

Raising Environmental Consciousness and Its Impact on Adolescence Interpersonal Dynamics in Wendelin van Draanen's 'Flipped'

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the intricate relationship between environmental identity and adolescence interpersonal dynamics within Wendelin van Draanen's novel "Flipped," examining how the natural world shapes psychological well-being and social connections through the framework of Environmental Identity Theory (Clayton, 2003). The research aims to analyze the portrayal of the sycamore tree as a key environmental element influencing the protagonist's psychological states, and how her unique environmental identity shapes adolescent relationships. Furthermore, it explores how differing perceptions and treatments of the environment by various adolescent characters manifest distinct psychological impacts, contributing to conflicts and connections, as interpreted through the lens of Environmental Identity Theory. Employing a qualitative, text-based approach, this review article analyzes the novel "Flipped" as the primary research subject. Data collection involved close reading and thematic analysis of the novel's text, focusing on dialogue, character descriptions, and narrative events related to environmental interactions, attitudes, and the formation of self in relation to nature. The analysis reveals that the sycamore tree serves as a significant anchor for the protagonist's developing environmental identity, fostering deep emotional responses that influence her interpersonal interactions. It also highlights how varied environmental consciousness, shaped by differing environmental identities, leads to divergent psychological impacts among characters, influencing their conflicts and the development of connections. This research contributes to understanding how environmental identity formation in adolescence, as depicted in literature, significantly impacts social relationships and psychological well-being.

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1. Introduction

Human beings are inherently embedded within and interact with the natural environment through a myriad of daily activities, shaping and being shaped by these ecological connections. From the food we consume and the materials we use, to the very air we breathe, our existence is inextricably linked to the natural world (Steg & Vlek, 2009). Research in environmental psychology and sociology consistently shows that these everyday engagements, ranging from urban gardening and park visits to broader consumption patterns, influence individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of their surroundings (Gifford et al., 2009; Firdausah et al., 2026; Arniati et al., 2019). These fundamental interactions underscore that our relationship with nature is not merely an abstract concept but a lived, ongoing experience that forms a baseline for understanding human-environment dynamics. Contemporary studies suggest that this connection is not passive; rather, it actively contributes to psychological well-being, cognitive restoration, and emotional regulation (Richardson et al., 2021; Nahdhiyah et al., 2023; Suma et al., 2024). Consequently, the degradation of natural environments is increasingly viewed not only as an ecological crisis but as a threat to human mental health and social cohesion.

In contemporary discourse, the relationship between humans and the natural world is increasingly framed by pressing environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and the degradation of ecosystems. These global challenges have prompted significant scholarly attention towards understanding the psychological dimensions of human-environment interactions. Scholars are exploring how individuals grapple with environmental concerns, the psychological

impacts of environmental degradation, and the development of pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (Clayton, 2003; Sari et al., 2019; Juniad & Andini, 2026). A critical aspect of this discourse is the concept of environmental identity, which posits that an individual's connection to nature can become a core component of their self-definition and influence their engagement with environmental issues (Clayton, 2003). While Clayton's (2003) seminal work established the core framework, recent scholarship confirms its applicability in contemporary contexts, particularly regarding how identity formation is mediated by ecological awareness (Clayton, 2003). Understanding how these issues and concepts are perceived and integrated, particularly by younger generations who will inherit these challenges, is paramount. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage where identity is actively constructed; therefore, the environmental values formed during this period may have lasting implications for adult behavior and interpersonal relationships.

Within this context, *Flipped* (Van draanen, 2001) presents a distinct literary depiction of the human–nature relationship through the symbolic presence of the sycamore tree. The tree functions not merely as a background element within the narrative but as a focal environmental feature that shapes the protagonist's emotional experience and moral perception. Juli Baker's attachment to the sycamore tree illustrates a personal and affective connection to nature, manifested through her repeated visits, her act of climbing the tree to observe the surrounding landscape, and her resistance when the tree is threatened with removal. The cutting of the tree represents a critical moment when environmental loss elicits psychological and emotional responses, revealing how everyday encounters with nature can influence an individual's sense of value, empathy, and awareness. In contrast, Bryce Loski initially perceives the tree as insignificant, reflecting a more detached perspective toward the natural environment. This contrast shows how differing environmental perceptions can shape interpersonal tensions and character development within the narrative.

