

# **“Character Identification: A Guide To Yourself”**

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## Section 1: Introduction

This essay explores how readers identify with a character in a narrative. As a matter of housekeeping, I offer a rough outline of this essay's journey. My attempt focuses on two characters; Aeneas from Virgil's *Aeneid* and Prince Andrew in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. I utilize two methods for recreating identification, creating the opportunity to experience identification with one of the selected characters, or to induce a recollection of a character previously identified with. The first, a piecing together of quotes from each text to craft an image of the character. This method I call 'Epitome'. And the alternative, presenting a large excerpt of text that spotlights a character in a scene. This is here I refer to as 'Example'. I hope to uncover which method excels in recreating identification with an original character. Lastly, I present the significance of identification.

As for our characters, Aeneas and Andrew earn selection for two reasons. First, I am the author, and my identification with both of them inspired this essay. And second, Aeneas and Andrew are both men of obligation, trying to reconcile personal aspiration with their duty. Using both methods I focus on the two characters' crises of faith. I justify the choice of this type of crisis because it is a real world experience, not limited to words on a page. Aeneas's perseverance and Andrew's struggle provide representations of hardships which readers can benefit from identifying with. The process through which they resolve their crises offers insight into the value of identification. If a reader identifies with either, it is the result of self-reflection. One encounters a character, and something appears that captures one's attention, and identification ensues. And finally, I hope that you see arising from this comparative investigation

of both an epic poem's hero and a 19th Century Russian novel's main character, that the experience of identification transcends any one text or genre.

## **Section 2: Aeneas of Troy**

Aeneas, as the feature character of Virgil's *Aeneid*, is a classical hero who encounters a crisis when he grapples with personal desire as he and his fellow Trojans search for a new Trojan home. His mission is to fulfill Fate's promise by finding the new, foretold, Trojan homeland. Frequently, Virgil describes Aeneas as pious, which is significant because his faith is both the origin and resolution of his crisis. This crisis and Aeneas's faith are the two key aspects of the process of identification. Using Epitome, I consider the different moments when a modern reader can identify with Aeneas, using my own identification as the basis for analysis. Specifically, I begin with the Trojan's abrupt arrival in Carthage at the beginning of Book I, then turn to Aeneas's subsequent conversation with his mother, and end with Aeneas's encounter with Mercury in Book IV. Using Example, I present Aeneas's speech to heartbroken Dido. These instances provide a vivid look into Aeneas's crisis of faith. As he struggles to reconcile his desire with his mission, Aeneas makes decisions that are very agonizing. The pain Aeneas feels offers to a reader the opportunity for role-playing. A reader role-plays by applying the experience of a character to his own, as a means of resolving his own conflicts. To fulfill his mission, Aeneas must frequently relinquish his personal desires and chose his love of Troy over everything else. These instances reveal the lessons, I hope one will obtain in identifying with Aeneas.

We first see Aeneas on a beach, shipwrecked following a storm orchestrated by the wrathful goddess Juno. Aeneas speaks, yelling amid the distant cries of other marooned Trojans, "Triple lucky, all you men / to whom death came before your father's' eyes / Diomedes, why

could I not go down / when you had wounded me, / and lose my life on Ilium's battlefield?" (I. 134-135, 137-139). Aeneas is not fiercely strong or devilishly clever, but miserably vulnerable and pleading for death in a very unheroic way. This weakness at the outset of the poem hints at the exact nature of his crisis as one of conflict between faithful duty and himself. The roots of his heroism are in his devotion, his selflessness. Personally, Aeneas does not want to keep searching for a new Troy: he wants to end his own suffering. One sees later, that he denies himself for the sake of his mission because of his faith in the promise of a new home and his love for his people. Aeneas's shrieking is important because it allows us to witness his turmoil.

Shortly after pleading for death, Aeneas recovers and returns to his mission. Virgil reveals Aeneas's crisis as he addresses the marooned Trojans to console them in their grief. After his speech, Virgil notes that Aeneas is, "burdened and sick at heart, / [Aeneas] feigned hope in his look, and inwardly / contained his anguish" (I. 284-286). Aeneas disguises his own anxiety so he can retain some hope for the mission, both for himself and everyone else. He knows that he must project confidence and maintain his composure if the surviving Trojans are to continue on the journey. At the core of Aeneas's dilemma is an experience one confronts when personal desires and needs of the community are juxtaposed. Aeneas is heroic in this moment because he chooses his people over his desire for death. This choice is a lesson in perseverance. The anguish Aeneas feels comes from his hiding of his true feelings. Aeneas's decision not only saves Trojan morale but also inspires anyone who encounters a conflict between the needs of a community and individual desire, whether possessing Aeneas's faith and resolve or not. Someone sees this anxiety and can recall similar emotions when faced with a comparable experience. This recollection is the first step of identification; drawing parallels between one's self and a character

is a form of role-playing. For a reader to role-play he takes the emotions, choices, and experiences of the character and applies them to his own in self-reflection. Witnessing Aeneas choose his people over himself, one should reflect on a past conflict with a community. Even if the outcome was different from Aeneas's, reflecting urges an assessment of comparison and of evaluation.

