

MANAS

Speaks

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH ADIKAVI NANNAYA UNIVERSITY

“Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.”

#SchoolPsychology

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY FOCUS

Screen Addiction

Parenting Styles

School Adjustment

Peer Relations

Bullying and
Victimization

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Manas Speaks is a monthly magazine from Manas-The academy of psychology, to publish a wide range of conceptual articles relating to different perspectives on methodologies in psychological research and to support student communities to strengthen their knowledge.

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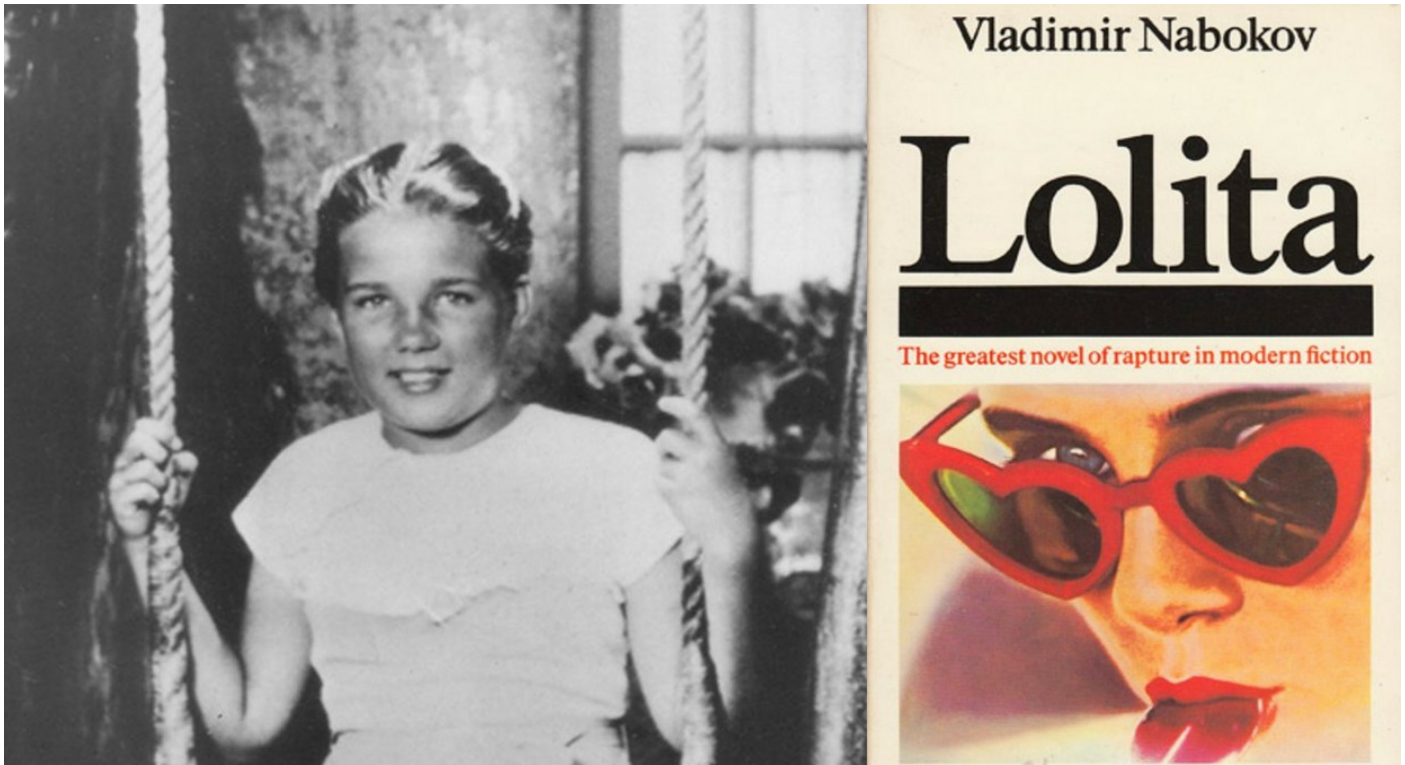
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Lolita is a 1955 novel which was written by a Russian-American novelist, Vladimir Nabokov. It was considered controversial because the lead character of the novel, Humbert Humbert, who is a middle-aged literature professor, gets obsessed with a twelve-year-old girl, Dolores Haze. Later, his obsession becomes so much that he marries her widowed mother to be closer to “Lolita” (Dolores’s pet name). It is a classic case of Paedophilia, which is a psychiatric disorder in which an adult experiences sexual attraction to a child. The novel is written from the point of view of the paedophile, Humbert. It shows how he justifies his attraction to the 12-year-old girl even though he manipulates, coerces, and rapes Lolita, then convinces the reader how this is justified because he is in love with her. This article aims to decipher the character of Humbert and understand various disorders which are prevalent in his character and how therapy could have helped his character.