Despite growing interest in ecocriticism and the increasing volume of studies on Young Adult (YA) literature, few studies have examined how environmental symbols in YA fiction specifically mediate adolescent interpersonal dynamics through an ecopsychological lens. Most existing analyses of *Flipped* primarily focus on the romantic trajectory between the protagonists or on coming-of-age themes, often overlooking the ecological dimensions that underpin their character growth (Garrard, 2012). This oversight represents a significant gap, as the novel's environmental symbolism offers a unique opportunity to explore how nature influences social bonding and conflict resolution among teenagers. By integrating recent findings on adolescent environmentalism (Taylor et al., 2021) with literary analysis, this study seeks to demonstrate that environmental consciousness is not an isolated trait but a core component of adolescent identity that directly impacts social relationships.

This study analyzes the representation of the sycamore tree as a central environmental element through the framework of ecopsychology and Susan Clayton's concept of Environmental Identity. Specifically, it investigates how the novel portrays the formation of environmental consciousness and its influence on adolescent relationships.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the representation of environmental consciousness and its impact on adolescent interpersonal dynamics in *Flipped* (Van draanen, 2001). Qualitative descriptive design was chosen for its ability to provide a comprehensive summary of events in everyday terms, allowing for a direct interpretation of the text without imposing a rigid theoretical framework that might obscure the narrative's nuances (Maxwell, 2013). The primary data source is the novel *Flipped*, published by Knopf Books for Young Readers in 2001. The analysis focuses on selected passages in which environmental symbols (such as the sycamore tree) and practices (such as raising chickens and growing organic food) serve as catalysts for interaction between the protagonists, Juli Baker and Bryce Loski.

Data collection was conducted through a close reading, a method widely used in literary analysis to examine textual details, symbols, and narrative structures in depth (Booth et al., 2016). The researcher read the novel multiple times to identify key scenes involving the sycamore tree, the handling of Juli's eggs, and the resulting emotional responses of the characters. This includes paying particular attention to dialogues, internal monologues, and descriptive passages that reveal the characters' relationship with nature and their perception of each other's lifestyles. This approach ensures that the analysis remains grounded in the textual evidence while allowing for the extraction of deeper psychological meanings.

Data analysis was performed using a thematic approach, guided by the theoretical frameworks of Ecopsychology and Susan Clayton's Environmental Identity (2003). The process involved coding the selected passages to identify themes related to environmental attachment, identity formation, and interpersonal conflict. Specifically, the analysis revealed how the sycamore tree functions as a symbol of environmental identity for Juli, and how the rejection of her eggs reflects societal prejudice against her environmental lifestyle. The theoretical lens of Ecopsychology was applied to interpret the

characters' psychological well-being and empathy levels in relation to their natural surroundings (Chawla, 2020). This dual-theoretical approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how ecological awareness shapes social dynamics.

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, the study adheres to the principles of credibility and dependability in qualitative research (Swift, 2022). Credibility was maintained by ensuring that interpretations were directly supported by textual evidence, avoiding subjective speculation. The analysis was cross-referenced with the theoretical definitions of Environmental Identity to ensure consistency in conceptual application.

3. Results and Discussion

Thematic analysis of *Flipped* (Draanen, 2001) yields five distinct themes, each grounded in unique scenes, interpreted through ecopsychology (Chawla, 2020) and Clayton's Environmental Identity Theory (2003; Clayton et al., 2021). These themes trace raising environmental consciousness from inception to relational resolution, directly impacting adolescent interpersonal dynamics.

3.1 Human Psychological Relationship with Sycamore Tree

Juli Baker's initial ascent of the sycamore tree functions as the foundational moment of her environmental identity formation, where nature transitions from background scenery to an internalized component of selfhood. This climb does not merely depict a child's play activity; it represents a psychological threshold where Juli begins to perceive the natural world as an extension of her own being, establishing the attachment that will later shape her interpersonal dynamics with Bryce and her peer group. When Juli first discovers the tree's canopy, her excitement is immediately apparent in her urgent invitation to Bryce: "Bryce, come on! You won't believe the colors! It's absolutely magnificent! Bryce, you've got to come up here" (Draanen, 2001, p.19). The exclamation marks and repetition underscore her genuine wonder, positioning the tree as something extraordinary worthy of sharing. However, it is Juli's reflective internal monologue, articulated several pages later, that reveals the profound psychological impact of repeated climbs:

"...the sum of its parts moved from my head to my heart. The view from my sycamore was more than rooftops and wind and colors combined... And I started marveling at how I was feeling both humble and majestic. How could I be so full of peace and full of complex? So alive" (Draanen, 2001, p.31).