Assessment can go one of two ways if one compares one's own experience to Aeneas's through role-playing. Comparison leads one to either confirm the outcome of a prior conflict or find fault in the conflict's resolution. Confirmation, regardless if with Aeneas's own experience, upholds one's decision and supports a reader's future experience. Error creates something different within one identifying because it forces a reevaluation of how one will deal with future conflicts. Either way, it is a valuable experience to reflect on the past and evaluate it. Aeneas becomes a tool for reader's role-playing, a device one uses to experiment with various thoughts and choices as a means of evaluating one's own life.

Although he denies himself on the beach, Aeneas's decision is not a mindlessly simplistic compliance with Fate. Continuing the mission is based on faith in the promise of a new home. This faith is an active choice. This legitimizes a reader's identification with Aeneas because without choice Aeneas would be a mindless cog, and not a complex psychological character that one could role-play with. An instance of this active choice occurs in a conversation with his mother, the goddess Venus, outside Carthage. Aeneas is bitterly whining about his mission, and does not recognize his mother appearing in disguise. She shuts him up, offers solace in the fact that, despite appearance all is not lost, then quickly departs. He recognizes her, and as she leaves, calls out harshly, "You! cruel, too! / Why tease your son so often with disguises? / Why may we

not join hand and speak and hear / the simple truth?" (I. 558-561). Aeneas is not only enraged that his mother allows him to continue to suffer from the fury of Juno, but also that she uses misdirection. This defiance indicates that Aeneas continues to resist Fate. Venus's unconventional support further embitters Aeneas as he grapples with his crisis. By the end of the scene, Venus's unconventional comforting of her son does serve as a refueling of his faith because she transports him to safety in nearby Carthage. Aeneas's anger towards Venus demonstrates how he actively chooses to continue and does not passively resign to Fate: making his choices a constant renewal of his crisis. Without the ability to choose, Aeneas would not have a crisis, and there would be no lesson in perseverance. Since choice is a necessity to the lesson of perseverance, this lesson is well suited for the reader's role-playing. Imagining the difficulty Aeneas confronts and paralleling it with one's own is useful in working through one's own real world conflicts.

Once entering Carthage Aeneas intends to end Trojan wandering; however he receives a reminder that the mission is incomplete. Jupiter sees Aeneas disrupting Fate when he falls in love with Dido as the Trojans begin to settle with the Carthaginians. As a result, he sends his messenger, the god Mercury, to deliver a reminder to Aeneas that he must resume his mission. After Aeneas receives this message, Virgil observes, "By what his eyes had seen, Aeneas felt / his hackles rise, his voice choke in his throat / ...heaven had shaken him awake, he now / burned only to be gone, to leave that land / of the sweet life behind" (IV, 381-385). By ignoring Fate and falling madly in love with Dido, Aeneas experiences intense feelings of guilt as he remembers the unfulfilled promise of a new Trojan homeland. Aeneas is physically disturbed at Mercury's message, the desire to stay and duty to his mission induce a sort of momentary sickness. In this

instance, Aeneas is guilty of choosing himself over his mission. His devotion to his people and the love for Dido cannot coexist; this an incredibly painful realization for Aeneas. Even though he is now aware that he has gone astray, Aeneas still has a lingering desire to remain in his newfound sweet life. These types of conflicting desires create guilt because he realizes his selfishness. One can relate when recalling any selfish choice. To be clear, this lesson is not simply that selfishness is bad. Rather, selfishness at the expense of family and community comes with terrible guilt. One role-playing with Aeneas's experience in the scene, or confronting conflict between his own desires and his community, will see that he must grapple with guilt. For Aeneas, this guilt is impossible to overcome because of his love for Troy and his family. Once the mistake is made clear to Aeneas, he again returns to his mission and decides the Trojans will leave Carthage.

Turning next to Example, I submit Aeneas's speech to Dido in Book IV. The Trojan flight from Carthage happens shortly after Aeneas sees Mercury. Driven by guilt, Aeneas chooses to resume his mission. When Dido learns Aeneas is abandoning her, she laments, crying out accusations of betrayal. I present the final lesson a reader can identify with from Aeneas's own words. A distraught Aeneas responds to her allegations:

As for myself, be sure  
 I shall never deny all you say,  
 Your Majesty, of what you meant to me.  
 Never will the memory of Elissa  
 Stale for me, while I can still remember  
 My own life, and the spirit rules my body.  
 As to the event, a few words. Do not think  
 I meant to be deceitful and slip away.  
 I never held the torches of a bridegroom,  
 Never entered upon the pact of marriage.  
 If Fate permitted me to spend my days  
 By my own lights, and make the best things  
 According to my wishes, first of all

