Your Name

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Course Number

Date

The Assistant

**Frank’s conversion to Judaism**

In Bernard Malamud’s *The Assistant,* Frank Alpine, an Irish Catholic, falls in love with Helen Bober, a Jewish girl. Bernard Malamud felt a strong attachment to the Jewish cultural and religious beliefs; his characters also seemed to be struggling with their identities and self-definitions. Frank Alpine comes to New York in search of wealth and a better life but is entangled in the life of the Bober family. Helen and Frank have to face ethnic issues, and the Bobers are not willing to accept their relationship either. Frank is willing to date a Jewish girl just because he has a physical attraction towards her, but at the same time, he is worried that she looks like Jewish. He feels ashamed that she possesses Jewish features. Helen falls in love with Frank but she wants him to transform into a different person. She envisions Frank with straightened hair, a straightened nose, and expects him to be devoted and emotional, but is disappointed when he hurts her. The Bobers are not in favour of the closeness and friendship between Frank and Helen. Helen's mother is worried that if she marries some gentile, the religious heritage passed to Helen would be lost. Frank, at first, is an immoral person who learns values as the story progresses. When he steals money, he is dismissed from the grocery store, but when he returns and learns that Morris is sick, he realizes his duties and looks after the store for them. After raping Helen and being dismissed by Morris, the sense of lust, guilt, and self-loathing of Frank comes to an end. These feelings lead to the rebirth of Frank as a moral being. He asks Morris, “What do you suffer for, Morris?” to which Morris replies’ “I suffer for you” (Malamud 118). He tries to win Helen's love, trust, and forgiveness back by carving a rose and a bird on wood that is rejected by Helen. He also visualizes St. Francis in his dreams that indicate his continuous transformation from suffering to love and moral values. Thus, the accidental and extraneous events make him acquire moral characteristics and transform into a Jew.

# Works Cited

Malamud, Bernard. *The Assistant*. Farrar; Straus; Giroux, 2003. <https://books.google.com.pk/books/about/The\_Assistant.html?id=-4AEdIzjlPUC&printsec=frontcover&source=kp\_read\_button&redir\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false>.