

The Kite Runner and Persepolis Paper 2 Style Test

Write the question you are responding to here: Through an analysis of the protagonists, compare the ways in which the struggle between internal and external forces is presented in both *The Kite Runner* and *Persepolis*.

Conflict is inevitable in every story. Though this may seem negative at first, it plays one of the most important roles in the development of the story, thus retaining the reader's attention. Conflict can take various forms, from physical fights to a mere internal decision between two choices, which often results in development of the story and reader understanding. This development is explored in both the autobiographical graphic novel *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi and *The Kite Runner*, a prose fiction novel by Khaled Hosseini. More specifically, these texts use the conflict between internal and external forces to develop and add depth to the character and portrayal of the protagonists. Three prominent examples of this type of conflict include the conflicts between personal beliefs and societal morality, identity and familial expectations, and oneself and the regime in power.

One way in which Satrapi and Hosseini develop the protagonists' character is through the portrayal of conflict between beliefs and societal morality. This is shown in *Persepolis* when Satrapi deliberately decides to include a chapter in which she convicts an innocent man for a crime he did not commit. At first, Marjane showed herself to be proud of what she had done; saving herself at the cost of another. However, her grandmother's disapproval helps her realize the severity of her actions and her breach of her grandmother's morals, thus resulting in conflict between her previous beliefs and her grandmother's moral code. This event is a quite significant turning point in the development of her character as morality prevails, showcasing a change in Marji's character as she begins to openly advocate for the rights of others, contrasting with her previous actions that strayed from a morally acceptable path. This is further

emphasized by Satrapi's use of a panel depicting herself staring into a mirror after the incident. The mirror is a symbol of reflection, and showcases the process in which Marjane rediscovers herself. She looks into her own eyes, and sees her true self, and sees the wrongs that she has committed. This sparks a change in her character, as after this point, she changes in both her own eyes and those of the reader. Without conflict, Marjane's development as a character would be neither as deep nor coherent.

Similarly, Hosseini uses the conflict between Amir's initial feelings and morality, and how they develop along with his character. An example of this is when he is called by Rahim Khan to Pakistan, and is offered a way to redeem himself for his past sins against Hassan by traveling into Taliban territory to bring back Sohrab. Rahim Khan tells Amir that "there is a way to be good again". Hosseini's choice to use the words "good again" portrays that accepting to make the journey is clearly the morally correct choice. However, Amir is clearly reluctant, which shows both the conflict between his beliefs and morality, and also his selfishness and fear for his own safety that has been present throughout the book. These moments before the decision is made highlights the portrayal of Amir as weak and timid. However, both his portrayal and character make a big change once he decides to travel back to Afghanistan, where he transforms from a weak boy into a somewhat brave man. In both texts, the same type of conflict is used to change the portrayal and nature of the protagonists. However, the difference in the author's portrayal of the conflicts in these scenes vary based on the type of character they try to convey as well. In Marjane's case, the conflict is brief and decisive, resulting in an immediate change in character that conforms with her brash and outspoken personality. In contrast, Amir's careful pondering and reluctant acceptance of the offer maintains his timid image. Thus, Hosseini and Satrapi employ belief versus moral conflict thought in different ways to develop the nature and portrayal of their protagonists.

In the case of both protagonists, family is held in high regard. Along with this fact, Hosseini and Satrapi portray the nature and change of their characters through conflict between protagonist identity and family impositions. In *Persepolis*, Marjane's free spirited and rebellious nature is immediately and obviously conveyed through the variety of rebellions against her parent's will, and her resilience when it comes to her own ideas. This is especially evident when Marjane is scolded by her parents for skipping school with her friends. Rather than repent or feel sorry for her actions, Satrapi portrays herself as stubbornly resilient, as does not acknowledge the scolding of her parents. This is effectively shown through the use of a cigarette as a symbol of rebellion and independence, which Marjane proceeds to smoke to solidify her rebellion despite her underlying appreciation for her parents. This is also significantly seen when Marjane makes the decision to not conform to her European peers' standards while in Austria. Overall, Satrapi's use of conflict here adds another layer to her character in the novel, as it introduces the traits of rebelliousness and independence to the viewers.

In *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini's use of the aforementioned type of conflict is used to instead solidify existing aspects of Amir's character while setting a basis for change. Throughout a large portion of the beginning of the novel, Amir's true nature is seen to be conflicting with the ideals of his father. His father wishes for him to be "masculine" in the sense that he is strong, brave, and expressive. However, Amir is quite the opposite, and Hosseini portrays this using the conflict. Due to his nature, Amir simply suppresses his true self and strives for his father's attention which greatly contrasts with Satrapi's portrayal of herself, as her own beliefs prevail over those of her family. However, the conflict is still ultimately used by the author to portray and develop nature. Amir simply allows his father's hopes for him to become the standard due to his timidity, which characterizes his timid and more artistic character. This ongoing conflict during his childhood also sets the basis for him to change later in the book, which is foreshadowed and symbolized by Hosseini's choice to create Amir's passion for storytelling. Once he continues to

study writing in America, his personality shines through, and he changes from the desperate child he was in Afghanistan. As illustrated, both of the authors use the conflict between internal beliefs and the standards of family as a tool to deeply convey and develop the true self of the protagonists.

Finally, both *The Kite Runner* and *Persepolis* utilize conflict between the protagonists and the parties in power to emphasize change and character. More specifically, Satrapi shows instances of her internal personality conflicting with government restrictions at the time to characterize her strength and empathy for the common people. This is shown when Marjane advocates for a change in the women's dress code in art school. Satrapi characterizes herself through this event as it conveys her courage to stand up to the party in power in a disadvantageous situation that can also result in her downfall if unsuccessful. Her change in character from prioritizing herself to helping others is a direct consequence of her reflection scene in the mirror, showing the benefit of conflict on development. Satrapi also characterizes her past self as somewhat brash and straightforward, as she chooses to truthfully admit that she does not pray during the interview for her school, where many considered it necessary to be devoutly religious. This conflict reinforces her portrayal to the reader and the change that she undergoes from an ignorant child, to an independent and respected woman.

This similar conflict between Amir's beliefs and the Taliban's rule over Kabul as well as the American immigration officer is shown, as Hosseini uses it in the same way as Satrapi to reinforce the portrayal and change of the protagonist. Regarding the former, Hosseini uses Amir's journey and conflict with the Taliban and Assef to reinforce the positive change that Amir has gone through, abandoning his often weak portrayal. In this case, Amir's desire to save his nephew overcomes the dangerous force and threat that the Taliban poses, which shows his development from suppressing his true self for the sake of satisfying his father's beliefs. His

conflict with the American immigration author is also used by Hosseini for characterization, and introduces and reinforces the new qualities of bravery, courage, and compassion into Amir's character. Both Satrapi and Hosseini use this type of conflict in a similar way, but to convey different qualities and rationales for the characters. Marjane's conflict is a result of her strong belief in her own moral code which was developed through other conflicts, and Amir's is born from his desire to relieve himself of guilt and care for his family. As demonstrated, both authors utilize the conflict between the protagonist and a party in power to develop, reinforce, and portray them as characters.

Ultimately, both Satrapi and Hosseini use the conflict of the internal force of beliefs versus various external forces such as morality, family, and parties in power to invoke development and establishment of the nature of the protagonists. These conflicts are used to cause change, which is an essential idea in not only stories, but in life as well. Conflict might be seen as negative, but it can often have positive results, which is seen in *Persepolis* and *The Kite Runner*. It simply depends on the way it is approached. Thus, the importance of choosing the side that prevails in a conflict is of utmost importance: as the right choice may very well change the course of the story.