Room – Character Questions – Jack

**Q: Do you think Dr. Clay is right when he says that Jack is “plastic” and will probably forget all about his time in Room? Explain your answer with reference to the text.**

Based on my reading of the novel “Room” by Emma Donoghue I think that Dr. Clay is right that Jack can forget a lot of what happened to him in room. However, there are some things I hope that Jack does not forget. I hope that as Jack gets older he does not forget or lose his own bravery. Jack shows great bravery when he pretends to be dead and allows himself to be carried away by Old Nick so he and Ma can escape. He is terrified that he is going to “mess it all up and Old Nick will bury me for real and Ma will be waiting always. Although Jack is only five, he is willing to fake his death and run the risk of being buried by Old Nick in order to escape and save his mother.

While I hope Jack holds on to his bravery, I think there is no denying that he has been damaged from his time in Room. Even though Jack has a larger vocabulary and better mathematical ability than the average five-year-old, Dr. Clay says he is “like a newborn in many ways”. Ma notices that he keeps “banging into things” because he has never learned to judge distances. He can only cope with other people “if they don’t touch me”. He behaves inappropriately at times: staring at a breastfeeding mother and touching his cousin’s private parts in the bathroom. Jack finds it hard to cope in society. Although Ma did her best, Jack was damaged by his time in Room and is far behind a normal five-year-old in many ways.

However, even though Jack has been damaged Dr. Clay says Ma did the right thing by getting Jack out of Room while he was still “plastic” as we see him grow up and adapt. He gains a conscience in the space of only three weeks, when he feels bad for keeping one of the coins Grandma gave him to give to a homeless woman. He learns something new every day, and says “I thought all the weird things happened yesterday but there’s more today.” He wants to go back to Room one last time and tells Ma that he’s “choosing for the both of us” when she’s not keen. Despite all he has been through Jack quickly learns how to cope in the outside world. There is a role reversal at the very end of the book. Earlier, Ma said she had to choose for both of them when she put pressure on Jack to agree to the escape plan. Now, however, he is in control of things, which shows how much he is growing up.