
Characteristics Of The Main Heroes in “Me And Earl And The Dying Girl” By Jesse Andrews

Even though a lot of characters in books may seem the same there is always a big difference between them. The big difference between people who are really important is that they are always changing themselves for the better of the people around them. Two characters that do this are Greg S. Gaines and Earl Jackson from *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*, a novel by Jesse Andrews published in 2012, go through lots of change for the better. The way that they change themselves in the novel is very important. Through their personalities and actions, Greg and Earl are able to move the story forward.

Greg S. Gaines is the main character who moves the story forward. Greg is an overweight, white, and pale 17-year-old senior who attends Benson high school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At the beginning of the novel, one learns that there are many clubs which are practically the friend groups. His thought process was that if you were friends with somebody in one group every other group would be your enemy. In order to get around this problem Greg figures out a way to gain “access to every group” (Andrews 8). His strategy is to be equally friendly to all the groups so that none of them will notice that he is a part of another group when he really is in reality. He also spends very little time with each group to not stand out so his strategy doesn't get revealed. However, in reality, this is a selfish strategy because in order to really be a part of every clique he needs to be a genuine friend to everybody, so in reality, he is not a part of every group nor friends with everybody because he is not being a genuine friend. However, his friendship problem completely changes when he learns that his classmate, Rachel Kushner, has leukemia. At first, Greg is unwilling to get closer with her because he thinks that it will ruin his social status, but after every time they meet and talk to each other, their friendship gets even greater. This is a sign that Greg is actually willing to change for the better. In the beginning, Greg feels like he is forced to hang out with Rachael just because his mom wants him to be sympathetic about it. Heading towards the end of the novel Greg goes to her house and says “I'm coming here because I want to”, which a sign of not willing to change because he is lying. However, it is not till the near end where Greg is actually ending up being committed for a change. Greg actually realizes that he cares about Rachel because he “was crying the whole time... and it was different somehow”. After Rachel dies he understands and comes to a realization that it's not too late, and he can still change his ways. It is that moment when Greg completely changes his mindset and is 100% focused on school, he wants to get into college.

Earl Jackson is also an important character who moves the story forward and is a good friend of Greg. Earl is a very short and underprivileged kid who only cares about getting high school over with. Earl was raised poorly, he was made fun of by his family members of his height which most likely caused his anger problems and does not have the chance to spend time with his mom or dad. This makes him have to learn on his own and have to fend for himself. Earl and Greg have been friends since kindergarten so they are very close, but when Greg starts to visit Rachel Earl decides to come along as well. Earl changed from being an uncaring and rude person to almost having the thought process and attitude of an adult. One of the most important things Earl does in this novel is sharing one of he and Greg's films to make her feel trusted and happy. Something that Earl keeps consistent throughout the novel is always being there for Greg. One of the most important things he says to Greg that makes him realize that he needs to

change is his feelings toward Rachel is that he cannot act as though Rachel is “some kinda burden” because he does not like or care about her, but Rachel definitely cares and loves Greg. Since Earl really understands the concept of pain he is also able to help Greg go through the grieving process of Rachel's death. Throughout the book, Earl impacts not only Greg but many of the other characters in positive ways and will always be there for the people who really need his help.

High school is one of the most important steps in life for Greg and Earl because they are able to learn and understand so many new things. One of the most important things that Greg learns is that he actually needs real friends like Earl. At the beginning of the book, Greg thought a friend was just having a small bond with somebody, and having the most friends would mean the cooler you are. One of the main rules in his plan is that he “cannot become too deeply enmeshed in any one group”. However, when he and Earl and Rachel slowly start becoming better and better friends he realized that people like Earl and Rachel are real friends.

Greg being the character who is there to help and comfort Rachel and being with her to the end, and Earl being the character that motivates him to always be a better person and improve on himself shows that their personalities and actions are really what moves the story forward. They both are able to develop very quickly, but at the same pace also since they are with each other most of the time. While working together they all were able to help each other, but most importantly they were able to make a difference in a dying girl's life.