

# ENGLISH – TRACKS & CHARLIE’S COUNTRY PRACTICE ESSAY + PLAN

‘Solitude can be dangerous.’ How is this idea explored in the two texts, *Charlie’s Country* and *Tracks*?

## Plan

### *Solitude can provide purpose.*

- Robyn wanted to escape from society.
  - Women’s standards/subject to sexism.
  - Disliked being around people in general.
  - “One does not have to delve too deeply to discover why some of the world’s angriest feminists breathed crisp blue Australian air during their formative years, before packing... and scurrying over to London or New York or any place where antipodean machismo would fade gently from their battle-scarred consciousnesses...”
  - “You ought to be more careful, girl, you know you’ve been nominated by some of these blokes as the next town rape case.”
  - “Sallay’s instinct to protect what he would always consider the weaker sex.”
  - Did not want to experience any discrimination so she spontaneously decided to a trip.
    - To experience being alone with the landscape and find self/identity.
    - “I had made the choice instinctively, and only later had given it meaning.”
  - The more she was around Kurt, men from Alice Springs and women who were subject to be weak and submissive, the more she wanted to take the trip.
    - “The Kurts of this world would always win.”
- Charlie wanted to escape from the white supremacist society that obstructed him.
  - The white sovereignty disabled him from hunting or moving in his traditional ways.
  - “...all of them warned me against it. the blacks were unequivocally the enemy - dirty, lazy, dangerous.” (*Tracks*)
  - He escaped into the wilderness to relieve his traditional ways.
  - “It’s like a supermarket out there.”
  - Ultimately the more cornered and hindered he was from the “bastard culture” the more obligated he felt to escape into the forest in order to reminiscence over the old ways and also to create resistance.

### *Solitude can be physically harmful or emotionally exhausting.*

- Robyn found it hard to connect with others unlike her, due to her preference to being alone and her experiences of being in solitude for so long.
  - “By this stage I had become emotionally remote from outsiders. I found it hard to relax, especially when I had to face being introduced as someone with a label - something that always instigates an identity crisis.”
- Link so that the solitude liberates them but also imprisons them or enables harm.
- Times where Robyn did not want to be in solitude, because of how long she experienced it.
  - “Being alone got awfully boring sometimes, and that I needed people, wanted them.”

- Robyn after putting down Diggity, spiralled into depression and no one was there to help or support her during this time until it was too late.
  - “I feel so alone.”
- Charlie was unable to survive long in the wild.
  - He fell into pneumonia and was sent to Darwin – infamous for where Indigenous Australians pass away.
- Charlie lived alone in house where he was not getting enough nutrition.
  - Although this can be attributed to the government.
- Charlie lived for his own (a type of solitude).
  - Where he held no allies.
  - Helped police but also helped druggies i
- Scene where Charlie was being shaved emphasised oppression and how alone Charlie was from being stripped of his identity and freedom.

### ***Solitude provides change.***

- “It gave me a superficial identity, or structure, which I could crawl into when I was down.”
- Robyn literally had become more taut and adept to living in the desert.
- Robyn physically became stronger and more independent.
  - Gained help from Kurt, Sallay, Gladdy and National Geographic that contravenes with her desire of freedom and independence (solitude).
  - “I wanted to do the thing on my own without outside interference or help. An attempt at a pure gesture of independence.”
- Robyn’s connection with the land influenced her actions and helped her find self
  - “To enter that country is to be... amazed by space and humbled by the most ancient, bony, awesome landscape on the face of the earth.”
- Charlie’s experiences in the forest and in prison allowed him to take new perspective
  - “I’m free now... and this is my country.”
- Charlie realises that with

The film *Charlie’s Country* directed by Rolf de Heer investigates how the segregation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can indirectly result in isolation that could be dangerous for the former. Similarly, Robyn Davidson’s memoir, *Tracks*, emphasises the need for independence and solitude yet the adversities it provides. Both texts explore the protagonists’ desire for independence and autonomy that result in their solitude becoming dangerous to their person but also a chance for change. However, the two texts differ from this inevitable change that solitude catalyses. *Tracks* and *Charlie’s Country* highlight that solitude brings

The film, *Charlie’s Country*, directed and produced by Rolf de Heer emphasises solitude as a form of resistance to initiate freedom and autonomy for Indigenous Australians, against the oppression of white Australian society. Similarly, Robyn Davidson’s memoir, *Tracks*, presents solitude through the escapism from society and disconnection with people. Both texts show readers protagonists who feel liberated in the wild, isolated from all those that

obstruct them and their different experiences that definitively portray solitude as dangerous and beneficial. In these texts, solitude provides purpose, adversity and change that ultimately develop the protagonists into a different person by the end of their respective narratives.

