



The Self-Absorbed Bubble Of Young Adults In Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why*.

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Abstract: In Jay Asher's "Thirteen Reasons Why," the narrative revolves around the self-absorbed bubble enveloping young adult characters, particularly evident through the protagonist Hannah Baker's posthumous revelations on cassette tapes. The characters' self-centered perspectives lead to a toxic social atmosphere, hindering genuine connections and empathy. This analysis delves into the psychological ramifications of their self-absorption, examining its impact on interpersonal relationships and emphasizing the missed opportunities for meaningful communication. The narrative structure, alternating between Hannah's tapes and the reactions of those implicated, underscores the cyclical nature of self-absorption and its pervasive consequences within the adolescent community. Through this exploration, the study aims to highlight the importance of breaking free from such bubbles to cultivate a more compassionate and supportive environment for young adults.

Index Terms - Thirteen Reasons Why, Jay Asher Self-absorption, Teen suicide, Toxic social environment, Empathy, Interpersonal relationships, Communication Narrative structure, Psychological impact, Adolescent community, Cyclical nature, Isolation, Social consequences, Narrative perspective, Posthumous narration, Cassette tapes, Character dynamics, Youth mental health, Compassionate environment.

Introduction

Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why* is a novel that explores the dark side of high school life, including bullying, suicide, and the self-absorbed bubble of young adults. The novel follows the story of Clay Jensen, a high school student who receives a box of cassette tapes from his classmate Hannah Baker, who has recently committed suicide. On the tapes, Hannah records thirteen reasons why she decided to end her life, each reason corresponding to a different person who played a role in her suicide.

One of the most striking themes of *Thirteen Reasons Why* is the self-absorbed bubble that young adults can live in. The characters in the novel are often so focused on their own problems and dramas that they are unable to see the pain and suffering of others. This is evident in the way that they treat Hannah Baker, who is bullied and harassed by many of the other students in the school. The students are so wrapped up in their own lives that they fail to see the devastating impact that their actions are having on Hannah.

The self-absorbed bubble of young adults is not just a fictional construct. It is a real phenomenon that can have serious consequences. In the United States, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10-24. Many of these suicides are preventable, but they occur because young people are often reluctant to seek help or because they are surrounded by people who are too focused on their own problems to notice their distress.

Thirteen Reasons Why is a powerful novel that raises important questions about the self-absorbed bubble of young adults. The novel is a cautionary tale for both young people and adults alike. It reminds us that we all need to be more aware of the impact that our words and actions can have on others.

Personal identity deals with philosophical questions that arise about us by our being people (or, as lawyers and philosophers like to say, *persons*). This contrasts with questions about ourselves arising from our being living things, conscious beings, material objects, or the like. Many of these questions occur to nearly all of us now and again: What am I? When did I begin? What will happen to me when I die? Others are more abstruse. Personal identity has been discussed since the origins of Western philosophy, and most significant figures have had something to say about it. Personal identity is sometimes discussed under the protean term *self*. And 'self' does sometimes mean 'person.' And 'self' does sometimes mean 'person.' But it often means something different: some immaterial subject of consciousness. (Eric Olson)

Jay Asher is a contemporary American author who writes books in the Young Adult genre. Born on September 30, 1975, in Arcadia, California, Asher graduated from San Luis Obispo High School, studied at Cuesta Community College, and eventually transferred to California Polytechnic State University. While in high school, Asher wrote two children's books for a class called Children's Literature Appreciation. This experience sparked his passion for writing books for young readers. Years later, in University, this passion caused Asher to drop out during his senior year to pursue a serious career in writing.

It took Asher around twelve years to sell his first book. His debut novel, *Thirteen Reasons Why*, is critically acclaimed and on bookshelves around the globe. The novel is a gripping tale of a young girl and the catalysts that drove her to commit suicide. Asher's inspiration for the book came from the suicide attempt of a close relative. This young woman was close to the age of Hannah Baker, the protagonist of *Thirteen Reasons Why*, when she made her suicide attempt, and so Asher used her state of mind and thoughts to help him craft the book.

