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Untitled

Sculpture

I call the moment I began to psychoanalyze myself, when I realized I was able to see myself objectively and understand my place in the world, as “gaining consciousness.” When I first realized that I saw the world differently, no longer in the bright colors of childhood, it was shocking. I felt lost and I did not enjoy the world with ease as I had done my entire life. I wanted to create a sculpture conveying this feeling and exploring the importance of caring for one’s self and accepting others’ help. To convey this I created a sculpture out of wire, metal, plastic, and various other items to create the shape of a woman. This sculpture has different self-destructive elements and found objects that remind me of my young teenage years. This is meant to translate the idea of growing up alone and finally taking a look at yourself and seeing what's really there. I tried new techniques such as working with metal, spray paint, and glass. I used objects such as records, doll parts, dominos, styrofoam, nails/screws, and buttons. I also made small cigarettes out of wood. I want to share why it is so important to look at yourself in an unbiased and sometimes crude nature in order to better understand yourself. I translate this through the roughness and decay of my project. I believe that once you are able to look at yourself objectively then you have matured in not only understanding yourself but the world around you in unison. Most of my research has led me to understand what maturing really means, which is something I have been searching for all semester. My work, overall, is meant to warn people against destroying their minds in order to grow up fast.

Growing Up



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OS47

Writers Note: This paper is about growing up in a healthy way. This is important to me because of the shocking experience it is to suddenly see the world as a whole entity outside of your home and your family. I wanted to explore the different ways to ease these processes and share the things that helped me to understand growing up and view myself in a lighter, happier way. I then wanted to compare my experiences with those represented in popular coming of age stories that show the experience of maturing. The experience of writing this paper was very informative and helped me to feel more comfortable with where I am in my growth.

Growing up means very different things to different people, and everyone has their own experiences in life. To some this means religious or cultural ceremonies like a bat mitzvah or a quinceanera. Physically, growing up means getting taller, experiencing puberty, and an expanding mind. By definition, according to Merriam Webster, it means “to grow toward or arrive at full stature or physical or mental maturity : to progress from childhood toward adulthood” and “to stop thinking or behaving in a childish way.” These concepts are more recently explored through coming of age films. This is a relatively new concept beginning in the mid twentieth century with stories such as *Anne of Green Gables* (1934) and *Little Women* (1933). As movies began to rise as an entertainment form in the 1950s, the movie *Rebel With a Cause* (1955) was released and is often considered to be the first coming of age film. This genre rose in popularity in the 80s with movies such as *The Breakfast Club* (1985) which, I will show, explores the concepts of not taking life too seriously . This important and complex genre continues into the 2000s with movies like *Almost Famous* (2000) which compares the healthy vs. the unhealthy ways to grow up, and *Lady Bird* (2017) which exhibits the ideology of selfishness and how it changes with age. These movies

help us to understand what growing up means and how to do it in a way that is not harmful to yourself or others.

As we grow up our brain development heavily plays a role in who we become. As we grow up, the frontal lobe (prefrontal cortex) increases the ability to control impulse, understand risk and reward, plan and balance many priorities, and make decisions. This part of our brains does not complete development until we are 25 years old. This is much older than the American legal age of an adult, 18, which many argue is too young to be able to successfully plan and make decisions that affect our whole lives. The emotional and psychological parts of our brains are so immature at this point it is no wonder teenagers get such a bad reputation and often crumble when handling mental distress. The author of *The Self Under Siege*, Dr. Robert Firestone, argues that this development can also be heavily affected by the people who raised us. If one's parents are hostile the child will incorporate these tendencies and mirror them. This then becomes "part of the child's developing personality, forming an alien system, the anti-self, distinguishable from the self-system, which interferes with and opposes the ongoing manifestation of the true personality of the individual" (Firestone 1). Looking at the source of certain behaviors is key to being able to acknowledge who we are and why we are the way we are. When you have self destructive tendencies it is important to acknowledge where they came from relating to where you are now in order to better understand yourself and to move forward.

