

Student Sample #1 (With Images)

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Rorschach's Digression Due to Tragedy

Life plays a large role into how we develop, whether that is through our parents, our social class, or other occasions that we build our foundation upon while growing up.

Each of these affects our mind and how we make decisions that may or may not lead to consequences or misunderstandings.

Throughout life we need a lot of attention and care even though we may not realize it at that time. **Provided by Christopher M.**

Aanstoos in a journal article titled "Maslow's Hierarchy of needs"

is the Maslow's Hierarchy of needs pictured to the right. Layered

in each tier of this hierarchy are the things or goals a person

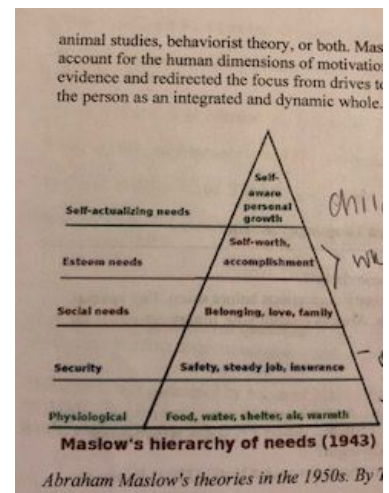
during that stage of life has maintained control of and meets. There are many factors

that should be considered when our mental state is affected negatively as a result of

conflicts faced. We see that with Rorschach's life in *Watchmen* as the hierarchy

becomes a part of his decision making during each stage he undergoes. **Rorschach's**

past life trauma has resulted in his digression down Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Rorschach, during childhood, experiences self-actualizing needs as he has everything he wishes to survive. Specifically, Rorschach struggles to find a positive relationship with his mom, who is the one putting food on the table, clothes on his back, and earning the money to provide for him. Rorschach at this level of the hierarchy has shelter, safety, family, and he has accomplished knowing he is worth something and is at the top of the tier with growth. Rorschach's mother gives him life itself, but not only that he has a roof over his head and clothes on his back. In Chapter 6, on page 3, we are looking at a scene where Walter Kovacs's mother is experiencing an intimate moment with a man and Kovacs walks in on them. His mother is not happy, but is doing this for money so that she is able to provide for them. Kovacs is then told by his mother on page 4 of chapter six, in panel 7 that "I should have listened to everybody else! I shoulda



had the abortion." We see that this piece of tragedy is a large portion which will lead to future issues Rorschach will face. Our parents are who we tend to look to for life advice, or even footsteps to follow as we develop and become our individual selves. Understanding his mother while at the same time trying to understand himself, he has struggled with the idea of growing up and is dependent on his mother for every little thing. **In a journal article, titled "Pathways from problems in adolescent family relationships to midlife mental health via early adulthood**



disadvantages- a 26 year longitudinal study,” written by Noora Berg, who is a researcher in life studies and mental health, as well as many other subjects explains that, “parents support their children in various ways, such as by providing physical, human, social and economic capital as well as through normative and behavioral guidance (...)”(Berg Par #4). This idea shows how much a parent really does affect a child whether they have everything or not. They will develop in the only way they have come to know and that is through watching those around them. It is more than just food and water that develop a child, it is actions taken. Walter Kovacs is given all of this when he is living under his mothers roof under her rules, and her lifestyle. Rorschach and the way he has developed down the hierarchy has taken what his mom has done to him and has viewed life differently even without realizing it. Although Rorschach has had everything he needed as a child the pain he has endured from his mom has left him to drift lower down the hierarchy. Developing a foundation of life comes from childhood experiences, and if they are not developed to the full extent they need to be such as Walter’s, then life will no longer have a positive outlook. Clarity will no longer be given as to how life should be and things will be looked at with more animosity.

Esteem needs and social needs are slowly missing as Rorschach enters his middle aged years. During this period of time as Walter Kovacs, and only being sixteen he had run away from the children’s home he was living at. Kovacs had started working for a garment industry. In chapter 6, page 10, panel 1, Rorschach explains that, “Job bearable but unpleasant. Had to handle female clothing”. This statement made by Walter



illustrates how his needs of accomplishment are being shut down by nobody but himself. Although he has a new job and is becoming an individual he has yet to come to terms with his own worth. By him stating the negative aspects that go along with the job, he is not looking at the fact that he is growing and developing as an individual. His idea of relationships have been broken and no longer can anyone be trusted. When studying the image more in depth, we see that the man behind Kovacs has his hand laying on his back. Walter's face looks as though he is frightened, therefore, what is portrayed here is the sense of belonging that is lost due to the negative experiences that Walter has encountered . Walter looks scared and this is due to his past. No one can be trusted any longer and he does not have the ability to accept relationships with others.

Therefore, he feels as though he does not fit in overall which has affected his social life.

