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NOTABLE CHARACTERISTICS & THE BIG 5

Dramaturgical Significance in *HOHB* | Carey Chuter

HOW

BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS

The Big Five Model is the most widely accepted personality theory used in psychology today. The theory narrows down personality to five core factors:

Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism. Other theories sort personalities into binary categories; however, the Big Five Model argues that each personality trait is on a spectrum. For purposes here, this filter is simply to observe how the core traits of characters move and interact with each other through the world of the play. Remember that each human personality is composed of all five traits, even though we will narrow our focus to one primary trait per character here.

This information was compiled through analysis, actor questionnaires, and Big 5 Personality Traits assessment software available to the public on psychology websites.

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OPENNESS

“Openness to experience, or simply openness, is a basic personality trait denoting receptivity to new ideas and new experiences. People with high levels of openness are more likely to seek out a variety of experiences, be comfortable with the unfamiliar, and pay attention to their inner feelings more than those who are less open to novelty. They tend to exhibit high levels of curiosity and often enjoy being surprised. People with low levels of openness prefer familiar routines, people, and ideas; they can be perceived as closed-minded” (Psychology Today).

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GREG

- Big 5 Core Trait: Openness to Experience - “Those who score high on openness to experience are perceived as creative and artistic. They prefer variety and value independence. They are curious about their surroundings and enjoy traveling and learning new things” (Lim).
 - Greg is keen to get to L.A. He is curious about life, and his interest in stunt work reveals his creative and imaginative perspectives. His openness to running off to L.A. with Kelli and starting a new life expresses an unconventional nature and openness to trying new things.
- Character Description: Greg is one of the youngest competitors. He wants to win the truck to drive to Hollywood and pursue a career as a stunt man. He is an All-American boy: charming, baseball cap-wearing, but with a sweet shyness about him. Greg falls for fellow young contestant Kelli throughout the competition, even inviting her to drive to Hollywood if he wins. Greg is genuine, kind, and remains hopeful despite the bottomless pit of poverty he has grown up in.

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KELLI

- **Big 5 Core Trait: Openness to Experience** - “Openness to experience refers to one’s willingness to try new things as well as engage in imaginative and intellectual activities. It includes the ability to “think outside of the box” (Lim).
 - Kelli does not want the life that awaits her if she stays in Longview. She wants something new and exciting. As her relationship with Greg blossoms, we see clearly how open to experience she is and the unconventional way she is willing to approach this new relationship.
- **Character Description:** Kelli is one of the youngest contestants. Kelli is a UPS worker who wants to sell the truck to finance a better life for herself and get out of this dead-end groove. Kelli is grateful to have a steady job, but with each package postmarked overseas, she dreams of the opportunity to getaway. Kelli’s mother has been stuck in Texas her whole life, working interminably and still making so little money that she has to pawn her stuff for extra cash. Kelli is determined not to follow in her mother’s footsteps. She is tough as nails but pretty, hopeful, and not yet discouraged by the life she has been handed. Kelli forms a sweet romance with Greg. They are both very young, ambitious, and hopeful for a better future.

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CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