In order to accomplish the basics of growing up it is important to assess one's selfishness. Teenagers are inherently selfish, we struggle to see the world as anything other than revolving around us. According to a study published in the March 8, 2012 Journal Neuron argues that youth are selfish due to undeveloped parts of the brain. In this study there were 146 kids that played two games in pairs. The "Dictator Game" and the "Ultimatum Game." In the end it was found that

older children were better at sharing and bargaining. Researchers found that children got better at this as they grew older and became able to control impulses. They scanned the brains of the children who completed the games successfully and compared them to the brain scans of adults and found that the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (impulse control) was more developed in adults. This proves the theory that teenagers and young people are inherently selfish. This will gradually mature as one learns to understand consequences, take accountability for actions, and learn to balance responsibility, fun, and immediate desires with long term needs. Even though, as young people, we are self centered, it does not mean you can't recognize this, actively be aware of it, and try to change it. A sign of maturity is the willingness to change, put yourself in other people's shoes in order to better understand them and eventually yourself, to avoid egotistical impulses by embracing optimistic self-confidence, and to simply be considerate of others and their communities by completing actions that show thoughtfulness of that understanding. Being able to psychoanalyze yourself is an important skill, although often scary, and it is an essential in the frightening but necessary process of growing up. It allows you to look truly beyond yourself and shows an understanding of maturity that is so important in order to live healthily.

Anxiety is proven to make life more difficult, so in order to maintain the amount of anxiety you are experiencing I believe it is important to not take life too seriously and eventually you will be able to focus on expanding your mind in a positive way as you mature. This is also important in order to appreciate and understand the reality of the now and to find meaning in a lighthearted way. Being an adult is all about being able to plan for the future without reservations and seeing life in a simpler way helps to develop this skill and avoid anxiety. According to the Child Mind Institute's Caroline Miller, Jerry Bubrick, PhD, and Dave Anderson, PhD anxiety "often looks like perfectionism" in teenagers. It "leads to depression, too. A life full of avoidance or worry

undermines well being.” It is important to teach “kids how to face their anxiety instead of avoiding it. Then they learn that their anxiety actually gets smaller over time.” As someone who often experiences anxiety about life as a whole it helps to try to picture life as insignificant and as something that is meant to make you happy. I believe that if you believe life is there to serve you then it will. If you can’t let go of anxiety then you can’t allow yourself to focus on the things that really matter. Instead you’ll be in your bed, not eating for days because of something stupid you said or some criticism someone gave you. When you realize it all just doesn't matter that much then you can be free to live your life and grow exponentially. In order to simplify life it is important to practice gratitude by appreciating the little things and practice emotional control by not allowing yourself to be overwhelmed and controlled by your feelings. Don’t be too hard on yourself: the world is ridiculous and seeing it in this way makes things feel less detrimental. Remember that rich people are not happier and that worrying isn't productive nor does it make you happy. Prioritize relationships and experiences over anything else because this is what living life to the fullest is about, being happy. Lastly, remember how big the planet is and how small we are, trust me it's comforting. Having this outlook on life, simply doing away with worry, and viewing the world in a simpler manner leads to overall maturity and happiness.

The ability to self reflect is one of the most important things to learn in order to grow and many adults struggle with this. It is imperative to take a step back and analyze in order to learn from mistakes. This goes hand in hand with forgiving yourself and allowing self-acceptance and appreciation for your own flaws and strengths. Giving yourself space to grow while still staying true to your belief patterns also shows maturity. It is impossible to learn without self reflection which allows the brain to pause in a hectic time. This allows for the creation of meaning and peace of mind. One way many people, myself included, process their day is journaling and venting.

Jennifer Porter from Harvard Business Review argues that journaling is “one of the most effective ways to identify areas where you need to change, recognize places where you've grown and keep you moving forward to achieve your personal growth goals.”

All of these themes are explored and proved through coming of age movies. Instead of looking at the physical actions of the characters we can look at the implied metaphors in order to show the true teenage experience of growth. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, coming of age means to “become fully established.” In other words these are the stories of growing up, of maturing. Our modern ideas of growing up as teenagers are fairly new as of the 1920s. Choice was something very few people had before this time. Thus, few had the luxury of committing a whole era of life to ponder the ideas of “what is love?” And “What are my true passions and aspirations?” The whole idea of being a teenager and the “teenage experience” only became a cliché recently, before, it was still a profound and new topic. Mathew Dale from *The Boar* believes that “The typical themes of finding a first love, dealing with significant personal trauma for the first time in your life or becoming passionate about a life-defining career or hobby are experienced by everybody.” This is important to accept as to better understand how the people around us grow into adulthood and recognize that they are complex. Overall it is important to explore the themes of these movies in order to figure out the best way to personally grow through one’s experiences.

