

Ways of thinking essay

In this essay I will be writing about the symbolic meaning and importance that a singular object can have on one's life. It can be different to many people, for example ones most special memories can spark from their childhood teddy bear, or from a song that they cherish as it has much meaning to a certain point of their lives or from a movie that they watched over and over again as a child etc. In my case this special object is a blue-ribbon pin which holds symbolic meaning to a person I once knew as me and his loved ones all wore it attending his funeral three years ago. It was worn to commemorate him as blue was his favourite colour. There was a glimpse of blue in the midst of the sea of black surrounding the church, blue decorations were all around and even his casket was blue. It was felt that that was a good way to celebrate and honour him. Even though it was a very dark time there was still some smiles and laughter shared through the tears that day when stories were shared about drunk shenanigans, stupid songs and general happy moments. In a way, memories are also valued by the stories that are told, their life lives in on through our words and keeps a piece of them alive as Jeffrey L. Seglin states in *The Right Thing* "It's our own stories that keep a loved one's memories alive. When loss hits with such a palpable crush and creates a void that in the moment feels impossible to fill, that seems the right thing do."

My friend suffered from mental health problems for many years before they left this earth, as I have found that most young adults are struggling with mental health problems or at least know others who are, it seems to be a regular theme for youth today which is a topic I want to touch upon in this essay as the level seems to be regularly increasing over the years. For example, in an article I found it shows that "Globally, depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents...Suicide is the third leading cause of death in 15-19-year-olds. (Kessler RC 2007; 6: 168–76). Sadly, it was mental health problems and suicide that took my friend and even though it was a horrible experience for many I am glad that I have something to keep their memory alive and to keep them close to me as I am sure many others feel the same. Suicide is a big cause of death for many but especially men in the past few years, statistics have shown that it is vastly higher among men than females, in a report it states that "As of 2015, almost two-thirds of worldwide suicides (representing about 1.5% of all deaths) are committed by men." This represents an even larger issue as most men feel that they cannot express their problems as there is the stereotypical social pressure that men need to be "strong" and that showing emotion is a sign of weakness, which creates a social pressure that needs to be discouraged or statistics wont change. People need to step out of the stereotypical norms of telling people how they should or should not act as times are changing and there is no one way a person should be anymore.

The ribbon was created for everyone to wear at the funeral, it was a way to bring everyone together to commemorate/ celebrate him and his life. As it was passed to everyone in the area, we knew it was for one of the worst reasons we could think of- death. It is usually happy items that are passed around at events, items such as sparklers on fireworks night, or sweets on Halloween, but this time it was to wish someone goodbye. It was unusual but we understood the meaning behind this tiny blue object. It creates such an emotional response

within me because this ribbon represents a very difficult time for me in my life and many others. It was a dark time which deeply affected my mental health and knocked me down for a long time. It was bleak and hopeless as many, including myself felt that more could have been done to prevent the outcome but in the end, nothing could have changed. Grief is a hard thing to understand as it is interchangeable and a way of life that needs to be experienced by people in one way or another. It is hard to overcome, I had to attend grief counselling sessions and emotional support from others.

In an article It talks about how grief is subjective and different to everyone as a young woman called Nazifa talks about the experience of her dad dying, she states that “I’ve learned that grief does not fit neatly into five stages, and nor should we be pressured to ‘move on.’ You may not feel able to carry on for a long time. Or perhaps you may pick up right where you left off straight after the funeral – it all depends on who you are, but it does not define how strong or weak you are. I’ve come to realise that I will not just ‘move on’ and leave the past behind. For a long time, I stifled painful emotions to be able to cope with the rest of my life, and only now am I learning to accept and sit with those emotions without panicking or disrupting my entire day.” (The *changing face of grief* 26 July 2019) Which closely relates to how I felt in this experience as it is never known if there are right specific steps to be taken when dealing with the death of a loved one.

I think the ribbon represents grief and remembrance, it shows how sometimes people hold onto things in order to hold onto a memory or to make themselves feel more comfort in a time of need because humans need to rely on that kind of reassurance in dark times like those, need something to hold on to that will make everything seem a bit better, like how it did with myself. To me it also represents the importance of looking into mental health and trying to spread awareness and give support to those who need it and normalizing making sure that others are stable/ healthy especially during these times considering the global pandemic of Covid-19 as research shows in the *International Journal of Medicine* article that it can have sever affects on anxiety and depression- “54% of respondents rated the psychological impact of the COVID-19 outbreak as moderate or severe; 29% reported moderate to severe anxiety symptoms; and 17% reported moderate to severe depressive symptoms.” (International Journal of Medicine, pages 311-312) So it’s especially important to reassure loved ones during the pandemic.

I found a poem that largely relates to the emotional pain one feels when a friend dies and that although it is difficult, we can take comfort in their memory.

Maya Angelou-

“When great trees fall, rocks on distant hills shudder, lions hunker down in tall grasses, and even elephants lumber after safety. When great trees fall in forests, small things recoil into silence, their senses eroded beyond fear. When great souls die, the air around us becomes light, rare, sterile. We breathe, briefly. Our eyes, briefly, see with a hurtful clarity. Our memory, suddenly sharpened, examines, gnaws on kind words unsaid, promised walks never taken. Great souls die and our reality, bound to them, takes leave of us. Our souls,

dependent upon their nurture, now shrink, wizened. Our minds, formed and informed by their radiance, fall away. We are not so much maddened as reduced to the unutterable ignorance of dark, cold caves. And when great souls die, after a period peace blooms, slowly and always irregularly. Spaces fill with a kind of soothing electric vibration. Our senses, restored, never to be the same, whisper to us. They existed. They existed. We can be. Be and be better. For they existed.” (When *Great Trees Fall* June 24, 2019).

I believe having gone through this experience it will influence my work and my creative direction in my writing skills as I have dealt with a difficult experience, but I feel rather than taking a darker approach in my work I will use this to make unique film making/ writing, for example in my *Guilty or Not Guilty* piece I have written about how the character represents both aspects as he is an anti-hero/ hero depending on ones view of the scenario. I like to think outside the box with my work as that is what I find most fascinating. From writing this essay it has deepened my knowledge on others experiences with grief and how different people manage that difficult stage of their life and that I am not alone in my experience. It has further made me realise the connection I hold with the blue-ribbon pin with a deeper understanding as to why it’s so valuable to me. It was reflective to research all the deeper meaning towards grief and the aftermath and refreshing to read other peoples personal experiences when researching the topic.

Bibliography

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Portfolio of Writing

Student Name: Tesni Williams

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Student Number: 2005170

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