

Cancer and Adolescent Identity: Reconstructing the Self in *Brave Enough*

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ABSTRACT

Narratives of illness in young adult literature frequently explore the psychological and emotional challenges experienced by adolescents while facing serious illness. This text depicts how teenagers renegotiate their sense of identity when illness disrupts their lives, and examines the process of identity development in *Brave Enough* by Kati Gardner, through the experiences of its protagonist, Cason. Cason is a teen ballerina whose life is disrupted when she is diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma, which forces her to reconsider her sense of self and future aspirations. This research paper employs James Marcia's identity status theory. Marcia proposes four identity statuses, namely, identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium and identity achievement. This study traces Cason's progression through identity foreclosure, moratorium and achievement, as her previous sense of self is challenged by her cancer. It offers a nuanced approach to how adolescents negotiate identity development as they navigate the challenges of cancer. By exploring Cason's transformation, the study highlights that cancer fiction frames illness not merely as a

medical experience but as a transformative moment that enables identity reconstruction and personal development.

Keywords: Cancer fiction, Identity transformation, Identity achievement, Adolescent identity, Illness narratives.
