
The Growth From Innocence to Experience Throughout The Marrow Thieves

Set in a dystopian future, where fighting and running is the key to life, *The Marrow Thieves* showcases the many challenges that the world's future might have. "Like caterpillars to butterflies these characters have gone through transformations that make them completely unrecognizable from the people they were at the start of their arc" (Malikali). Each challenge allows the main character, Frenchie, to grow and develop from being innocent to being experienced, through trials of survival, inner strength, and the support and growth of friendship.

Throughout the novel, Frenchie faces many challenges, one of which is survival. Through the different trials of survival within the novel, Frenchie was able to grow from an innocent young boy to an independent and strong man. *The Marrow Thieves* is considered a dystopian novel which ultimately means "[A]n imagined state or society in which there is great suffering or injustice, typically one that is totalitarian or post-apocalyptic" (Dystopia). This definition rings true for *The Marrow Thieves* due to many aspects of survival shown, such as killing, hunting, running away, and scavenging for food. Frenchie demonstrates a lack of experience at the beginning of the novel after Mitch (Frenchie's brother) has died. Frenchie was unsure of what to do if or when he saw an animal. Frenchie acknowledges his inexperience when he thinks, "Keeping my eyes to the ground for animal tracks with no idea of what I would do if I actually saw some" (Dimaline, 10). However, near the end of the novel Frenchie has killed not only animals but a human being as well. "RiRi was dead. I had killed a man. And there was no taking either of those things back" (Dimaline, 139). Frenchie was faced with a difficult decision, to let the man live as he might be able to bring them to safety, or to kill the man to save himself and his group from more possible deaths. These two examples of decisions and actions for survival, demonstrate the growth of knowledge and the experience of survival that Frenchie obtained throughout the novel. Frenchie not only grew to learn what to do in times of survival, but he excelled in a way that only the experienced can. Along with this growth in survival experience, is the elimination of fear. Frenchie describes that when Mitch was alive he was allowed to be scared of his fears, however, once his brother had left he did not have a choice but to persevere through his fears. "I had been scared of them all when I was still running with my brother. Now, in the wake of his removal, they were nothing" (Dimaline, 8). This quote also highlights the growth of maturity of Frenchie through his journey of survival, as Frenchie realizes that there is no other choice but to push through the challenging times.

Many human beings go through ups and downs every day that are only possible to get through with internal strength. This is true for Frenchie as he has been involved in many events that allowed him to grow through determination and strength. Cherie Dimaline, the author of the novel, also showcases this through colour and tone in the way Frenchie speaks. Frenchie struggled with the loss of his brother and his parents when he was still young. When Mitch was taken by the recruiters, Frenchie showed a tremendous amount of emotion, however, the emotion was shown within the way he spoke as he yelled at a pack of pigs, "We're all dead anyway" (Dimaline, 8). The tone Frenchie used is clear as he is hopeless, alone, and upset. At this point Frenchie was young and innocent and did not know any better than to give up. At the end of the novel Frenchie began to realize that as long as there are dreamers left on the earth, then there will never be the want to kill and harm any more indigenous people like Frenchie.

This demonstrates Frenchie's growth and awareness that everything will be ok in the long run. Frenchie's growth through the way he showed emotion near the end of the novel changed as he matured and had more experience to traumatizing events. Frenchie killed a man to make sure his group was safe, however, he explains that the colour in his life has changed for the worse, "Something had changed since I'd fired the gun, since I'd killed Travis. It was like a colour had ceased to exist and now the world seemed dull" (Dimaline, 139). Dimaline showcases Frenchie's inner struggle through his awareness of colour as this demonstrates the sadness and agony that Frenchie is going through. This also demonstrates Frenchie's growth from innocence to experience through the demonstration of his inner strength, as he is more aware of the pain inside of him as opposed to the way he reacted to the pain that he was feeling at the beginning of the novel.

The Marrow Thieves, despite its lack of true bloodline families, shows the support and growth of friendships throughout the novel. With this, Frenchie was able to grow and develop as a human and as a loving and caring friend. Rose, one of the girls in Frenchie's group, had one of the biggest impacts on Frenchie's change and growth as a human. After Frenchie met Rose he immediately felt a connection, he states, "she made me feel like I needed to be a better person just through her existing" (Dimaline, 32). Dimaline's use of a simile in this sentence demonstrates a comparison of how Frenchie is feeling to how he should be feeling. Throughout the novel Frenchie makes it very clear that he has a crush on Rose and that he also has times where he gets jealous, displaying how much he cares about her. At the beginning of the novel, Frenchie had no one to care about but himself and his brother, however, once his brother was taken away and Frenchie had to join a new family, he then had around eight new individuals that he had to care for and love.. Along with this comes the death of a few of the group members. Frenchie grew extremely close to RiRi, the youngest group member, however, after her death Frenchie was said to have changed - "you know what French, you're different. At first I thought it was because of RiRi and Minerva, but now, you're even more different here" (Dimaline, 196). Due to the changes in Frenchie's life between the death of friends and the growth of friends in his life, Frenchie's perspective of his life had changed, again demonstrating his growth from innocence to experience.

Overall, as many human beings experience change within their lifetime innocence fades and experience blossoms. This is demonstrated within The Marrow Thieves as Frenchie's journey through the dystopian world throws many challenges at him and trials of survival, inner strength, and the growth and support of friendship are all necessary elements for his growth. Dimaline also uses a few literary elements such as tone, colour, and similes to showcase Frenchie's growth and awareness throughout his journey.