I should look after Troy and the loved relics  
 Left me of my people. Priam's great hall  
 Should stand again; I should have restored the tower  
 Of Pergamum for Trojans in defeat.  
 But now it is the rich Italian Land  
 Apollo tells me I must take for: Italy  
 Named by his oracles. There is my love;  
 There is my country. If, as a Phoenician,  
 You are so given to the charms of Carthage,  
 Libyan city that it is, then tell me,  
 Why begrudge the Teucrians new lands  
 For homesteads in Ausonia? Are we not  
 Entitled, too, to look for realms abroad?  
 Night never veils the earth in damp and darkness,  
 Fiery stars never ascend the east,  
 But in my dreams my father's troubled ghost  
 Admonishes and frightens me. Then, too,  
 Each night thoughts come of young Ascanius,  
 My dear boy wronged, defrauded of his kingdom,  
 Hesperian lands of destiny. And now  
 The Gods' interpreter, sent by Jove himself -  
 I swear it by your head and mine - has brought  
 Commands down through the racing winds! I say  
 With my own eyes in full daylight I saw him  
 Entering the building! With my very ears  
 I drank his message in! So please, no more  
 Of these appeals that set us both afire.  
 I sail for Italy not of my own free will.  
 (*Aeneid* IV, 459-499)

Aeneas begins to relate his crisis by first admitting his love for Dido. This love is solely based on his personal desire, it is not part of his obligation to his people or Fate. As mentioned in the scene with Mercury, Aeneas's crisis renews, and creates a guilt-filled reaction. His emotional response provides a new lesson that a reader might identify with. Since he is truly in love with Dido, as well as Troy. The physically manifested anxiety Aeneas feels continues in this speech as he tries to reconcile Fate with desire while at the same time softening Dido's pain. Aeneas wants to remain with her in Carthage and live the sweet life, but Fate will not allow it. He also

mentions several times in his speech that his control of his spirit is not entirely his own. Consequently, he will always love Dido, even though he is now forced to abandon her. Aeneas realizes this decision is a denial of himself. Both choices available to Aeneas are painful. The results of his evaluation of his conflicting loves demonstrates his dilemma. Aeneas, as presented in Example, is a model for one contending with his own desires that clash with the community's.

After he professes love for Dido, he elaborates on what he loves most of all, Troy. His duty to and love for Troy, independent of Fate's mandate, are above all other considerations. Love of Troy is in his desire to reestablish the fallen city and restore Trojan gods. Aeneas even implies that if he determined where the Trojans would finally settle, then it might not be off in distant Italy, but perhaps in Carthage. However, because the gods command that Italy is where Trojans must go, Aeneas's departure for Italy must be necessarily favored over his love for Dido. Aeneas refers to the oracles of Apollo, in addition to the visit from Mercury as a means of conveying to Dido just how powerful Fate's decision is. If Aeneas truly loves his people, then he needs to sail for Italy. He resolves the conflicting loves by using faith as a guide. A reader seeing Aeneas use his love and faith in his decision making offers a potential solution through role-playing.

Aeneas expands further on what his devotion; love of his father, son, and household gods are the other parts of his love for Troy, in addition to wanting physically rebuild the city. The thought of defrauding his son, and letting his father down haunt his mind. The image of his father's ghost scolding him is incredibly vivid in the mind of Aeneas. This familial demand shows that there is no future for both Troy and Aeneas in Carthage. Generally, his devotion to Troy and specifically love for his own family outweigh any newfound love for Dido. The general

appeal of new Troy combined with the potential guilt associated with the injustice done to his son, impels Aeneas to accept that he has made a terrible decision. Inflicting dishonor on his son is enough to make Aeneas realize that staying in Carthage is a blunder.

Revealing his crisis to Dido is a powerful moment, providing insight into what Aeneas himself considers the cause of his dilemma. The scene confirms the prior suspicions we noted in the Epitome; it verifies that the clash between Aeneas's personal desires and his mission produces a crisis of faith. Faith is the center of this crisis because Aeneas's ability to continue his mission is dependent on the promise of a new home in Italy. Without the revelation of this promise to Aeneas, he would never leave Carthage. This promise creates the guilt Aeneas feels because there is no transgression against his son if there is no guarantee of a new Troy. Watching Aeneas attempt to resolve his guilt is another opportunity for role-play

Aeneas asserts his free will by addressing Dido. Aeneas bitterly resigns himself to Fate, but his love for Dido compels him to try consoling her, by admitting that his departure is painful for him as well. If Aeneas were just a mindless pawn of Fate he would not attempt to console Dido. Rather, he would leave Carthage never stopping to say farewell. This entire speech illustrates the clash between desire and obligation. How Aeneas resolves this juxtaposition in the case of Dido is a different lesson from the one on the beach for readers. While on the beach, Aeneas was motivated by duty and the threat of guilt. Here he is compelled out of grief-stricken guilt at the abandonment of beloved Dido. Understanding Aeneas's evaluation between the love of family and love of Dido, one can learn from his painful decisions how to deal with his own. Examination of Aeneas's crisis of faith produces a few things: uncovering the utility of

identification with a single character for us, opportunities for a reader's role-playing with a character's lesson-specific teachings, and a means of evaluating real world experiences.

