

"one death is a tragedy; one million deaths is a statistic"
essay sample

[Life](#), [Death](#)



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It is easy to personalise one death – we can all imagine someone we know dying. However, beyond 100 or so, the number of deaths becomes unfathomable and we can only think of it in an abstract, conceptual sense. That is to say, we can understand that a million people dying is a terrible thing, but we do not feel the amount of sorrow and pain that we feel if one person living relatively near to us dies. Therefore, we see one secluded death as a tragedy, whereas, as Stalin put, “ One million deaths is a statistic”.

It is hard for a human to feel sympathy towards something that they cannot imagine themselves going through. Individuals find it much easier to empathise with other individuals rather than trying to discover the names of the nameless.

In Canada, full news reports covering the life and death of each Canadian soldier killed in combat are broadcast. Although there are few Canadian soldiers killed compared to other deaths around the world, this helps to show the importance of death, to all people in Canada, be it local or halfway across the world. Failure to detail the lives and names of those deceased and assigning them a number desensitizes people towards death. Death must not be a statistic as it is the greatest tragedy that can happen to Man.

Single deaths, political or not, are often covered and dramatized by the news, whilst many thousands of deaths, caused by war or otherwise, are

practically ignored. This shows the truth in this quote; society as a whole views a single death as much more interesting and relatable than a thousand people killed in some far-off country by people who are no threat to them.

Joseph Stalin, the infamous dictator of the USSR between 1924 and 1953, allegedly said that " One death is a tragedy; one million deaths is a statistic". He was responsible for the deaths of some 20 000 people, mostly in labour camps. This quote shows his dismissal of the importance of death, an almost necessary mind-set for someone responsible for such an enormous amount of deaths.

After all this reflection, I believe that, even though it is natural for human beings to see a million deaths as a statistic, society should do everything in its power to see it instead as one million tragedies.