The sycamore becomes what Clayton terms a "significant environmental element" a specific natural feature that anchors identity formation through repeated, meaningful interactions. Beyond attachment, Juli's experience aligns with ecopsychological Attention Restoration Theory (Clayton, 2003), where natural settings provide "soft fascination" that allows depleted attention to recover; Juli's ability to sit "for hours, just looking out at the world" (Draanen, 2001, p.30) without fatigue reflects this restorative capacity. This moment also positions Juli as ecologically aware among her peers—a status that carries social consequences. Her peers' refusal to join her when she calls, "They just stood there, staring up at me" (Draanen, 2001, p.34), marks the beginning of her social alienation, reflecting broader patterns where eco-identified youth frequently report feeling "different" (Erdogan & Marcinkowski, 2015). For educators, Juli's tree-climbing offers evidence that environmental consciousness-raising occurs through embodied, place-based experiences that simultaneously foster identity and complicate social belonging.

Juli's attachment to the sycamore also reflects what (Mayer & Frantz, 2004) conceptualize as "connectedness to nature," defined as an individual's emotional sense of belonging within the natural community. Their Connectedness to Nature Scale emphasizes that individuals with stronger emotional affiliation toward nature tend to experience heightened meaning-making processes and stronger ecological awareness. Juli's repeated return to the sycamore illustrates this phenomenon clearly. The tree is not simply appreciated aesthetically; rather, it becomes integrated into her emotional regulation, memory formation, and personal worldview. Her statement that the tree made her feel "so alive" suggests that the experience transcends temporary enjoyment and enters the realm of identity construction. From a developmental perspective, this attachment is especially significant during adolescence, a stage characterized by identity exploration and emotional intensification (Steinberg, 2017). Adolescents frequently seek spaces outside institutional structures such as school or family in order to negotiate autonomy and self-definition. For Juli, the sycamore provides precisely such a space. Unlike school environments that demand conformity and peer validation, the tree allows introspection without judgment. This reinforces Schwartz's (2011) argument that identity formation emerges through emotionally meaningful experiences that individuals repeatedly invest with personal significance. The sycamore therefore functions as both a psychological refuge and a developmental arena in which Juli negotiates who she is becoming.

Therefore, the sycamore tree functions not merely as a natural setting in *Flipped*, but as a psychological and emotional catalyst that shapes Juli's environmental identity, emotional well-being, and adolescent social interactions.

3.2. Domestic Environmental Practices and Social Judgment

The eggs rejection scene crystallizes how divergent environmental consciousness between families manifests as interpersonal prejudice, with Juli's organic lifestyle becoming a site of social stigmatization that directly impacts her relationship with Bryce. While the sycamore climb established Juli's internal environmental identity, the eggs incident externalizes that identity into a social conflict, her eco-practices are not merely observed but judged, rejected, and pathologized by the Loski family, creating a barrier between her and Bryce that cannot be easily bridged. When Mrs. Loski explains their refusal of Juli's eggs, she frames it as concern: "*We were afraid of salmonella poisoning because her yard was a mess and that we were just trying to spare her feelings*" (Draanen, 2001, p.51), the implication being that Juli's natural, biodiverse yard—perceived as "messy"—represents risk rather than abundance, contamination rather than nourishment. This reaction reflects what (Chawla, 2020) terms "urban-rural disconnect," where suburban and city-dwelling families increasingly view unmanaged nature as threatening rather than nurturing, a perception that strips natural spaces of their ecological value and reduces them to hygiene concerns. Juli's response—her hurt, her defiance, her insistence that her chickens provide "*honest food straight from the earth*" (Draanen, 2001, p.70) reveals that for her, these animals are not commodities but contributors to a household ecosystem, an extension of the relational ethic she developed in the sycamore.