Both *Charlie's Country* and *Tracks* assume that solitude provides purpose, that is, to escape from the surrounding society that prevents the protagonists from initiating independence, cultural practice and identity. *Tracks* particularly stresses that Robyn has a strong desire to retreat from the misogynistic view of women from Australian society that withholds her from discovering her own identity different from "the weaker sex." Repeatedly, Robyn describes her spite of women being told to "cover (their) legs" and "pull (their) skirts down.". This is also highlighted with her encounter with a man in a bar, him declaring that "you ought to be more careful... you've been nominated ... as the next town rape case", which implies that women are weak and vulnerable to be victim of violence because of the fact that they are a woman. Robyn's experiences with stigma and sexist standards enable her to develop a desire for solitude- instigating her spontaneous trip across the desert to escape and an "attempt at a pure gesture of independence" Similarly, Charlie also wishes for escape from the oppression of the white "bastard culture" that prevents him from committing traditional acts that were once norm in Australia. He is disabled from the same privileges and opportunities as the colonists who stole his land. This melancholy is heavily emphasised with Charlie's stern demeanour with the doctor: "You have a house, you have a job... on my land. Where's my house? Where's my job?" Essentially, there is such development of resentment from Charlie that he decides to venture into the forest to relive the traditional Indigenous ways. Both texts portray the protagonists' wish for escape, hoping that it will grant liberation; solitude in this perspective is not displayed as dangerous, but desirable.

However, in contrast, solitude in *Charlie's Country* and *Tracks* is also denoted to be physically harmful and/or emotionally exhausting. Charlie's freedom in the forest remains short-lived as he contracts pneumonia - eventually collapsing. Charlie being alone in the forest, combined with his lack of nutrition from pitiful resources in his community, takes a physical toll on his body. However, he was able to survive due to his mates finding him in the forest in time - implying that his isolation is a major factor for his illness. If Charlie were not to be in solitude, he would have never been hospitalised in Darwin. Therefore, *Charlie's Country* promotes that solitude could be dangerous to the body, due to insufficiency of resources or help. This is also emphasised by the long shot of Charlie under his shelter in the rain, focusing on the emptiness of people and signifying aloneness in the vast landscape. In contrast, Robyn experiences emotional trauma in her solitude, up to the point where she feels like an outcast from society. "I had become emotionally remote from outsiders, I found it hard to relax, especially if introduced as someone with a label – something that always instigates an identity crisis", explains that Robyn's long-term isolation made her disconnected from other people. It also highlights her discomfort of company and preference in isolation with the landscape, as there would be no people to "instigate an identity crisis" Particularly, Robyn suffers culture shock at the end of her journey where she physically becomes ill due to media attention. Her longevity of solitude deprived her from human connection with majority of society, and therefore resulted in Robyn being detached from sympathy or longing of companionship with strangers. Furthermore, Robyn agonized over the death of Diggity- whom "because of (her) isolation, became more of a cherished friend rather than simply a pet" This quote features Robyn's solitude had allowed her to rely on her dog significantly and therefore, became more treasured than humans. This explains Robyn's distraught experience and grief after Diggity's passing, as her death weighed heavier than a human friend because "she had taken the place of people" Thereafter, her isolation further tenses her depression due to the absence of emotional support from other people. Overall, Charlie witnessed physical sickness whereas Robyn encountered human disconnection and emotional injury, attributed to their shared solitude that enabled harm.

Solitude is also portrayed to be a catalyst for change in *Charlie's Country* and *Tracks* for the protagonists. As aforementioned, Robyn experienced culture shock and grief for her lack of independence and solitude once her trip ended. In comparison to her character in the beginning, she became taut and adept to living independently with limited technological resources. Solitude granted her opportunity to discover her identity and connect with the landscape that effectively influenced her viewpoint of the Australian outback. Robyn learned about autonomy, independence and quality of life during her journey: "Nothing was more important than freedom. The freedom to make up your own mind, to make yourself" She consequentially obtained accomplished change to her integrity and behaviour that morphed into further distaste with society and its standards – ending on a bittersweet note. Whereas, Charlie changes from a resentful Indigenous man to a hopeful and optimistic dance teacher after his solitude throughout the forest and in prison. Charlie once refused to teach the younger generation of the traditional dance, but after his trip through isolation and solitude, decided otherwise. Charlie realised whilst isolated, that passing down tradition is more favourable than resistance with white culture. Therefore, as Robyn's change occurred to be bittersweet, Charlie gained a new hope for his Indigenous culture. Solitude granted change that differed in both texts, hence to some extent, may be dangerous if the change resulted in adversity like Robyn.

Both texts, *Charlie's Country* and *Tracks*, explore solitude as an idea that provides purpose, adversity and change. Charlie and Robyn similarly find desire for solitude as an escape mechanism, to achieve freedom and autonomy. However, their isolation ultimately caused harm, physical and/or emotional, and concluded to change their character different from before their journey. To a significant degree, solitude can be dangerous due to the harm that comes from the lack of companionship, support and resources – but can grant liberation and opportunity for discovery of self. Ultimately, both texts evaluate that solitude can be both harmful and beneficial, given the experiences brought along with it.