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Effects of Childhood Experiences

The development of a child is affected by the experiences a child has endured. Everything around them can be influential and heavily impact them in the present or later in life. The short story, “Long Long After School,” written by Ernest Buckler and the short story, “A Teacher’s Reward,” written by Robert Phillips show how one’s childhood has direct effects on their adulthood. Ernest Buckler told the story of how Ms. Trethewey supported Wes Holman through his journey of accepting himself after years of discrimination due to his skin colour. In, “A Teacher’s Reward,” Miss Scofield’s former student, Raybe Simpson, visited her to seek revenge. Raybe claimed she ruined his life because she never gave him a chance to prove himself which resulted in him spending several years in prison. One’s childhood experiences heavily impacts and follows them through adulthood. Encounters or trauma stays with a person and effect every event in their future. As a result, this can be the main reason one is loving or unforgiving.

Prejudice towards Wes and Raybe heavily impacted how they were viewed by others and how they saw themselves. Both experienced inequities from a young age. Discrimination was a main factor in their upbringings leading to them feeling self-doubt. As a child, everyone wants to fit in and be included. Wes was constantly being tormented due to his dark complexion as he lived in a predominately Caucasian neighbourhood. “Shhh…Wes is blushing” (Buckler 50). Comments made by his classmates tore away at his confidence in his own skin, “Your hands are dirty” (Buckler 50). Unfortunately, Wes was used to these racist encounters, but would forever be affected by the negative impact they had on his self-esteem. On the other hand, Raybe was discriminated against because of his socio-economic background. He did not have much financial support which showed through his appearance. Raybe was constantly reminded why he was different by his peers and teacher, Miss Scofield, “You always told me I was dirty. Just because my aunt couldn’t keep me in clean shirts” (Phillips 386). Raybe was seen as inferior compared to his classmates since he was poor. He was unfairly judged and labelled as an orphan. Raybe’s life was ruined due to society’s preconceived ideas and categorized him as, “a common jailbird” (Buckler 385). Low expectations of Raybe left him powerless. The negative comments and labels put on Wes and Raybe left them growing up isolated from others around them.

Role models are vital in shaping a child and their future. Wes grew to be comfortable in his own skin from the help of Ms. Tretheway. Her continuous support was crucial in Wes’ development because she did not see him as others did. Ms. Tretheway saw his character and not his skin tone. She encouraged him to be greater than the image others placed on him and influenced Wes’ actions. Wes happily looked back on his achievements that he would not have accomplished without motivation from Ms. Tretheway. Wes was moved by her generosity and willingness to give, “She gave me a whole quart, just as soon as she found out that hers would match” (Buckler 52). Ms. Tretheway’s braveness to donate her blood to him encouraged him to peruse his passions and work for what he sought. Though Ms. Tretheway held a strong position and was responsible for the progress Wes made, Miss Scofield had the opposite effect on Raybe. She abused her position and did not do her part to care for Raybe. Miss Scofield physically abused him and resorted to horrible punishments, “Rapping people’s knuckles” (Phillips 384). The abusive behaviour Raybe was victim to impacted his life as Miss Scofield assumed numerous times that he was the suspect. Raybe claimed she was the reason he ended up in prison, “You picked on me all the time. Made me out worse than I was. You never gave me the chance the others had” (Buckler 386). Due to Raybe’s financial situaition and lack of family support Miss Scofield assumed he was trouble and did not allow him to prove himself. Miss Scofield’s failure to inspire Raybe was the factual reason he ended up in prison and was not able to believe in himself and his capabilities.

When children are young their mental strength has not yet been built up. Wes was faced with an incredibly tough situation. Discrimination at any time is tough to overcome, but he was able to look past the comments at a young age. Wes was motivated to improve himself and work hard to receive his desired results, “I decided I’d be stronger and I’d study harder than anyone” (Buckler 51). Wes proved that anyone who is willing to work hard for what they want can achieve great things no matter the odds against them. However, Raybe was not strong enough to defeat the labels put on him. He was not able to admit that it was his fault he was sent to prison, not Miss Scofield’s. Raybe became who everyone believed he was as Ms. Scofield accused him, “A degenerate, no respect for your elders” (Buckler 385). Raybe was not able to grow from his experiences, instead he became more bitter and vengeful by blaming others for his misery. He was not resilient nor determined enough to prove everyone wrong. Raybe was able to overcome and work through the hate he received, but Raybe gave into the labels put on him and instead held everyone else responsible. The childhood experiences provided them both the chance to grow, however, only one took the opportunity proving it takes humility and strength to better yourself for your own future.

In conclusion, children are easily influenced by the environment and people around them. The main factors being discrimination, impactful role models and their own responses and strength. The short stories, “Long Long After School,” and, “A Teacher’s Reward,” contrast well and show how childhood experiences can have a long-term effect on one’s future. Wes was able to work through the challenges put in front of him with the aid of Ms. Tretheway whereas Raybe struggled to succeed due to the lack of support. Both Wes and Raybe experienced adversities, but Wes was the only one that was able to use his experiences to better himself and his future.