

The Chrysalids

by John Wyndham

Questions & Answers

How does Wyndham make David's reaction to Aunt Harriet's death so very disturbing?

Your syntax is a bit unclear. Wyndham has David so very disturbed by his aunt's death because this is a dramatic introduction for him to the Waknukian ideology that human deviations must be culled (killed) just like crop or cattle imperfections.

Wyndham makes the event so very disturbing to the reader so as to dramatize his point that blindly following biases, sacrosanct ideologies, and established paradigms of behavior will be the doom of the human race.

For what reasons does Axel doubt the accepted view of “Tribulation”?

The Tribulation must have been an incredibly violent set of events that essentially brought a cataclysmic end to the world as people knew it back then. The Waknuk people know about fires, floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters, and they know that those things existed in biblical times as well. The Tribulation, we are told, was like all of those things happening at once, on an unheard-of scale.

The general accepted thought is that God must have sent the Tribulation as punishment for whatever humanity was doing at the time. Uncle Axel questions the validity of this argument. He doesn't understand how or why the Tribulation allowed for the current deviations. He flat-out says this doesn't make sense and is beneath the wisdom of God. The current Waknuk thinking is that they also have to try to recreate the world that the Old People of years before had. Uncle Axel questions this goal and brings up the

possibility that the return of those conditions might trigger another Tribulation.

And after a bit they might begin to say: "Are we right? Tribulation has made the world a different place; can we, therefore, ever hope to build in it the kind of world the Old People lost? Should we try to? What would be gained if we were to build it up again so exactly that it culminated in another Tribulation?"

This whole time, have David and the others been communicating through telepathy?

This appears to be a "yes" or "no" question. Without knowing a specific sequence that is being referenced in this question, the answer should be based on the entire book.

If that time frame is used, then the answer to the question has to be a "no." David and the other telepathic children have not been communicating entirely through telepathy. That would be a huge mistake and quite life-threatening to

all of them, since Waknuk society would identify them as Deviants, and Deviants are either killed, sterilized, or banished from the community. In any of those instances, the Deviant genetic coding would be removed from the community gene pool. David and his friends have to keep everybody under the assumption that they are completely normal, so they talk to each other through verbal communication anytime that they are in public.

If "the others" refers to the Sealand people, then the answer would lean toward a "yes," because the Sealand people were able to communicate across long distances to David through telepathy.

What are some quotes that show acceptance in the novel *The Chrysalids*?

Acceptance is somewhat of an odd topic in this book, because the Waknuk society is not very accepting of anything, outside a very strict set of norms. The entire society fears changes to the genetic code, yet characters

like David and Uncle Axel give readers hope that not everybody in the Waknuk society is so close-minded. Readers get a good glimpse at David's open-minded acceptance of people's differences early in the story when he discovers that Sophie has six toes.

I felt sorry for her distress, and for Sophie, and for the hurt foot—but nothing more.

Notice that David has an emotional response to her pain, but he is not disgusted by the appearance of her genetic abnormality. He accepts Sophie for being Sophie, whether she has five toes or six toes. Sophie's parents will ask that David keep it a secret. David is not exactly sure why, and Sophie's parents explain that not everybody is so accepting of genetic variations.

"It's very, very important," she insisted. "How can I explain to you?"

But she didn't really need to explain. Her urgent, tight-strung feeling of the importance was very plain. Her words were far less potent.

She said, "If anyone were to find out, they'd—they'd be terribly un-kind to her. We've got to see that that never happens."

It was as if the anxious feeling had turned into something hard, like an iron rod.

"Because she has six toes?" I asked.

"Yes. That's what nobody but us must ever know. It must be a secret between us," she repeated, driving it home.

"You'll promise, David?"

Other good quotes to use can be found in chapter 2, when David is explaining to readers some of the sayings that are hanging up around his house. They mostly all drive home the point that Waknuk society accepts "the norm" and does not accept any deviation because it goes against God's will for the image of mankind.

BLESSED IS THE NORM

WATCH THOU FOR THE MUTANT!

THE DEVIL IS THE FATHER OF DEVIATION

The society is so close-minded about deviation that David even gets reprimanded for suggesting a genetic deviation might be useful in certain situations.