The book's unique format - someone's recorded voice leading another person on a journey - was inspired by another one of Asher's life experiences. He was on an audio tour at a museum, where a disembodied voice led him through the exhibitions, when it occurred to him that this would be a fascinating way to tell a story. The fact that a deceased person is giving the tour or telling the story from beyond the grave further adds to *Thirteen Reasons Why's* uniqueness and allure amongst readers.

Thirteen Reasons Why's focus on bullying and teen suicide has made it a popular book amongst readers and activists of the suicide prevention movement. When he is not writing, Jay Asher travels around the United States, speaking at schools and libraries about his books, suicide prevention, and creative writing for young adults.

Thirteen Reasons Why follows the story of Clay Jensen as he returns home from school to find a mysterious package on his bed. When he opens it, he sees seven cassette tapes. Upon inserting them into his family's cassette player, he discovers they were recorded by Hannah Baker, a girl that he went to school with who recently committed suicide. Her instructions are clear: each person who receives a package is one of the reasons why she killed herself, and after each person has completed listening to the tapes, they must pass the packet on to the next person. If anyone decides to break the chain, a separate set of tapes will be released to the public.

The first tape is addressed to Justin Foley, Hannah's first kiss. She addresses the first time they kissed after meeting in a playground in their town and explains that it was lovely and completely innocent. However, she also explains that Justin later bragged to his friends that more had happened in the park, and Hannah was called a slut for the rest of high school. At this point, Clay pauses the tapes and goes to his friend Tony's house, where he borrows his portable Walkman to listen to the tapes while following the locations of each of Hannah's stories. The areas are designated on a map that she slipped into the lockers of each recipient before her death.

The second tape is addressed to Alex Standall, who compiled a list during Hannah's first year that declared she had the best ass in the first-year class. Hannah explains that the title led to a boy assaulting her in the local candy store, only adding to her insecurity after being labeled a slut.

The third tape is addressed to Jessica Davis, a new student during Hannah's first year when Hannah also moved to the town. The two were introduced by their guidance counselor, who wanted to give them a support network while they adjusted to high school. Hannah never considered her or Alex Standall (a new student that year) her friends, even though they often hung out at a local coffee house. Jessica and Alex dated and then broke up. After the best-ass incident, Jessica was offended that Alex "chose" Hannah over her, and the two stopped talking. Jessica continued to bring up the rumors that Hannah was a slut.

The fourth tape is addressed to Tyler Down, who stalked Hannah outside her bedroom window and took pictures of her. In addition to Tyler, the video addresses an unnamed girl Hannah knew somewhat well and whose help she enlisted to help catch the Peeping Tom. The unknown girl decided to give Tyler a show, first asking Hannah to provide her with a back massage and then exclaiming about nonexistent sex toys that she "found" in Hannah's drawer. As her privacy had been infringed on, Hannah felt violated by Tyler, but she moved on to address the unnamed girl next.

The story of Courtney Crimson is told in the fifth tape. She is known as a sweet, well-liked girl, a persona Hannah explains she fell for. Following the event with Tyler, however, Hannah began to feel ignored by Courtney, and even when Courtney invited her to a party, she still felt suspicious. Courtney abandoned her at the party, and later, Hannah found that Courtney had been spreading lies about the "surprises" she'd seen in Hannah's drawer.

The sixth tape is addressed to Marcus Cooley, whom Hannah matched within a set of school Valentines. He showed up late to a date for ice cream that she had organized and then molested her in a booth at the diner where they had met.

The seventh tape is addressed to Zach Dempsey. Hannah explains that in her Peer Communications class, there was a set of bags at the back of the room where students could leave compliments for each other. After her assault in the diner, Zach comforted her. However, she later discovered that he had removed notes from her bag. By this point, Hannah explains, she was already depressed, and that action only worsened her condition. She also explains that she wrote an anonymous note to her Peer Communications class where she shared that she had been suicidal. No class member took the note seriously, thinking it was made up for attention.

