Ralph Waldo Emerson's Self-reliance Versus Kurt Vonnegut's Harrison Bergeron

Is this the change we need?

Society everywhere is against the manhood of every one of its members. the quality or character of a particular person or thing that distinguishes them from others of the normal kind, especially when strongly noticeable in the stories of Emerson, Ralph Waldo ¨Self-Reliance¨ and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. ¨Harrison Bergeron¨ they demonstrate how society makes the people be unsure to do the same thing without reason which leads them to not progress and remain the same and not let them work hard with oneself. In Ralph Waldo Emerson´s ¨Self-Reliance¨ and Harrison Bergeron differ in the Romantic ideas of freedom and individuality.

Initially, ¨Self Reliance¨ and Harrison Bergeron differ in the idea of freedom. In his famous essay 'Self-Reliance,' Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, ¨Society is a joint-stock company in which the members agree for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater.¨ This opinion was written almost a century before Vonnegut's story, yet it describes a society in which Harrison Bergeron finds himself. Bergeron is one of forced equality, even to the point of making everyone mediocre. Society is certainly against those with superior abilities in Vonnegut's story they ridicule and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of politics and other topical issues. With dark humor, Vonnegut shows buzzers going off in people's ears, masks being worn to cover beautiful faces, lead weights inserted into clothing to weigh down those too athletic, and handicaps on the heads of the brilliant mind. Perhaps one of the most noticeable or important of examples of the ridiculousness of forcing everyone to be 'equal,' comes with the ridiculous Hazel, who is too limited naturally to have to wear handicaps. 'Who knows better' n' I do what normal is?' said Hazel. Right,' said George. He began to think glimmeringly about his abnormal son...but a twenty-one gun salute in his head stopped that.' Hazel's complete acceptance of the forced equality of everyone comes because many like Hazel are lacking the quality themselves. When an announcer with a terrible voice and speech impediment tries to say, 'Ladies and gentlemen,' he has to give up because he cannot do it. 'That's all right--...he tried. That's the big thing. He tried to do the best he could with what God gave him. He should get a nice raise for trying so hard.' At the end of the story, Hazel has seen her son shot, but she cannot clearly remember, so George consoles her, 'Forget sad things.' Vonnegut criticizes the results in a society when one's natural talents are not developed when competition no longer exists when someone cannot be 'better' than someone else...when a genius like Harrison Bergeron is not appreciated and is even killed so that everyone will be mediocre. In both of the passages, they show how the government and society pressures you, me and all of us to be one and fall into on category when in reality we all are different and want to go our own ways but can’t because we doubt ourselves and our intuition and follow what everyone wants when deep down we don’t want that but don’t want to be the one who is different and gets criticized and not be appreciated for being different because society doesn’t want that they don’t want us to feel free and have the freedom to be us they put this constant pressure on us that we need to be this type of person within and out as a certain personality and a certain look and mindset emotion but we don’t have that we are all different but we don’t have the freedom to show who we are because we have this constant pressure in the back of our minds to be this ¨perfect¨ or ¨ideal¨ image of a

person. In ¨Self-Reliance¨ and Harrison Bergeron, they both differ on the idea of freedom.