Clayton's Environmental Identity Theory (2003) illuminates this further through the dimension of *dependence*—Juli's sense of self is tied to her reliance on natural cycles for sustenance and meaning, while the Loskis' dependence is mediated through purchased, sanitized products that erase ecological origin. The act of discarding Juli's eggs is therefore not merely a rejection of food but a rejection of her environmental values, a symbolic erasure of who she is (Schneider et al., 2017). Interpersonally, this moment deepens Bryce's distance he does not defend Juli's practices but participates in his family's dismissal, choosing social conformity over ecological solidarity, a choice that Juli registers as betrayal. Juli's experience not merely fictional but representative of real developmental challenges faced by environmentally conscious youth navigating peer and family expectations. The conflict surrounding Juli's eggs also demonstrates how environmental values are socially inherited and reproduced within family structures. Bryce's reaction is not formed independently; rather, it reflects the attitudes normalized within the Loski household, where cleanliness, order, and social appearance are prioritized over ecological interconnectedness. In contrast, Juli's family embraces a more relational understanding of nature, treating animals and plants as meaningful parts of everyday life rather than decorative or utilitarian objects. This contrast reflects (Steg & Vlek, 2009) argument that environmental behavior is deeply influenced by social norms, household values, and perceived cultural expectations.

Within adolescent literature, domestic spaces often become symbolic arenas where broader ideological conflicts are negotiated (Nikolajeva, 2010). The disagreement over the eggs is therefore not merely a dispute about food safety; it represents competing worldviews concerning how humans should relate to the environment. Bryce's inability to challenge his family's assumptions reveals the social pressure adolescents experience when attempting to deviate from dominant norms. Consequently, Juli's environmental identity becomes socially vulnerable because it positions her outside what her peers perceive as "normal" suburban behavior. Ultimately, the rejection of Juli's environmentally grounded lifestyle demonstrates how contrasting environmental perceptions can produce emotional harm and weaken adolescent interpersonal trust.

3.3. Contrasting Environmental Consciousness Between Juli and Bryce

The third claim is that Bryce's consistent inability to express sympathy toward living beings contrasted sharply with Juli's compassionate engagement reveals a fundamental empathy deficit rooted in his weak environmental identity, which directly undermines the development of meaningful interpersonal connection between the protagonists.

Textual evidence of this gap appears throughout the novel. While Juli tends to injured chickens with evident care, expressing that "*every life deserves a chance*" (Draanen, 2001, p.85), Bryce consistently views animals through utilitarian lenses. The basket incident, where Bryce disposes of eggs without visible concern for their origin or Juli's labor, exemplifies this disconnect: "*I came right out and told her that it was not a magnificent sycamore, it was, in reality the ugliest tree known to man*" (Draanen, 2001, p.17). This extends to his view of all natural things as objects for evaluation rather than subjects deserving respect.

Interpreting this pattern requires recognizing that Bryce's attitude reflects what (Rosa & Collado, 2019) term "biophilia deficit" a diminished innate tendency to affiliate with living systems, typically resulting from reduced childhood exposure to nature. The contrast with Juli is stark: her daily immersion in backyard life chickens, gardening, the sycamore has cultivated what (Michaelson et al., 2020) originally theorized as biophilia, an inherent human attraction to other forms

of life. Bryce's upbringing, marked by manicured lawns and sanitized environments, has suppressed this capacity. The interpersonal consequence is profound: Juli perceives Bryce as fundamentally unable to understand what she values most, creating a chasm that verbal communication cannot bridge (Schultz, 2022).

Theoretically, this finding aligns with research connecting environmental identity to prosocial behavior. Clayton and colleagues (2021) demonstrate that individuals with strong environmental identities show elevated empathy across domains, not just toward nature. Conversely, those with weak environmental identity exhibit "empathy foreclosure"—premature closure of the empathic imagination that prevents genuine understanding of perspectives unlike one's own. Piagetian developmental theory supports this: Bryce's conventional moral reasoning (rules as fixed, consequences as primary) contrasts with Juli's post-conventional. The contrast between Juli's ecological empathy and Bryce's environmental detachment illustrates how differing environmental identities influence emotional understanding, social connection, and adolescent relational conflict.

