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Expectations and their appropriate height

What do expectations do to people trying to discover their way? It sounds broad but if you think along the lines of the stories we read, every protagonist somehow battled or was helped by the expectations they were held up to.

Societal expectation can be harmful to someone if they do not enjoy the outcome set for them. Think about a child brought up to become a doctor but who really wants to do something else. Dr. Manhattan is help up to extreme expectations just because he has god powers. The pressure the expectations put on him are undoubtedly harmful because it drives him to abandon earth in its hour of need. Essentially the expectations cause him to snap.

You could argue that author Wes Moore was in a position where he had defied expectations. This was because Wes's mother saw that his environment and his friends were building him up to be a drug dealer. The solution to change the environment where he would be help up to high expectations (sending him to military school) worked because it helped him realize what he was capable of. Here expectations did not produce pressure but rather set achievable goals.

But how high is too high and whats wrong when one only accomplishes the bare minimum of already high expectations when they are capable of so much more? What if I only wrote this abstract to the 300 word minimum when I could have been more productive? There is no way to quantify expectations but I was finding it hard to find a place to say "this is the stopping point"

My ideas also seem to fall apart when I begin to think about characters like Gilgamesh. We have no idea what expectations he was held up to or if he even cared what they were. I believe the end result of "no expectations" was a tyrant who needed opposition.

In a nutshell I plan on examining the appropriate height of expectations (high or low). I contend the high is better because I have not been presented with a situation where low (or no) leads someone to accomplish anything. But how high is too high and whats wrong when one only accomplishes the bare minimum of already high expectations when they are capable of so much more? What if I only wrote this abstract to the 300 word minimum when I could have been more productive?