

John Wyndham The Chrysalids Mega Notes

Significant to

Themes

Plot

Character

Techniques of

Mood

Style

Writers' opinions and influence

Influence to Audience

Themes

1. Authority and Harm

- Harm to self (progress and stagnation)
- harm to women (misogynistic and oppressive society of WN)
- harm to deviations

People in power, like Joseph and Elias Storm, oppress(1) and subjugate(2) large communities of people like Waknuk.

They have power due being inherited through family. This reflects the backwards society of Waknuk and also the society's resistance to change as their role is unchallengeable for other people. Such rigid and old-fashioned authority systems in Waknuk is additionally an introduction to learning about the world in the Chrysalids beyond Labrador(3), used as a means of comparison of David and the other people of Waknuk's restricted view of the world.

They also have authority due to their unquestionable beliefs and ability to harm people if they divert from such beliefs. They impose themselves like gods to others, which accentuates their self righteousness and ego. This portrayal of them paints a bad light on cruel and unjustified leadership. It is Wyndham's critique and condemnation of how egocentric and cruel leaders can oppress and hurt many.

1. Oppress:

Women: Anne(misogyny), Aunt Harriet(religious tyranny and unmerciless oppression) and Sophie(subject of comparison and also representative of the Fringes people)

Anne was introduced as a part of the Telepaths group, immediately letting readers understand the pain she goes through, alongside with the other undercover deviations, as she must conceal her true self to avoid sterilisation and banishment. This tremendous pain leads her to her later life struggles of desiring acceptance and normalcy. However, her perspective of a life that is happy and contented, is deeply flawed.

ANNE:

“(Michael trying to convince Anne to break off the engagement with Alan) It’d be like tying yourself for life to a cripple” – Communication will be an issue and having to suppress your true identity.

“I’m a woman - I’ve the right to marry and have children.” – Wants to have a so called “normal” life she is unable to get if she keeps herself in the telepaths group.

“(When trying to configure how the telepaths were to marry each other, but then concluding that they are unable to hence they will) Never have any lives or homes of our own?”

“(David, about his deviation and how it affects his family life to be) a suffocating half life with our families”

AUNT HARRIET:

“there were plenty of silent speculation whether my father would, as the law allowed, send my mother away if (her third child was a deviation)”

“Superficially (Aunt Harriet and Emily) were not dissimilar yet In Aunt Harriet each feature had been a little softened” – Character foil. Aunt Harriet is what Emily *could have been*. Emily’s features are more strict and cold while Aunt Harriet is softer and

warmer. + “I looked at her that I was seeing my mother as she might have been – as, I thought, I would have liked her to be”

“(My baby) is lovely too isn’t she, isn’t she a lovely darling?” – Seeking reassurance and trying to make herself and Emily that her baby is a normal.

“(the feature that showed the baby was a deviation) such a little thing, you see, it’s nothing much”

“Monster! Oh oh oh” – Repetitions shows the deep anguish and how she is speechless to Emily’s cruel response.

“I kept her, and prayed, and prayed and hoped, and when I heard your baby had come early I thought perhaps God had answered my prayers”

“(After Joseph condemned her) Why should I (be remorseful) I’ve done nothing to be ashamed of. I am not ashamed, I am only beaten.” – She believes she has done no wrong and is the victim of the society’s cruelty. “Beaten” suggests that Waknuk’s rigid beliefs have emotionally destroyed her. It also conveys helplessness and violence.

“I shall pray” (repetition)

“I shall pray God to send charity into this hideous world, and sympathy for the weak”

“I shall ask him if it is indeed His will that a child should suffer and its soul be damned for a little blemish of the body”

“They’ll take my baby away again like they took the others. Henry will turn me out. He’ll find another wife, who can give him proper children. There’ll be nothing, nothing in the world for me, nothing.” – Women’s sole person is only to be child bearers.

“Emily is the only person in the world who can help me” – shows how isolated and unsupported she is. Waknuk’s rigid society destroys family bonds and compassion.