Christina D. Bethell, who is a professor in child and adolescent health measurement with a PhD, as well as a few others have stated in their Journal Article "Methods to Assess Adverse Childhood Experiences of Children and Families: Toward Approaches to Promote Child Well-being in Policy and Practice," that "ACEs assessment relates to exposures to adverse experiences that can disrupt the safety, stability, and nourishing qualities of a child's primary relationships and environment and that, in turn, pose risk for trauma and chronic stress linked to healthy development and wellbeing"(Bethell Par.#11). This statement describes how a relationship, what it means to belong, and the healthy aspects of life are affected by different life exposures. These experiences have affected Rorschach's sense of being wanted and have left him on his own to protect

himself alone. Rorschach's lack of relationships are not the only thing holding him back. Walter's life choices are leading him to problems that are hard to repair.

Kovacs, before transitioning to Rorschach, experiences a lack of security in himself. During his life and the issues that he faced, Walter never really felt as though he had an identity or life that was safe overall. He did not have a steady job or even the defense he needed to protect himself. As Walter he was just a normal person. When he



started working in the dress shop, we see the dress that was made and never picked up Walter had taken home. Illustrated in chapter 6, page 10, panel 4, Walter begins to create the mask which will eventually be his future identity as Rorschach. This image shows the security that he lacks when being himself, while reflecting his own imagination of always wanting to be someone he is not. He is placed at this lower stage because he does not have the means to

live a secure life as of a job, and his whole identity alone which is not protecting him when trouble is presented. The trauma he has faced has affected the way he protects himself, therefore, he does not have a steady foundation to base his security upon. In the article titled "Our Unconscious Mind" written by John Bargh, who is a social psychologist working at Yale points out that, "our unconscious mind may not nudge us to choose a particular option, but it may help muster the necessary motivation to actually achieve it" (Bargh Par.#33). This is important because as Walter has entered this stage, he is wanting to reach the level of security necessary without realizing it, yet he does not have the motivation that is needed to reach this point in his life. He has yet

to become Rorschach the masked superhero he has always wanted to be in order to protect himself.

Rorschach, as a masked superhero, is now at the bottom tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs with no life necessities due to past experiences. At this level of the Hierarchy he is missing the necessities such as food, water, and shelter. This all begins after he witnesses two dogs fighting over a bone in which was a little girls shown on page 20 of chapter 6 panels 5,6,7, and 8. This image then leads us to where we are then first introduced to Rorschach as he is now masked, and identified officially. While maintaining his identity as Rorschach, we are given more visuals as to how he has none of what is needed in the bottom tier of the Hierarchy. Images shown on Chapter 1, page 11, panel 5 reveal Rorschach taking sugar cubes from Dan as this is what will be his food to keep him going. This is important to bring up because it shows how at this stage in his life he is dependent on the food of others because he does not have any of his own. This idea and image paint a bigger picture as to how he has struggled even as the person he has always wanted to be. Rorschach and his Physiological needs are not being met



because of his dreams and aspirations to be a masked superhero. Due to him being wanted for murder there is no stable source of shelter as well.

We see that on Page 11 of Chapter 7 in panel 9. He is constantly on the run to keep his identity protected

because this is the only thing that is positive in his life. Presented in this image are dirty dishes and his landlord which help us see how he spends a majority of his time away from home running from problems. With his hidden identity Rorschach cannot live a normal life with everything he needs. A journal article Written by Laura Szanto called "Childhood Trauma Experience and the Expression of Problematic Sexual Behavior in Children and Adolescents in State Custody" states that "current research indicates that children who are maltreated exhibit more psychiatric symptoms[...]"(Szanto Par.#2). The mental instability that Rorschach faces as a result of struggling to be who he wanted, has led him to a hard place of understanding himself. This is all due to the struggle he faced as a child with his mother affecting who he is as Rorschach.

To conclude we are guided through Rorschach's life where we are shown how Rorschach's past life trauma has resulted in his digression down Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Looking at the top tier self-actualizing needs, we are given a glimpse of his childhood where he is talked down to by his mother who is a provider for him. This affects his relationships with others in which he no longer trusts people. Later, Rorschach is seen at the two tiers under the highest one where he lacks a sense of accomplishment and belonging. This is illustrated by his work in the dress shop, where he is uneasy to create a relationship and really connect to the job, as well as to the man guiding him along the way. Next, Walter is experiencing a level of security when he first puts on the Mask that he had made out of the fabric from the dress a women never picked up. This is is where he begins to feel safe, yet he still lacks the confidence in himself as being just Walter. This missing piece affects every other stage that is

essential in a healthy life. At last, Rorschach is who he has always wanted to be and is now a masked superhero. This is where he only experiences life and its physiological needs with a lack of life's major necessities, water, food, and shelter. We are given a more developed idea of this struggle that Rorschach faces in more ways than one. Life is not based on dreams achieved, and Rorschach is a prime example as to how you can have what you have always wanted, but it will never be good enough to survive. Overall, life trauma as we have learned through Rorschach takes away from the minds well being and limits people when it comes to the ability to live and we saw that with the different stages that Rorschach had undergone.

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