

## Mini Essay Final Draft

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Many authors show the evolution of a character through a common plot pattern called a Rite of Passage. This pattern usually involves a single person going on a journey that causes the individual to become more mature and show more knowledge upon the completion of it. The individual has to go through choices and challenges to be able to complete this journey. In the end of this journey there also has to be a major change that this individual has developed. In Paul Fleischman's "Whirligig", Brent, the protagonist, shows to go through this process throughout the entire book. At first, we see that Brent is quite a disturbed person, who's bad at controlling his anger, insecure, and a liar. During the end of the story, the author tries to show that the most significant change in Brent is that he has partially overcome these problems, which has in turn led Brent to forgive himself for his bad actions.

In the beginning of Brent's tale, Paul Fleischman shows how corrupted Brent's character is. He shows the reader many of his actions and thoughts as well as how his obsession to fit in shapes up his overall physical appearance and his personality. All of this mainly settles into three main problems. First of all we see that Brent has trouble controlling his temper. There are two different situations where Fleischman shows" this in the book. One hint that we see of this is when Brent is at Chad's party, where certain events lead him to unleash some his anger. "The hated grip on his shoulders again, the public humiliation, the snickers, the alcohol, all mixed and detonated inside Brent. He

stopped, whirled, throwing off Chad's hands, and swung with all his might. (Fleischman pg. 15)" In this moment Fleischman has made it clear that all of those components were overwhelming Brent, filling him with a lot of anger. That sudden whirl and the force of the punch showed how Brent had "snapped".

Another thing Fleischman tells us about Brent is that he is, at first, a very deceiving person. Like most of the other things that the author tries to tell us about Brent at the beginning of the book, this also plays out at Chad's party. "Don't even say the word Porsche to my dad.... It was the sort of lie that would never be found out, the sort he'd drawn on often. (Fleischman pg. 13)" By reading this quote, the author is obviously telling the reader that Brent is a liar. As mentioned before by the author, Brent would always try to make the best impressions on his peers, often creating alternate pasts for himself, so right here, the author shows that Brent is lying about the Porsche, just to impress the boys.

The last thing that Fleischman shows us about how Brent's character is, his insecurity. During the beginning of the book, he lets the reader know that Brent is usually moving around the country, which causes him to want to make the best impression he can on whoever he meets. This pretty much means that Brent will try his best to fit in with everyone he meets during his moves. During the very first few pages of Whirligig, Brent is thinking about his current move. "Discerning what stations were considered cool was another of his moving-in tasks." (Fleischman pg. 6). This shows that he will look into whatever is cool with his new peers, just so he can fit in, most likely because he's not sure if they will like his own personal preferences. Another clue at insecurity that Fleischman hints at is when Brent is looking around at everyone in the

party. "Brent felt he'd gained a glimpse of Olympus." (Fleischman pg. 9) This shows that Brent sees himself below everyone else, because he thinks of them as "Gods".

At the end of the book, Fleischman has made Brent change throughout the story. The most significant change that he made to Brent's overall character was that of making him learn to control those three traits, which in turn led him to forgive himself for his bad actions. The author shows how Brent's character has been learning to control his temper when he is making his first whirligig. "He slammed the file onto the table. He hated wood...He took a break... he almost felt the man was with him, telling him to settle down and conquer the project calmly, step by step."(Fleischman pgs. 50 and 51) "Here Fleischman is trying to inform us that after having that little tantrum, Brent is trying to calm down a bit. This is different than before, because this time the character is actually attempting to calm down, instead of just letting the snowball effect contain him, like in the first chapter. Fleischman also shows how Brent's opinion toward lying has also changed during the story. After starting his journey and having to lie to get into a hotel, Fleischman shows Brent getting more and more guilty." The lies were piling up...Not only every word, but every bite and breath was counterfeit. Prison, where no presence was needed suddenly seemed the better choice.( Fleischman pg. 69)" The author had also made sure to show how Brent had always thought of himself very self-consciously, yet now , at the end of the book , he gives Brent newer and better thoughts after his journey. "That he might in fact be like everyone else was a foreign idea, never considered.(Fleischman pg.129)" This shows how the author made sure Brent accepted himself, because if he were to have not, he probably would have never forgiven himself. Fleischman shows that this is the most significant change because, although sometimes

when someone does a bad thing, it's best for them to learn to forgive themselves.

Although sometimes things go wrong, its best to learn from the mistakes made, then to not learn at all.