Negative Effects Of Fear In The Chrysalids

Imagine living in a world where people are so cruel and judgemental based on others' appearance or how they act. This leads them to strive for acceptance and equality, to eliminate prejudice and hatred upon others. A novel named The Chrysalids, written by John Wyndham, is about a post-apocalyptic community called waknuk, which is religiously strict that leads them to be extremely prejudiced against people who do not fit “ the true image of man”. The people of Waknuk who have disabilities or seem to be abnormal have fears to live freely because people do not accept them for who they are. Fear is a negative emotion when left uncontrollable, which makes a person feel anxious and distressed leading them to be irrational. The three points that illustrate fear in The Chrysalids are; Sophie, Uncle Axel, and Aunt Harriet. John Wyndhams uses these characters to portray fear in a negative way.

Fears is one of the motifs that the characters experience most in the novel and Sophie is definitely one of them. To begin, Sophie lives in a society where discrimination exists. She has six toes in each foot that classifies her as blasphemy because “ any creature that shall seem to be human, but is not formed thus is not human. It is a blasphemy against the true image of God, and hateful in the sight of God” (Wyndham, 13). Waknuk is a place where all people are obsessed with being normal. When Alan finds out about her six toes, he immediately reports it to Joseph Storm. Sophie feels afraid, so she and her parents try to escape Waknuk to protect her from torture. Furthermore, Sophie fears when Gordon wants to have a child with Rosalind because she would not be able to produce children herself. Sophie says, “ If she were to give him children, he wouldn't want me anymore” (167). Afterward, Sophie rescues Rosalind and Petra from Gordon’s tent to keep Rosalind away from him. This illustrates that fear can make a person uneasy, which makes them do unpleasant things.

Moreover, another character in this novel that experiences fear is none other than Uncle Axel. Among the adults, Uncle Axel is one of David’s closest friends who he trusts the most. Fear often describes when a person feels concerned or worry when something bad happens to someone they care about. This happens when Uncle Axel, finds out about David and Rosalind's abilities to communicate telepathically. He tells them not to tell anyone else about their abilities for them to be protected. Uncle Axel warns them, “ I want to keep it secret. I want you to promise that you will never, never tell anyone else...:” (30). He worries because he does not want David to banish from Waknuk and to be rejected by his own father. However, when Alan discovers everyone’s abilities, Uncle Axel has no choice but to kill him. He says, “ It was the only thing to do, Davie. Of course, I knew Anne would reckon it was one of you that had done it… There was a risk, but I had to take it” (118). Nonetheless, Uncle Axel experiences uneasiness throughout this novel because he has to kill Alan just to protect David and the other telepaths from danger. He is willing to sacrifice himself against the laws of Waknuk.

To further this point, Aunt Harriet also demonstrates fear in The Chrysalids. She is someone who experiences tension and the feeling of anxiety, which leads her to kill herself. Aunt Harriet goes to David’s house to ask Emily Strorm if she could borrow Petra to get her baby a Certificate of Normalcy. Although, Emily refuses her because she discovers that Harriet’s baby is a blasphemy which makes her angry. Emily says to Harriet while sobbing, “ In all my life I have never heard anything so outrageous. To come here suggesting that I should enter an

immoral, a criminal conspiracy…" (71). This situation makes Harriet feel scared because no one else will help her; even her own sister could not accept her baby. Afterward, David finds out Aunt Harriet kills herself. He says, " When they broke the news to me the next day that my Aunt Harriet's body had been found in the river, no one mentioned a baby…" (74). Being intensely anxious, Aunt Harriet commits suicide. She thinks that no one cares about her and her baby which makes her feel unworthy.

Overall, fear is a negative emotion when left uncontrollable which makes a person feel anxious and distressed leading them to be irrational. Throughout this novel, the three characters that John Wyndhams illustrates fear through are Sophie, Uncle Axel, and Aunt Harriet. Fear is a feeling that is very common for humans. It is something that people always deal with. However, it is very hard to overcome because in The Chrysalids, people who fear, do unpleasant things in the end. Fears can affect mental well-being which can cause others of having depression, anxiety, stress and even attempting suicide. In Waknuk's society, discrimination is very common which leads people to be afraid of telling others their differences because people will not accept them for who they are.