

The death of ivan
ilych: how dying
renews the meaning
of living



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

July 25, The Death of Ivan Ilych: How Dying Renews the Meaning of Living

The Death of Ivan Ilych provides deeper understanding for Man's Search for Meaning, because the former asserts how hedonism only wastes intrinsic living and the only meaningful life in this world entails giving it up for a life of service to others. Ivan's life focuses on hedonism, where it refers to "the pursuit of pleasure as the highest good" (Breakthrough Writing Lesson #1) and this veers him away from intrinsic living. Ivan's life revolves around material possessions and superficial social relationships. Ilych measures himself through his material possessions and social status. He overly concerns himself with his belongings, because he desires to be perceived as a wealthy man: "...with his new and fashionable portmanteau, linen, clothes, shaving ...," he believes that happiness depends on looking successful (Tolstoy Ch. 2). Furthermore, his social relations are valuable to him, as it "... [inspires] general respect" (Tolstoy Ch. 2). Ivan lives to feel accepted. But as he dies, he realizes how he uses others as instruments and how others see him as means to their ends too. So many people live hedonistically.

Hedonism feeds narcissism, however, which Frankl asserts as inconsequential in life: "Self-centeredness is the natural obsession of a life without meaning" (Breakthrough Writing Lesson #2). Frankl notes that the Holocaust changes the concept of existence and renews the meaning of decency: "This was an unrelenting struggle for daily bread and for life itself, for one's own sake or that of a good friend" (Frankl 16). It has been necessary to use all means to survive during this time: "The best of us did not return" (Frankl 17). Frankl learns that life becomes more important when it turns outward to others, instead of being centered in the self. Only when people see other human beings as precious ends can they see their value in <https://assignbuster.com/the-death-of-ivan-ilych-how-dying-renews-the-meaning-of-living/>

life too. The Death of Ivan Ilych argues that the only meaningful life in this world requires the paradox of giving it up for a life of service to others. Frankl provides the ultimatum of “[living] a life of service to others and [being] worthy of your suffering” or else, the opposite direction is “ futile.” Ilych’s impending death renders how the living selfishly lives. Ilych’s friends and colleagues, almost all of his family, and his doctors treat him as an instrument. Only Gerasim and his son act toward Ivan with compassion and service. Gerasim sees Ilych as a person who is worthy of his time and understanding, because he is also a human being like him. Gerasim obeys Ilych’s requests “ because he was doing it for a dying man and hoped someone would do the same for him when his time came” (Tolstoy Ch. 7). Ilych’s son also feels his deep connection for a person who dedicated his life to his family. These are people who lived with service in mind and their lives are fuller because of that, an important point that Frankl makes in Man's Search for Meaning. Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning explores the meaninglessness of life before the Holocaust. Tolstoy also shows how Ivan finds the real meaning of “ living” during his route toward death in The Death of Ivan Ilych, and how. The paradox of these stories lies in the process of realizing the true meaning of life, only after death threatens to end it. Living means living outside oneself and dying happens only when the “ self” focuses inwardly. Works Cited Breakthrough Writing. “ Lesson #1: Distracting Ourselves from the Rudeness of Death and Putting Up a Facade of Respectability to Conceal the Private Nuptial Hell.” 9 Dec. 2010. Web. 23 July 2010. . ---. “ Lesson #2: So Much Money and So Much Misery.” 9 Dec. 2010. Web. 23 July 2010. < http://herculodge.typepad.com/breakthrough_writer/2010/12/lesson-2-so-much-money-and-so-much-misery.https://assignbuster.com/the-death-of-ivan-ilych-how-dying-renews-the-meaning-of-living/

html>. Frankl, Viktor E. Man's Search for Meaning. Google Books. Web. 23 July 2010. Tolstoy, Leo. The Death of Ivan Ilych. Web. 23 July 2010. .