### **Section 3: Prince Andrew**

Prince Andrew Bolkonsky is prominent in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* as an internally conflicted man in search of happiness. Andrew's life is one of duty. While he is fulfilling his societal and familial obligations, he frequently expresses unhappiness. This section investigates the crisis of Andrew's faith as he struggles to understand himself. First using Epitome, I examine him as a dissatisfied member of high society in Moscow, his time as a soldier, and his engagement with Natasha Rostov. And in Example, I present the pivotal moment when he finally grasps faith through love. Andrew's crisis manifests itself as he constantly confronts his feelings of despair, produced by loneliness and distance from love. After suffering near fatal wounds in the battle, he takes his final step in a lifelong search for happiness. He discovers his solution in love - love realized through faith.

As a husband in the upper social circles of Moscow, Prince Andrew finds life to be insufferable, and his wife Liza equally unbearable. Dissatisfaction is recognizable from the very first time Tolstoy introduces Andrew, "Everything about [Andrew], from his weary, bored expression to his quiet, measured step, offered a most striking contrast to his lovely little wife. It was evident that not only he knew everyone in the drawing room, but had found them to be so tiresome that it wearied him to look at or listen to them" (Tolstoy, Book I. pg.12). During the first scene of the book at a dinner party, Andrew projects his internal anguish externally through his body language. Even though he occupies a very wealthy and influential status in Russian society, he still feels unfulfilled with his life. This causes Andrew to feel unhappy, and uneasy.

One sees his wife Liza is very vivacious and well-liked among friends. Her words and body language offer a stark contrast to Andrew. Nevertheless with all his apparent advantages, Andrew wants nothing more than to get away from his present circumstances. One can see that Andrew is detached and cannot experience happiness because something is missing. Tolstoy offers this portrait of Andrew with his wife at a dinner party to foreshadow the complexity of his search for happiness, always close, yet always feeling incredibly distant. His wife serves as the symbol for what peace might look like, and Andrew is standing right next to her, yet cannot understand. This incomprehension is present throughout most of Andrew's journey as he struggles to pinpoint the cause of his despair.

When someone first sees Andrew one might identify with his feelings of isolation. Andrew chooses to distance himself from those around him in an effort to not feel despair. In Andrew's mind, enduring the pain of isolation allows him to avoid the pain caused by interacting his friends and family. For some reason he imagines the origin of his despair is external to himself. Isolation is a self-defense mechanism. It is Andrew's device for battling the anxiety that his social life causes. A reader should recognize that isolation, even if it offers marginal relief, is incapable of resolving unhappiness. Andrew's lack of self-reflection only perpetuates his crisis by distracting him from the actual origin of his unhappiness. A reader benefits from witnessing Andrew's struggle with his unhappiness because the interaction creates an opportunity for one to consider his own misconceptions as he role-plays with Andrew's emotions in this scene.

Later in Book I, Andrew has an intimate discussion with Pierre Bezukhov, one of his closest friends, and his words confirm his misconception. His revealing thoughts and words in these exchanges offer insight to a reader because Andrew expresses what he considers the nature

of his despair. This exchange deciphers Andrew's body language from the dinner party. Andrew confides to Pierre, "My wife is an excellent woman, one of those rare women with whom a man's honor is safe; but, O God, what I would not give now to be unmarried!" (I, 24). Andrew now is verbally expressing what his body language conveyed earlier. Andrew sees his marriage as his plight. Whereas before he had a measured step, and was weary, Tolstoy now describes Andrew as "quivering with nervous excitement"; this conversation sparks life and intensity. Even though he is animated and open with Pierre, Andrew knows he is trapped in his present state. Naturally, Andrew seeks freedom from this trap, by convincing himself that he will find escape by going to war, leaving his wife and the rest of Russian high society behind. Andrew's desire to be unmarried is rooted in his misconception about the source of his unhappiness, leading him to conclude that if he distances himself from his wife and friends that he can escape. Andrew is detached from the people that surround him; running off to war enables him to physically complete his isolation. However once he is at the war-front he unintentionally discovers his mistake.

As a soldier, during the Battle of Austerlitz, Andrew experiences his first interaction with faith, forcing him to reconsider his unhappiness. Wounded and knocked on his back, he looks around, "Above him there was now nothing but sky - the lofty sky, not clear yet still immeasurably lofty, with gray clouds gliding slowly across it" (III, 244). Though he is among dead bodies and the debris of battle, Andrew feels a sense of calmness at this sight. This is the first time readers see Andrew relatively relieved of his unhappiness. He feels at ease, totally captivated as he watches the clouds glide across the sky. However, this life-changing moment passes, and Andrew is unable to hold on to this feeling. He recognizes there is something he can

gain from this calmness; however he is unable to identify it. This incident is is Andrew's confrontation with himself. As Andrew is considering his life while lying on the battlefield, a reader should turn inward and reflect on the origin of his own unhappiness. When a reader experiments with the notion of 'Am I at fault like Andrew?', he is role-playing. This role-playing takes the form of a projection. Andrew projects his inner turmoil on to the sky, and one identifying with Andrew will project on to him. Utilizing Andrew's experience as inspiration, in order to better grasp one's own inaccurate conceptions, is a form self-reflection . This becomes a self-evaluation when one applies the results of the role-playing in the real world.