One of the most recent and successful coming of age movies is *Lady Bird*, which translates the concept of overcoming selfishness. This movie follows Christine, who goes by the name Lady Bird until the end of the movie, as she navigates her way through her senior year of high school with the pressures of growing up. She has to learn how to successfully achieve her goals while her parents struggle with money issues. At the beginning of the movie, Lady Bird is entirely selfish. As her mom is talking about how they are struggling financially, saying that her “father’s company

is laying people off left and right” (0:02), Lady Bird and her mom begin to fight and Lady Bird throws herself from the car, breaking her arm and thus has to go to the hospital and get a cast (all of which costs money). At this point she is too immature to understand what her mother is talking about: responsibility, money, and raising kids. This scene introduces the theme of Lady Bird’s journey with her mother where she eventually comes to understand and appreciate her mom.

As the movie progresses, Lady Bird shares her frustrations with her mom to Shelly, who has been taken in by her family as her brother’s girlfriend whose family no longer accepts her. Lady Bird expresses that she feels like her mom “hates” her and Shelly explains that “she has a big heart” as a way of saying that her mom will love her no matter what (0:32). She clarifies Lady Bird’s mom’s intent in loving and caring for her but Lady Bird is still too stubborn and immature to understand and accept this.

In true coming of age form, this movie shows Lady Bird live through her first experiences including her first boyfriend, first breakup, first time having sex, and applying to colleges and planning to move away. In this way Lady Bird is very mature. She has an attainable dream of moving away from Sacramento, CA and she pays for the applications herself which is a display of being responsible. By the end of the movie Lady Bird and her mom have swapped places. Lady Bird is doing the responsible thing of pursuing the plan she has for her life and in doing so her mom stops talking to her out of anger for her going behind her back to send the applications to east coast schools. Her mother goes as far as to not say bye to Lady Bird as she leaves for college. This represents that maturing doesn’t only happen once. People continue to grow throughout their whole lives and even her mother, by the end, has a change of heart and wants to say bye to Lady Bird before she leaves, but she is too late.

At the end of the movie, Lady Bird is newly at college, gets drunk, ends up in the hospital, then the next day at church. She has a true introspective moment of reflection, key in understanding and allowing growth, after which she calls home and says “I wanted to tell you, I love you.” and she ends the call saying “Thank you” (1:28). She shares how much she appreciates her roots and the struggles she went through to raise her. She finally appreciates everything her mother did for her even though people had been telling her that all along, she is finally mature enough to actually understand it. This change of heart, settling with her childhood, shows how much she grew up and this moment was the first time of open reflection that we see in the movie and it shows how she sees herself now as an adult vs a teenager. Many people go through this shift as our brains develop and become able to control impulses and decision making. This movie identifies with so many people because of its simplicity in translating the teenage experience. This movie does not need to take huge metaphorical strides for the deeper meaning to be understood, it is simply about someone growing to appreciate her parents.

Almost Famous deals less with one topic versus overall exhibiting what it means to grow up. This movie shows the two parallels of William and Penny Lane which represent how different people grow to be themselves both by growing up too early and doing things and acting like an adult. This movie is set in the 1970s as the main character, William (15), a writer for Rolling Stone and following the band Stillwater, meets the band’s resident groupie Penny Lane (16). It was almost impossible to spot Penny as being as young as she was because she acted like she was much older than she was. This did not come as maturity as she was only 16 and lying that she was 18 saying “isn’t it funny? The truth just sounds different” (0:30). She was so young but she was just running away from the truth as she had no one to guide her. She acted like an adult in the activities she participated in and the people she slept with but she was not responsible nor mature. She was

too young and had the wrong notions on how to grow up and what being grown up means. This does not entail that didn't survive or that she was wrong in trying to do this when she was just doing what every teenager wanted to be doing. She exhibits the dangerous way to grow up, by rushing herself through it and pushing herself into the adult world before taking the steps to be able to healthily join society.