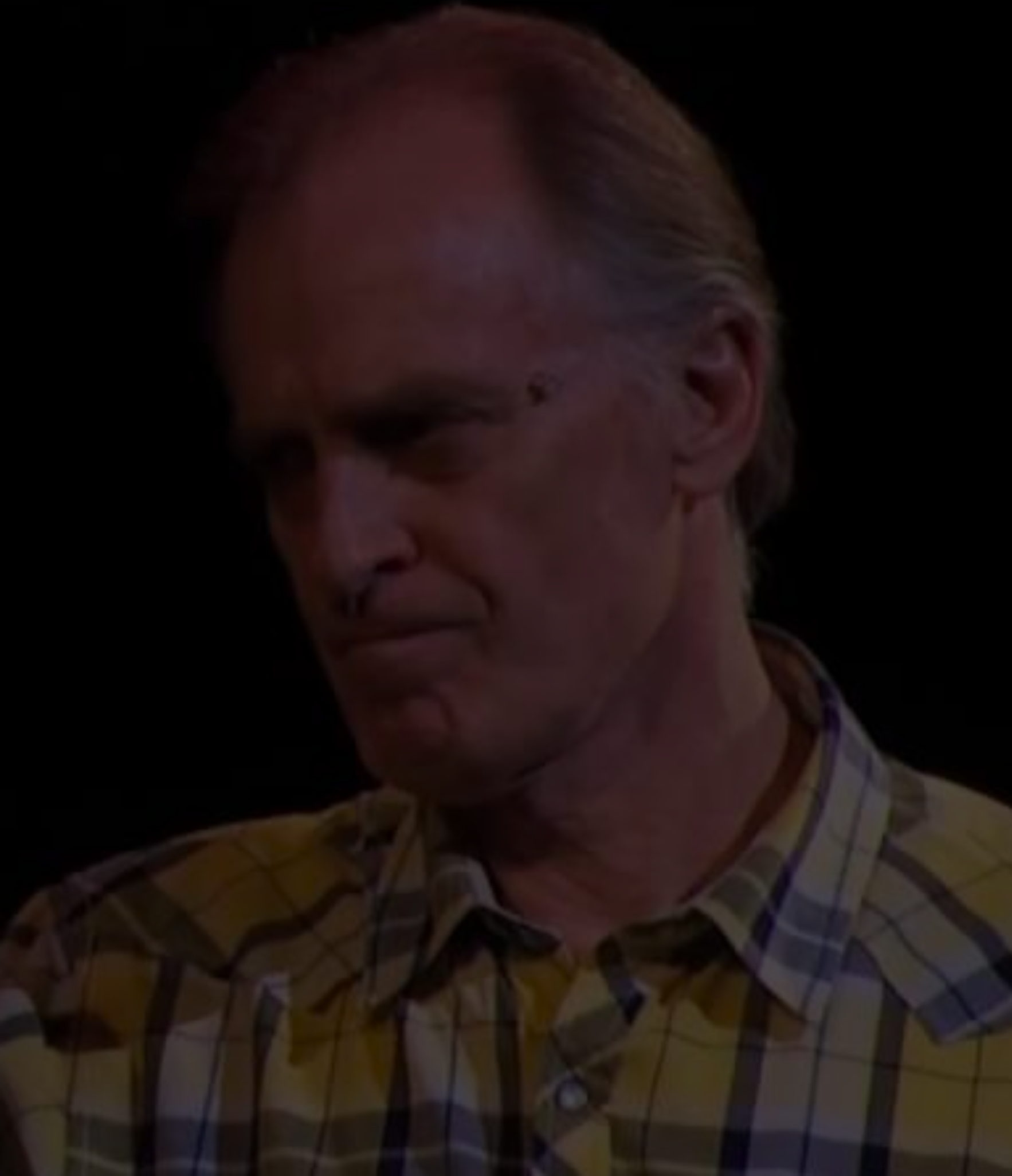
Conscientiousness is a fundamental personality trait that reflects the tendency to be responsible, organized, hard-working, goal-directed, and to adhere to norms and rules. Like the other core personality factors, it has multiple facets; conscientiousness comprises self-control, industriousness, responsibility, and reliability.

A conscientious person is good at self-regulation and impulse control. This trait influences whether you will set and keep long-range goals, deliberate over choices, behave cautiously or impulsively, and take obligations to others seriously (Psychology Today).