SOPHIE:

“(She had a) small face, sunburned, and clustered about by dark curls”

“She stood still for a few seconds as though uncertain about leaving the security of the bushes, then curiosity got the better of her and she stepped out”

“When I landed she had lost her serious look and eyes were dancing with excitement”

“No I mustn’t” (repetition) (when her foot got hurt)”

“(Adult Sophie) there was dark hair hanging down on each side of a sunburnt face”
(parallels)

“(About Gordon) He wants her, doesn’t he?”

“Should could give him babies?”

“To be any kind of deviant is to be hurt — always”

“If she were to give him children, he wouldn’t want me any more”

“Don’t call him that (spider-man), we can’t any of us help being what we are.”

“He’s kind to me, he’s fond of me, you’ve got to have as little as I have to know how much that means, you’ve never known loneliness. You can’t understand the awful emptiness that’s waiting all round us here.”

“Why didn’t they kill me? It would have been kinder than this..”

“(David, about her Fringes house) looking at the shadows that danced on the rock walls, listening to the plop plop plop of the drips, and very likely this is luxury in the Fringes”

“(Sophie helping to clean David’s wound)(parallel to her mother)”

“(About the cross) You must get rid of that cross. We women in the Fringes do not feel that it has served us very well.” – Believes God doesn’t care or hear the people in the Fringes and seemed to be abandoned. Sophie must have prayed for divine intervention in the past but no help was given and lost all faith.

“Damn you, leave me alone, damn you”

“(Sophie’s appearance) uncared for, half naked in her ragged skirt, dangerously poised”

“(In contrast with Rosalind) bronze hair shining the candlelight, her fine features upturned”

“Damn you go on laugh at me, God damn your lovely face” – Both envious and jealous. Both a compliment and insult.

“If he weren’t in love with you, what good would I be to him” – Sophie can never produce children unlike Rosalind.

“[Sophie] looked down at her own soft moccasins, then at her short, tattered skirt” – She is almost as uncivilised like an animal

Mrs Wender:

“Nobody can let must know” (repetition)

“If anyone were to find out, they’d be terribly unkind to her” (euphemism) (talking about Sophie’s extra toe)

“(Mrs Wender saw Sophie’s wound and) pause to look down, lift it and kiss it gently”

“(David to Mrs Wender) I could not remember anyone saying before that I was a good boy I knew no response designed to meet such an event”

“(David liked Sophie and thought she was) awfully brave, it must’ve hurt a lot”

Wenders house:

“It was a great deal smaller than my home” “but I liked it better, it felt friendly”

“(Did not have repentances on the wall) for people to point to in disapproval”

1. Subjugate: It is the people who have never experienced the suffering of the Fringes or the pressure of being a woman in both Fringes and Waknuk who have the pride and authority to subjugate and punish people.

JOSEPH STORM:

The Storm house is a symbol of moral superiority:

“Largest and best in Waknuk”

“The great fireplace there was an object of pride - not vain pride, more of a matter of being conscious of having given the worthy treatment and materials that the Lord has provided : a kind of testament.” There is disapproval in pride, so they disguise it as a

testament to their hardwork and faith in God. However, it is also a show on their moral superiority and signal of high status among the Waknuk community.

“The evangelical flash (of Elias Storm) did not appear in my fathers eye; his virtue was more legalistic.”

Angus Morton Great Horses: “I don’t believe this” “God would never make horses of such size”

** show of governments priorities of money over morality:

Inspector: “there’s good profit there, a good incentive to get them passed”

Inspector: “Possibly (when Joseph accused the government as corrupt and immoral)”

Drakers Cat: “(the outcome) somewhat expensive (on his reputation)” “very bad grade he had chosen to make a public apology rather than resign his magistratry”

Old Jacob: “When my father was a young man a woman who bore a child that wasn’t in the image was whipped for it.” “If she bore three out of the image she was uncertified, outlawed and sold.” “(Mutants were) burnt”

People in Fringes

1. World Beyond Labrador:

How **Uncle Axel describes the communities beyond** what most people around David knows: reveals how after the world went through intense destruction, it destroyed most of humanity’s resources, knowledge and also their understanding of how to live. Causing people to live in fear and subjugate what they do not understand.

