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Who are you?

“We can be anything we want to be, but we can’t be anyone we want to be”(Hudson). Do we ever know someone completely? In Kurt Vonnegut’s short story, “Who Am I This Time?,” the 2 main characters act in plays and portrays a different person each time. They get so involved in this that they become a completely different person often. In real life, who you’re with depends on how you’re acting. Everyday, we’re surrounded by fake people living a fake life to impress everyone else or get something they want. In today’s society most of us hide many of our emotions and our true self because of what we want other people to think. This makes things complicated because most of the time someone isn’t who they appear as. Someone might act like a completely different person underneath their fake face that they put on making meeting genuine people hard. How long can a person go until they show how they truly act and others begin to notice the other person has lied the entire time. People hide their true selves, become someone they’re not depending on who’s around them, act like a completely different person than their true self, and this doesn’t seem right from a moral standpoint of view.

“Being someone you aren’t meant to be may be possible, but opportunities for failure are endless” (Hudson).People hide who they are and put on a fake face because they think they have to act a certain way for others to like them. This has made me extremely hard to trust someone completely. Everytime I meet someone new I always have a shade of doubt in the back of my mind that they’re hiding something. While this has made me a careful person, I still give people chances which rarely works out in the end. I’ve had many friends who turned out to have another side to them entirely. This can turnout great but usually turns out bad and I end up get screwed over. This makes finding real friends really hard for me because I don’t trust anyone until I’ve known them for a long time. My dad comes off as one of these people which led to my parents getting a divorce because the whole time he put on a fake face of someone my mom would want to marry. Unfortunately this ended up as him living a lie the whole time and wasn’t who as appeared. Even the people closest could act like someone completely different and one has no idea until they accomplish their own agenda. A girl I dated for 4 months turned out to have a side that I never imagined. In both of these situations, people I would completely trust turned out as fake people and moved on once they got what they wanted. People act as someone they’re not to achieve their own agenda. To fall in love with someone or care for someone comes easily and then we get surprised to find out they’re someone else underneath. These relationships or friendships only last until they show how they truly behave.

In my view of the world, I believe that acting like someone else becomes morally wrong and bad for society in general. If someone lives the lives of multiple personalities and manipulates they’re lying to the rest of the world and to themselves. Social stigmas regarding emotions also change the way we act in different places or around different types of people. While at school, students act differently than friends would with friends or with your parents. During class a student may act quiet and respectful because that’s the way society has shaped them into behaving. Is individuality a real thing or have we been persuaded to act a certain way by society? In the story Harry gets assigned an actor and asks,"Who am I this time?" (Vonnegut 17). The most important line in the story, a metaphor for real life in that some people choose how they’re going to act with certain types of people. After they ruin a friendship or relationship they become a whole new person, someone that someone else finds attractive. Also, in the story when Heleene starts to act with Harry she falls in love with him. She wasn’t falling in love with Harry she fell in love with who he acted as. Outside of acting he's a nervous reck who appears unattractive. This appears as a positive thing for Harry but in the end will come to hurt them both. Heleene fell in love with his acting not with Harry as a person. This happens in the real world when people chase relationships for the wrong reasons. "'Think of what it's going to do to that girl when she discovers what Harry really is.' She corrected herself. 'What Harry really isn't'" (Vonnegut 24). Harry really isn’t this amazing perfect guy. He‘s only that way when acting as someone else. In real life, people fall in love with others when they act a certain way which makes us put on fake faces to impress everybody else. Maybe someone acts like everything’s great and amazing even though they have no job and no life. This article says,“You can try to be someone you’re not – plenty of people try – but they all ultimately fail (Hudson).” In the end people can only pretend for so long. We hide the side we don’t want others to see, so is individuality a real thing? Or do we get influenced to behave a certain way by others and society?

I enjoyed this story because of the message and theme sent to the reader. The message is that people have to act like someone you’re not in order to have a happy relationship. The other theme is we are who we pretend to act like. Harry and Heleene pretend as other people who appear fun and filled with excitement to make their relationship better. In the real world, this only works in the short term because eventually society has to stop pretending. While This seems morally wrong, that’s how most people’s lives work. I enjoyed Vonnegut’s use of hyperboles. “Harry added fifty pounds to his weight and four inches to his height just by picking up a play book”(Vonnegut 18). The use of this shows how much confidence Henry gained by simply acting in plays. This also shows his temporary confidence because when he sets back down the book he is back to his lame old self. I didn’t find this story entertaining but I did enjoy the metaphors and Vonnegut comparing their relationship to real world relationships. This story showed the ignorance that people get when they’re blinded by fake people.

I had a positive overall reaction to this story because of the truth behind the message. This story has opened my eyes to how people act and how they appear as someone or something else. I would love to read more stories similar to this one because of the clear message sent to the reader. Vonnegut, one of my favorite short story authors, uses a unique writing technique, powerful themes, and lessons behind all his stories. I would recommend this text to friends still trying to get over a breakup or had someone deceive them as a person. His story made me further realize how the people around us could act like someone they’re not. After reading this, I asked myself how I try to act and what motivates me to stay a genuine human.

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