

Writing Final – Arnold and Raven

“Family is supposed to be our safe haven. Very often it’s the place where we find our deepest heartbreak.” (Iyanla Vanzant) This is the case with Arnold from *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* by Sherman Alexie and Raven from *A Raven Flies South* by Gord Bruyere. Both Raven and Arnold’s identities are affected by their families in separate ways. Raven’s identity is affected by the burden of his responsibilities given to him by his family while Arnold’s identity is affected by the deaths of his family members.

Raven’s identity is affected by his family burdening him with the responsibility of taking care of his siblings. Raven’s mother is extremely sick and cannot take care of her kids, so she leaves Raven with the burden of acting like a grown-up and caring for them. Raven starts to feel the anxiety of his responsibilities, “...and Raven starts to get that feeling in his stomach again” because he is stressing over the number of tasks he must remember. (Pg. 5) This anxiety will affect his identity because having so much to worry about at an early age will start a pattern of constant worrying throughout his life. Raven’s grandmother, Kooks, reminds Raven that it is not permanent, “Only until Mom gets better,” which slightly lessens the pressure, but it still does not enable him to live freely without consequence. (Pg.5) Kooks also contributes to his burden, “You have to approach these times like a warrior with serious intent.” which is affecting his identity because she is not trying to help him balance the responsibilities that were given to him, but instead she is telling him that he needs to be a warrior. (Pg. 4) This puts more pressure on his mind and on his psyche, which will affect his identity negatively because it does not enable him to be a child and have fun.

Unlike Raven, Arnold was not burdened with responsibilities, his identity was affected by the deaths of close family members. It first started when Arnold’s grandmother, Grandmother Spirit, passed away. She died a violent death, “...when she is struck and killed by a drunk driver” but her last words were of kindness, asking her family to forgive the drunk driver that hit her. (Pg. 129) This display of acceptance and kindness affects Arnold’s identity because it changes his perspective about what is important in life. His grandmother shows that holding a grudge against the drunk driver is not important but the forgiveness you could present towards him is. Her kindness is what affects Arnold and pushes him to be more accepting. Another death that affects Arnold’s identity is the death of his sister, Mary. It takes Arnold a bit of time to adjust to the news he was told. He quickly accepted her death, “My sister is dead” and he starts to grieve for her. When the day of her funeral arrives, Arnold starts feeling the loss as reality sets in. This reality affects his identity because Arnold grew up with his sister and thought of Mary as a part of his identity. During Mary’s funeral, he was feeling the loss, “...like there was a snowstorm blowing inside of my chest.” and started his cycle through the stages of grief. He was also affected by the loss because he admired her courage to leave the rez, get married, and move to Montana. Her

actions to leave the rez and follow her dreams is what kept Arnold motivated with his choice to go to Reardon instead of Wellpinit High. When she passes, Arnold decides to do the same and to follow his dreams and leave the rez and continue his journey.

To conclude my analysis, Raven's identity was affected by the pressure and weight of his responsibilities while Arnold's identity was affected by the loss of close family members he had experienced. They were both affected in ways that differ from one another, but they were equally as affected by the heartache of family.

I was going to finish off with a final idea connected to the hook.