

**RESILIENCE AND RESURGENCE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF
JAY ASHER'S *THIRTEEN REASONS WHY***

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ABSTRACT

Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why* is a poignant and thought-provoking story that delves into the complexities of teenage life, the power of empathy, and the profound effect our actions can have on others. The novel explores the profound themes of suicide and mental health, bullying and harassment, isolation and loneliness, guilt and responsibility, communication and miscommunication, consequences of actions, empathy and understanding, and the power of storytelling. The research paper entitled **Resilience and Resurgence: A Psychological Analysis of *Thirteen Reasons Why*** examines the aftermath of teenager Hannah Baker's suicide through cassette tapes she leaves behind. Clay Jensen listens to these tapes, uncovering 13 reasons why she took her life. Through Hannah's story, it prompts reflection on the impact of our actions and the importance of reaching out to others. Clay becomes increasingly haunted by the realization that he could have done more to help Hannah, and he grapples with guilt and grief.

Keywords: Behaviourism, miscommunication, self-concept, guilt, bullying, isolation, harassment.

Jay Asher is an American writer and novelist born in Arcadia, California on September 30, 1975. He grew up in a family that encouraged all of his interests, from playing the guitar to his writing. *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher has won several awards and has received five stars from Teen Book Review. It also has received high reviews from fellow authors such as Ellen Hopkins, Chris Crutcher, and Gordon Korman.

Asher attempted for years to launch a children's picture book writing career. He worked in bookstores, libraries, trophy shops, and shoe stores during this time. He has authored four books: *What Light, Piper*, *The Future of Us*, and *Thirteen Reasons*

Why. The novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* is a young adult fiction book that debuted at the top of the New York Times bestseller list in 2007. In addition, Asher is the author of multiple picture books and novels for middle school humour. Teen Book Review gave *Thirteen Reasons Why* five stars and multiple awards.

Thirteen Reasons Why is about the tale of teenage suicide victim Hannah Baker. In a series of several audio cassettes that are mailed to a classmate in the form of a chain letter with instructions to pass them from one student to another, she reveals her thirteen reasons for making the decision. Hannah's classmates get to hear the reasons behind her decision to end her life through a recording of her voice. In addition to Hannah, one of the people who receives the tapes, Clay Jensen, also provide insight into the story for the reader.

Thirteen Reasons Why is the gripping, addictive international bestseller that has changed lives all over the world. It is an unrelenting modern classic. Following her death, Hannah leaves behind a series of seven double-sided cassette tapes detailing the thirteen specific people and events that she blames for her demise. Two weeks after her death these cassette tapes are mailed out with directions to pass the tapes on to the next person on the tape.

Hannah's life story is conveyed through these tapes, which are narrated by Hannah herself, and through the point of view of Clay, her classmate and the ninth person to receive the tapes. High school student Clay Jensen receives a mysterious package in the mail with seven cassette tapes recorded by Hannah Baker, a classmate who recently committed suicide. The tapes had also been sent to several other classmates, instructing each of them to visit each person mentioned and to pass them on to the person following them on the tapes. As he listens to the cassettes, Clay learns that there is a side of the tapes for each person to whom Hannah attributes her reasons for killing herself. After sending the tapes to the next person, Clay returns to school and runs into his classmate Skye Miller, whom he suspects is also suicidal. The novel ends with Clay reaching out to Skye.

Even though the girl on the tapes is gone, her voice comes alive through them. The reader can feel her pain as they listen. The tapes show how different people played a role in her decision. One has to listen to all of them, or there will be consequences. *Thirteen Reasons Why* marks Jay Asher's debut in the writing world,

and it is an exceptional start that still impresses. The storytelling is smooth, even though what Hannah shares on the tapes and what Clay experiences is hard to swallow. It is like a lump in the throat. A clever move by Asher is telling the story from two angles, which adds depth and intensity. As Clay follows each reason and visits the places, his pain becomes overwhelming. Asher's writing vividly brings everything to life and resonates with the heart and mind.

The major themes of the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* are rumours and reputation, gender, sexualisation and agency, guilt and blame, parental care and attention. Hannah understands from her first few weeks of high school that she has no control over what other people think of her. Justin is the first to undermine the favourable perception that Hannah's classmates have of her when he spreads a rumour about their first kiss. Hannah experiences anxiety as a result of Justin's rumour, which turns her happy and hopeful first kiss memory into a source of worry.

The inspiration behind the main character, Hannah Baker, comes from author Jay Asher's close relative who attempted suicide. The effect can be studied through Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reason Why* novel. This paper study the sociological perspective and the effect of bullying in Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why*, to interpret the reasons of Jay Asher chooses bullying on *Thirteen Reasons Why* through the lens of behaviourism theory. The term Behaviourism was coined by John Broadus Watson in 1913. Watson famously stated, "Psychology as the behaviourist views it is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science" (Watson).

Edward Lee Thorndike, another influential figure in the development of behaviorism, also contributed to shaping its principles. This is the statement often associated with Thorndike's views on behaviourism: "The bond between stimulus and response is strengthened by the satisfying state of affairs and weakened by the annoying state of affairs" (Thorndike). Specific behaviour will form as a result of consistent reinforcement. Both negative and positive outcomes can be influenced by changes in the environment.

The author describes the indicators of bullying found in *Thirteen Reasons Why* the novel by Jay Asher as follows gives an unpleasant look, body shaming, physical violence, ridicule, and touch a body part without permission these come under the behaviourism of the student and the society. Second, the author describes

the issue of bullying through character, events and setting. Bullying has many effects on people one of them is negative and positive impacts on the people who experienced. But maybe some people thought that bullying action is one of the forms of life learning. Whereas, the impact of bullying action can affect the victim with long term adverse effects.

