

Mrs. Snider

English 5th period

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Why We Are

Society's expectations, social pressure, and one's own expectations can lead to the creation of a mask that one may wear for the rest of their life. Throughout history depending on customs or leaders, there were certain standards individuals were expected to meet no matter how absurd, anyone who failed to do so was seen as an outsider. This leads to many if not all to mask their true selves and hide behind a mask created in order to fit into society or escape their insecurities. Escaping takes dedication, and most importantly to realize that oneself is not real and just a mask. To become oneself requires being honest with oneself, living with one's own failures, and only caring for one's own judgement of oneself.

Living true to oneself requires letting go of vengeance or guilt that may cloud one's mind from who they truly are. In "A Separate Peace" Gene feels a crushing guilt after breaking Finny's leg, but at very end of the book after Finny's death Gene describes how Finny's views and beliefs have affected his own view of the world (Knowles). Gene's guilt had lead him to create a fake relationship with Finny which was created over repressed feelings, causing both to act fake towards each other in order to alleviate their feelings. Finny's death released Gene of his guilt that was tying him down, this allowed him to be able to deal with his repressed feelings and become who he truly his, developing as a person in the process by adopting an indifferent view on life. In "12 Angry Men" one of the jurors has not seen there own son in years leading to him

feeling angry and hopeless, affecting his decision on the court of a random child (Rose). The jurors anger blinds his decision and leads him to become someone who he is not, unfairly judging children who disrespect their fathers. These feelings are seen in his stubbornness towards trying to prove the accused guilty and his arguments being purely emotional; in the end when he is forced to see the accused is not his child he agrees with the decision of not guilty as he is forced to be honest with his emotions allowing him to be who he truly is. Emotions that tie us down, be it guilt or resent, lead to decision making and personas that are not true to oneself and only when they are casted aside are ones true colors shown.

Failures in one's life can cause grief that leads to various forms of coping that one must endure, otherwise possibly falling into indecent ways of coping. In "A Separate Peace" Gene breaks Finny's leg by jouncing the limb, this leads to Gene listening to Finny's absurd requests such as training for the olympics (Knowles). Gene full of guilt feels compelled to follow Finny's request for him to train for the olympics as he feels as though it will be a form of redemption. This crushing guilt and belief that this will be a sort of redemption leads to Gene acting false to who he is as well as creating a false relationship with Finny that only causes him to fall astray from who he is. In "A Clash of Kings" Catelyn mentions how her resent for her husband's killer urges her to travel to sate her vengeance but understands that she must fight for the living(her son) (Martin). Catelyn is full of rage as a result of feeling like a failure for losing her husband yet manages to keep her feelings in check. Unlike Gene, Catelyn understands how detrimental it can be to allow her burdens to consume her, allowing her to stay true to herself. Burdens in life affect us emotionally, often driving us into corners that cause us to create personas to alleviate them,

only by staying true to our ideals and what is important to us is one able to face these burdens and stay true to oneself.

Outside judgement plays with one's insecurities and doubts, once cast aside does one's true being truly appear. In "A Clash of Kings" one of Jon's friends says the word bastard and quickly apologizes, Jon only laughs it off, stating he did him no harm (Martin). Jon was born a bastard in a noble family, and as a result was shunned regardless of the majority of his family being accepting of him. This insecurity of his continued to gnaw at him until he was told that he should accept what can not change by a dwarf, leading to him overcoming this insecurity and focussing on who he truly is as shown how well he took hearing the word bastard. Growing up I took any sort of insult to heart, but in 9th grade I had begun to question what people knew about my life and realized how meaningless outside judgement was. Insecurities act like chains, forcing one to act in certain ways to hide or avoid them. Once these are broken one is able to act without such chains or barriers, allowing one to be what one truly wants to be. Only by accepting how oneself is is one able to block outside judgement, allowing for one to be who they are.

For one to act as one wish it is requires honesty with oneself, accepting one's own failures, and blocking out outside judgement on one's own life. At any point in time in human history it has been difficult to be oneself when culture creates a circle of norms one must follow, not by law or by belief but pressure. It suppresses one's own true wishes and as a result suppresses one's own true being in the form of acting to fit in. In a world where it pressures everyone to fit into roles the only way to truly live is to create one's own world, not in an arrogant way that forces that world upon others such as the world but a world that allows one to live such as one pleases while still being considerate of the many worlds that others inhabit.