*Kfdtinvfm* Cited

Brandon Schrand’s “Works Cited” and David Sedaris’ “Me Talk Pretty One Day” share many common aspects, especially both authors’ mindsets and tones. Both writers, throughout their personal, retrospective essays, show that a certain naïveté has affected them throughout their lives in their mentalities and actions. The authors display similar senses of facetious humor, especially when their personal situations became most difficult. Also, both writers are very inclined to immerse themselves into subjects they are passionate about. Brandon Schrand’s “Works Cited” and David Sedaris’ “Me Talk Pretty One Day” are similar primarily because of the authors’ naïveté, humor, and passion for their interests.

The similarity in Schrand’s and Sedaris’ tones is the naïveté the authors exhibit at different moments in their essays. Schrand begins his essay with a moment from his childhood in which he is enthralled with a novel called *The Mad Scientist’s Club.* He enlists some of his intelligent classmates, and together they form their own version of the club. The boys lose themselves in the fantasy, with ambitious ideas of scientific projects and a “summer of endless adventure.” Inevitably, “girls or other tinseled distractions… eclipse the Mad Scientists’ Club,” and the youthfulness begins to fade.

Time passes; both Schrand’s life and “Works Cited” progress. Schrand writes of being “an Outsider… for the rest of junior high and some of high school.” He has graduated from the world of the Mad Scientists’ Club, and he now perceives himself as one of S. E. Hinton’s Outsiders, although this new Outsider identity is a façade. More time passes, and Schrand’s youthfulness has long faded. He writes, “I was out to prove something, to make up for years of trouble, jail time, and flunking out of college.” The juxtapositions of Schrand’s “identities,” from his innocent youth through his arduous teenage years, is a prime illustration of Schrand’s naïveté and how aging and experiences change him.

In Sedaris’ essay, his naïveté is not quite as visible as Schrand’s, given how Schrand adopts personae from the literature he reads. However, Sedaris’ own lack of realism is evident as his French class convenes. He realizes he has been thrust “into the language pool, sink or swim,” and he struggles to keep his head above water. Sedaris believed he was at least somewhat prepared to comprehend the classwork before the class actually began. He has moved to Paris for the sake of learning French, having already spent summers in Normandy and taken a French class for a month. He comes to find he is unprepared to deal with the teacher, who increases the difficulty of the already overwhelming French class. “[The teacher] hadn’t yet punched anyone, but it seemed wise to protect ourselves from the inevitable.” Schrand’s identities from his literary fixations and Sedaris’ “wild animal” of a teacher are the catalysts of the authors’ eventual personal growths.

Brandon Schrand and David Sedaris also share the humor with which they conquer their sometimes bleak individual circumstances. For instance, Schrand self-effacingly writes of his ordeal getting arrested after drunk-driving. “Drunk, dumb, and desperate, I cited ‘benefit of clergy’… That I couldn’t cite any scripture… didn’t diminish my boozy hopes of the loophole’s potential.” Sedaris’ humor is in dealing with the tribulations doled out by his sadistic French teacher. The teacher once said to Sedaris, “I really, really hate you,” to which he quips, “Call me sensitive, but I couldn’t help but take it personally.” Also, Sedaris has an amusing way of spelling French words he cannot understand: “*apzkiubjxow*” and “*fiuscrzsa,*” among many others. The authors’ self-effacing writing styles echo the condescendence with which the policeman who dealt with Schrand and the French teacher who taught Sedaris likely treated each of them.

Both authors seems to share in a delusion that by immersing themselves in their own fixations, they will somehow incorporate the traits of the things they admire into their identities. Throughout “Works Cited,” Schrand shows that he enjoys literature and internalizing what he reads. The reader can best see this when Schrand writes of how “eager [he was] to shuck off [his] former self and inhabit a new fiction,” a fiction that he believes will allow him to be more himself, as he does in the instances of *The Mad Scientists’ Club* and *The Outsiders*. Similarly, Sedaris immerses himself in learning French by moving to Paris, and he is “determined to create some sort of identity for [him]self” through his hard work and sense of humor.

The more literary, edifying moments of Schrand’s essay are where he summarizes and briefly analyzes each work of literature. Sedaris’ essay has similar moments given that the setting of his work is an educational atmosphere. All of Sedaris’ essay is about his education and struggle to learn French. This is similar to Schrand’s essay in the sense that much of Schrand’s work is also about education, dominantly about his struggle to find his place in the academic world and, thus, find himself. Sedaris is a little more mature and less reckless than Schrand but experiences a similar personal search. Sedaris’ search is aimed toward finding self-confidence and a niche for himself in a foreign country and among his peers as “David, the hardworker, David the cut-up.”

Both essays are successful in that they are relatable because of the very human traits of inexperienced judgment and self-effacing humor that Schrand and Sedaris portray. This relatability was likely an objective for which the authors were striving. Also, the essays conveyed a common theme of the constant struggle toward self-discovery. The similarities that bind Brandon Schrand’s “Works Cited” and David Sedaris’ “Me Talk Pretty One Day” are the authors’ naïveté, facetious senses of humor, and overwhelming passions for their interests.

Works Cited

Schrand, Brandon R. *Works Cited*. Wordpress. The Missouri Press, 2008.

Sedaris, David. *Me Talk Pretty One Day*. Me Talk Pretty One Day. New York: Little,

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