Giving an unpleasant look is very disturbing for everyone. Everybody wants to get the same treatment without differing to each other. Giving an unpleasant look is happening when someone gives an inappropriate look to the other and makes an uncomfortable feeling. It happened when Clay Jensen caught Justin, and his friends looked at Hannah Baker while she walked across the corridor then they laughed with a mocking look at her. Justin dated Hannah because he was curious. After all, she is a freshman in the school and his junior at school. After he got Hannah for a date, he shares his experience with his gang. Because of the rumour that Justin spread to the other friends while he dated Hannah has a snowball effect to Hannah. The rumour he spreads paves way for bullying.

Kat told me that at the end-of-school dance, you finally found the nerve to do more than stare and bump into her. The two of you danced every slow song together. And soon, she told me she was going to let you kiss her. The very first kiss of her life. What an honour! (14)

The act of ridicule is one of the forms of bullying, which means to take something or stuff that not belong to themselves, destroy or dispose of them. When Ryan stole Hannah's notebook, where the poem writes there and make it a learning material without Hannah's permission.

Photographs that fell out of binders...he scanned them, too.

History notes covered in doodles by an extremely bored student... he scanned them.

Some people may wonder how Ryan found so many interesting items to scan. Did he really find them all? Or did he steal them? I asked them that very question after one of our poetry meetings. And he swore that everything he printed was founded purely by chance. (184-185)

The act of touching a body part without one's consent comes under consent sexual harassment, it is considered as bullying, and it happens while the doer did the

threat, touch and also using inappropriate words to the victim. In this novel we find who grabs Hannah knee without consent at the cafe where he and Hannah meet, and It makes Hannah angry, she pushes him on the floor and make him. *Thirteen Reasons Why* offers a thought provoking exploration of behaviourism and its implications for understanding human behaviour in the context of social interactions and environmental influences.

In *The Unconscious*, Freud explores the concept of the unconscious mind and its significance in psychoanalytic theory. Freud states, “The unconscious is the true reality; it is the psychic reality” (Freud, 1915). The three levels of personality is related to the problems of Hannah Baker in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*. It shows that how the sexual harassment affects the mental and personality of the victim in the novel. It highlights victim really feels about the terrible experiences she had been through, is she conscious about her behavioural and personality change or decided to repress, the whole experiences with the unconsciousness. Hannah Baker experienced major depression as a result of bullying. Hannah Baker is a very kind, beautiful, independent, and friendly teenage girl. In the novel *Thirteen Reason Why*, the author reveals more about the crimes that Hannah experienced, such as being harassed and intimidated by some of her closest friends.

According to Carl Rogers, there are three components which are essential for a human to live life peacefully with strength, courage and patience. The components are, Self-image, Self-esteem and Ideal self. This is to state and prove that a person without the self-image, self-esteem and ideal-self, would prevail way to take away their own life. This is interpreted through the character of the protagonist in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*. This helps to know the importance of self and self-concept in individual’s life, which would help them to avoid suicide and suicidal thoughts. This would help people to boost themselves with self-confidence and courage to break the worst idea of losing their life.

The protagonist, Hannah of *Thirteen Reasons Why* tries to prove that low esteem would result in depression and hopelessness, which makes individual to commit suicide. This chapter made an attempt to prove that being voiceless, would make people to leave their unwanted footprints in other people’s life. Hannah Baker suffers out of rumours created by her own friends and classmates, which show her as

a voiceless character. Self-esteem plays a major role in the life of people to avoid suicidal behaviours and this has been stated through the character of Courtney, where she maintains her self-image in an appreciable sense.

Clay Jensen is introduced as a quiet, thoughtful, and introverted character. He is depicted as a kind-hearted teenager with a crush on Hannah. As Clay listens to the cassette tapes, readers witness his emotional journey of shock, guilt, and grief. His initial confusion and disbelief give way to a deepening understanding of Hannah's pain and his own role in her story. Clay's character development revolves around his coming to terms with Hannah's death and his desire for justice and accountability. Through his experiences, readers grapple with the complexities of guilt, responsibility, and the consequences of inaction.

One of the strengths of character development in *Thirteen Reasons Why* is the portrayal of characters as multi-dimensional and flawed individuals. Characters are not simply heroes or villains, they are portrayed as real teenagers navigating the complexities of adolescence, peer pressure, and societal expectations. This realism adds depth to the narrative, allowing readers to empathize with characters' struggles and understand the motivations behind their actions. Throughout the novel, characters are forced to confront their own flaws, mistakes, and regrets. Some characters, like Clay, experience growth and self-reflection as they grapple with the revelations from the tapes. Others, however, struggle to come to terms with their actions and the impact they have had on Hannah and others.

The Netflix adaptation of *Thirteen Reasons Why* further intensified the controversies surrounding the novel. The series included additional scenes of sexual assault, self-harm, and substance abuse, which some critics felt were unnecessary and potentially harmful. The portrayal of these sensitive topics in a visual medium sparked renewed debates about the responsibility of filmmakers and the potential impact on vulnerable audiences. Mental health organizations and professionals have issued warnings about the potential harm of the novel and its adaptation. Some experts argue that the novel and series fail to provide sufficient context, resources, or discussions about mental health and suicide prevention. This criticism has led to calls for more responsible media portrayals of suicide and mental health issues.

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