

# Tell Me Who I Am Viewing Guide

Rajan Agarwal ENG4U October 2022

1. State the title of the film and the year it was released. Then briefly describe what the film is about and the position that it advocates.

Tell Me Who I am was a documentary released in 2019, detailing the lives of two twins following a major motorcycle accident which caused one twin to lose their memory to its entirety.

2. Describe the progression of the film: how it begins, what stages it passes through, and how it concludes.

## Act I

- Begins with distressful music that sets the scene of the original accident
- Use for first-person view and close ups to immerse the viewer into the experience, to identify the shock that was associated with this event
- He only remember ed his brother, not his mother or anyone else. He began to forget his own life — the use of music accentuated the shock of the experience
- His brother was the only person he could trust, and Alex felt like he was alone in the world. Marcus helped him with everything in recreating the memories
- As Alex wanted to explore his identity in more depth, he began to get more and more curious of his past, questioning things about their family and experience together
- Alex was normalized to the idea of having distant parents and difficult living conditions — nothing to compare it to.
- Marcus's reaction to the death of their parents greatly differed from Alex, raising questions as to the characters and relationships made with the twins
- Alex realized that the one person that he could trust was lying to him, creating an emotional barrier with his only contact with reality.

## Act II

- Alex is curious of his experiences with the family

- Viewers are posed with the question of trust — if you only have one person to trust in your life, what would happen if they broke this trust?
- Discovery of their past of sexual abuse from their mother and the image with the top cut off
- Marcus began to lie for his own sanity, he could not reveal the truth as it would hurt him to the core
- Difficult for Marcus to stop lying as the false reality has gone on for too long
- Lying to Alex caused emotional damage, regardless of the fact that the truth would have scarred him as he was re-introduced to the new world
- It was revealed that the mother sexually abused her sons throughout their childhood, Marcus chose to hide this for the sake of Alex's sanity
- Marcus did not discuss his past for 20 years

### Act III

- Older Marcus and Alex reconvene and have the discussion they wished they had at a young age
- Use of visuals and music in conjunction with flashbacks build suspense
- Marcus claims that he was lying for himself — he was trying to share the life he wish he had
- Now that the lie has been removed, the bed from the first Act is shined upon with music to convey relief

3. List six facts described in the film that impressed you and explain how each fact relates to the film's premise or theme.
  - a. Alex was able to maintain his proficiency in English and daily habits, but not remember people — raised questions of inquiry into what happened following the accident
  - b. The two boys were sexually abused at a young age, and this trauma was unclear for both of them. This uncertainty of these situations increased the suspense and worry in the viewers, raising questions as to the harsh realities of their childhood
  - c. A lot of the abuse towards the children remained hidden due to their dyslexia, making it difficult for them to communicate verbally and through writing. The twins, as a result, used their personal encounters to develop a connection

- d. The twins' step siblings was rarely mentioned in the documentary, which makes the audience question whether they were sexually abused as well.
- e. It was only until after their mother died that Alex discovered the sexual abuse as a child, highlighting the restrictive nature of their interactions.
- f. Until the age of 14, both boys were involved in a series of sexual abuse cases with her mother's friends and those around her. The tragedy, which lasted for the majority of their childhood, was difficult to convey and thus he kept it to himself. Alex's unabashed curiosity eventually destroys his understanding of his past and trust of Alex.

4. How did the filmmakers try to convince you of the position that the film supports? Look for appeals to logic, emotion, and prejudice.

The film is not solely about the accident; it is a reflection on the long-lasting repercussions of sexual assault, the complex issue of "good" lies, and the moral conundrum that results from suppressing distressing truth. The use of key symbols like the bed and the personalized experience from editing helps the audience understand the trauma through an appeal to emotion.

5. Did any of the reasoning given in support of the position advocated by the film seem to be weak or misleading? If so, describe the concept put forward in the film and why you thought the reasoning was flawed.

The audience is made to fill in the blanks of many parts of the film. It often goes between the age of 18 to 30 to 60, which forces the viewer to make connections to what happens in this gap.

6. Describe any cinematic techniques used in presenting particular scenes, images, or sounds that were designed to appeal to the viewer's emotions and to encourage the viewer to agree with the position advocated by the film, without reliance upon fact or logical argument.

Re-Enactment: key household items and parts of their childhood were recreated to share an insightful take on their past

Flashback: shared moments from their past are displayed again, with archival footage or recreations of childhood moments

Lighting: the entirety of the film, until the very last scene, maintains low-key lighting to convey suspense and darkness

Music: the audio and music are always suspenseful, keeping viewers anticipated and on their toes

7. If the filmmakers asked how this film could be improved, what would you tell them? Describe the changes you would suggest in detail.

Provide more context into key parts of their childhood; there is a lot of repetition between Alex and Marcus who sometimes have the same take on a certain issue or a piece of their past.

Analyze the perspectives of those they interacted with in their lives. Exploring the lives of their step sisters or close friends may provide more insight into how his memory loss was perceived.

8. Did the film change your mind about any aspect of the subject that it presents? What information, argument or persuasive technique caused you to change your mind?

The documentary, although not trying to prove a point, helped gain more insight into the varying perspectives. Upon my first interaction with Marcus's choices, I was shocked to see that he hid the truth for more than a decade. However, as the film progressed, cinematic devices helped understand the risk that Marcus took and to empathize with his situation — he was lying for his own sanity to develop the childhood he wish he had.

9. Can you make any connections to a Global Issue? How so? Which literary work studied in the course can you connect this documentary to?

The primary issue presented in the documentary is the role of childhood trauma in the progression of one's life. This connects to Persepolis, who faced an authoritarian government in the face of harsh violence towards women. Similarly, in a Rachel Divide, Rachel claims that her childhood abuse was a precursor for the choice of her identity.