

FIRST PLACE



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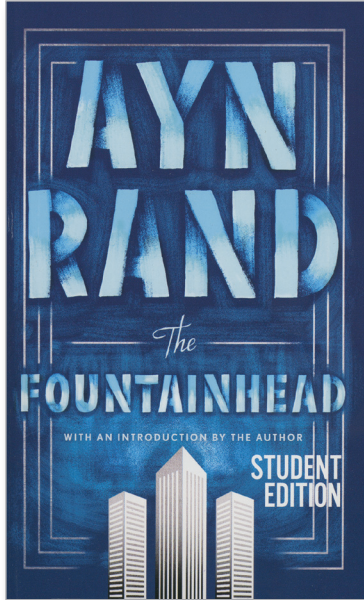
Mallory says the following about Roark: “You know how people long to be eternal. But they die with every day that passes. . . . They change, they deny, they contradict—and they call it growth. . . . How do they expect a permanence which they have never held for a single moment? But Howard—one can imagine him existing forever.” Give examples of characters in the novel who change in the way Mallory suggests. In what respects is Roark unchanging through the book? Are there any respects in which his character develops? How do these issues of characterization relate to the theme of the novel?

To Mallory, there are two types of people in this world: Howard Roark, who stands confidently in his opinions without faltering to satisfy others, and everyone else. Individuals are easily changed by the influence of those around them, and the characters in *The Fountainhead* are no exception.

Throughout the novel, author Ayn Rand presents Peter Keating as a self-absorbed architect who struggles to make decisions for himself. At the start of his career, Keating accepted Guy Francon’s job offer as a result of his mother’s influence and turned to Roark when he doubted the success of his own designs. Keating received all the credit for Roark’s reworked sketches, and he began utilizing manipulation to excel in the business and satisfy those around him. In the hope of raising his position in the firm, Keating followed his mother’s advice and abandoned Katie Halsey for a marriage with his boss’s daughter, Dominique. He took all the credit whenever Roark reshaped his designs, and successfully removed Lucius Heyer, his superior, when he saw an opening for a position as partner. Later, Keating even sacrificed Dominique, his wife at the time, in exchange for a commission from Gail Wynand. Throughout his career, Keating is a social climber with no sense of self. Like Mallory’s statement, he is easily influenced by those around him and has never held true to his own opinions.

Now, although Gail Wynand understands his sense of self, he too is easily changed by the influence of those around him. When his earlier idols left him disappointed, Wynand no longer believed that honest men existed, and he lowered himself to the corruptness of society. He used his local newspaper to win the favor of public opinion and allowed corrupt individuals, like Ellsworth Toohey, to have their own columns in his paper. Even when he began expressing his own opinions, Wynand soon gave in to public scrutiny. Defending Roark after he destroyed the

Cortlandt building, and firing Toohey for not doing so, allowed Wynand to reclaim power over his newspaper, yet it also marked the beginning of its downfall. After



Wynand took these actions, many workers went on strike, and he eventually apologized for defending Roark when the paper was on the brink of closure. Similar to Keating, Wynand also makes decisions according to the influence of those around him and of public opinion.

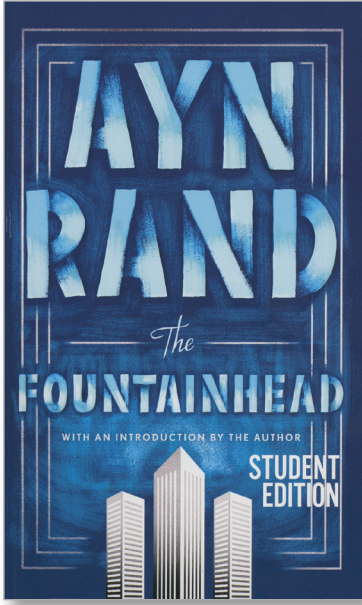
The same can be said for the women in this novel. Despite her independent mind and strong opinions, Dominique Francon is also guilty of being influenced by the actions of those around her. After Hopton Stoddard won the suit against Roark, she chose to punish herself and marry Peter Keating because society did not appreciate the genius of the man she loved. As she watched corrupt and evil individuals succeed over those who were noble and honest, Dominique's pessimistic view of the world was born, and her perspective did not change until Roark's actions throughout the novel convinced her otherwise. Like Mallory's statement, Dominique is one of the many characters affected by the influence of society and those around her.

Another victim of this influence is Katie Halsey. At the beginning of the novel, Rand portrays Katie as a good-natured young woman who quickly falls in love with Peter Keating, yet lacks ambition and independence in her own thoughts. Because she does not live by her own judgment or have a strong sense of self, her character is easily changed by the actions and influence of those around her. After Keating abandoned her to marry Dominique, Katie gave in to the heartbreak and became unfeeling and cold-hearted. When the two reunited towards the end of the novel, Katie has clearly been influenced by her uncle, Ellsworth Toohey. Her soul lost the innocence it once possessed, and, like her uncle, she became concerned with gaining control over the weak. As Mallory stated, Katie allowed those around her to change her character and how she viewed the world.

Then, there's Howard Roark, who, throughout the novel, remains unchanged by the influence of those around him. From the very beginning, Rand presents her protagonist as an individualist who does not allow the disdain of others to change his values or his designs. When he was expelled from the Stanton Institute for being an overly modern architect, Roark remained true to his opinions and did not change to satisfy others. Throughout the novel, Roark suffered from failure, debt, and the refusal of his designs, yet he did not compromise or give in to public opinion and scrutiny. Even when he was put on trial for destroying the Cortlandt building, Roark stayed true to his values and remained honest with the jury. Roark did not allow the corruptness of society to change his character or disrupt his integrity, and he held true to himself throughout the novel.

Yet, there are some respects in which Roark's character does develop. At the start of the novel, when he was expelled from the Stanton Institute, Roark struggled to understand men like the Dean who did not conduct their lives by the same set of principles. He understood his own values, yet he could not identify why those around him acted in the way that they did. However, when Roark presented his

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speech at the trial towards the end of the novel, there was a significant development in his perspective of those around him. Roark finally came to realize that people did not live to create for themselves, like he did. Rather, they relied on the recognition of others to feel satisfied and accomplished. Through this change in perspective, Roark was able to grow intellectually, while still remaining true to himself.

These issues of characterization relate to the theme of the novel, as they highlight the stark difference between Roark and the characters around him. This novel portrays the conflict between individualism and collectivism—those who hold true to their own values and those who are easily changed by the influence of others. Throughout the novel, Roark remains true to himself, while his fellow characters make decisions according to the actions and influence of those around them. Rand's characterization allows the theme to be clearly presented to her readers.