

Personal Reflective Essay

Being a teenager in today's society is hard. The pressure surrounding the upcoming exams - from both parents and teachers - is stressful to say the least. People close to you change - and not necessarily for the better. Peer pressure gradually becomes a bigger deal. We are supposed to be young adults, yet get treated like children. I feel that some people have the mental age of a five year old, yet others act far older than their years. Society often labels us depending on what we wear or what we like. We have the pressure to look a certain way, and the expectation to dress like the people in magazines. Relationships come to the fore too. The joys of being a teenager - or so I'm told.

Exams. If you ask anyone in education right now what on their mind, the answer will be exams. With only a couple of months till they begin everything is starting to get slightly hectic. We're all panicking because we don't understand anything, and the occasional outburst from your teacher telling you that "you are going to fail if you don't buck up your ideas", isn't really that helpful to be honest. The new exams being made up on the spot, or so it feels, isn't exactly reassuring either. Over the past few years I have discovered that I'm someone who needs structure. I need a specific road that will lead me to the end goal, or a plan that has been meticulously planned. And with very few teachers giving me a straight answer when asked about the exams, you could say I'm starting to get a bit panicky. I also feel that some teachers forget you do other subjects *cough* maths *cough*. As important as that subject is, I do have other homework *slightly* more important than a page of a worksheet!

As you can probably tell I have some strong feelings about these changes, in addition to everything else that goes on inside my head. I'm not normally an emotional person, but this year I have discovered emotions I've never felt before. I discovered over the past couple of months that people around me are changing. Someone that used to be a very close friend is drifting from my group. It's been building up over the past few weeks and months, with the occasional snap at someone, or getting up and storming off. With eight girls in a group that tends to happen now and again. But now I feel that this happening too regularly and I don't like it. I spoke to my mum, as we are quite close and she told me to keep fighting for the friendship that we used to have. But, I don't actually think I want to fight for it anymore. I'm tired and fed up of the nights I spent worrying about this individual, thinking I've done

something wrong and apologising, only to have it thrown back in my face. Normally I would be the one to stop and say sorry, even if I haven't done anything wrong. I was a bit of a pushover when it came to this person. My other friends noticed it too. So this time I waited for her to say something first...and I'm still waiting.

Peer pressure is also becoming more noticeable as I've got older. I'm one of the good girls in the year; I don't go out drinking every weekend. I don't kiss every boy with a pulse. I don't feel like I'm missing out on anything though. I just feel that sometimes people laugh at you because you're not doing what 'everyone else' is doing. There is also the pressure to look like the girls from magazines, size 0 with no fat whatsoever. I know people that have been affected by this kind of pressure and it's horrible to see someone you care about putting themselves through that level of self-criticism. The media feed us with images of 'perfect people' and the latest diet craze. When they manage to get hold of a picture of a celebrity with no make-up on, they slag them off because they don't look their best. Is it wrong not to be perfect?

Society often labels teenagers based on what they look like. For example, if you're a boy and are out in the streets at night wearing a hoodie, you're out to cause trouble. If you're a girl and aren't wearing a lot, then you're asking for trouble. But society doesn't know what these people's lives are like and automatically judges them at a first glance. Society labels people because of how they look or what music they like. And here I thought we, as a society, were taught not to judge a book by its cover and to treat everyone equally. At school, we are forced into the appropriate uniform, forced to all look the same. But outside of school, people have the opportunity to dress the way they want to, and act the way they want to without having those rules to stick to. They are themselves. Yet society penalises what they look like, putting them into categories, taunting them all because they don't look like they just stepped off the cover of a magazine.

Peer pressure, exam pressure, people changing, weight worries and labels are all things that we, as teenagers, are forced to deal with. Its cliché but it is hard at times to hold everything together, to just smile and get on with it. Yet I have realised over the past few years that as long as you have your family and true friends around you, everything will fall into place sooner or later.