



"In Year of Wonders, Elinor says to Anna, 'I wonder if you know how much you have changed.' Do you agree that Anna has changed?

Geraldine Brooks' compelling novel Year of Wonders is a story of ^{circumstances} inner strength overcoming the odds. ✓
 The novel explores the life and times of protagonist and narrator, Anna Frith, in the midst of 17th century when the torturous grasp of the Bubonic plague had taken hold of the isolated village of Eyam, England. The novel explores the natural human reaction to change and adapt in order to survive. ^{the way in which people} Brooks masterfully crafts the novel in a circular narrative structure narrated through the viewpoint of Anna to demonstrate the significant developments of her character as well as the confirmation of the existing qualities that bred her growth. ✓ ^{good}

By employing the use of a circular narrative structure and first person narration the changes that occur to Anna are communicated clearly. Brooks structures the narrative very purposely by beginning the novel when desperation, grief and torment was at its peak. Immediately the audience is brought to attention of how Anna "used to love". This line and in particular the repetition of the word "used" demonstrates that a series of events have occurred that have caused Anna to lose the passion and affection for life's former joys. Following this chapter, which is set in the Fall of 1666, is the Spring of 1665, where the tragic events that took place begin to be explored. By placing, ^{metaphorically} essentially the end of the plague with the birth of it, acts as juxtapositioning to directly contrast the complex changes that have occurred to Anna. ^{Brooks} It is in this second chapter that Anna feels compelled to think of the prospect of 'new beginnings', which is starkly contrasted to ^{with} the idea of Anna consoling the Rector in chapter one when the death toll and devastation leaves the idea of a fresh start seemingly hopeless. Brooks' character Anna is used to narrate the series of events during the period of the novel which gives the reader an intimate insight into her deepest and darkest thoughts. It is this link to her conscience that allows the reader to note the development of the character from her own level, and not an outside and unreliable viewpoint. Anna's character is able to use hindsight to make obvious her changes as the audience observes her switches in thoughts from previous states in the text. For she once envied Elinor for her tender relationship with Michael, yet later on when given the opportunity to ^{with} unlimitedly take her place in her childhood home, she lets the audience in on her realisation that she was "not Elinor, after all. But Anna." A position that formerly she would have embraced with open arms, Anna's growth and new found independence shows she has finally discovered her identity and need for "something entirely new". It is this structure and narration that builds the foundation to explore Anna's shift from the idea of divine providence to seeking truth through logic and reasoning. ^{sophisticated analysis of Brooks use of juxtaposition}

Anna's thirst for knowledge drives her to take a very scientific and natural approach to the plague, revealing a revolutionary way of thinking. The role that religion played in England in the 17th century was very significant. For the majority of the narrative the idea is enforced that the plague was "a trial" of God's "infinite and unknowable wisdom" to repent the sins of people worldwide. Although it is the likes of Anna who challenges this belief when faith in God alone does not keep her precious sons from the plagues trademark scarlet blemishes. The "prayers in the church bring no relief" to the utter devastation she is experiencing, so she resorts to ability to heal the plague victims with the herb knowledge the

Gowdie's left behind. She embraces the notion of using "the virtue of plants...to nourish those who remain in health" as well as to boost the body's ability to "resist contagion." Anna, like the rest of the villagers, trusts in the Rector's sermons, for she believed that "God listened to such prayers." Although she did not have faith, but rather belief in "hope" for the future, which allowed her to branch away from the constricting ideas of the church, and instead delve into the idea that the plague if not a force of God, "but simply a thing in nature." Brooks used the metaphor of the "stone on which we stub a toe" to symbolise the plague. The rock which trips Anna represents the plague in that its an uncontrolled occurrence in nature, an event which occurs so simply, yet can bring its victim to their knees. The strength that Anna gains as a result of the power of knowledge she attains is crucial in her development into a self-relying, sophisticated woman.

The perils of the plague successfully guided Anna to evolve into a liberated and confident woman that defied the constraints of female roles in the society. Social expectations of women of the time were based around the concept of a patriarchal culture. At the beginning of the novel Anna fulfills the requirements of this, marrying young and swiftly having two children. Although it is not until Anna's husband is killed in a mining accident that she is left to ponder the idea of freedom, not only from marriage, but freedom from conforming to age old beliefs such as celibacy. The influence of Anys Gowdie plays a large role in Anna's changes in regard to female and male equality and expectation. No longer did she want to live life "shackled" to "menfolk", "as surely as the plough-horse to the shares!" By utilising this simile, Brooks successfully likens the women of the time to plough-horses. It creates the image of submissive and subservient animals under the control of men. Such a negative comprehension of how women were being treated encouraged Anna not live a life "ruled by others' conventions", but to welcome the shadows between the "light and dark". That is, there is not simply good and evil, but the image that Anna recalls of the strong shadows left by the trees symbolise the ability to oppose the Godly constraints, and still be considered a good person. Although Anna longed for the touch of George Viccar's, a man she was not married to which would be considered a sin, was almost counteracted by the compassion and warm she gave him when he fell victim to the plague. Her own insight into the two people she is made up of, one, her former self the "timid girl... fearing hard words and harsh looks" and the other, the new "woman who had faced more terrors than many warriors" displays her own acknowledgment of the two distinct people inside of herself. Anna finally realises that although she will meet hardships, she is in control of the direction to take next. It is this decision that leads her on the journey to a new life, traveling across the world. Again Anna defies the limits set by going against what is expected. It was very out of the ordinary for a young widowed woman, whom is a soon to be mother of two bastard children to travel the world in order to begin a new vocation as a healer.

The novel Year of Wonders, written by Geraldine Brooks is a novel encompassing the capacity to change when dealt with the horrors of the Bubonic plague. Through the use of the narrative structure and first person narration of Anna, the audience is given great depth into the ways in which she has changed in order to survive the continuous adjustments to her world.

A fluent, expressive and very precise response. It presents a detailed examination of the ways in which Anna's character develops, supporting your interpretation with carefully chosen evidence. Sophisticated analysis of how Brooks' methods of writing and referring to characters of the text reveal and reinforce values.