While it is clear that Andrew does not understand the nature of his crisis, it is still not clear what is lacking from Andrew's life in Book I. Once he actually fights in battle, Tolstoy suggests that perhaps what he lacks is faith. The search for faith as a means to happiness is not a conscious undertaking for Andrew, Tolstoy characterises Andrew's mind as clouded, however while still healing from his wounds, he remembers an icon, a gift from his sister Mary, that he wears around his neck which evokes this thought, "It would be good if everything were as clear and simple as it seems to Mary. How good it would be to know where to seek for help in this life" (III, 255). Andrew links his encounter with the sky to his sister, this is how Tolstoy suggests that Andrew is lacking faith. Mary is known for piety and selflessness, and even though Andrew's understanding of the sky is incomplete, he knows that there is a relationship between the calmness he felt and his sister's faith. Andrew still does not know where he will find relief, but this connection is a critical step in the right direction. The reflection a reader makes should push him to think about his own experience in misidentifying oneself, as well consider faith's role in his life. Although Andrew's faith will evolve around the Gospels, the faith of one

identifying with him does not necessarily need to fit into any sort of Christian religious beliefs. A reflection on faith can be an evaluation of one's world view. This type of reflection is similar to the role-playing introduced with Aeneas.

Before examining his relationship with Natasha Rostov, one must first see Andrew just prior to meeting her. In the beginning of Book VI, Andrew is traveling through a forest on his way to the Rostov home. Once again he is experiencing an intense feeling of detachment from those traveling with him. Around him, people are marveling at the life that is flourishing out from the fading winter. Andrew takes notice of something different, an oak tree in the distance, "As he passed through the forest Prince Andrew turned several times to look at the oak, as if expecting something from it. Under the Oak, too, were flowers and grass, but it stood among them scowling, rigid, misshapen, and grim as ever" (VI, 369). By isolating this lone tree among the beautiful budding spring, Andrew is projecting his feelings of grief and detachment on to the oak tree. Just like Andrew, the oak is lost in the emptiness of winter. Meanwhile, the flowers and grass, much like the people around him, are full of life. Andrew keeps looking back at the oak in hopes of gleaning some form of resolution. No matter how many times he looks back the tree, he cannot induce anything. The scene with the oak tree is important in establishing Andrew's pattern in his search.

After meeting Natasha, Andrew leaves the Rostov's the next morning. On his way home he passes by the same oak tree again, but this time, the encounter is drastically repaired. The tree improves, as has Andrew. The tree is "transfigured" and so is Andrew, who now feels much like spring, reborn. Now the once decrepit tree is full of new life, much like his youthful hopes. The sight of Natasha caused an awakening within Andrew, altering his projection on to nature.

Andrew's affection towards Natasha causes development in Andrew. No longer is he feeling isolated and projecting his detachment outwardly. Love for Natasha rescues Andrew from his despair. This causes Andrew to reflect, "*No, life is not over at thirty-one!*" (VI, 371). Andrew's renewal serves as another experience that one identifying with him can use in role-playing. Andrew finds rejuvenation in the love of Natasha, one identifying with him should contemplate his sources of inspiration, and apply previously discussed self-evaluation.

Andrew postpones his engagement to Natasha for a year, at the request of his father. During this time Natasha falls victim to Prince Anatole Kuragin's advances, resulting in Andrew breaking off the marriage. The ending of the engagement extinguishes the relief Andrew felt previously. He recedes into the same grim despair that he projected on the decrepit oak tree. As a result, Andrew returns to the war-front, feeling defeated by despair. Before leaving for battle, Andrew believes he is ready to die, unable to endure any longer. Death is now a release from grief. However, once severely wounded in battle again, combined with the sight of wounded Anatole Kurgan, Andrew dramatically reassesses his understanding of his unhappiness.

I present now Andrew's Example. What follows is an excerpt from Book XI, in this scene Andrew is recovering from wounds he received fighting the French at the Battle of Borodino. As Andrew tries again to solve the mystery of his happiness he confronts writhing physical pain, a semi-delusional consciousness, and finally love.

After growing confused from pain while being carried into the hut he again regained consciousness and while drinking tea once more recalled all that had happened to him, and above all vividly remembered the moment at the ambulance station when, at the sight of the sufferings of [Anatole Kuragin] a man he disliked, those new thoughts had come to him which promised him happiness. And those thoughts, though now vague and indefinite, again possessed his soul. He remembered that he had now a new source of happiness and that his happiness had something to do with the Gospels.

His mind was not in a normal state... All the powers of his mind were more active and clearer than ever, but they acted apart from his will... At times his brain suddenly began to work with a vigor, clearness, and depth it had never reached when he was in health, but suddenly in the midst of its work it would turn to some unexpected idea and he had not the strength to turn back again.

“Yes a new happiness was revealed to me of which a man cannot be deprived”, he thought as he lay in the semidarkness of the quite hut, gazing fixedly before him with feverish, wide-open eyes. “A happiness lying beyond material forces, outside the material influences that act on a man - a happiness of the soul alone, the happiness of loving. Every man can understand it, but to conceive it and enjoin it was possible only for God. But how did God enjoin that law?”

