Childhood trauma has been found to have a lasting effect on the person. Whether it be good or bad, the way a person is treated as a child can be reflected in the road they follow in to adulthood. In the short story Long, Long After School by Ernest Buckler, Wes is an African American boy going to an all-white school. Even though he is bullied by his peers, a teacher always stands by him when he needs help. He grows up to live a peaceful life. On the other hand, in the short story A Teacher’s Rewards by Robert Phillips, Raybe is from a poor household and is deemed a troublemaker by his classmates and teacher. Bullied and beaten by his teacher, he grows up to be a criminal and return to the teacher’s house to finally “finish something.”

Whether it was racial or social, Wes and Raybe both faced discrimination in their early childhood. In Long, Long After School, Wes’s race is never outright stated in the text but can be speculated from the way people talk about and treat him. A girl will not hold his hand during a game because “[his] hands are dirty” (Buckler 50). This was insinuating the color of his skin, not his cleanliness. When Wes was hospitalized after punching the window he says, “nobody felt like taking chances for me, anyway” referring to the fact that the hospital will not want to use their plasma bottles on a black person (Buckler 52). In A Teacher’s Reward, Raybe is an orphan living with an aunt who’s barely able to support herself, much less another person. Since his “aunt [cannot] keep [Raybe] in clean shirts”, most assume he’s a troublemaker based on his shaggy appearance (Phillips 386). These assumptions made “the other kids [leave] [Raybe] out of things” (Philips 386). Even the teacher chose to assume his personality based on appearance. Discrimination is the unjust and prejudicial treatment of a person based on appearance. Both Wes and Raybe faced this regardless of who they were as a person.

Being bullied as a child can lead to lasting effects in that person’s behavior towards other people and the world. As a child, Wes, from Long, Long After School, was constantly teased by his classmates because he was black. They would make fun of the fact that he cannot blush stating, “Wes is blushing” every time they would say something about him (Buckler 50). Wes was able to handle the boys who made fun of him, but “you cannot hit a girl. There just was not anything [Wes] could do about the girls” (Buckler 50). Wes did not get discouraged by these people and instead chose to spend his time becoming a better student. Wes’s teacher, Ms. Tretheway, was the only person willing to stand up for him. Raybe from the short story, A Teacher’s Rewards, was placed in a similar situation, except his teacher was also bullying him. Raybe was poor off compared to the other students and was deemed an outcast for it. Nobody gave him the chance to become their friend. The teacher, Miss Scofield, would call him names like “Baby-Raybe”, which the other students would then copy (Phillips 381). When she saw him, “[Raybe] was no good to start with” (Phillips 385). This was an assumption she made based on his appearance. She treated him like a criminal before he was one. The students respected Miss Scofield and her opinion and treated him the same way Miss Scofield did. Raybe chose to hang out with sketchy people and outcasts because that was the way he was being treated and ultimately led to his downfall. In each case, the child was bullied for being different.

A good teacher helps us to become a better human being in our society and member of our country. Wes and Raybe had an adult figure, in this case a teacher, that played a significant role in their upbringing and choices later in life. Wes, a positive one, and Raybe, a negative one. Wes often thought “[Miss Tretheway] was so beautiful” (Buckler 49) because “she was a real lady” (Buckler 52). Miss Tretheway was a supportive, forward-thinking woman who would not stand for the racism Wes faced. She was constantly willing to help him and never looked down on him. Wes looked up to her for advice and guidance, never hating school regardless of the bullies he faced because he knew Miss Tretheway believed in him. This gave Wes the confidence to pursue good grades and a career. Raybe, on the other hand, was not placed in a learning environment where he looked up to his teacher. He would have his knuckles rapped “dozens of times” simply because the teacher, Miss Scofield, “made [Raybe] out worse than [he] was” (Buckler 384) (Buckler 386). Good teachers that believe that their students can achieve great things are able to motivate and encourage improvement in the student. A teacher with positive behavior and high expectations influences students to perform better. Raybe did not get this kind of teacher and was evident in the fact that he ended up in prison in his adulthood. Constantly being bullied by not only his classmates, but his teacher who was supposed to be his mentor encouraged rebellion. A teacher is in a student’s life to further their growth as an individual and become the best person they can be.

The things we face as children effect who we become as adults. As evident in the short stories Long, Long After School and A Teachers Rewards, Wes and Raybe both are affected by discrimination, bullying, and a teacher’s influence. Faced with the same bullying and discrimination, it was the role the teacher played in the student’s lives that truly effected their future. A teacher should teach to be a positive mentor that pushes a child to be the best version of themselves as possible, not a jailer who decides who is worthy of the teachers praise.