

“Life’s transitions impact strongly on an individual’s understanding of self and others”
How effectively has this been represented in your prescribed text and one other related text?

Through the **movement of social contexts**, one can **alter their understanding of themselves and others**. Subsequently, within this initiation of **accepting influential and significant relationships**, an individual can feel **accepted** when exploring and **overcoming challenges**. This transition is explored within Stephen Daldry’s 2000 film *Billy Elliot* as the protagonist predominantly faces **transformative barriers** in the acceptance of his passion for ballet. Similarly, Christina Lea’s short story ‘Denial’ reflects the **confrontation of social inequality** when transitioning between **social classes** derived from **different worlds**.

As an individual explores transitions, their attitudes and values may be **challenged to reflect societal norms**. This is evident in Stephen Daldry’s film *Billy Elliot* as the protagonist Billy continuously **experiences hardships** when breaking stereotypes and gender roles constructed in his prevalent world. Within this world, many values and beliefs are **entrenched within the community**, **impeding** the acceptance of Billy’s passion for ballet. The **opening sequence** of this film allows the audience to understand the **social context** through the depiction of a working class in Durham, Northern England. Throughout this world, **fear** and **conflict** are prevalent themes represented under the Margaret Thatcher government and miner strike in the **1980’s**. A **close up shot of the strike posters**, acts as a **subtle** message for Billy to **‘strike now’** and transition into the new world. Through witnessing the obstacles predominant in Billy’s society, this permits the audience to **gain an understanding of Billy’s physical and emotional barriers** as he begins to gain **self-awareness** and the **ramifications** of his decisions. Additionally, throughout the **opening credits** of the film, the audience is able to visualise Billy’s **personality and characteristics**. The song “**Cosmic Dancer**” is significant through its influential lyrics **“I was dancing”**. This highlights the **youthfulness** and **positivity** encompassed within dancing. It is then **contrasted** through the lyrics **“I danced myself into the tomb”**, in which the **non-diegetic music foreshadows** the **negative impact** of dancing as Billy’s **aspirations are continually weakened** by the **norms** of his prevalent world.

Transitions may initially encompass feelings of **uncertainty and self-doubt** for an individual. Similarly, ‘Denial’ focuses on **injustice and the incapability to gain a sense of ‘self’** due to social stratification. Like Billy, both protagonists in this short story experience different challenges due to their **disparities in social context**. As well as Billy, the protagonist in this story face **constraints of the old world** consisting of **racial inequality**. Denial explores the setting of an **Indigenous island** in which the narrator **contrasts the hotel for the tourist and the native village**. This juxtaposition in settings allows the audience to view the protagonists transition to the **new world**. Consequently, Jahbur as an Indigenous man experiences **two different lives**, his life as a member of staff in the hotel, and his life on the streets of this **“alienated city”**. Jahbur changes his name to Petar in order for the tourists to remember his name easily, further depicting **cultural identity as a barrier to his transition**. Additionally, Jahbur explores his feeling of uncertainty as **“the guests were only ghosts. I had no bond with them”** in which the **first person narration** allows the audience to **connect to his thoughts and attitudes**. As Jahbur struggles to transition into his **desired world of acceptance**, his hope is inevitably lost as **“laughter drained from his eyes”**. The narrator utilises **pathetic fallacy** to convey his continuous endeavor of gaining a sense of

individualism. Through the **evident divide in social class**, the characters in *Billy Elliot* and 'Denial' are **unable to create their own identity**. Subsequently this creates a sense of **isolation and sadness throughout the initiation of both Billy and Jahbur's transition**.

Through understanding the stages of a transition, **one's perception of self** and others can be altered as they gain support and meaning to life. These contrasting perspectives are evident in *Billy Elliot* in which Billy's father, Jackie is portrayed as the antagonist and **greatest impediment**. His refusal to allow his son to pursue ballet creates a **lack of support and negativity** associated with Billy's passion. Through Jackie's **traditional family structure and values**, this consequently impedes the transition for Billy and Jackie as they both search for a **new identity**. In the scene "A Disgrace to the Gloves", **mirrors** are constantly used as a **motif** as a way of **Billy stabilising his identity** through his reflection **despite ongoing challenges**. Additionally, the **boxing ring** serves as a **cage** in which the traditions of Billy's family and society inhibit his transition into the new world. As Billy begins to start boxing, it is evident that his **thoughts are elsewhere**. A **close up shot** of Billy falling to the ground depicts him **symbolically** enduring a **harsh continuous cycle** living up to his father's expectations. Yet Billy is reminded that he is a **"disgrace to the traditions of the boxing hall"**, further emphasising the **pressure** for Billy to live in his **father's footsteps**. Barriers or obstacles being evident throughout one's transition process may result in a lack of **individuality**. Consequently the theme of **isolation** is depicted in Christina Lea's short story 'Denial' as the narrator allows the audience to connect to her sense of **entrapment** in which the **hotel acts as a prison in Jahbur's imagination**. It is not until the sun cleared and the hotel finally **"lost its malnourished look"** that he was able to leave. The use of **personification** depicts the **hotel** as constantly being a **barrier** from experiencing the new world.

Within the process of transition, an individual can achieve **new and imaginative goals** through developing a **significant sense of 'self'**. Stephen Daldry's film *Billy Elliot* closely explores the **development of one's identity through** discovering **personal values and motives** which enable one to gain **courage and strength**. Additionally, Billy's first ballet lesson represents his first encounter with the real world of ballet and the beginning of his **transition** for individualism. Daldry juxtaposes the two worlds of ballet and boxing to depict the **impact** of this transition. The **medium shot** portrays his **lack of interest in boxing**, although **non-diegetic ballet** music allows him **to feel connected** to this unfamiliar sense of security. As Billy joins the female dancers, a **panning shot** enforces the idea that he initially does **not belong in this new world of ballet**. With **continuous practice and effort**, Billy's fears and insecurities are overcome with the help of his **dance teacher** who gives him reassurance by **acknowledging his potential**. This scene represents Billy's **journey of transition** as his outlook and perspectives change from negative to positive through the acceptance of ballet from those around him. Subsequently, Billy is able to **grow and move into new worlds** by developing his sense of self and **re connecting to others**. Through transitioning into new worlds individuals are able to develop a **sense of individuality in life**. Christina Lea's short story 'Denial' conveys the **pinnacle of self-discovery** as the protagonist experiences life outside of his comfort zone. Within this experience he becomes **less naïve** and a more **complex** character. As he realises he **"was not alone, listening like a dreamer to his splintered sobs"** the **simile** likens him to a **dreamer**, conveying **his humble personality in a world consisting of pessimistic attitudes**. Although Jahbur does not gain full acceptance from others, his **transition allows him to create his own identity** subsequently altering his

beliefs and attitudes.

Through the experiences **associated with transitioning into new worlds**, one can develop a deepened understanding of themselves and others. Stephen Daldry, through his film Billy Elliot encourages one to aspire to **achieving a personal goal** despite challenges **entrenched** within society. Similarly, Christina Lea's short story 'Denial' challenges society's expectations in which an individual's values and beliefs change through the **development of one's self-identity**.