Prince Andrew painfully entreated someone. And suddenly thoughts and feelings again swam to the surface of his mind with peculiar clearness and force.

“Yes - love”, He thought again quite clearly. “But not love which loves for something, for some quality, for some purpose, or for some reason, but the love which I - while dying 0 first experiences when I saw my enemy and yet loved him. I experienced that feeling of love which is the very essence of the soul and does not require an object. Now again I feel that bliss. To love one’s neighbors, to love one’s enemies, to love everything, to love God in all His manifestation. It is possible to love someone dear to you with human love, but an enemy can only be loved by divine love. That is why I experienced such joy when I felt that I loved that man.

“When loving with human love one may apss from love to hatred, but divine love cannot change. No, neither death nor anything else can destroy it. It is the very essence of the soul. Yet how many people have I hated in my life? And all of them, I loved and hated none as I did [Natasha Rostov].” And he vividly pictured to himself Natasha, not as he had one in the past with nothing but her charms which gave him delight, but for the first time picturing her himself her soul. And he understood her feelings, her sufferings, shame, and remorse. He now understood for the first time all the cruelty of his rejection of her, the cruelty of his rupture with her. “If only it were possible for me to see her once more!”

Prince Andrew collected all his strength in an effort to recover his sense, he moved a little, and suddenly there was a ringing in his ears, a dimness in his eyes, and like a man plunged into water, he lost consciousness. When he came to himself, Natasha, that same living Natasha whom of all the people he most longed to love with this new pure divine love that had been revealed to him, was kneeling before him.

“You?”, he said. “How fortunate!”

“Forgive me!”, she whispered, raising her head and glancing at him.

“I love you”, said Prince Andrew

“Forgive...!”

“Forgive what?”, he asked.

“Forgive me for what I ha-ve do-ne!”, faltered Natasha in a scarcely audible, broken whisper.

Those eyes filled with happy tears, gazed at him timidly, compassionately, and with joyous love. Natasha’s thin pale face, with its swollen lips, was more than plain - it was dreadful. But Prince Andrew did not see that, he saw her shining eyes which were beautiful.

Tolstoy, Book XI, pg. 816-817

Andrew’s life-long cycle of approaching happiness only to pass by it, is fully encapsulated in this scene. He starts his first approach by trying to recreate his time in the battlefield hospital where he saw Anatole miserably suffering. From this Andrew knows that he uncovered a lesson about love, however he cannot fully grasp his prior epiphany. In this lesson he found a new route to happiness, yet cannot recall the steps revealed in the battlefield hospital. As he frantically tries to remember what seeing Anatole taught him, Tolstoy points out that Andrew mind is deliciously clouded. Much when gazing at the oak tree, Andrew continues to look back this moment, in an effort to recreate the experience, but his ailing body creates a barrier forcing him to pause his search.

He gathers up his strength again, and resumes his ascension towards happiness. Andrew realizes in his second attempt that the happiness he experienced is distinct from previous fleeting moments of bliss, like that of his infatuation with Natasha. Seeing the man he hates most lying wounded in a hospital should have invoked a feeling of vengeful satisfaction in Andrew, but the relief he experiences is extraordinary. Something about being near death, and seeing Anatole at the hospital in tremendous pain, creates a very strange, yet hopeful, resolution for Andrew. The next step Andrew takes is when he realizes that this kind of happiness is not only new, but it is also external to human love. He labels this love as divine and then tries to link this with the soul.

He, at first, believes that only God can experience this love. Linking this love to the soul enables him to realize that he can access this type of love for himself.

From the fog of his mind arises a new definition of this type of love. It does not require an object, making it completely unique from the love of Natasha. With no object, this love can never be lost. He feels bliss in loving everything with this new-found divine love. The loving of one's enemy (whether Anatole or Natasha) is Andrew's means to divine love and happiness. Andrew's real enemy is himself, his hate for others and denial of divine love is what instigates the despair he feels throughout his entire life. Andrew needed to experience this love of an enemy in order to reconcile with Natasha, and himself. Similarly, one needs to experience identification with a character in order to internalize and learn the lessons of characters. With the discovery of this divine love, Andrew now possesses a constant love that he can use in his battle with grief. Andrew determines that this feeling is love, but love one must experience. Simply lying in bed feverishly contemplating love and grief is not enough for him.

Andrew considers his engagement to Natasha, and how much he once loved and hated her. He contemplates forgiveness, recognizing that reconciliation would be a way of using this new found love. The next step he takes is when he visualizes Natasha's soul. The seeing of Natasha's soul, and not just her physical traits, is a new perspective for Andrew. Similar to how characters produce new perspective to one that identifies with them. When Andrew places himself in Natasha's viewpoint and imagines the grief he caused her, it illustrates his next development. Andrew's reflective role-playing makes him feel guilt for his cruel actions and leads him to seek reunion.

