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The Member of the Wedding by Carson McCullers is the story of an adolescent girl who triumphs over loneliness and gains maturity through an identity that she creates for herself in her mind. It is with this guise that twelve year old Frankie Addams begins to feel confident about herself and life. The author seems to indicate that one can feel good about oneself through positive thinking regardless of reality. The novel teaches that one's destiny is a self-fulfilled prophesy, seeing one's self in a certain light oftentimes creates an environment where one might become that which one would like to be.

The world begins to look new and beautiful to Frankie when her older brother Jarvis returns from Alaska with his bride-to-be, Janice. The once clumsy Frankie, forlorn and lonely, feeling that she "was a member of nothing in the world" now decides that she is going to be "the member of the wedding." Frankie truly believes that she is going to be an integral part of her brother's new family and becomes infatuated with the idea that she will leave Georgia and live with Jarvis and Janice in Winter Hill. In her scheme to be part of this new unit, she dubs herself F. Jasmine so that she and the wedding couple will all have names beginning with the letters J and a. Her positive thinking induces a euphoria which contributes to a rejection of the old feeling that "the old Frankie had no we to claim.... Now all this was suddenly over with and changed. There was her brother and the bride, and it was as though when first she saw them something she had known inside of her: They are the we of me." Being a member of the wedding will, she feels, connect her irrevocably to her brother and his wife. Typical of many teenagers, she felt that in order to be someone she has to be a part of an intact, existing group, that is, Jarvis and Janice. The teen years are known as a time of soul-searching for a new and grown up identity. In an effort to find this identity teens seek to join a group. Frankie, too, is desperate for Jarvis and Janice's adult acceptance.

Frankie is forced to spend the summer with John Henry, her six year old cousin, and Berenice Brown, her black cook. It is through her interactions with these two characters that the reader perceives Frankie's ascent from childhood. Before Jarvis and Janice arrive, Frankie is content to play with John Henry. When she becomes F. Jasmine and an imagined "we" of the couple, she feels too mature to have John Henry sleep over, preferring, instead, to occupy her time explaining her wedding plans to strangers in bars, a behavior she would not have considered doing before gaining this new confidence.

When F. Jasmine tells her plans to Berenice, the cook immediately warns her that Jarvis and Janice will not want her to live with them. F. Jasmine smugly ignores the cook's warning that "you just laying yourself this fancy trap to catch yourself in trouble." The adolescent feels confident and cocky, refusing to believe that her plot is preposterous. After the wedding and the shattering reality that Frances (as she is now known) faces, it is evident, from the fact that their refusal doesn't crush her, that she has truly turned herself around, and that her maturity is an authentic and abiding one. At the conclusion of the story, the now confident Frances is able to plan a future for herself, by herself, which includes becoming a great writer. She, further, finds a

sympathetic friend who becomes the other half of her new "we."

Carson McCullers brilliantly portrays a teenage girl's maturation through a fabricated feeling of belonging, which ultimately leads to a true belonging. The reader sees how the girl grows from a childish "Frankie," to a disillusioned "F. Jasmine," and eventually to a matured Frances. When F. Jasmine questions Berenice as to why it is illegal to change one's name without consent of the court, the cook insightfully responds, "You have a name and one thing after another happens to you, and you behave in various ways and do various things, so that soon the name begins to have a meaning." No matter how we might change externals, it is only when our innermost feelings are altered that we truly change and grow.

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Novel by: Carson McCullers

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