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## Why Unity Is Better Than Segregation In Judith Guest's Novel Ordinary People

"Yeah. About friends. I don't have any. I got sort of out of touch before I left." Conrad's attempt to isolate himself before his decision was not an accident, it was his attempt to free himself from the binds that normal society would have put upon him. It wasn't his actions that drove him to isolation, but his thoughts that kept him from growing close to anyone in the first place. This is best seen after his attempt, when he starts meeting with Berger. It is quite evident that the decision-making process that led him here did not involve his opinions, but was an attempt by his father to bring Conrad closer to society. In the beginning, this seems to fail, because Conrad does not enjoy nor appreciate the attempts of Berger to close the gap that Conrad has created. However, over the stretch of the novel, this gap is slowly closed by the friendship Conrad creates with Berger, and his overall trend toward a closer relationship with his family.

The novel begins to demonstrate Conrad's isolation by making his morning routine seem like an assembly line, where no emotion is showed at any step that could lead to a break or malfunction. This part shows how Conrad has very rapidly descended away from societal norms and has created his own sense of reality that he must live through every day without thinking about it. He also begins daydreaming in the middle of a lecture about Stillman, the rude kid talking to , telling himself "he was never friend". The outlook some other kids in his class have on him may also affect his outlook on friends as a whole. If no one comes to support him after his endeavor with suicide, and most act as if nothing happened or still be rude to him, then he will obviously be disinterested in trying to create new "true" friends after the fact. Also, when he was called back to attention by the teacher, this moment could represent the start of his gradual redemption back to society, because soon after he meets Berger and begins the healing process.

The transition from this low does not come easy. Conrad continues to be isolated, even from the man trying to heal this isolation. He will not open up to Berger at first, which represents his resentment to help from his father and society as a whole. However, over essentially the entire novel, Conrad makes friends with this Berger, which opens his isolated world to a hole that Berger exploits and expands until Conrad is fully redeveloped with society. He accomplished this by first allowing Conrad to talk about whatever he wants, and thereby gaining the information he needs to bring him back. The book develops isolation as the enemy, and therefore the heroic Conrad must reconnect with society and community in order to survive his dark thoughts after his poor actions. By emphasizing the struggles of isolation to a threatened teenager, Guest has portrayed the importance of community in her novel.

Based on the fact that the transition from Conrad's isolated self to a more open, life filled teenager is seen as a positive trend, the book leans more on the part of community over isolation. Conrad's isolation from his family led to his decline, and after the fact, he was much more down upon life as a whole. However, by the work of Berger, his life transitioned to a more spirited one with a greater focus on family, as well as friends and future life. Not possible without the community of people supporting him, most notably his father, this book represents the benefits of community over isolation, especially in trouble times.