What is the role of acceptance in the novel *The Chrysalids*?

Acceptance plays a significant role in John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids*. The Waknuk society that readers are introduced to is an incredibly accepting society; however, they are only accepting if a person fits into their very narrow view of what is normal and acceptable. The entire Waknuk society is built on the concept of keeping the gene pool pure. The society does not accept drastic deviations in genetic diversity. This goes for people and other animals, and genetic purity is pursued with religious fervor.

THE DEVIL IS THE FATHER OF DEVIATION.

Any person that has too drastic of a genetic change is removed from the Waknuk gene pool through sterilization,

banishment, or death. This is why David and his fellow telepaths have to hide the fact that they are Deviants. They are eventually discovered, and they have to escape to the Fringes where the other Deviants live; however, David is not accepted into this society either.

Another angle to pursue regarding this question is to examine which people within Waknuk society seem to be more accepting of genetic diversity than others. I would certainly look to David as an example because he completely accepts Sophie as his friend regardless of the fact that she has six toes. David's uncle Axel is another character that I would examine as he knows about David's ability, but he doesn't turn David into the Waknuk authorities. Instead, he helps David understand the need to keep his ability a secret.

What characters influence David in *The Chrysalids* the most, and why?

Many characters throughout the novel influence David in a variety of ways. The question does not indicate if the influence has to be a positive or negative influence, so you could absolutely include David's father, Joseph Storm. He rules the household and community with an iron fist. He is adamant about keeping the genetic code of the Waknuk society "pure." When David is very young, David is influenced by his father's domineering presence. This is one way that David is a dynamic character. As the book progresses, David disagrees with his father more and more.

A second character to go with should be Uncle Axel. Uncle Axel is the adult that David turns to more often than not when he needs advice. Uncle Axel becomes a confidant for David because he is the only adult that knows about David's talent, and Uncle Axel is not willing to report David as a Deviant. Uncle Axel helps David hide his abilities and warns David about being super careful to not reveal his powers.

I also think that Sophie Wender is a hugely influential character. She is the girl with six toes, and she influences David early on. He recognizes that she has a genetic abnormality, but he also is able to see that she is a normal human being. Her humanity influences him far more than her abnormality. David helps keep her secret, and his kindness is returned when she helps David and his group escape.

How does the woman from Sealand help David become self-aware?

The woman from Sealand helps David and the other telepathic children become aware of her through her incredibly strong telepathic abilities. She can communicate extremely long distances, and she begins telling David that he and his kind are not the freaks of nature that Waknuk society would have him believe.

David has been taught for his entire life that any genetic deviation outside of a strict predetermined set of norms

makes someone a Deviant, and Deviant genetic coding needs to be purged from Waknuk society through banishment, sterilization, or death. David does not understand why the rule, but he does not have a big problem with the societal rule until he realizes that his telepathic ability makes him a Deviant. The woman from Sealand helps David understand that his ability is a blessing and not a curse. He is the next step in human evolution. She teaches David that change is normal, and any population that is not going through natural genetic changes is a society that is doomed to be wiped out by an up and coming "superior variant."

"For ours is a superior variant, and we are only just beginning."

She helps David see that his abilities make him a part of a population that is better able to think and adapt as a group. Her teachings are difficult for David to hear because she flatly tells him that Waknuk society and beliefs are his

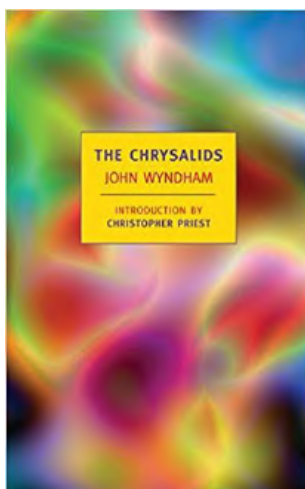
enemies. David already knew this, but her explanation helps him come to terms with it.

"The essential quality of life is living; the essential quality of living is change; change is evolution: and we are part of it.

"The static, the enemy of change, is the enemy of life, and therefore our implacable enemy.".

What is the name of the narrator of *The Chrysalids*?

The Chrysalids by John Wyndham is narrated from the first person point of view. The first page has the narrator telling readers a little bit about himself and his dreams. It is not until the...



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