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J.D. DREW

- **Big 5 Core Trait: High Conscientiousness** - "Those who score high in conscientiousness can be described as organized, disciplined, detail-oriented, thoughtful, and careful. They also have good impulse control, which allows them to complete tasks and achieve goals" (Lim).
 - A high level of conscientiousness directly connects to J.D.'s winning of the truck. It also connects to his long marriage to Virginia. Despite their sometimes challenging interactions, his high conscientiousness allows him to view their relationship through a filter of thoughtfulness and a sense of duty supporting the longevity of their relationship.
- **Character Description:** J.D. is a "good old boy" in the classic Texan tradition. He is the oldest contestant, a former oil-field worker who is out of a job because of a life-changing injury when he fell off an oil rig. J.D. is charming, good-looking, and determined to win; he is a salt-of-the-earth survivor. Though generally hopped up on painkillers, fighting his rusty joints and broken bones, he hopes to prove his manhood. J.D.'s support at the contest is his wife, Virginia, who remains unsure if her husband can withstand the long contest, particularly considering his injured state. The couple has grown apart since J.D. left his job - he resents her utter devotion to him because it makes him feel small, while she is frustrated by his bull-headedness and distance. J.D. longs for Texas to return to how things "Used to Be."



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JANIS

- **Big 5 Core Trait: Conscientiousness** - "Conscientiousness describes a person's ability to regulate their impulse control in order to engage in goal-directed behaviors. It measures elements such as control, inhibition, and persistency of behavior" (Lim).
 - Janis competes to win, but not at the cost of her integrity. In her life, she has had to play by the rules that other people have written, even when they detrimentally affect her family and those she loves. She will not allow herself to become a part of that same corruption, even if it means sacrificing the truck and the financial benefits it could bring to her family.
- **Character Description:** Janis is a tough, fiercely competitive, quirky old bird with missing teeth and weather-beaten skin. She is no-nonsense and is utterly determined to win. Janice is devoted to her supportive husband, Don, and despite their dire financial straits, the couple's relationship is firm and impenetrable. Janis may not be at the top of the pack intellectually, but she has a keen sense of what is going on around her. Janis recognizes the cheating that's going on (with contestant Heather, and the car dealer, Mike, conspiring to win.) Still, when she speaks up, no one listens to her. Janis refuses to engage in the hypocrisy of the contest and leaves.

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HEATHER

- Big 5 Core trait: Low Conscientiousness - “Those who score low on conscientiousness may struggle with impulse control, leading to difficulty in completing tasks and fulfilling goals. They may also engage in more impulsive and careless behavior” (Lim).
- Heather’s choice to cheat is careless and impulsive. It also reveals the lack of regard for her fellow contestants and how her choices may affect them - another characteristic of low conscientiousness.
- Character Description: Attractive, flirtatious, and sexy. Heather is desperate for the truck because she is tired of having to bike ride to her job. Heather is stubborn and a bit of a troublemaker. It is revealed that Heather is having an affair with Mike, the Nissan dealer, in the hopes of boosting her odds of winning. She knows that what she is doing is wrong, but the stakes are too high for her to risk losing.

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MIKE

- Big 5 Core Trait: Low Conscientiousness (Lack of Direction) - “Those who score low on conscientiousness may struggle with impulse control, leading to difficulty in completing tasks and fulfilling goals. They tend to be more disorganized and may dislike too much structure. They may also engage in more impulsive and careless behavior” (Lim).
- Mike’s relationship with Heather is a clear example of low conscientiousness. This careless decision could jeopardize the integrity of the entire dealership and the excellent name of Nissan. He also puts his marriage at risk by engaging in such impulsive behavior - relationally and financially.
- Character Description: Mike is the proprietor of the Nissan dealership where the contest is taking place. A classic car salesman - greasy hair and manner, boyish grin, and a cheap tie with a Nascar tie clip. He is having an affair with Heather, a beautiful contestant. Mike is just as invested in the contest as the competitors-- sales have been slow at the dealership, so he needs a TV-ready winner to parade to the masses. He thinks Heather is a perfect fit.

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DR. STOKES

- Big 5 Core Trait: Conscientiousness - "Conscientiousness describes a person's ability to regulate their impulse control in order to engage in goal-directed behaviors. It measures elements such as control, inhibition, and persistency of behavior" (Lim).
- Though we only see Dr. Stokes briefly, there are certain things we can assume based on his chosen profession. Dr. Stokes would require a certain level of competency and organization to achieve and retain the doctor's status. We can also assume that he was goal and achievement-oriented with a degree of self-discipline, at least part of his educational career.
- Character Description: Dr. Stokes ensures that each contestant is physically able to compete and assists in the case of health failure during the competition. He is a well-educated professor from LeTourneau University; he has got the most book smarts in the room.



