**The human being effect**

For hundreds of years, psychologists have attempted to explain why people do the things they do and are the way they are. The question of whether or not everything happens for a reason is up for interpretation, but for the most part everyone is born by nature to a fresh state and grown by nurture to decide their fate. “Long, Long After School” written by Ernest Buckler and “A Teacher’s Reward” written by Robert Philips are both short stories about the future self of a character who has been affected deeply by a childhood event. Wes of “Long, Long After School” is an African American boy deeply affected in a positive way by the care and understanding given to him by his 3rd grade teacher. Raybe of “A Teacher’s Reward”, on the other hand has been sent into a spiral of loss, sorrow, and crime because of misunderstanding by his teacher. The lives of both Wes and Raybe in *School* and *Reward* respectively, are greatly influenced by childhood events. Firstly, Wes’ and Raybe’s lives are both affected profoundly albeit in markedly different ways. Secondly, both boys undoubtedly feel as though certain people and events in their upbringing have altered the course of their lives ever since. Finally, because both Wes and Raybe were children when they experienced impactful events, when they were still capable of major change, it is clear that children are shaped into a personality which reflects the social, mental, and physical circumstances which they endure during childhood.

Despite it being quite obvious that people grow in different ways, it is true as well that the way children emotionally grow into adults is quite similar and can be shaped by the same reasons. In Wes and Raybe’s case, they are certainly not portrayed as being a similar personality. In fact, they are like ying and yang to each other; very different in how they have been shaped into adults yet their paths represent the same greater truth – children are vulnerable to change. Raybe has been affected quite negatively from his past, being misunderstood by his teacher who repeatedly blamed and physically punished him, in turn shaping him into a criminal and harsh person fighting inner demons from his childhood. Wes on the other hand has been affected quite positively, as a result of being understood for who he was while everyone else his age made fun of him. His teacher respected his differences and shaped him into a happy adult at peace with himself and with being African American. For the both of them, these events have affected them ever since and without them occurring, they would never be the same. Wes demonstrated this when he says, “I myself had never felt less beautiful, or less of a gentleman.” (Buckler, Pg. 9). Because of the childhood events that Raybe and Wes experienced, Raybe’s teacher sent him into a downfall in his life, whereas Wes was saved from a downfall of his life. Without Raybe’s teacher beating his knuckles and blaming him for wrong doings, he wouldn’t have been bullied and gone into his downwards spiral. To the same extent, without Wes’ teacher helping and being kind to him, he would have continued to get bullied and gone into a downwards spiral. Bullying can seriously affect children and cause trauma that is hard to recover from, and the people who had the most influence on the children’s trauma was not their peers, but their teachers. “How I came to be there. Was it my aunt? Naw... Was it the fellas I took up with in high school? Naw… You were the one.” (Philips. Pg. 386)

Has a favourite class in school ever felt dull or tedious because of the way it is taught or the way their teacher presented the material? Dreams are broken as often as they are formed – quite often, at school. Teachers are often people we see everyday as children just as much as our parents, and we become like our teachers just as we become like our parents or anyone who has an influence on our life. As adults we are able to see things more clearly, and Raybe and Wes have realized how they have become like the people who affected them in the first place. Raybe’s teacher had been very strict and unempathetic, only really doing what is best for herself and feeling no shame in physical abuse, which ironically Raybe himself became. Even if he thought he was facing a demon in his life, his act of beating the teacher uncaringly the way same she did to him was only doing what was best for himself. Wes’s teacher was very kind and understanding of other people and saw the good in everyone. Consequently, Wes has grown up to be someone who can see the good in life even though people around him are not good people and little joys like the acts of kindness he receives from his teacher prove to be significant. Both Wes and Raybe understand good and bad and everything in life much more as adults and have an idea of how both of their teachers thought they were doing the best for their students. When Raybe’s teacher says, “Surely it was deserved, if indeed I ever did rap your knuckles” he replies with, “You did it lot’s of times, in front of the whole class. They laughed at me.” (Philips. Pg. 384)

Often adults are able to see things can be seen more clearly; especially in perspective. The reasons for why things happen are often not explained or understood as children, and only time can tell us the true nature of something. Our brains and bodies are still developing as children and this is why we all, Raybe and Wes are affected by our childhood and have relics in our heads and skin that show it. Mental states can often be attributed to childhood experience, certainly in the case of Raybe’s fear and anger, as well as Wes’s peace and joy. Wes suggests this when he says,“That was the first time I’d ever been able to say that and laugh myself.” (Buckler. Pg. 8). Physical effects are also set in stone during childhood, for example, the scars and wounds that Raybe’s teacher gave to him whilst beating his knuckles, as well as the blood, indeed life, that Wes’s teacher gave to him when he needed it because they were the same blood type. Wes states the significance of this gift when he says,“She gave me a whole quart, just as soon as she found out that hers would match.” (Buckler. Pg. 8). Our mental and emotional state persists well into the future too. Raybe had not made any friends due to his teacher’s actions, which made him seek out those in a similar mental state; other societal rejects, which led to his crime. “The other kids left me out of things, because you were always saying I was bad.” (Philips. Pg. 386). Wes on the other hand found that he didn’t need friendship from others his age because of the care that his teacher had given to him, which lead to his independence and well-being.

In conclusion, the evidence from both “Long, Long After School” and “A Teacher’s Reward”, shows how the two main characters’ lives were affected by childhood events. The downwards spiral of self-loathing and anger felt by Raybe because of the situation his teacher put him in unleashed a demon in himself he could not fight. Conversely, the path of self-love and peace that Wes underwent because of his teacher’s care for him improved his life in a way unlike any other. Both of these two characters were deeply, irreversibly affected by the social, mental and physical circumstances and experiences they endured during childhood. No one is born a criminal or philanthropist, but one thing is for certain – adults develop from what happens in their childhood.