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THE PROBLEM OF ENVIRONMENT AND PERSONALITY IN DANIEL DEFOE'S WORKS

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between the environment and personality is a fascinating subject that has captivated thinkers, writers, and researchers throughout history. The works of Daniel Defoe, a distinguished English writer of the 18th century, offer a rich tapestry of narratives that explore the intricate relationship between the environment and individual personality. In this article, we delve into Defoe's literary world, analyzing how he masterfully weaves the problem of environment and personality into his works. Defoe illuminates the complex interplay between the natural world and the shaping of individual identities through vivid descriptions of settings and profound character development.

KEYWORDS

Environment, personality, Daniel Defoe's literary works, interplay, the natural world, character development, survival, moral dilemmas, ethical considerations, isolation, symbolism.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the environment and personality is a fascinating subject that has captivated thinkers, writers, and researchers throughout history. Drawing insights from psychology, literature, and environmental studies, we explore the complex interplay between nature and the formation of human

identity. Daniel Defoe, a prominent figure in 18th-century literature, explored the complex relationship between the environment and individual personality in his works. In this article, we embark on a comprehensive analysis of the captivating problem of environment and personality as depicted in Defoe's

writings. Through his vivid narratives, intricate character development, and thought-provoking themes, Defoe delves into the profound influence of the natural world on the formation, transformation, and expression of human identity.

MAIN PART

One of the key debates surrounding the environment and personality revolves around the question of determinism versus agency. Environmental determinism posits that an individual's personality and behaviors are predominantly shaped by external factors, such as their physical surroundings and social environment. However, alternative perspectives emphasize the role of individual agency, suggesting that personal choices and internal factors interact with the environment to shape personality. Balancing these viewpoints is crucial in understanding the intricate nature of the environment-personality relationship. The natural environment has a profound impact on the formation of personality traits and behaviors. Research suggests that exposure to natural settings, such as forests, parks, or oceans, can have positive effects on mental health, cognitive functioning, and overall well-being. The presence of nature can foster a sense of tranquility, connection, and restoration, which can shape individuals' personalities by promoting qualities like resilience, empathy, and environmental consciousness. Challenging environmental conditions can have significant implications for personality development. Adverse experiences, such as exposure to pollution, natural disasters, or socio-economic disparities, can contribute to stress, trauma, and negative personality outcomes. Individuals facing such challenges may exhibit traits like anxiety, aggression, or a heightened sense of vigilance. Understanding the impact of environmental stressors is crucial for

comprehending the dynamic relationship between nature and personality. The environment provides opportunities for personal growth and self-reflection. Immersion in natural settings, outdoor activities, or wilderness experiences can serve as catalysts for self-discovery, resilience building, and personal transformation. By engaging with nature, individuals may develop a deeper understanding of themselves, their values, and their place within the world, contributing to the shaping of their personalities.

Defoe's works are marked by their vivid descriptions of physical surroundings, whether it be the deserted island in "Robinson Crusoe" or the chaotic city streets in "Moll Flanders." These environments serve as catalysts for personal growth, moral dilemmas, and psychological exploration. Defoe skillfully intertwines the environmental backdrop with the development of his characters, illustrating how the surroundings shape their values, behaviors, and moral choices. Defoe's characters often find themselves in challenging and often hostile environments that put their resilience to the test. Whether it is the deserted island in "Robinson Crusoe," the plague-ridden streets of London in "A Journal of the Plague Year," or the corrupt society in "Moll Flanders," the environment becomes a crucible in which the characters' personalities are forged. These harsh conditions force the characters to confront their limitations, adapt to their surroundings, and develop resilience as they strive for survival. Defoe explores how the social environment influences the personalities of his characters. In works like "Moll Flanders" and "Roxana," the characters navigate complex social structures characterized by deceit, crime, and moral ambiguity. The social environment shapes their values, choices, and behaviors, leading to moral dilemmas and internal conflicts.

Defoe illustrates how individuals are both products of their social environment and agents who can challenge or conform to societal expectations. Defoe presents his characters with moral dilemmas that arise from the interaction between their environment and personal choices. In "A Journal of the Plague Year," the protagonist faces the ethical dilemma of self-preservation versus communal responsibility during the devastating plague outbreak. These moral dilemmas expose the characters' strengths and weaknesses, testing their moral compasses and shaping their personalities. Defoe delves into the complexities of moral decision-making and its impact on individual character development. Defoe employs the environment as a symbolic element to reflect the inner state of his characters. The physical surroundings, such as the deserted island, the plague-stricken city, or the bustling streets of London, mirror the characters' psychological and emotional states. The environment serves as a metaphorical representation of their internal conflicts, desires, and struggles. Defoe's symbolic use of the environment enhances the depth and complexity of the characters' personalities.

