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### Benjamin Button

Twain states that, "Life would be infinitely happier if we could only be born at the age of eighty and gradually approach eighteen". Although the Twain may have been goading for a laugh by saying such a thing, in the movie, "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button", this claim is explored. Growing up in an elderly home put Ben in a place surrounded with death when in a traditional life, a child should be surrounded by his family and shaded from loss. Also, because of Ben's condition he is unable to kindle a romantic relationship; specifically with Elizabeth and Daisy. Finally, Ben is unable to create lasting friendships without disclosing his condition. Twain and many alike would think that a life of getting more fit and healthy as time progresses would be desirable, but in Ben's case this is just the opposite.

When Ben's father observed that his child had been born as an old man, he immediately searched for a way to abandon him. Amidst the grief of losing his wife to child birth and the horror of his birth defected child, Thomas still managed to locate a suitable set of stairs to place Ben on; the steps of an elderly home. Ben's elderly appearance allowed him to fit in to the environment that surrounded him. In a traditional newborns life, the people who surround him at a young age tend to remain in the child's life as he gets older. However, as Ben grew younger, the people around him grew older. After the passing of the woman who taught Ben piano, this juxtaposition becomes more evident. Searching for connections and friends in the elderly home is very difficult for Ben because the residents are close to death.

In the life of a traditional child, the parents play a significant role in raising it. Because of Ben's untraditional nature, Thomas gives up on raising him. Without his father, Ben loses the guidance of a true parental figure and the real truth of his existence. His father attempts to rekindle his relationship with his son over the few dinners they anonymously held together, but because his father abandoned him he does not have the heart to reveal the truth. Although Ben does later find out who his true father is, it is when his father is dying leaving him devoid of any true relationship. While Ben may get to be stronger as his days go on rather than weaker, he has to grow up without knowing his own father.

Ben's first romantic relationship was with Elizabeth Abbott. While at first, their meetings at midnight contained discussions and stories from their lives, it soon evolved into romantic dinners followed by sexual experiences. As time went on however, Elizabeth cut off the relationship which left Ben utterly heartbroken. The main reason for Elizabeth breaking off this relationship with Ben was because she was already happily married. However, Ben and Elizabeth's physical age gap also created a problem. Ben was visibly younger than Elizabeth. In Ben's relationship with Elizabeth he experienced love for the first time, but again was plagued by his backward aging.

Twain's point of slowly approaching the age of 18 may at first sound appealing, but living with a finite age of death removes the anonymity of life. Although the movie has Ben live past the age of 18, the majority of his problems begin to onset at the age of 18. Ben is unable to live a traditional paternal role to his child and as a husband to his wife. Ben is only able to kindle the relationship as he gets 'physically' younger. However, while he gets physically younger, he gets 'emotionally' older. Ben and Daisy are at the same 'emotional' age around 20 when their

relationship would have matured, but they are unable to proceed because Ben still looks as if he was 60 years old. The relationship takes flight when the two of them are around the age of 40, but at this point Daisy and Ben are too focused on how the future will be as Ben's age is on the decline. Ben should be able to pass on all of the knowledge he has gained over his life like a true father, but because of his condition he is unable to. Daisy's pregnancy comes as Ben is in his 30's giving him realistically 10 years with his daughter. In order to not taint the life of his unborn daughter or create a greater burden on his wife, he is forced to leave the family.

Ben's first job was given to him by Captain Mike, a ship captain, aboard the *Chelsea*. Captain Mike was Ben's first friend that he made outside of the retirement home that he grew up in. Although Ben cherished his relationship with Captain Mike, it would have been impossible for him to maintain this relationship without revealing his aging backwards condition. Captain Mike dies before Ben is forced to tell him the truth so, as the viewer, we do not see how Ben would have went about such interaction. Although not specifically seen in the movie, Ben must have been plagued by this problem. Without explaining his situation, Ben would not be able to live in one specific place for an extended period of time. This is evident when Captain Mike makes the comment aboard the ship that Ben is able to do more and more work as time progresses. He says this jokingly, but he in fact is right.

Ben's untraditional backwards-aging, carries many more miserable moments than if his life went from newborn to elderly. Ben is unable to have a meaningful relationship with his father, because when he is born, his father is too shocked from the deformity of Ben's existence, that he gives him up. Ben is also unable to kindle a romantic relationship with Elizabeth and Daisy because their 'physical' age does not correspond to their 'emotional' ages. Ben's counter

aging causes relationships, like the one he has with Captain Mike, to be fleeting in order to protect his secret. While Twain says, although halfheartedly, that it would be better to age in the reverse direction, the life of Benjamin Button argues just the opposite.