



Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?

The Title

It suggests the book is going to deal with the answer to the question.

The reader has to extrapolate the answer from the text: Jeanette Winterson wants to create her individuality to be herself



THE SENSE OF LIFE IS TO BE YOURSELF

The Word Normal

The word *normal* refers to something or someone who/what conforms to a standard or to a norm in the society so the writer suggests just from the cover the topic of refusal.

The Word Happy

In the second chapter Jeanette Winterson dedicates the last two paragraphs to the word *happy*. But according to Jeanette Winterson pursuing happiness is more important than to be happy, indeed if you are always happy (even if it is impossible) you can't distinguish your feelings and emotions, life is happiness or sadness. The word happy comes from *hap*, that is the fate which can preserve happy or sad moments.

What the Americans, in their constitution call "the right to the pursuit of happiness is" the right to swim upstream, salmon-wise..

The meaning of the title is explained in this phrase: to be happy you can go against social conventions and against who prevents you TO BE YOURSELF

The Dedication

Why be happy when you could be normal?

the question is addressed to her adoptive mother

→ like a provocation(?!)

The dedication is addressed to her three mother → essential role in her life

- Ann S. → the biological mother
- Mrs. Winterson → the step mother
- Ruth Rendell → the literal mother

Each one is different from each other

Role of three mothers → psychoanalysis

The Memoir

- The memoir → circular and not linear structure
 - ▶ mesh builds up on the narrator's experiences, feelings, emotions
 - ▶ every chapter appeals to each other
 - ▶ mainly final chapter appeals to the first one

The pips – more money in the slot – and I'm thinking, as her voice goes in out like the sea, 'Why aren't proud you of me?'
(look at pag. 4, pag. 224)



direct comparison between Ann's figure and Mrs. Winterson's one and distance between the chapter (1th -15th)

Mrs Winterson



- In psychoanalysis → *Terrificans Mother* (is identified in Durga, Kali or Ecate)
She said: "It is the first time I've had order a book in a false name.."
...why aren't you proud of me? (1th chapter)
→ she is described like a Creature/Monster (look at 12th chapter)
→ **obstacle** on the growth of her daughter/son.



difficult and hard life

creation of individuality (love, books, leaving home)

→ going over the life obstacles

Ruth Rendell



- In psychoanalysis → the *Good Mother* ...never judging, quietly supporting, letting me talk, letting me be (13th chapter)
- Good Mother is identified in Marie, Iside or Demetra
- Symbols :
vase, womb → wrapping and protection.

Ann S.

- The objective of Jeanette's life
 - absent in Jeanette's life
 - an extraneous person for her

She could have been the perfect mother:

Do you mean you don't go with men?...I have no problem with that.

(look at 14th chapter)

[...]

I ordered your book from the library...I felt so proud!

(look at 15th chapter)

The Titles Of The Chapters

- **Titles**
 - ▶ not easy to find connection between the content of every chapter and its title
 - ▶ the few words of every title contain the core message
 - ▶ hidden connections from a chapter to another one
- **Chapters**
 - ▶ not directly and immediately connections among them
 - ▶ you have to go beyond the surface of lines

The Titles – The Chapters

1. The Wrong Crib

- ▶ Crib , c – rib → religious code
 - superiority of male gender
 - female gender is the **wrong** one
- ▶ Wrong → topic of refusal (refused by her birth mother and her adoptive mother)

→ homosexuality

2. My Advice To Anybody Is: Get Born

- ▶ Advice → to **get born**
 - people sleep (conform to mass, products of a factories and of industrialization process)
 - people are all the same, **normal** according to society
- ▶ anybody → advice is addressed to every kind of people
- ▶ get born → exhortation

→ creation of individuality, being her/himself

→ pursuing of happiness

→ being **happy** ≠ being **normal**

(→ Why be **happy** when you could be **normal**?)

3. In The Beginning Was The Word

- ▶ In the beginning → right from the start
→ implies continuation and consequences (other books)
- ▶ The Word → the Bible
→ she tricked her mother (from the beginning → different characters)
My mother turned over the page and said, 'Leave that to the Lord,'
I'd sneak a look (during they read the Bible)

4. The Trouble With A Book...

- ▶ The Trouble → according to Mrs. Winterson and to society
→ reflection on your life (creation of individuality, ideas and thought, not conform to mass, not normal)
- ▶ Book → Jeanette in hiding read forbidden pages of Bible and of other books
→ made her able to reflect on her life, to be herself
→ place of protection
I had no one to help me, but the T.S. Eliot helped me. [...]
That is what literature offers...it's isn't a hiding place. It is a finding place
→ gave the way (your future, Parable of Talents)
I had lines inside me - a string of guiding lights.

5. At Home

- ▶ Home → place of prohibitions
→ made her feel unsuitable, **wrong** (topic of refusal)

6. Church

- ▶ Church → place of comfort
 - religion had an important role in Jeanette's life
 - she felt to be accepted by God
 - religion makes life meaning, beyond material assets (industrialization period: wealth, money, food)
 - sharing the same ideals and life condition make people stronger

7. Accrington

- ▶ Accrington → description of town she lived
 - industrialization process (cotton factories → birth of spinning jenny)
 - desire to escape from Accrington

8. The Apocalypse

- ▶ The Apocalypse → reference to religion
 - catastrophic event (Jeanette's homosexuality)
 - relationship between Jeanette and adoptive family (topic of refusal)

9. English Literature A-Z

- ▶ Literature → important role of books in Jeanette's life

10. This Is The Road

- ▶ The Road → she found the way (sense of live, her talent → Parable of talents)
 - she attended Oxford
 - books helped her to find **the road**

Art and Lies

- ▶ Art → importance of literature
- ▶ Lies → tutor's false belief that literature was for a closed inner circle
 - hiding the past events and the true relation of Mrs Winterson and Jeanette

11. Intermission

- ▶ Direct intrusion of Jeanette into the narration
- ▶ Reflection from past to present
- ▶ Emotions, feelings and thoughts about her life (memoir → not chronologic order)

12. The Night Sea Voyage

- ▶ Night → darkness, period of suffering
- ▶ Sea → metaphor of an hard **voyage** (childhood, adolescence)
- ▶ Voyage → long way to pursuit happiness, light after darkness → books lighted the way

13. This Appointment Takes Place In The Past

- ▶ Appointment → something she has set for long time → meeting her birth mother
- ▶ In the past → now she has to face the reality
→ something she had always postponed

14. Strange Meeting

- ▶ Strange → something abnormal, different from usual → difference between Mrs Winterson and Ann
→ new emotions, new feelings → she felt to be loved, accepted
- ▶ Meeting → the appointment with her birth mother and with past

15. Wound

- ▶ Wound → the meeting opened the **wound**
→ suffering and difficulty to forgive Ann and forget past

Coda

- ▶ Final reflection about her actual life: love, relation with her mother

ALL THE CHAPTERS HAVE INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN THEM

Jeanette's Figure In The Novel

- She doesn't describe herself directly
→ telling technique
- She tried to talk about herself through writing
- She explains the reason of choice of the memoir:

There was no straight-line connection. You can tell that reading this. I want to show how it is when the mind works with its own brokenness.



HER LIFE IS A COMPOSITION OF PUZZLES
WHICH HAVE CREATED HER IDENTITY