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EXTROVERSION

Extroversion is a personality trait typically characterized by outgoingness, high energy, and/or talkativeness. In general, the term refers to a state of being where someone “recharges,” or draws energy, from being with other people; the opposite—drawing energy from being alone—is known as introversion.

People who identify as extroverts tend to search for novel experiences and social connections that allow them to interact with other individuals as much as possible. Someone who is highly extroverted will likely feel bored, or even anxious, when they’re made to spend too much time alone.

Though many psychologists argue that extroversion and introversion exist on a sliding scale, and that very few people are “pure” extroverts, someone’s degree of extroversion is a core factor of their personality and is generally difficult (though not impossible) to modify. True extroverts are often considered “the life of the party,” but they can clash with more introverted types, who may find an extrovert’s energy and enthusiasm overwhelming or difficult to tolerate (Psychology Today).

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RONALD

- **Big 5 Core Trait: High Extroversion** - “Those high on extroversion are generally assertive, sociable, fun-loving, and outgoing. They thrive in social situations and feel comfortable voicing their opinions. They tend to gain energy and become excited from being around others” (Lim).
 - Almost from the moment, Ronald enters, his extraversion is on full display. He is a social butterfly with a current and past history of many girlfriends to support it. There is an energy to Ronald. He is exciting and has no problem being the center of attention.
- **Character Description:** Ronald is good-natured, jovial, and eager to get his due. During his breaks, Ronald snacks on candy bars. He is flirtatious and outgoing and loves the ladies almost as much as he loves his Snickers bars. Ronald wants to win the truck so that he can start his own landscaping business. As he puts it, “Car don’t make money. Truck make money.” Ronald is disqualified early on due to his distraction (a few lovely ladies also competing) and the ups and downs of his sugar highs.

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FRANK

- **Big 5 Core trait: High Extroversion** - “Extroversion reflects the tendency and intensity to which someone seeks interaction with their environment, particularly socially. It encompasses the comfort and assertiveness levels of people in social situations” (Lim).
- Frank is assertive, sociable, and outgoing. He thrives in his job as a radio host, always energized and the center of attention.
- **Character Description:** Frank is the fun-loving, enigmatic radio host and disc jockey who broadcasts the contest to the surrounding areas. Frank is a good-time guy, with a winning smile and a voice that can reach from here to Houston. He loves to look good and knows it when he does, especially in his Stetson suit. His commentary is funny, and his voice is charming. Frank is the kind of radio jockey that gets folks to turn on their radios.

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AGREEABLENESS

Agreeableness is a personality trait that can be described as cooperative, polite, kind, and friendly. People high in agreeableness are more trusting, affectionate, altruistic, and generally displaying more prosocial behaviors than others. People high in this prosocial trait are particularly empathetic, showing great concern for the welfare of others, they are the first to help those in need.

When a person is high in this personality trait, they are less “me”-centric and more “we”-centric. They look for the common good in others, are quick to hear out opinions of the people around them, and look for harmony instead of discord.

The less amenable and more combative person, however, is more inclined to be manipulative, callous, aggressive, and competitive. They don't care much about other people, make disparaging or offending comments, have little patience, and are easily irked and annoyed (Psychology Today).

