

35 Breaking 56 Bad



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The Transformation of Walter White and Jesse Pinkman

"Chemistry is the study of change. It is growth, then decay, then transformation," Walter White spouted off to his uninterested high school chemistry class five seasons ago. What we didn't know was that Mr. White was talking about himself and that this concept would serve as the iconic show's theme.

The cult classic ended poetically. Sunday, Sept. 29. It is the end of an era where viewers don't have to choose between a good concept, good writing and good acting.

So here's to the study of transformation and the legend of the aging chemistry teacher turned drug kingpin and the broken thug turned free and enlightened.

Caution: If you are not caught up on "Breaking Bad," do not continue reading.

When we first met Walter White, he was a meek, vanilla, middle-aged high school chemistry teacher. Then he got cancer. To say contracting a life-threatening illness changes someone is an un-

derstatement. Walt, however, took this to mean he should start making methamphetamine to leave his family money. Walt is "awake" and his alter ego, Heisenberg, is born.

Jesse Pinkman was first introduced to us as amateur meth cooker, "Captain Cook." He was a punk kid in baggie clothes, who said "yo" and "b—" and used his product as much as he made it. His company of choice went by the names of Combo, Skinny Pete and Badger. That is, until he met Jane.

The sexy/artist/junkie combination had Jesse falling hard. He became loving, sensitive and high. Walt, on the other hand, with two murders under his belt, had hardened. The story pivoted when he watched a heroin-riddled Jane choke on her own vomit and did nothing because she was a threat.

While Jane's death shook Jesse to his core, even leading to a stint in rehab, Walt grew colder, chalking up her death to a meaningless necessity. Along with his transgressions came the lies. Who can forget the site of a naked Walt standing in front of a grocery store refrigerator?

By this time Gus Fring is in Walt and Jesse's lives. While Jesse is still broken, Walt grows increasingly established in the meth game. His blue product is in such high demand, that Walt realizes his vast control. And with this newfound realization comes this insatiable thirst for power that cannot be quenched.

The more broken Jesse becomes

the easier it is for Walt to manipulate him. This is most evident when Walt poisons Jesse's girlfriend's son to elicit his help in the war against Gus. This deranged deed alone proves how far Walt will go to protect his empire.

Now we're to the ricin-making, bomb-building Walt. Living in fear becomes a constant for Walt. Every decision he makes is done with good intentions and an end game in mind.

When Walt calls Skyler and utters the words "I won," he truly becomes Heisenberg. With Gus finally out of the way, Walt assumes the position of alpha dog. Meanwhile, Jesse is reeling over killing Gale, an order given to him by Walt. Hatred and resentment bubble up inside Jesse from all the pain Walt has caused. Just in time for Hank to come face to face with some hard cold truth: Walt is Heisenberg.

Walt, beyond salvation, and Jesse, full of apathy, are now enemies. Jesse feels betrayed by the one constant in his life, and Walt feels hated. There's no going back. Especially after Hank's death, the one time in season five the new Walt expresses pure sadness.

Now he's an exile, and Jesse is a prisoner subjected to the same emotional and physical abuse. He does, however, pull it together enough to stick it to Walt one last satisfying time.

While Walt maintains his uniform of a bland button up, khakis and Clark's Wallabees throughout the

entirety of the show — aside from his various hairstyles — the real change is in the way he stares coldly, the snarl in his lips and the deep voice that shakes you to the core.

However, Jesse exchanges his Eminem-style wardrobe for that of a more mature man. His emotions convey the hell he's endured, from blowing everything off, to meth binges and tears, to feeling numb.

When Jesse is shown for the last time, he is part crying, part laughing and part screaming as he drives until his old life is far behind him. While Walt is shown, he has a smirk across his face, dying on the floor of the place that changed him.

"I did it for me. I liked it. I was good at it. I was alive," Walt said to Skyler in the series finale.

That's what you call a transformation.

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Claire Osburn
/A&E Editor