

English 12: Synthesis of Text

Scale: 6

Comment: This essay is a low 6. The writing throughout is effective, with an insightful understanding of the topic. There are pertinent references used, and ideas are synthesized nicely.

An individual's belief regarding personal control can have a significant impact on the decisions that they make, as well as their overall attitude towards life. Such is the case in "Circus in Town" by Sinclair Ross and "'Happy' for Sale" by Jia Lynn Yang. In both passages, the main character is forced to deal with the hardships that accompany an impoverished lifestyle. In both cases, the character adapts coping strategies that involve a positive, optimistic outlook towards the future; however, the young and inexperienced Jenny relies on fantasy and imagination as an escape, whereas the more mature Chris is able to channel his energy into changing his misfortunes.

In "Circus in Town", a young child named Jenny has been brought up in a poverty-stricken area that has plagued her family with a life of nothing but "chickens and cows"; however, Jenny is able to escape reality through the use of her powerful imagination. Despite the fact that she is unable to abandon her unfortunate lifestyle, she is able to remain positive after receiving one simple piece of paper: a poster of a circus. Jenny does not attempt to change her unwealthy and insecure circumstances, but rather avoids them by creating her own idealized version of life, complete with "purple lights" and the ability to ride a horse with "silver bells on reins and bridle". Her overall inexperience with life results in an ignorance towards the ability to change; Jenny does not realize that a change in her unfortunate life is possible, and instead becomes satisfied with changing it in her mind. The poverty that surrounds her does not result in feelings of self pity; however, it also does not result in the drive for realistic change.

Chris Gardner in "'Happy' for Sale" similarly has dealt with experiencing an impoverished lifestyle; however, unlike Jenny, Chris's drive for change and internal focus of control result in the necessary actions for a new way of life. Chris, who had spent "long nights at the shelter" with his infant son for years, eventually made the necessary decisions to take action against his less than ideal living circumstances. His internal desire to "do something with [his] life" eventually resulted in several astounding milestones, including an interview on "ABC's news-magazine 20/20". Chris's powerful belief that "baby steps count" as long as one is always "moving forward" has led him to a life of wealth, fame, and fortune that he believes is possible for anyone to attain. His experience and maturity when he was homeless resulted in mature decisions and actions, which ultimately led him to an ideal reality.

Both Jenny and Chris have experienced hardship that is immensely difficult to overcome and have remained positive throughout the difficult times; however, Chris's maturity in decision making allowed him to overcome his circumstances, whereas Jenny's youthful existence only allows her to dream and fantasize. Overall, one's attitude towards the circumstances they must deal with will determine the level of happiness they are able to attain; as well, their personal feelings of control will determine whether or not they can achieve what they desire.