

Sean McClellan

Essay

Describe a character in fiction that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.

A while ago, probably sometime last year, I was browsing through a great local bookstore here in Walla, Walla, Earthlight Books. At the same time I happened to be looking for something to read for my own enjoyment so I busily scanned through the “used fiction” section looking at anything that caught my eye. As it happened on the fateful day, I ended up purchasing that provocative piece of prophetic British literature, Brave new World, by Aldous Huxley. This novel, especially because of the character Helmholtz Watson, enabled me to see society, and particularly high school society, in a wholly new manner.

While reading the book, I empathized with Watson, as Huxley surely intended, because of Watson’s ability to see Huxley’s futuristic society for what it was. Near the beginning of the novel, Watson acts the perfect image of an Alpha Plus male; yet, as the plot continues, Helmholtz realizes that he is not finding fulfillment living the high life and pleasing everyone but himself. Now granted, I have never been the popular, athletic, ladies’ man that Watson is. Nevertheless, Mr. Watson inspired me because he reaffirmed my belief that I need not worry about being “cool” in the manner that peer pressure and pop culture proclaims everyone should. Rather, enjoying the close friends, appreciating family and being passionate about things I love to do, such as swimming, being out of doors, and participating in mock legislature and mock trial, have become progressively more important over the course of my high school career. Just as Watson became a truly unique individual upon realizing that Huxley’s society was stifling his creativity, I have come even more to find the daily routine of high school life monotonous and shallow.

That said, I would like more than almost anything to enroll in an establishment of higher education where people care about learning simply for learning’s sake, where people keep their minds truly open, where people find honest, intellectual debate thoroughly stimulating and where I can be an individual and be normal, at the same time. I want to follow Helmholtz Watson’s footsteps at the end of Brave New World and enter an “island” full of the best thinkers of the time and times past. And perhaps more importantly, I want to have an adventure on this island, a fantastic one totally different from anything I have ever experienced; I believe Wesleyan University can be the site of that adventure.