“The Lady Or The Tiger” In Comparison To Sigmund Freud’s Theory

“Use your head, follow your heart, and listen to your gut”(Mullis). Social entrepreneur Brian Mullis encourages people to follow this strategy when making decisions. The brain is for thinking and making a choice,, the heart for knowing what is wanted, and the intuition knows what is right or wrong to do. The heart may want something so badly, but someone’s gut knows what is right. The brain is the middle-ground. It knows each side’s ideal solution, but it is up to the brain to choose which one to go with. Similarly, Freud’s theory also has a wanting aspect, knowing the right choice, and the deciding factor. Freud explains that there are parts of a person called the id, superego, and ego. Both the id and superego take a side on an issue while the ego is the one that is the deciding factor of the results (Heffner 1). In Frank Stockton’s short story, “The Lady or the Tiger,” Freud’s theory pertains to the story when the author showcases the princess’ deliberation as the ego’s struggle deciding between the id and the superego. In the short story, the tiger represents the id, the superego serves as the lady, and the superego functions as the princess.

The way in which humans interact in the world can be described by Sigmund Freud’s theory. There are three parts of the structure of his theory: the id, ego, and superego. The id is what babies are born with and makes sure that they get what is essential to live, such as food. The id is needed so that young children can be given what is needed to survive without any aware of anyone else’s position or taking in the reality of the situation. If a newborn cries, it learns that an adult will immediately come to it and take care of its wants and needs. As the infant develops “within the next years, [and] as the child interacts more and more with the world, the second part of their personality is developed” which is called the ego(Heffner). The ego focuses on what reality really is and understands that the world does not revolve around him or her and instead realizes that other people have wants and needs of their own. The ego can then accept that making selfish or impulsive decision can affect them in the long run. The ego’s job is to “meet the needs of the id, while taking into consideration the reality of the situation”(Heffner). In other words, the ego has to choose the id’s needs, but realize if going with the id is not the best choice for the situation than to override it and choose a different solution. By the time the child reaches the age of five, it has developed the superego, which is the moral part of homo sapiens. The superego develops due to the moral and ethical restraints put on [by the toddlers’] caregivers (Heffner).” The superego is equal to the conscience and the ability to decipher right from wrong. As a result of the ego being the strongest of the three, it can satisfy the needs of the id, not upset the superego, and take in the reality of the situation when a choice between an amount of options is required. The three aspects: the id, ego, and superego all revert back to Sigmund Freud’s theory.

The first part of Sigmund Freud’s theory not only applies to children but also to the character labeled the “Tiger” in the short story “The Lady or the Tiger.” The Tiger represents the id in the story because, like the id the Tiger is the choice that would be ideal for the princess’s wants. The princess believes that it would “be better for him to die at once, and go to wait for her in the blessed regions of semi-barbaric futurity?”(Stockton 6). Therefore, it would be better for both of them if he were to die from the claws of a tiger and wait for the princess to die also. The princess frequently “started in wild horror, and covered her face with her hands as she thought

of her lover opening the door… which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger!" The princess had "much oftener… seen him at the other door!" and "gnashed her teeth, and torn her hair, when she saw his start of rapturous delight as he opened the door of the lady!" (Stockton 5-6). Since the princess is torn between which choice to make, the tiger is the choice that she would most rather because the young man would be hard to see daily if he was happily married to someone other than herself. If the tiger would be the one to be his fate than the princess would have no worries about her lover and only looking forward to the day that they reunite in death. The tiger, similar to the id, is what most people want to choose to go with in situations. People want to get rid of the possibility of an unwanted outcome by disposing of that option and the pawn that is used. In this instance, the undesirable outcome would be the young gentlemen marrying the alluring lady and the pawn played by both the princess and the king would be identified as the princess's current lover. Each character in "The Lady or the Tiger" is established as a part of Sigmund Freud's Theory including the tiger, presented as the id.

Not only is there an id in the short story, but also an ego, which is the princess. The ego can be described as a part of somebody that wants to please itself, but also knows the right choice for the current situation. In one instance of the story the princess "knew in which of the two rooms, that lay behind those doors, stood the cage of the tiger, with its open front, and in which waited the lady."(Stockton 4). The Princess knew which door led to what surprise and could choose from either of them for her lover. The tiger would be the choice she would like so that no one else would have him and she would never have to see the lady and be jealous of her. Like the ego, she had the power to choose whichever one she wanted, but both of them had good outcomes and bad outcomes. It would be her job to choose what one would be worth losing for the price paid. The princess sees that "The girl was lovely, but she had dared to raise her eyes to the loved one of the princess; and, with all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted to her through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door. (Lockton, pg 4-5)." The princess knows that the lady is the right choice but can't handle the fact that her and her lover won't be together. Additionally, the author states, "Her decision had been indicated in an instant, but it had been made after days and nights of anguished deliberation(Stockton 6)" The princess frequently, had deliberated between which of the two to choose much like the ego. It only takes an instant to indicate the preferred option but it takes more time to decide which one to go with. The ego is a part of one that picks what action should be the one performed and therefore noticeably and accurately depicts the princess.

Sigmund Freud's theory can also be applied to the lady as being the superego. Once again, Freud writes, "The girl was lovely, but she had dared to raise her eyes to the loved one of the princess; and, with all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted to her through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door(Stockton, pg 4-5)." Interpreted, the princess knows that the lady is the right choice but can't handle the fact that she and her lover won't be together. The princess choosing the lady would be the right choice because it would prick her conscience if her significant other was killed by the tiger and the princess had the ability to prevent that from happening. However, the princess imagined the young man choosing the door that had the lady and "his whole frame kindled with the joy of recovered life(Stockton 6)." Afterward, the princess would have to live seeing her lover and the lady together for life and seeth and grieve over the loss of him but would have made the better choice. The lady is accurately depicted as the superego.

The three parts of Freud's theory are all prominent in the short story, "The Lady or the Tiger"

which are represented through the characters. The lady, tiger, and princess each represented an aspect of the theory. The lady is the superego, the tiger is the id, and the princess is the ego. There is one question that can be asked pertaining to the story and that is what the princess chose. Which did the ego choose?