The Social Jungle Of Human Existence In The House Of The Scorpion

Erik Erikson once said, “In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity.” In the novel, The House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer, a boy named Matt goes through many conflicts that lead to him finding his identity. Matt’s identity as a clone came with many setbacks along the way, and since Matt is different from humans, he is determined to try his best to hide his differences. This affects people’s characters and self-conscience for the worst. In this novel, the idea of identity influences many of the conflicts in the book. Matt’s character is most greatly affected by being disrespected by society, noticing his true friends, and almost being killed by a person he loved.

Matt is impacted when El Patron needs his organs to survive, a man vs. man conflict, that made him wonder what his identity in other people’s perspectives is. El Patron reveals that there were eight clones before Matt and that they were all used to give their organs to him because he feels that he owns the lives of his dead family. In the novel, El Patron says, “’I gave you these things, Mi Vida. You… owe… me’” (Farmer 235).By El Patron saying this to Matt, it changed his character because it shows how little El Patron actually cared about him. The significance of this is that El Patron is one of the most important figures in Matt’s life. By him saying this, it made Matt realize what he meant to El Patron. Moreover, it shows how Matt was used and that the feelings of love were not mutual like Matt thought it was. Later on, Matt goes on to say, “’Someone I cared about more than anyone in the world tried to kill me’” (343). This further supports the idea that he is distraught because this action provided a long-term emotional effect on him. In addition, this connects to the motif of identity because it leads to Matt’s questioning of who really cares for him. In the end, Matt turns out to be more aware of how other people think of him. In short, the impact of El Patron’s betrayal impacted Matt significantly because it led to him discovering his identity in others.

Matt is impacted when the people in the Big House shun him for being a clone, which is a man vs. society conflict. When Matt arrived at the Big House, he was shunned by society because he is a clone. This led to people treating him as if he were an animal. When Matt gets sick in the beginning, the doctor says, “’You need a vet for this little beast!’” (23). This conflict changed Matt because it led him to wonder why he needed a specialized doctor instead of one that normal humans got. Furthermore, it led him to think that what the people at the Big House said was true, which is important because it shows how much society influenced his perception of himself. In return, he felt unloved by society and sought out peace in the rest of the novel. After a while, Matt had “only felt the weight of hatred humans had for such things” (pg. 120). The significance of this feeling makes a connection with the recurring idea of identity because it shows how the teasing of the people at the Big House leads to a false identity being created in Matt’s mind. This impacts Matt in the future because it leads to his thoughts constantly being about what others think. Due to this, Matt begins to have a sense of pride when he feels like he fits in. In conclusion, based on this evidence, Matt starts to worry about the way people perceive him in life after the Big House residents start to judge him.

Matt is being confronted with all of his flaws, which is a man vs. self-conflict. When Matt is at the plankton factory, the Keepers prompt the boys to show Matt why he doesn’t fit in. They start

attacking him by telling him what is wrong with him in their eyes. After the boys insulted Matt, he was "…left alone, curled up in the middle of the floor, like the unnatural creature he was" (293). This conflict impacted Matt because it made him wonder if his ideas of fitting in were false. This led to him becoming discouraged because he realized that when people figure out that he is different from society in one way, shape, or form, he is blocked out from their society. Matt "understood he was only a photograph of a human, and that meant he wasn't really important" (84). This is significant because all of what society imagined him as made an imprint on his identity of himself. Again, this connects to the motif of identity because he is beating himself up because he is a clone. His identity in being a clone leads him to believe that he is an unworthy person. In the future, Matt wants to hide his identity from others. As a result, Matt's perception of himself leads to a negative identity of himself that affects his actions later in the novel.

Erik Erikson was correct when he explained that you truly live when you have a sense of identity. Not only was Matt more confident, but his actions were more defined when Matt discovered his identity. Due to multiple conflicts, Matt was forced to discover his identity or his purpose, in life. From being an outcast to society to almost being killed by a loved one, Matt had a great deal of life-changing events that changed his characterization dramatically. If Matt had just given up, the country of Opium would have remained under an unjust ruler, and it would not be able to flourish under Matt's reign. Nancy Farmer made it clear that one's identity can only be discovered by dilemmas. This goes to show that when times get tough if you persist, you will overcome them.