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BENNY

- **Big 5 Core Trait: Low Agreeableness (Antagonism)** - "Those low in agreeableness may be perceived as suspicious, manipulative, and uncooperative. They may be antagonistic when interacting with others, making them less likely to be well-liked and trusted" (Lim).
 - Unfortunately, Benny's personality leads him to hurl insults and, at times, belittle others. He can be stubborn, a show-off, and unsympathetic, which leads others to form strong opinions with few personal connections.
- **Character Description:** Benny is the de-facto leader of any group of which he is a part. A bit wind-battered, lanky, and self-confident to a fault, Benny is both easy to love and easy to become irritated with. He has won the contest previously, so Benny is confident that he can win the truck again. Because of Benny's track record, he is constantly dishing out advice to the other contestants, demonstrating his skills, and sneering at those who do not follow his sage wisdom. He is also a bit of an amateur philosopher of redneck, Texan dog-eat-dog ideas, like, "If you can't run with the big dogs, stay on the porch with the pups." However, it is revealed that Benny is competing again because his wife recently left him and took the truck with her, leaving him carless. Benny is loath to display vulnerability, but his bravado cracks when he thinks about the mistakes he made in his marriage and the death of his son.

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VIRGINIA

- **Big 5 Core trait: High Agreeableness** - “Those high in agreeableness can be described as soft-hearted, trusting, and well-liked. They are sensitive to the needs of others and are helpful and cooperative. People regard them as trustworthy and altruistic” (Lim).
 - Virginia is a modest, sympathetic, and empathizing woman. She is straightforward in her communication with her husband, though he is not always ready to receive what she says. This straightforwardness and ultimate trust in her husband and her trustworthiness play no small factor in the longevity of marriage to J.D.
- **Character Description:** Virginia is the wife of J.D. Drew, who was recently injured at his job on an oil rig and fired and is now competing in the contest. Virginia is supportive of her husband to a fault - he often feels demeaned and emasculated by her constant care, despite Virginia’s best efforts. A former stunner, Virginia is still beautiful in older age but struggling to deal with the changes in her appearance and relationship that age, time, and J.D.’s injury bring. She is a strong woman who genuinely loves her husband. She believes in his strength but fears that his bravado will exacerbate his injury.

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JÉSUM

- **Big 5 Core trait: Agreeableness** - “Those high in agreeableness can be described as soft-hearted, trusting, and well-liked. They are sensitive to the needs of others and are helpful and cooperative. People regard them as trustworthy and altruistic” (Lim).
 - Unlike Virginia, Jésus draws his agreeableness from a very different place. Unfortunately, living in Texas/U.S.A. has forced him to live with the ignorance of racism. Much of his agreeableness emanates from the learned compliance that institutional racism forces on him day after day. Even in a simple “Hands-On” competition, Jésus must deal with Benny and Cindy perpetuating this bias.
- **Character Description:** The grandson of Mexican immigrants, Jésus is American by birth: “Born in Laredo.” He is frustrated by the constant assumption that he is an illegal immigrant, mainly because he is proud to be an American. He sings, “I came to this country like you came to this country.” Despite the way others often treat him (assuming he only speaks Spanish, steals American jobs, and came across the border illegally), Jésus is polite, hardworking, and genuine. Should he win the truck, his dream is to pay for veterinary school at Texas A&M. He is disqualified late in the competition because he hallucinates seeing his beloved dog and takes his hands off the truck.