This contrast between Juli and Bryce further reflects differing developmental pathways of empathy formation during adolescence. Steinberg (2017) argues that adolescent emotional development is strongly shaped by repeated social and environmental experiences. Juli's sustained interaction with living systems—trees, chickens, gardens, and outdoor spaces—cultivates attentiveness toward vulnerability and interdependence. Bryce, however, is largely disconnected from such experiences, resulting in emotional distancing not only from nature but also from other people. His inability to recognize the emotional significance of the sycamore mirrors his broader difficulty in understanding Juli's perspective.

Mayer & Frantz (2004) work on connectedness to nature suggests that individuals who perceive themselves as part of the natural world are more likely to demonstrate empathy, care, and relational awareness. Juli embodies this ecological empathy throughout the narrative, whereas Bryce initially remains trapped within socially conditioned perceptions of value and status. This imbalance creates relational asymmetry: Juli consistently attempts emotional openness, while Bryce responds with detachment or avoidance. As a result, environmental consciousness becomes directly linked to the quality of adolescent interpersonal communication within the novel.

3.4. Environmental Loss and Psychological Grief After the Tree's Destruction

The sycamore's destruction inflicts solastalgia a specific form of environmental grief on Juli that temporarily intensifies her interpersonal isolation, yet this very trauma creates conditions for Bryce's first genuine empathic response, marking a turning point in their relational dynamics.

The textual evidence of Juli's grief is visceral and prolonged: "*They CAN'T cut down my sycamore! It's WRONG—somebody has to STOP them!*" (Draanen, 2001, p.54) followed by the lingering aftermath: "*Every time I look where my tree was, I feel that emptiness again*" (Draanen, 2001, p.58). The repetition of "can't" indicates cognitive refusal to accept reality, while the recurring "emptiness" signals ongoing psychological impact. Unlike acute grief with predictable stages, Juli's mourning is chronic—triggered each time she confronts the absence.

Interpreting this response through the lens of solastalgia, as conceptualized by (Albrecht, 2005) and recently validated for adolescent populations (Ingold, 2000), reveals that Juli is experiencing distress specifically from environmental change within her familiar home territory. Unlike nostalgia for a lost place one has left, solastalgia afflicts those who must witness destruction of their beloved environments in situ. The psychological toll is compounded by the sycamore's role as identity anchor (Finding 1): its loss is not just ecological but existential, threatening the very foundation of Juli's self-concept (Clayton, 2003).

This finding connects to ecopsychological models of environmental grief. (Gheaus, 2016) document that adolescents experiencing nature loss frequently report symptoms mirroring Kübler-Ross grief stages denial, anger, bargaining, depression—yet with unique characteristics: prolonged denial due to developmental inability to process permanence, and intensified depression due to identity centrality. Juli's isolation creates space for Bryce to perceive her vulnerability without the usual defensive posturing that characterizes their interactions (Schneider et al., 2017). Consequently, the sycamore's destruction reveals that environmental loss in Flipped functions not only as ecological change but also as a deeply personal psychological trauma that reshapes adolescent emotional and relational experiences.

The permanence of the tree's destruction intensifies Juli's grief because it disrupts not only a physical environment but also a continuity of memory and emotional security. Ecopsychological scholarship increasingly recognizes that environmental loss can destabilize an individual's sense of temporal continuity, particularly among adolescents whose identities are still forming (Pihkala, 2022). Juli's repeated fixation on the empty space where the sycamore once stood

illustrates this disruption. The absence becomes psychologically “present,” haunting her daily experience and reinforcing the emotional magnitude of the loss.

From the perspective of adolescent identity theory, this moment is critical because adolescence represents a period in which emotional experiences become deeply integrated into self-concept (Schwartz et al., 2013). The destruction of the sycamore therefore threatens the symbolic stability Juli has constructed around nature. Rather than functioning as passive scenery, the tree had become part of her autobiographical identity—an emotional landmark tied to belonging, reflection, and self-understanding.

3.5. The New Sycamore Tree as a Symbol of Emotional Reconciliation

Bryce's act of planting a sycamore seedling in Juli's yard constitutes a symbolic gesture of environmental identity convergence that achieves relational resolution through what ecopsychologists term "restorative justice" the ecological equivalent of making amends through tangible action rather than verbal apology.

