

An Examination of Identity Crisis in Ruskin Bond's *The Blue Umbrella*

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Abstract

This paper deals with the theme of Identity crisis in Ruskin bond's "The Blue umbrella". While reading close to the text and analysing the character development, the paper tries to explain about how the little girl, Binya struggles with questions of self-identity. She struggles with the questions of belonging and societal expectations. By examining the key moments in the story, such as Binya's accession of the blue umbrella and her interactions with other characters, the paper examines the internal dispute and external influences which mould Binya's sense of self. Also this paper examines the identity formations and the human experience of navigating through periods of uncertainty and self-discovery.

Keywords: Identity Crisis, Struggles, Character Development, Self-Discovery, Psychological Analysis.

"The Blue Umbrella," written by Ruskin Bond, is a moving examination of identity crisis that emphasizes the difficulties of self-discovery and the effects of outside influences on one's sense of self. Bond skillfully explores these subjects via the perspective of a little girl living in a rural area, which makes the story thought-provoking and relevant. The protagonist Binya serves as a subtle conduit for the issue of identity crises throughout the story. A little child from a tiny village named Binya has a change in identity after she purchases a stunning blue umbrella from a traveler. With this umbrella, Binya elevates her position in the community and sets herself apart from her peers. It becomes a treasured possession. Her sense of identity and self-worth are further cemented by the praise and jealousy she gets from others.

Let's first define what an identity crisis is. An identity crisis is characterized as a time in a person's life when they feel uncertain or confused. An individual experiences this crisis when their sense of self becomes erratic and insecure. A person often experiences an identity crisis in response to a life transition. Nonetheless, an identity crisis might strike at any moment.

Although everyone has self-doubts occasionally, if you are going through a significant transition or a difficult period and your inner doubts about who you are start to get in the way of your everyday activities, you may be experiencing an identity crisis. It's possible that you're feeling more agitated, uninspired, or hollow.

There are a number of strategies to deal with an identity crisis, including professional therapy and social support, depending on the intensity of your feelings and symptoms.

Identity crisis refers to a stage theory of identity formation in psychology that entails resolving conflict throughout the course of eight stages of life. It was German psychologist Erik Erikson who first used the phrase.

Identity cohesion vs. role confusion is the term used to describe the stage of psychological development in which identity crisis may transpire. Adolescents must deal with physical development, sexual maturity, and the integration of their own and other people's perceptions about themselves throughout this phase. As a result, they create their self-image and struggle to overcome their ego identity problem. The resolution of a crisis effectively depends on an individual's advancement through prior developmental phases, which primarily address matters of trust, self-governance, and initiative.

In summary, Binya discovers who she is when she obtains the blue umbrella, a representation of her originality and distinctiveness in her small-town setting. But the umbrella theft puts her self-perception to the test and starts her on a path of self-awareness and personal development. Binya starts to define herself by having the umbrella because she grows attached to it and her personality becomes entwined with it. Her attachment to the umbrella is strengthened when she receives praise and jealousy from other villagers for her newfound sense of self. But when another villager takes the umbrella, Binya goes through a crisis because she can't cope with losing the actual item alone she also feels as though her identity is connected to it. From the perspective of her peers and the townspeople, the umbrella becomes a representation of her originality and difference.

Binya feels more like herself as her bond with the umbrella deepens. After purchasing a Blue Umbrella, Binya experienced an identity problem. Although she loved the umbrella more than anything in the world, she felt like a princess from a fairy tale, and as a result, she was now identified by the blue umbrella. She finds satisfaction and fulfillment in owning this prized item, and she starts to identify herself by it. The umbrella becomes more than simply a practical item; it also represents her identity and standing in her community.

Ruskin Bond's "The Blue Umbrella" tells the story of Ram Bharosa, the village shopkeeper, who uses a variety of strategies to try and find his place in the community. The portrayal of Ram Bharosa is that of a cunning businessman who is constantly searching for methods to obtain the upper hand and elevate his status.

Ram Bharosa uses his shop as a means of displaying his money and power in an attempt to establish his persona. He positions himself as a vital member of the community by taking pride in the range of products he offers and the services he renders to the locals. By providing necessities and serving as the village's go-to resource for needs, he becomes an important part of the community's social and economic life. Ram Bharosa also looks to other people for approval and acknowledgment, especially from visitors to the community. He views visitors as prospective clients and chances to showcase his commercial savvy. In an attempt to make a lasting impression on visitors, he frequently strikes up a conversation with them, impressing them with his merchandise and his in-depth knowledge of the area.