One last time Andrew recedes back from happiness because he believes that there is no chance at reconciling with Natasha. Fortunately, when he awakens with his love beside him. The reconciliation that follows between them is Andrew implementing the divine love that he theorized about earlier. Natasha's entrance is the last piece of the puzzle, his new notion of divine love allows him to curb his emotional suffering. Implementation of role-playing is key to learning and benefiting from identification. Andrew finally puts everything together when he is able to actually partake in love. This final step acts not only to signal Andrew's triumph over despair, but also demonstrates the utility of role-playing with Andrew's experiences. Andrew dies shortly after, in what some might think a tragic death, however his new found love and reunion with Natasha allow him to leave his grief-stricken life finally in possession of happiness.

#### **Section 4: Identification**

Recall the goal of this essay; recreating identification with a character in order to uncover its value. Before evaluating Epitome and Example, reflect on what one can identify with in Andrew and Aeneas. In order to evaluate Epitome and Example, one must have an understanding of the process of identification. It begins with a recognition of the character's emotions, conflict, and decisions. Then, one self-reflects on what the character presents, resulting in identifying something of one's self. I see Andrew feeling detached, and recall that I have experienced this. From this, the self-assessment takes place; I compare my shared experience with Andrew for correlations and then evaluate. Self-definition is a result of the assessment. In defining the nature of the identification I experience, I am actually defining myself in relation to Andrew. Any role-playing I utilize when considering Andrew (or Aeneas) should be thought of as thought

experimentation. The two benefits of identification are self-definition and conflict resolution. In laying out my own steps through identification, I offer a model for one trying to recreate the experience.

I propose my evaluation of Epitome and Example, to find which method best assists one in recreating identification. Both methods use my own identification presented differently. Each method contains unique advantages, as well as shortcomings. Next, I offer my thoughts on the combination of both methods, after which, I submit my final decision.

The most glaring flaw of Epitome is that the character identification occurring is not with the original character. This stems from the interaction with the selected quotes; these quotes are not the character. This raises the question of what one encounters in Epitome. The weaving together of quotes creates a sort of Frankenstein-esque monster character that is related to, but definitely not, the original. Epitome constructs a distance between the original character and one reading this essay, preventing the recreation of identification. This results in a production, not a recreation when the one identifies with a character through the use of Epitome. This method cannot recreate identification because the interaction is with modified character is an entirely new experience. Even though the mission is recreating identification, which Epitome fails to do, there is still benefit to its inclusion in this essay. Additionally, another question arises: what is the original character? I leave this question to a future conversation.

Using Epitome offers benefits in its opportunities for identification and the development that arises from multiple encounters with a character. First, opportunities exist because Epitome accounts for scenes throughout a character's journey, offering snapshots of the character in different contexts. If one trusts the snapshots are accurate, and nothing glaring is missing from

the account, then the various scenes expand the emotions a character displays as quotes are connected through analysis. This is a wider opportunity for a reader to identify. For instance, Andrew's pattern of coming close to happiness, and then missing it, is an example of an emotional development that Example cannot demonstrate as well as Epitome. Epitome actually demonstrates this pattern by offering multiple scenes where he struggles to find happiness. The emergence of this pattern cannot be corroborated without multiple quotes. This is important because a reader cannot experience (and subsequently identify with) Andrew's emotional development without presenting this pattern. In Example, one can still identify with Andrew's emotions, but without seeing his development the experience is limited. In offering more opportunities to encounter the character, Epitome increases one's chance of identifying. More opportunities for identification results in more beneficial role-playing.

Second, witnessing a character's development also enhances identification. Using Andrew's pattern again, his feelings of isolation and contempt at the dinner party are distinct from his brooding over the oak tree. Since the progress Andrew makes from one scene to the next can only be demonstrated with the use of multiple quotes, one would not even detect progress without Epitome. The combination of these scenes offer different insight into his grief; however they are not as useful to one role-playing when disconnected from one another. Although, this benefit is potentially mitigated by a writer's suggestion. The quote selection in Epitome can lead to misidentifying a character's development because the proposed development is largely circumstantial speculation by the essay writer.

One can still advantageously role-play with the composite character, just as with the original character. Use of Epitome is a helpful tutorial in how to approach a character in

Example. Andrew's development in Epitome is advantageous to a reader struggling with his own grief. Identifying with Andrew's emotions and decisions offers potential resolutions, which through role-play, help with one's own struggle. In this case, role-playing results in self-reflection. Just as Andrew projects his emotions on to the oak tree, a reader role-playing with Andrew is projecting his emotions on to the character. Additionally, one might not identify with Andrew in one particular scene; however as he develops, something new could arise that invokes identification (which is another benefit to having multiple quotes). This results in a more dynamic impression that a reader can engage with. While Epitome does provide a more thorough image of the character as presented in the text, it still does not recreate identification with the original character.