“Other places, though, you’ll find Deviations who think they are normal”

“Most of them think that their type is the true pattern of the Old People, and anything different is a Deviation” – Just like Waknuk, majority makes up their own “normal”

“You find yourself wondering whether [Nicholson] knew he was in the true image, or whether he only thought he was

1. **Maturation and Learning (Includes Prejudice and Progress of Society)**

Uncle Axel acts as an author surrogate for Wyndham to express his opinions into the text.

UNCLE AXEL:

He is usually “a central character”, “David’s mentor”

“That a lot of people saying that a thing is so, doesn’t prove it is so”

“It’s trouble you get, not thanks, for upsetting their idea”

“There’s one tribe where both men and women are hairless, and they think that hair is the devils mark.”

“In one place they don’t think you’re properly human unless you have webbed fingers and toes”

ABOUT ZEALAND / THE ZEALAND WOMAN:

“It is not pleasant to kill any creature... but to pretend that one can live without doing so is self-deception” – Highlights how she is practical, emotionless and lacks remorse. Speaks in a detached and practical manner about killing. Her calm justifications makes her seem emotionally distant and almost inhumane.

“Ours is a superior variant” – This phrase suggests arrogance and elitism and it reflects the obsession with purity and perfection.

“The really important matter is the little girl. Keep her safe at all costs. We have never known such a power of projection in one so young”

“So costly to send the ship: they could scarcely believe it would be worth it” – “Worth” implies how the Zealand woman didn’t rescue the telepaths out of compassion but more so transaction. It makes her seem calculating and utilitarian.

“In time, those who were able to do it best found others who could do it a little, and taught them to develop it”

1. Religion

Religion is viewed differently by people

Fringes guy:

“They’ve (Waknuk society) always taught us that it’s the Devil that rules in Fringes”
(Said by David)

“[God] sent along Tribulation to bust it up and remind ‘em that life is change”

“One day [God’s] going to get pretty tired of the way they can’t learn a lesson, and start showing them another trick or two”

Sophie, On God:

“You must get rid of that cross.”

“We women in the Fringes do not feel that it has served us very well. The men resent it too.”

1. *Deviation Vs Normality (Includes Prejudice)*

David and his friends are all deviations, who lived under fear of getting discovered. They were able to live an interesting life, having the privilege of not living in the Fringes, but not being able to fit in when they were in the Fringes.

Petra :

Two incidents of unintentional summoning of the telepaths – Petra's uncontrolled telepathy frequently risks exposing the group's secret. It invites unwanted questions from others who observe their strange behaviours but are unable to hear the same summons. Creates suspense in the plot as readers fear for their safety.

“So costly to send the ship: they could scarcely believe it would be worth it. But it will be...” – With Petra's unusually strong telepathy, the group was discovered and rescued by the Zealanders. Becomes the central to the telepaths' escape and survival.

“At her age and untrained – yet she can throw a thought half-way round the world! [Zealand woman] shook her head once more, as if still unable to believe it entirely.” – Shows that there is so much more that people do not know about the world around them. Even a technologically advanced society like Zealand is still discovering new things.

ROSALIND: (her love with David) she had a genuine, vulnerable side of her.

“The real rosalind(was calling to David when he got hit in the head)” “the one who dwelt inside and showed herself too seldom”

“she become aware by instinct that she was in a hostile world, and deliberately equipped herself to face it.”

“The under-Rosalind calling gently, forlornly all armour thrown aside, the heart naked”

“(Her mother) sort of half known, guessed something.”

“May have felt that as long as she didn’t have to admit it in words it might be all right.”

DAVID: 1. Fear of being a telepath 2. Kind nature 3. Dreams

(On Dreams): Dreams were used as a tool to foreshadow the future .

“Oh god, please” (repetition) “make me like everyone else”