Trust yourself, your intuition, and your nature. According to Emerson's Self-Reliance, these qualities are essential to contentment and harmony with one's self. Self-reliance is an appeal to the individual to obey his instincts and to challenge tradition and conventional wisdom. According to Emerson, those who are truly self-reliant have the ability to mark their place in history as great and genuinely creative men. Emerson urges the reader to live by his instinct and listen to his intuition, 'Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.' it is about trusting yourself and don't fear your original thoughts, trust them and live up to them. Great men and artists appeal to us because of their creative nature, 'In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts.' If we don't live according to our nature we are not men. Be bold and brave about your convictions, 'And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind up and above the range of normal destiny; and not hiding into a corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but redeemers and a person who gives help to a person or cause.' Recognize your nature whether it be good or bad, 'No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature.' Emerson instructs the reader to avoid the common pitfalls that tend to create difficulties, resulting in delay or obstruction in a man's behavior showing high moral standards. Emerson identifies consistency as being an enemy of the creative thinker, 'A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds', 'With consistency, a great soul has simply nothing to do'. Emerson isn't implying that we live unpredictable but that we should be characterized by our positions and ideals. We should not hold the same position simply because it is the one we have always taken. We shouldn't be preoccupied with the impression we leave on others, 'What I must do, is all that concerns me, not what the people think.' According to Emerson, our inconsistency should be our testimony. Your inconsistent actions will explain to others what you are, 'The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks.' Emerson also points out man's fear of being misunderstood. We often fail to present or discuss our original thoughts and ideas in fear of being misunderstood. Emerson asks, so what? Weren't all great innovators misunderstood? Emerson says: 'Misunderstood! It is a right fool's word. Is it so bad then to be misunderstood??¨. Kurt Vonnegut portrays a society in which individuality is a serious threat to the government and about the society's well-being. While people in this future society acknowledge that there are individuals, every difference from the ¨normal¨ is seen as unfair and therefore threatening. Each person must be 'handicapped'— every individual has to make particular minor changes appropriately to put an end to their individual features. Differences in individuality are shown in Hazel and George Bergeron, a married couple. Hazel is of average intelligence and requires no adjustment. George's 'intelligence was way above normal,' so he 'had a little mental handicap radio in his ear. He was required by law to wear it at all times.' The transmitter sends out signals to mess with his brain, 'to keep people like George from taking unfair advantage.' Individuality in society is suppressed. While performing, the ballet dancers all wear ¨handicaps¨ to keep them equal so they cannot actually show their individuality of emotion while dancing and one can´t be better than another and this is intended to keep others from ¨feeling bad¨. By the year 2081, the search for true equality of all U.S. citizens has led to the creation of amendments to the Constitution. In every case, the effort has not been to raise the standards of those handicapped by their differences or inadequacies. Instead, those who are gifted with superior intellect, physical beauty, or strength are penalized. Those who are beautiful must wear hideous masks, intelligent people must wear headsets that mess with their brains and nerves with a series of loud, annoying sounds, and those with a physical advantage or strength must carry bags of birdshot to weigh them down. Therefore, in the race of life, all Americans are handicapped so that no one must ever feel ugly, stupid, or "like something the cat dragged in." Diana Moon Glampers is the Handicapper General, whose job is to track down

violators of the law and get rid of those in society who are a threat to the average, the ones who are lacking the quality, the mediocre. If a man wants to rest from the hard work of carting around fifty pounds of birdshot by removing some pellets, he can be killed. Those, such as Harrison Bergeron, who learn to overcome their handicaps are forced to move around ever-larger burdens. Society has become so restraining to the freedom of a person that no one dares to question the increasing numbers of new laws that call for more handicaps and punishments. All those who oppose the Handicap General are arrested, thrown into mental institutions, or shot because they threaten the society. The effects of these governmental policies are shocking, horrific. Society is so messed up because those smart enough to develop new technology, medicine, and literature have been permanently handicapped, exiled, or killed. With all this, we realize that even if decades before Kurt Vonnegut story individuality has been seen as ¨bad¨ but in reality, it is courageous that one goes with there believes and don't go with the flow or with what the government wants but most times those who go there way don't get support because even if one believes as that one person they are a minority and are going to get hated on by the government and the rest are going to see what is happening and jump in or not say a word and continue going with what the government wants because they do not what to be hated and torched as the ones who went there way. In ¨Self-Reliance¨ and Harrison Bergeron, they both differ on the idea of freedom.

Initially, ¨self-Reliance¨ and Harrison Bergeron differ in the romantic ideas of individuality and freedom. This still relates to today's society because we are still somewhat controlled by the government and society, for example, social media is a big part of trends and what we say and dress and post. At the same time, the government has claimed this is a Freeland to all but there yet has been slavery where they were not free and torched and those who would try and leave and go their way were killed or torched to death and immigrates have to live in fear in day to day basis but why arent we ¨ the land of the free¨? well, immigrants have to wait years and years to be citizens and while they are still immigrants who follow the law, pay taxes, and be responsible they are not allowed to have the same rights as a citizen of America but yet again we are human no one is better then another just because they are citizens and the government puts this idea or feeling that if your ¨American¨ you are better and you can say what you want you are available to the amendments but if you don't classify as an American then you do not have any rights and must remain silent and go with the flow even if you do not agree but if you are minority already and you try and stand up for yourself things can go really bad and many do not want to take the risk of change because they can imagine the worst that can happen and it is sad because when you claim something you are not providing it should be called out but it does not because they put fear into us so we keep quiet and go along with what they want and say. Something we learned about these two stories is that even if you try and change the government and society many may agree but they are too scared to make that change and they stay where they are comfortable and if your comfortable that means you are not pushing yourself to be better, greater than what you already are. Even if you take the risk and do it there might not be change right away but rather after. In most cases, they don't realize the purpose of the person making the change until time passes. Then after they realize they wanted a change for the better to happen and it usually ends up making a big part of history for example segregation ended in 1964 it really wasn't acknowledge that inequality was still very much alive even after segregation ended until Martin Luther King decided to make it known to the public that this was not fair and he went against ¨society [the] joint-stock company in which the members agree for the better securing of the bread to each shareholder, [but to the expense that the people needs] to surrender [they´re] liberty and culture¨.

Works Cited

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