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NORMA

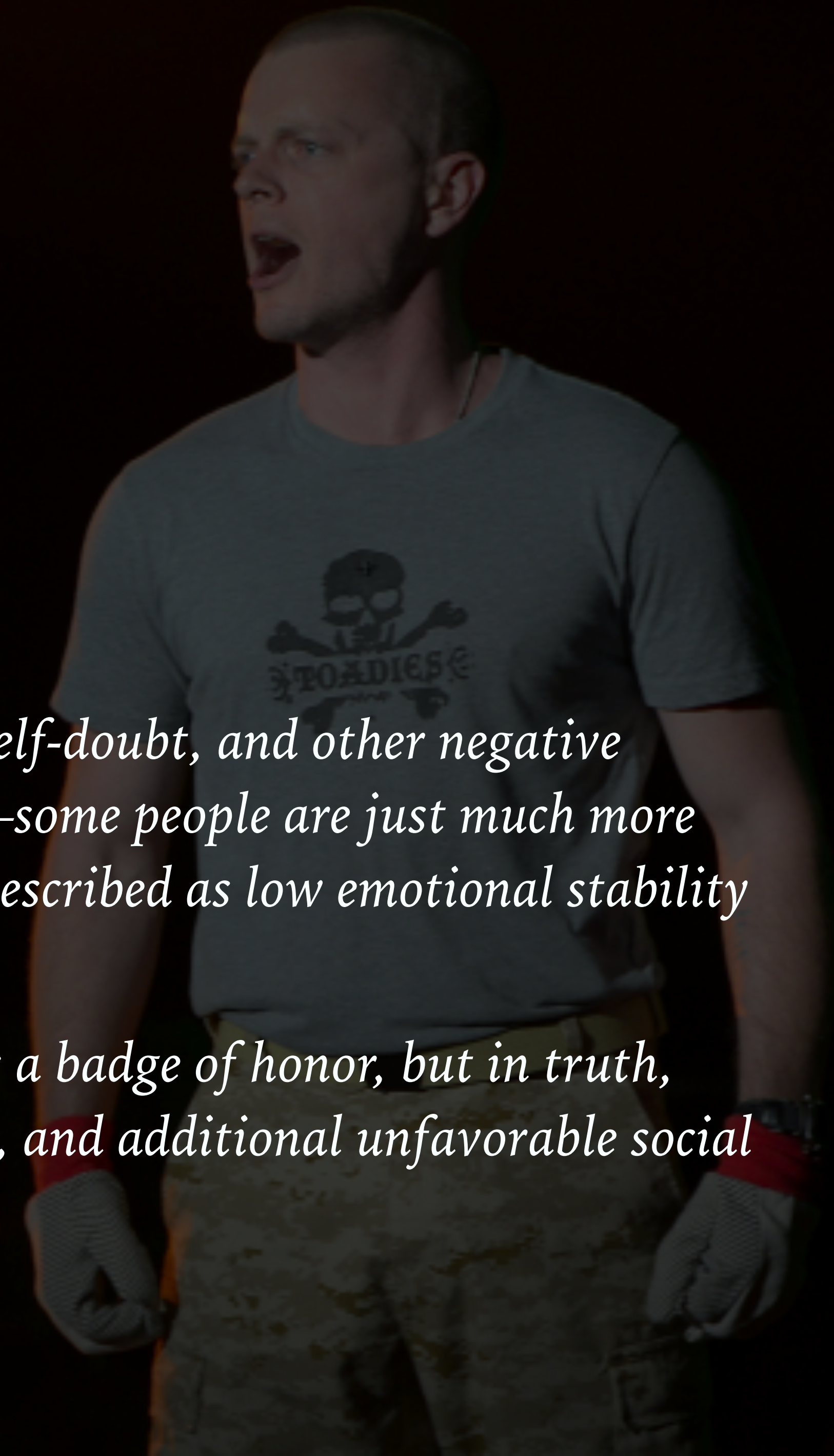
- **Big 5 Core Trait: High Agreeableness** - "Those high in agreeableness can be described as soft-hearted, trusting, and well-liked. They are sensitive to the needs of others and are helpful and cooperative. People regard them as trustworthy and altruistic" (Lim).
 - Norma is a woman of great faith. She is modest, sympathetic and shows great empathy towards others. She truly cares about the feelings of others. This agreeableness grows out of her faith. The sincerity and care with which she talks to Chris after his explosive anger towards her is an excellent example of compassion for others, born out of mature Christian love for all.
- **Character Description:** A die-hard Christian and strong-hearted competitor. Norma is incredibly devout and believes that Jesus Christ will help her win the truck. She listens to religious music to keep herself confident and awake. When pain and sleeplessness get too hard for her, Norma breaks out into fervent religious singing, almost to the point of ecstasy - she sings, "I feel the joy take my pain away!" as she bangs on the truck. Norma hopes that she can provide her children transportation to school by winning the truck and help her job-hunting husband get to interviews. Norma is easy to love, magnetic when talking about Jesus, and utterly determined.