At the beginning, a 14-year old boy, Humbert is shown in love with a 12-year old girl, Annabelle Leigh. This youthful love is interrupted by Annabelle's premature death from typhoid, which causes Humbert to become sexually obsessed with a specific type of girl. He refers to these girls as “Nymphets”. Humbert sees in Dolores the perfect nymphet, the embodiment of his old love, Annabelle. According to Erickson’s stages of psychosocial development, it would seem that Humbert gets stuck on the sixth stage of intimacy vs isolation and for the longest time was isolated. He was so fixated on Annabelle that he saw her when she was 12 in Lolita. When he meets Lolita, he knows immediately that she is his ultimate goal. Throughout the two years that Humbert was using Lolita sexually, he has a fixed attitude about his relationship with her (he controlled & dictated every aspect of her life). He is constantly worried about society and the law figuring out his unnatural liaison. His relationship with Lolita ends because she runs away from him but before running away she shows obvious signs of distaste towards him which makes him paranoid about people, places, and especially, the future.

Humbert knows that he has an unnatural lust for Lolita over which he is powerless and this realization results in him focussing on keeping everything perfect so he can continue his “relationship” with her. This includes changing places from time to time, keeping the physical state of the car in which they travel perfect, rehearsing their father-daughter scenes in front of the society and lastly keeping Lolita to obey him with bribery and threats. By constantly honing, and tinkering with these procedures, Humbert wants to create a worry-free sexual relationship with Lolita for as long as he should wish.

Various psychological disorders are presented throughout the novel within his characters, such as narcissism, depression, alienation and self-destructive behaviours. Humbert has a way of manipulating the audience into feeling sorry for him. A classic power play exhibited by narcissists. Narcissists have an inflated sense of self-importance. His usage of language and mannerisms depicts his sense of self-importance. Throughout his memoir, this can be exhibited by the way he pleads with the audience, by the way, he uses his persuasive abilities to manipulate us to sympathize with him instead of seeing his ways as monstrous. He is an extremely self-assured, almost cocky individual, with imperious charm and a sardonically elegant tenor of his style. He maintains the fixed attitude that his outlook and ideas are correct, contrary to society’s norms. He packs his memoir with music, artwork, poems and books in which he puts immense pride. He also uses other languages, clever puns and acronyms throughout the book which brings forth his pride in being in academia. He feels he has a superior aura to him and nothing he does is evil and if the audience believes it maybe they are not able to match his depth and intellect.

Therapy could have helped Humbert’s character. Humbert should have talked about his problems of getting attracted to a child to a properly trained psychologist. He had empathy and towards the end felt sorry for doing what he did. He was ashamed of his lust for Lolita and for ruining her life. Had he visited a trained professional, his behaviour might have been modified. Most therapies focus on helping the paedophile refrain from acting on their desires, its development is influenced by prenatal factors. In Humbert’s case as well, he was in love with Annabelle and because she died, got fixated on her. This might be the major reason for his paedophilic tendencies. Psychoanalysis is one technique that could have helped him get over this particular fixation. CBT also aims to reduce attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that may increase the likelihood of sexual offences against children. Its content varies widely between different therapists but it mainly could have helped in self-control, changing views on sex with children with the help of cognitive restructuring and developing empathy and social competence. Relapse prevention could also have helped Humbert by teaching him to identify and respond to potentially risky situations based on principles used for treating addictions. Behavioural treatments target sexual arousal in children, using satiation and aversion techniques to suppress arousal. Apart from these, Overt sensitization (masturbation reconditioning) could have been used to increase Humbert’s arousal for adults so that it could develop a healthy relationship. Pharmacological interventions could also be used to lower his sex drive in general to ease the management of pedophilic feelings.

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