The eighth tape is addressed to Ryan Shaver, who attended a poetry class with Hannah while she was spiraling further into depression. They shared their poetry, including Hannah's poem about being unable to accept herself. Ryan later anonymously published the poem in his magazine, *The Lost and Found Gazette*, betraying Hannah's trust.

The ninth tape is addressed to Clay, who Hannah says does not deserve to be on the list. She says that he is a genuinely lovely boy. She explains that they were at a party together, very close to the end of her life, when everything was spiraling out of control. They had a very long conversation and learned a lot about each other, and Hannah explained that she wished she had gotten to know him earlier. They kissed, and she felt overwhelmed by remembering what had happened between her and Justin.

The tenth tape is addressed to Justin again. Hannah explains that on the night of the party, he allowed his friend to enter a room where a drunk, unconscious girl was lying and raped her. Hannah does not name the boy who committed the rape; she explains that if she called him, he would skip town and stop the chain of tapes. However, to a certain extent, she blames Justin for allowing the boy into the room in the first place.

The eleventh tape is addressed to Jenny Kurtz, who gave Hannah a ride home after the party and hit a stop sign. Later, a car crash happened at the intersection due to the stop sign not being there, and a senior at Hannah's school was killed; the day of his funeral led Hannah to think about her funeral. The twelfth tape is addressed to Bryce Walker, who sexually assaulted Hannah in a hot tub at the party before she left. On this tape, Hannah begins discussing how she plans to kill herself.

The thirteenth tape is addressed to Mr. Porter, an English teacher who was a guidance counselor at Hannah's school for a while. She went to him with depression and isolation, and he did nothing to help her.

As the tapes are playing, Clay walks to each location that Hannah discusses, feeling increasingly distressed as he does so. By the end of the tapes, he feels changed, and the novel ends with him addressing a student named Skye, who he sees behaving like Hannah, potentially preventing another suicide.

This paper analyzes how today's young adults lead a self-absorbed life. They live in a bubble that they have created around them, which can never be penetrated no matter what goes around them; even the death of a fellow student never affected them. "A lot of you cared, just not enough." (153trw). But in the novel by Jay Asher, *Thirteen Reasons Why*, this impenetrable bubble bursts when the protagonist, Clay Jensen, finds a package waiting for him. When he opens it, he finds thirteen tapes waiting for him to hear, and these tapes will change his life forever. Clay Jensen loved Hannah truly, but still, he was also a reason for the death of Hannah

Baker. Hannah Baker is an average teenage girl who suffers from depression, a problem that most young adults face today.

This book can be related to all the young readers out there, and it helps them know that their life is not that bad and things can and may change for the better. But in the case of Hannah Baker, she saw things and heard things that can shatter anyone and break even the strongest person. An average girl, Hannah Baker, fell in love, and the world changed it into a rumor, calling her names. Slowly, everyone she thought was her friends showed the other side of themselves and how their actions never affected them, but it all affected Hannah. As usual, they were oblivious to the world around them and the hurt they inflicted on her.

She saw things she could never utter, and she contemplated ending her life when she tried to get help. Life gave her another blow. Was it life, or was it someone she knew? Yes, it was from her very own classmate. Why push another human being down, taking away the one thing they look forward to, the light on her dark day, the appreciation she longed for but never got? She did try to send out signals, and no one understood what was wrong. They did not see the signs.

The bubble could never be penetrated, even when the signs were obvious. These characters, knowingly or unknowingly, like Clay Jensen, were the reasons behind Hannah's death. How does it feel when you can't go back and change the past, and you are forced to live with the guilt that their blood is on your hands and you never knew then that your actions will and always have a consequence? This novel has been an eye opener to the world around us, how we ignore the people around us, how we are never there to save the other person in their time of need, and how we only add to their misery knowingly or unknowingly we hurt them. Thus, this paper explains how young adults should break the bubble they live in and see the world where there are real people who are suffering, people who are dealing with issues with one to hear, people who send out silent signs for someone to see, someone to save them.

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