

"the man who studied  
yoga" by norman  
mailer essay sample



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## **“ The Man Who Studied Yoga” by Norman Mailer Essay Sample**

Why are people often dissatisfied with their life? Maybe, it's because people settle for a particular life and want more or they don't settle and wish that they had. According to Sam Slovida in “ The Man Who Studied Yoga” by Norman Mailer, “ many people are dissatisfied with the present, and either dream of the past or anticipate the future”(Mailer, 129). Sam discovers that this realization is hard to come by in the real world. Sam's inconceivable outlook over his point of view leads to his dissatisfaction with his family, with his friends, and ultimately with his own self.

Often the people that are closer to each other are the first to know of an individual's personal dissatisfaction with life, and can often become the object or the target of the loathing that it can bring into the relationship. The picture that is given of Sam's relationship with his family is not one of a man with a somewhat firm grip on the environment in which he lives. Sam has a steady job, a wife and two daughters, and pretty much the picture of what a modern family is composed of. In the beginning of the story, Sam is described as wanting to “ free himself of envy... he would like to love more; specifically he would like to love his wife more, and to love his two daughters without the tormenting if nonetheless irremediable vexation that they closet his life in the dusty web of domestic responsibilities and drudging for money” (Mailer, 126). This paragraph captures the feeling that Sam has dealing with the duality of his present life and the life that perhaps he had always pictured himself having. Sam refers to his wife as “ She”, embodying her as a plaguing or an opposing element in his life (128). In Sam's case, “ The

grass is always greener on the other side", when it comes to the path that his life has taken. If he had been allowed to chase his dreams it is very likely that he would long for the chance to be a "family man" again.

In the case of Sam's relationships dealing with his friends, he has become envious of their lifestyles, not because they are better than his, but because they are simply different from his own. On the subject of Charles, it is revealed, "Sam has the best of reasons for not liking Charles. It takes more than ordinary character for a middle aged husband to approve of a friend who moves easily from woman to woman"(129). However what Sam fails to realize is that Charles, in some ways could be envious of Sam's lifestyle in much the same manner. In one instance when Sam is involved in a conversation with some guests his mind begins to wander in boredom and the very people around him emit a mocking sensation that they are in fact part of this mundane and repetitive trap that he has been caught in. Sam views everything in the situation as being "Laden with dissatisfaction" (140). This J. Alfred Proofrock-like lifestyle numbs Sam into a feeling of helplessness and despair. His ability to understand any other viewpoints or rescue himself and his feelings are beyond the boundaries of this middle-class and monotonous overtone.

The contagious "Ho Hum" outlook that Sam seems to carry with him is only a shadow of the monster that he is burdened with on the inside. He does not realize that he could change a great deal of his problems by facing them head on rather than merely accepting them. Sam is seen as being "full of envy, full of spite, a gossip, a man who is pleased to find others are as unhappy as he, and yet-this is the worst to be said- he is a decent

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man"(126). This is to say that probably the most horrible thing about Sam's disposition is that it is within his ability to see past it all, all of the elements that make his life feel routine, but he has convinced himself that the problem is the world in which he lives in rather than his outlook upon it.

There is a balance of events in Sam's life that would be normally seen as "Not so bad" but through gray colored glasses he seems to tie even what are supposed to be good times into a negative outlook. On the occasion of a party it is reported that Sam is "depressed in the morning and it is no different today. He finds himself in the flat and familiar dispirit of nearly all days"(127). In another instance "Sam has these casual daydreams frequently. He likes to think about other lives he might have led, and he envies the most astonishing variety of occupations"(131). Sam's avoidance towards the reality of his life evolves into a form of escapism where he can leave behind environment in which he feels abandoned and betrayed. This is ironic given the fact that he does nothing to improve his situation but to wallow in his own disappointment.

Overall, Sam condemns himself to the very life in which he loathes. By allowing the drone of his everyday existence to take precedence over his internal wants and wishes, he loses the power to control his own path, and the direction in which it takes him. It is ironic that the narrator has tones of being a mentor or perhaps a psychologist, because Sam's Hypnotic attitude towards enduring the day-to-day life that has been put before him is the only thing that is keeping him from achieving his personal goals.