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NEUROTICISM

Neuroticism is typically defined as a tendency toward anxiety, depression, self-doubt, and other negative feelings. All personality traits, including neuroticism, exist on a spectrum—some people are just much more neurotic than others. In the context of the Big 5, neuroticism is sometimes described as low emotional stability or negative emotionality.

Some self-deprecating comedians and complainers wear their neuroticism as a badge of honor, but in truth, people with neurotic dispositions are more prone to anxiety, mood disorders, and additional unfavorable social and emotional outcomes (Psychology Today).



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CHRIS

- **Big 5 Core Trait: High Neuroticism** - “Those who score high on neuroticism often feel anxious, insecure and self-pitying. They are often perceived as moody and irritable. They are prone to excessive sadness and low self-esteem” (Lim).
 - Chris enters the contest while suffering from PTSD. While experiencing much stress, his neuroticism reveals itself through his anxiety and irritability towards fellow competitors. Chris is also vulnerable and shares this through his song “Stronger” and his sometimes dramatic shifts in mood.
- **Character Description:** Chris is a Marine Corps veteran who has PTSD. As a weak, ninety-eight-pound teenager with a wife and a son and no way to provide for them, Chris was drawn in by a recruiter’s promise that the service would make him a stronger man. He joined up and left for Afghanistan, where he experienced horrific loss-- his entire unit killed except for him. Chris is emotionally bruised upon his return, suffering from PTSD and survivor guilt, but arguably “Stronger.” He wants the truck so that he can finally impress his wife and son after years of letting them down. Chris wears a pair of aviator sunglasses that hide his eyes and effectively hide his pain and sadness.

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CINDY

- **Big 5 Core trait: Neuroticism** - “Those who score high on neuroticism often feel anxious, insecure and self-pitying. They are often perceived as moody and irritable. They are prone to excessive sadness and low self-esteem” (Lim).
 - Cindy is a single mom living on a tight budget. This factor alone is enough to induce anxiety in any single mom. She makes it clear when she is irritated with Mike or the contestants - she is good at her job but is not given her due. Her financial situation makes her vulnerable to Mike’s bad decisions, which can kickstart some dramatic shifts in mood for Cindy.
- **Character Description:** The former Miss Gregg County, Cindy is still a pageant girl at her core with love for big hair and pastels. She is the host of the contest and an employee at the Nissan dealership. Cindy holds her prejudices near and dear: she has intense suspicion of Jésus, whom she assumes is an illegal immigrant, but trusts the cheating Mike Ferris until face to face with his transgressions. Cindy is a charismatic hostess and an easy leader. Always put together, Cindy always looks great.

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DON

- **Big 5 Core Trait: Low Neuroticism (Emotional Stability)** -"Those who score low on neuroticism are more likely to be calm, secure, and self-satisfied. They are less likely to be perceived as anxious or moody. They are more likely to have high self-esteem and remain resilient" (Lim).
 - Don is a rock for Janis. He is emotionally stable throughout the story, providing a sense of calm and support for his spouse. The life that he shares with Janis and their family is not easy, but Don's emotional stability provides a sense of resilience whatever the situation, including supporting his wife as she walks away from the competition.
- **Character Description:** The devoted husband of Janis, one of the contestants in the "Hands on a Hardbody" competition. Don is a Texan with a heart of gold. He loves his wife beyond measure and supports her in everything she does, almost to the point of obsession. Although Janis tends to "wear the pants," Don is a good guy and determined to help Janis win so that she can care for her family. During the competition, he wears a sign on his head that reads: "I LOVE YOU, JANIS, GO BABY GO!" When Janis leaves the competition because she suspects others are cheating, he supports her 100% and follows her right out of the dealership.

HOW THE MUSICAL

- Broadway Production Photos by Chad Batka
- “Big 5 Personality Traits.” Psychology Today, Sussex Publishers, www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/big-5-personality-traits.
- Lim, Annabelle G.Y. “The Big Five Personality Traits.” Big Five Personality Traits | Simply Psychology, 15 June 2020, www.simplypsychology.org/big-five-personality.html.