Ram Bharosa also makes an effort to strengthen his identity by associating with well-known people in the village. In order to maintain his position in the social hierarchy, he makes alliances with influential people and takes part in local activities. Ram Bharosa's character highlights the uncertainties and vulnerabilities that accompany attempting to uphold a particular image, even in spite of his attempts to claim his individuality and obtain attention.

His interactions with Binya and the other villagers demonstrate his need for respect and approval, implying that his identity is not totally stable and could be shaped by outside opinions.

Eventually, “The Blue Umbrella” and Ram Bharosa’s quest for identification highlight the complexity of human nature and the ways in which people negotiate social relations in their societies. When another villager takes the umbrella from Binya, she realizes that it is only an ephemeral exterior identity. Before that, Binya had connected the ownership of the blue umbrella to her sense of self and identity. She took delight in the respect and envy it drew from others, believing that owning the umbrella made her exceptional and unique in her town.

But when the umbrella is taken away from her, Binya has to face the reality that her identity was predicated on something transient and outside of herself. She feels disoriented and confused about who she is without the umbrella. Binya had an epiphany as a result of this loss, realizing that material goods and outside influences cannot determine one’s inner identity.

In the final phase, Binya’s coming to terms with the fact that the umbrella was only an outer persona aids in her character development. She gains a deeper awareness of both herself and the world around her as she discovers how to define her identity and feeling of value without reference to material belongings. Binya starts to realize that her identity extends beyond her possessions and how other people see her as she mulls over the umbrella theft and how it affected her sense of self. She discovers that a person’s ideals, experiences, and interpersonal connections shape their genuine identity, which originates from within.

Bond examines how outside events or things may mold a person’s sense of self via Binya’s trip and how flimsy this identity can be when it is based only on material items. The umbrella theft ultimately causes Binya to develop and get a deeper awareness of herself that goes beyond worldly belongings by forcing her to face the shallowness of her manufactured identity. At the conclusion of “The Blue Umbrella,” Binya sees the blue umbrella being destroyed by a storm, which leads her to the revelation that her identity is something she will always have. After being distraught at first by the loss of the umbrella, Binya eventually comes to terms with its destruction and understands that worldly belongings do not truly define who she is. When Binya observes the umbrella being ripped apart by the storm, she realizes that although outside things change, who she is within will never change. She understands that the umbrella and other outside elements do not define her worth or sense of self; rather, her values, experiences, and interpersonal relationships do.

The umbrella’s symbolic destruction acts as a trigger for Binya’s development and self-realization. She discovers resilience and power within herself, understanding that her own self cannot be altered by outside events. She feels empowered and liberated by this insight, accepting the stability of her inner identity. By the time the narrative comes to a close, Binya has grown stronger and more confident in herself, knowing that her true identity is within her and cannot be taken away by the vagaries of fate or the loss of material belongings.

In “The Blue Umbrella,” Binya finally realizes that virtues such as kindness and love are innate and will always exist when she considers what happened after the blue umbrella was destroyed. Binya finds consolation and comfort in the affection and care she receives from others around her, especially from Ram Bharosa and his wife, despite the loss of the umbrella. Binya gains insight about the transience of material possessions but the permanence of genuine human connection and acts of kindness via their support and compassion. She understands that traits like love, kindness, and empathy endure hardship and help to shape a person’s actual identity in a deep and enduring way.

In the end of the story, Binya has realized that her display of The Blue Umbrella caused Ram Bharosa to suffer indirectly. As a result, Binya voluntarily gives Ram Bharosa the umbrella, and he even offers her a bear claw pendant in return. Why is happiness dependent on an object?

The book masterfully illustrates in the end of the narrative that we don’t need an object to be happy.

The love we have for anything may eventually go away, but the love that exists between individuals never does.

As Binya observes the kindness and generosity of everyone around her, she comes to understand the intrinsic worth of these traits as well as their capacity to unite and encourage one another. As she comes to terms with the idea that genuine identity is defined by one's love and kindness for others rather than by what one owns, this discovery helps her comprehend herself and the world more fully.

When you own material possessions, you may be happy with them, but they can be stolen, they will eventually fade away, or people will be envious of them. These are examples of external identification; internal identification, on the other hand, such as humility, kindness, and goodness, cannot be stolen by anyone.

As she learns to discover contentment and significance beyond financial belongings and outward looks, Binya experiences a pivotal moment of growth and enlightenment when she realizes that interior traits like love and kindness are eternal forever.

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