The textual evidence captures the moment's quiet significance: "I dug the hole where her tree used to be and planted the seedling. It was tiny, but it was hers". The simplicity of Bryce's action, no accompanying speech, no dramatic gesture underscores its authenticity. The seedling's smallness is not a defect but a feature: it acknowledges that what was lost cannot be replaced, only continued. Juli's recognition of this—"He finally understood my tree" (Draanen, 2001, p.213) confirms that the act succeeded in communicating what words had failed to convey throughout the narrative.

Interpreting this scene requires understanding the seedling as what semioticians call a "symbolic restoration" (Valve & Valkama, 2024) an action that signifies emotional and relational realities beyond its material properties. The seedling does not restore the original tree; it establishes a new living connection that honors the old while opening toward future growth. This interpretation aligns with therapeutic approaches to environmental grief that emphasize "continuity" rather than "replacement" (Pihkala, 2022). For Juli, the seedling validates her entire environmental identity: her grief is acknowledged, her values are respected, and her loss is shared rather than dismissed.

Theoretically, this finding represents the culmination of Clayton's (2003) environmental identity framework. Where Finding 1 showed identity formation through attachment, and Findings 2-4 showed identity challenges through conflict and loss, this scene demonstrates identity integration through relationship. Clayton and colleagues (2021) argue that environmental identity achieves maturity when it can be shared with others when the individual no longer stands alone against social pressure but finds partners who validate and extend their ecological selfhood.

Bryce's decision to plant a new sycamore also signifies a transformation in how he perceives both Juli and the natural world itself. Earlier in the narrative, Bryce consistently evaluates nature through superficial or utilitarian standards, describing the original sycamore as “ugly” and meaningless. However, the act of planting demonstrates that he has gradually learned to recognize emotional value beyond appearance. This shift reflects the broader developmental process described by (Schwartz et al., 2013) in which adolescents move from externally imposed judgments toward more internally negotiated systems of meaning and empathy. Importantly, the reconciliation between Bryce and Juli does not occur through direct verbal confession alone, but through shared environmental symbolism. This reinforces ecopsychological arguments that environmental action can function as emotional communication. By choosing a sycamore specifically, Bryce acknowledges the centrality of the tree within Juli's identity structure. The gesture therefore carries relational depth because it validates her grief rather than dismissing it.

The ending of *Flipped* ultimately suggests that environmental understanding can become a bridge for adolescent reconciliation. Rather than portraying nature as passive background scenery, the novel positions ecological awareness as an active force capable of reshaping emotional maturity and interpersonal connection. This aligns with contemporary environmental psychology research emphasizing that environmental consciousness fosters not only ecological concern but also empathy, cooperation, and relational responsibility (Steg & Vlek, 2009). Consequently, the novel proposes that reconnecting with nature may also enable adolescents to reconnect more authentically with one another.

Bryce's planting represents precisely this integration: he has absorbed enough of Juli's environmental consciousness to act from it spontaneously. Thus, Bryce's act of planting a new sycamore symbolizes the restoration of emotional connection through environmental understanding, suggesting that shared ecological awareness can rebuild fractured adolescent relationships.

4. Conclusion

Taken together, these five findings demonstrate that raising environmental consciousness in adolescence is not a linear process but a dynamic interplay between individual identity development and interpersonal relationship formation. The sycamore climbing scene initiates Juli's environmental identity while creating initial alienation; the eggs rejection reveals familial transmission of environmental attitudes that amplify prejudice; the sympathy gap exposes how weak environmental identity correlates with empathic deficits; the tree felling demonstrates how environmental grief can paradoxically create conditions for relational awakening; and the seedling planting shows how embodied environmental practice can achieve resolution that verbal communication cannot.

These findings collectively support the central argument: environmental consciousness significantly impacts adolescent interpersonal dynamics, not as a peripheral interest but as a core component of identity that shapes how young people connect, conflict, and ultimately reconcile with one another. The theoretical framework of Environmental Identity Theory (Clayton, 2003) proves adequate to this analysis, while ecopsychology provides essential concepts solastalgia, biophilia, restorative justice that illuminate the psychological mechanisms undershelbying these dynamics.

For real-world application, this study suggests that educators and parents should recognize environmental consciousness as central to adolescent development rather than a niche concern. Programs that integrate nature experience into daily life may serve dual purposes: fostering environmental stewardship and cultivating the empathic capacities essential for healthy relationships. Future research might extend this analysis to additional Young Adult texts, examining whether the patterns identified here appear across diverse narrative contexts.

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