

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the defense mechanisms employed by Todd Hewitt in Patrick Ness's *The Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008), responding to the intense psychological pressures of Prentissstown. Using a qualitative descriptive method and Anna Freud's psychoanalytic framework of ego defenses, this study identifies the forms, causes, and effects of Todd's psychological coping strategies. The findings reveal that while Todd initially relies on primitive mechanisms, such as repression, denial, reaction formation, and projection to shield his ego from the constant surveillance of "Noise" and the toxic masculinity of his environment, sublimation emerges as the most defining mechanism for his survival. Activated by the profound internal conflict between his inherent empathy and the external mandate to become a killer, Todd's defenses evolve from destructive self-alienation to a constructive redirection of his aggressive impulses. Furthermore, the study offers a new understanding of Noise not merely as a physical loss of privacy, but as a relentless psychological catalyst that forces the ego into extreme defensive adaptations. Ultimately, the research concludes that while Todd does not achieve full psychological development or complete autonomy by the novel's end, his ability to sublimate his trauma into a protective responsibility for Viola demonstrates a crucial step toward moral resilience in an ongoing state of dystopian chaos.

Keywords: Characterization, Conflict, Defense Mechanisms, Psychoanalysis, Settings.