. Father Barry and Charley are also important, yet it is through analysis of how these people influence Terry that Edie’s true importance is revealed. As Terry reflects on his life to Charley, he demonstrates an insight which he has never had before. It is through this insight that Charley becomes unnerved by his previous actions, with actor Rod Steiger portraying Charley with a diminished bravado and anxious eyes. Yet without Edie’s initial influences, Terry would not have had the moral strength to recognise these details about his past, he would have never seen that he “ coulda had class”, that he “ coulda been a contender”.

Hence, although it is Terry's words that prompt Charley to search his soul to discover that blood is thicker than water, it is truly Edie's influence that brings Terry to a stage worthy of delivering such reflective admissions. Even though Edie's importance diminishes after Charley's death, Terry has already gained a new moral high-ground, a new perspective. Terry now understands that self-preservation, slice and false toughness are no longer the answers to his problems and that in order to reform, he must subvert the strict class and gender roles of the time. Therefore, even though Edie is not longer a large factor when Terry completes his act of catharsis and atonement, walking into the docks between the two columns of men, her importance lies not the final stages but in the initial, before Terry was convicted to change. Thus, without Edie's influence Terry would not have achieved his moral redemption.

Through *On the Waterfront* director Elia Kazan portrays Terry's transformation not as one moment of epiphany, but as the cumulating of smaller events. From the scenes of the boar to his final redemption, Edie plays a large part in allowing Terry to transform. It is Edie who provides him with the depth of morality he requires to begin his transformation. It is through his love that promotes Terry's guilt, prompting him to listen to the homilies of Father Barry and speak the truth to Edie. Thus, although much of Terry's later actions are spurred by Father Barry and his brother Charley, without Edie, Terry would have never achieved the change required to initiate moments such as his reflection to Charley which presents the brothers in an ethical conundrum which is seemingly irreconcilable. Thus without Edie's love and initial influences, it is clear that would not have been

able to achieve this new level of thought, thus suggesting that without the influence of Edie, Terry would not have achieved his moral redemption.