Next my evaluation of Example, it offers a glimpse into the life of the original character. Example effectively recreates identification with the original character through direct exposure to the author's words. Direct contact with the character in some scene preserves authenticity, which shortens the distance Epitome creates between a reader and the character. Proximity is a key aspect in the recreation of identification because the closer one is to the character, the more authentic the identification. Example can dig much deeper into a scene, whereas Epitome only glances by. Additionally, the large passage of text is less vulnerable to suggestion and allows a reader to directly engage with the crises of Andrew or Aeneas. Example limits the influence of my own opinion on a reader of this essay because I cannot ignore parts of a scene that might not agree with my analysis. Whereas in Epitome I offer speculation as to the nature of a character's conflict using circumstantial quotes, Example provides a definitive answer to what both Andrew and Aeneas are grappling with. I, as the essay writer, have more influence over a reader's

interpretation in Epitome because in carving up the text I can potentially exclude information that does not fit my viewpoint. Example captures the benefits of role-playing without compromising the character by limiting the suggestion of the essay writer. Further, Example better preserves the original character as written by the author.

Example is not without its shortcomings. First, it is exposed to interpretation; one can read the selected passage and identify with something completely different from what I offer with Aeneas or Andrew. This perceptual flaw is actually an advantage. The differences in opinion among readers' specific results of role-playing with a character create a new avenue that bolsters the benefits of identification. If one challenges another's identification, the defense that follows improves the self-reflection that occurs in the initial identification because it forces one to re-evaluate. Either one's conclusion is confirmed, or it needs amending. Regardless, the benefit received from identification improves because it is now a more accurate understanding of one's relationship with a character. As well as a better understanding of one's own emotions, and conflicts. While Example is superior in recreating identification, it does leave my personal identification in the essay prone, potentially.

The second shortcoming is the lack of character development. While Example does highlight a definitive moment for a character's development, it cannot demonstrate it because it offers only one scene. I attempt to resolve this issue by retaining the use of Epitome in the essay. Even though, as previously mentioned, Epitome does not recreate identification. Both methods, when used together, create something distinct from either method applied separately. While resigning to say 'use both' is an incomplete and ultimately unsatisfactory conclusion, there is some merit in offering two methods. Removal of Epitome from the essay leaves the Examples

awkwardly floating around between the introduction and the conclusion. One sees this in Aeneas's Example: how can one fully comprehend the striking emotional force that Aeneas experiences while leaving Dido without knowing about his journey thus far? Missing the steps of this development hinders the benefits of one trying to role-play through Aeneas's experience, and can limit identification. Limiting a reader's identification restricts the benefits of role-playing.

Having scrutinized each method, now I must weigh them. The decision reduces to evaluating production versus recreation. Epitome fails to induce the necessary experience to recreate identification. To Epitome's credit, it does enable one to describe personal identification with characters to another (recall the helpful tutorial). However, Example triumphs because it completes the mission of recreating identification.

## **Section 5: Conclusion**

Before concluding, I propose the unique benefit from conducting this investigation with two characters, suggest what an 'original' character means, as well as offer my final thoughts on identification. Ultimately the significance of this essay is in the benefits of role-playing with characters you identify with.

From a practical standpoint, a reader might think that this essay only needs one character to discuss identification, and that the use of two is a repetitive exercise of little value. While this challenge is legitimate, it is shortsighted. The unique advantage of two character resides in comparative self-reflection; this is distinct from the role-playing a reader performs with just one character. In comparing identification with two different characters, a reader expands his

self-reflection. The expansion results in different identifications. Take for example my personal identification with Andrew and Aeneas. My comparison of the two experiences resulted in a number of realizations. First, I no longer identify with Aeneas the way I once did (if at all even). I realized this as I reexamined Virgil's *Aeneid*; I could not find the character I was once inspired by. Instead, I see a classical hero, that while still relatable, is not someone I saw myself in. My role-playing with Aeneas no longer benefits me the way it once did. Predictably, I thought about how this could happen. As I reflected on this new development, I compared it to my identification with Andrew. Presently I still identify with this character, yet I realize now that as I change, my ability to role-play with a character will also change. While this is not a groundbreaking epiphany, the experience that brought me to it is immensely valuable. The true insight comes, from the understanding of how the change occurs, not from just noticing it. How did I get from Aeneas to Andrew? Or more generally: how could a reader get Aeneas to Andrew? Examining this question enhances the benefits of identification by deepening the self-reflection. In using two characters one must confront and then reconcile both identifications of the past and of the present. My use of two characters separated by centuries serves to demonstrate the value of identification is not tied down to one genre or type of character. One can apply this exercise to any combination of characters he identifies with as means to better understand himself because of the various kinds of self-reflection occurring. Comparing two characters is necessary to fully benefit from identification.

Finally, I wish to propose my reasoning as to why identification with a character is a recognition of something within one's self. Since role-playing when identifying with a character is a form of self-reflection, the result is self-identification. First, one defines himself when

establishing the connection necessary for role-playing. Next, by imagining a character grappling with similar problems, one is actually contemplating his own conflicts. This requires one to define, at least roughly, what the conflict is. Next, using two characters expands the role-playing; understanding development of one's identification with one character to another is an incredibly useful tool in reevaluating benefits gained from identifying with a character. I admit, one who is not particularly contemplative may find this essay a largely useless sentimental celebration of literary characters. And a reader that does not want to self-reflect might find the exercises (both reading the essay and identifying with a character) tedious. However, I still believe that the benefits of role-playing with a character are immensely useful. I hope in writing this essay I spark you to consider literary characters and what it means for you to identify with them.

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