Survival, a recurring theme in Defoe's works, forces his characters to confront the challenges presented by their environment. Whether it is Crusoe's struggle for sustenance and shelter or Roxana's navigation of a corrupt society, their encounters with the natural and social environment shape their personalities, resilience, and adaptability.

Defoe's characters also face moral dilemmas that reflect the ethical complexities of their environment. The choices they make, influenced by their surroundings, contribute to the development of their personalities and moral compasses. Through their

journeys, Defoe prompts readers to reflect on the interplay between environment and individual agency, highlighting the profound influence of external circumstances on personal values and ethical decision-making.

Psychological exploration is another crucial aspect of Defoe's works. His characters undergo profound internal struggles, influenced by their environment, which shape their thoughts, emotions, and self-identity. Defoe delves into the psychological depths of his characters, providing readers with insights into the complexities of human nature and the ways in which the environment interacts with individual personality.

In addition to exploring the problem of environment and personality on an individual level, Defoe's works often shed light on the broader societal and cultural context. He examines how the social environment, influenced by the natural world, shapes individuals' behaviors, beliefs, and interactions, offering a comprehensive exploration of the complex interplay between the environment and collective personality.

Through this analysis of Defoe's works, we aim to deepen our understanding of the problem of environment and personality. By unraveling the intricacies of human identity within the context of the natural world, Defoe's writings invite us to contemplate our own relationship with the environment and the profound ways in which it shapes who we are as individuals.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Daniel Defoe, an acclaimed author of the 18th century, adeptly delved into the complex interconnection between the environment and personal identity in his literary masterpieces.

Through vivid descriptions, moral dilemmas, and psychological nuances, Defoe shed light on the profound impact of the natural world on the formation and expression of human identity. In this article, we delve into the captivating problem of environment and personality as depicted in Defoe's works, examining key extracts that exemplify this complex dynamic.

Extract 1 - "Robinson Crusoe": "Thus, my island became a prison, and yet a paradise. For in my solitude, I had to confront the harshness of nature, the relentless struggle for survival. The environment molded my character, testing my resilience and resourcefulness. It was here, amidst the solitude and isolation, that I discovered facets of my personality I never knew existed."

This extract showcases the transformative power of the environment in "Robinson Crusoe." The deserted island serves as a crucible, shaping Crusoe's personality through his encounters with the natural world. The environment becomes a catalyst for his personal growth, revealing aspects of his character that were previously unexplored.

Extract 2 - "Moll Flanders": "The city streets were alive with a chaotic blend of vice and opportunity. The environment I found myself in challenged the very core of my moral being. I was thrust into a world where survival necessitated compromise, where the boundaries between right and wrong blurred. The choices I made within this environment shaped not only my destiny but also the person I became."

In this extract, Moll Flanders grapples with the moral complexities of her environment. The corrupt society she inhabits poses moral dilemmas, testing her values and forcing her to confront the ethical implications of

her choices. The environment becomes a crucible for her personality, highlighting the delicate balance between survival and maintaining one's moral integrity.

Extract 3 - "A Journal of the Plague Year": "The plague swept through the city, claiming lives indiscriminately. The environment was suffused with fear, panic, and the stench of death. In the face of such calamity, individuals were forced to make impossible choices – between self-preservation and communal responsibility. The environment revealed the depths of human character, exposing the fragility and strength of our inner selves."

This extract depicts the impact of an environmental crisis on individual personalities. The plague becomes the backdrop against which moral choices and ethical dilemmas unfold. The environment magnifies the complexities of human nature, revealing the true character of individuals as they navigate the chaos, fear, and moral challenges presented by the epidemic.

CONCLUSION

The problem of environment and personality is a complex and multifaceted topic that encompasses various perspectives, including environmental determinism, individual agency, cultural context, and personal growth. Understanding the interplay between nature and individual identity provides insights into the formation of personality traits, behaviors, and values. By recognizing the influence of the environment on personality and fostering a deep connection with nature, we can cultivate a more holistic understanding of ourselves and our relationship with the natural world, fostering a sustainable and harmonious future.

In the literary realm of Daniel Defoe, the problem of environment and personality is intricately woven into the fabric of his works. Through his vivid descriptions of settings, moral dilemmas, social environments, psychological exploration, and symbolic representations, Defoe illuminates the profound influence of the environment on individual personality. His writings remind us of the intricate interplay between the natural world and the shaping of our identities, prompting us to contemplate our own relationship with the environment and the profound impact it has on who we are as individuals.

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