Penny takes up a relationship with one of the band mates, Russell Hammond, who is married and, as she later finds out, intends to stay married. This leads her to spiral where in a drunken haze she asks William “why doesn’t he love me” and moments later she overdoses (2:04). She was too young and immature to deal with the consequences of her own actions and the actions of those around her. It is also important to note here that Penny’s career as a groupie was coming to the end as her friends were going on different tours and she was forced to return home. This was one of the only options for women to experience the touring lifestyle apart from being a musician. William was able to experience this safely and without risk, relying on relationships, and having to sacrifice his own personal integrity as a man and a writer, and he is less desirable as a sexual exploit. This experience was essential in Penny’s own personal journey and femininity and creates who she will be as she grows up and this is only one of the things that makes her unique, however sappy that sounds.

Penny’s journey shows an extreme and material embodiment of what most teens internally deal with at some point. She represents the minds of adolescents looking for something to help them through to adulthood. This is somewhat similar to what William went through and although they were together throughout the entire movie they still had polar opposite views on “finding yourself and coming of age.” William did not do drugs and was chasing his highly attainable dream of being a writer. He was by far the youngest but still the most mature of all of them, constantly

saying that he “needs to get home.” Penny Lane is the polar opposite of him. While she was not mature enough for the journey he was able to responsibly handle everything and turned out an amazing article. He was never thinking about his personal wants but instead the needs and wants of those around him. He was not selfish (arguably the most immature thing to be) like most teenagers who are inherently selfish and mildly small minded. He exhibited the traits of selflessness and self reflection which, at the end of the day, helped him to leave the tour in one piece.

The Breakfast Club is the perfect example of seeing each other as not that different and the world as not that serious. This is one of the best representations of how we all have our own experiences but the process of growing is still the same. The kids, Alison, John, Andrew, Brian, and Claire explore this topic as they are all in detention and have a famous heart to heart that sheds light on what it's like to grow up. Throughout the conversation they argue about their different perspectives and Andrew points out “we’re all pretty bizarre. Some of us are just better at hiding it” (1:11). He touches on the point that really everything is bizarre. That's why it doesn't really matter just like they are all bizarre so what's the point of lying and trying to hide it. This entire conversation is just a big self reflection moment as Andrew and Brian go on to acknowledge where they came from and the bad things they did in order to please their dads. Andrew bullied a kid and “jumped on top of him and started wailing on him” and Brian had “a gun in his locker” as he planned to commit suicide (1:15-1:25). As they share their hardships, they let themselves feel all the things that they couldn't feel at home. They are finally able to let go of these feelings in a relatively safe environment where there are people who understand where they're coming from. After this self-reflection they then acknowledge all of the simple things they can do like “make spaghetti” as Brian says or “write with (her) toes” as Allison says (1:16). This is important as they

take a step back from these harsh feelings they are releasing and suddenly appreciate the little things that make life simple and it makes them all laugh, feel happy, and lighter from all that they have released off of their shoulders. They then explore their fears of growing up as Andrew asks “are we gonna be like our parents” and Claire immediately responds saying “not me” but Allison points out “it’s unavoidable. It just happens. When you grow up, your heart dies.” John, the perfect example of someone who has displayed the same characteristics as he describes of his dad replies “who cares” and Allison says “I care” as she is someone who is determined to not be the same as her parents. Your parents have a huge impact on you, but that does not mean you will inherently be like them if you are determined enough to change. Allison changes the most by the end of the movie when Claire gives her a makeover. But they all come out of this experience proving that change is possible as they have all significantly matured. Their realization about life and its simplicity is one that will change them for the better and help them to not be like their parents and grow away from their lives in a healthier and happier way.

I call the moment I began to psychoanalyze myself as “gaining consciousness.” This means when I realized I was able to see myself objectively and understand my place in the world. This happens slowly as you grow through your tweens but when I first realized that I saw the world differently, no longer in the bright colors of childhood, it was shocking. I felt lost and I did not enjoy the world with ease as I had done my entire life. The world suddenly looked complicated and it was scary. Growing up is scary and there's nothing we can do about it, but to try to understand ourselves vs. the world around us. There are little things like recognizing selfishness, cherishing relationships, self-reflecting, and not taking life too seriously that we can accept and learn about in order to mature happily and healthily.

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