

Themes in tuesdays with morrie



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In the Book, Tuesdays with Morrie Mitch Albom asks the reader a continual question that reverberates throughout the book: a question that he wrestles back and forth with. His question is simple but deep and compelling; have you had someone close to you leave your life, not completely, but physically? Everything just seemed right when they were in your presence.

The moments spent could only be described as what seemed so lovely and pure, the memories often pondered fondly. You keep yourself busy with many a task to dull the senses of what the mind plaques on your innermost being. The feelings of apathy and complacency are feelings that have not brushed across your mind until now, like an artist with a single stroke, a shiny gloss that hazed over your thoughts, now dry and crackling, chipping away and falling far from your mind as if they were never there. Realizing what you had is coming to terms with where you came from and where you are now. Mitch goes on to speak of how Morrie spoke words of life into his cynical soul and enlivened it towards betterment. It is as if you can hear his audible underlying tone say: you see he was a better person than I, and it made me a better person to be around him. The kind of betterment that can only be attained through birth-bestowed upon the chosen, such a substance as his cannot be taught or attained through some moral code of competence. He did it all when no one/everyone was watching-experiencing the real and unencumbered in all his glory. Here today and gone tomorrow but forever etched within the soul. Morrie Schwartz was Mitch Albom's sociology professor at Brandeis University whom he has not spoken with in years, and when he discovers that his dear old professor has taken ill with Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease) while watching a

Nightline interview that Morrie did with Ted Koppel he wastes no time in getting back in touch with him. From the onset, Mitch's cognitions of what Morrie use to look like are dwarfed by the reality of just how deeply aging and terminal illness have affected his once jovial and lively professor.

When he arrives at Morrie's home in Boston he sees a frail and aged man waiting outside in a wheelchair, a far cry from the dancing fool he remembers him to be. As his first visit is underway he realizes just how confined his old professor's life has become, from not being able to leave his home to having a nurse at the house to aid him in tasks that a healthy individual does with ease, becomes a daily routine. After his first visit to Boston Mitch vows to keep coming back every Tuesday in keeping with the same schedule that they had while Mitch was a student of Morrie's at Brandeis because as Morrie says " were Tuesday people Mitch."

Tuesday after Tuesday Mitch returns to Morrie's house in West Newton to take in every bit of Morrie he can and extrapolate every ounce of knowledge and wisdom his aging professor can muster, and for sixteen Tuesdays they explored many of life's central concerns family, marriage, aging, and happiness, to name a few. It becomes increasingly evident just how cruel and unrelenting a disease such as ALS can be, it takes from Morrie the one thing that allows him to exercise his right to free and reckless abandon, " his dancing." The slow degenerative effects of this inexorable malady are played out in every stage of the book from the first time we see Mitch baring handfuls of Morrie's favorite foods to the following where he has trouble lifting his hands to his chin and his in-house nurse has to spoon feed him. Morrie had expressed to Mr. Koppel in their first meeting that what he

dreaded most about the disease was the likelihood that one day soon, somebody else would have to clean him after using the lavatory. It happened; his worst fear had come to fruition.

Morrie's nurse now has to do it for him, and he realizes this to be the utter surrender to the disease. He is now more than ever entirely reliant on others for virtually all of his necessities. He articulates to Mitch that in spite of the troubles of his reliance on others, he is trying to revel in being an adolescent for the second time. Morrie reiterates that we ought to discard culture if it is not beneficial to our needs, and conveys to Mitch that we must to be loved such as we were when we were children, continuously being held and rocked by our mothers. Mitch sees that at 78 years age, Morrie is "generous and giving as an adult while taking and receiving just as a child would." As Morrie's ailment worsens, so does his hibiscus in the window of his study. It acts as a representation of his life as a natural process of life's cyclical process. He conveys a story Mitch and also to Mr. Koppel of a wave rolling into shore, signifying death.

Morrie articulates his fear of it, but reassures Mitch with that he accepts it and will come back as something far greater. Morrie echoes an aphorism to Mitch "When you're in bed, you're dead" to signify his ultimate surrender and on Mitch's last visit to see him that is where he laid, "like a child, small and frail." This notion of dependence (birth through childhood)-independence (teenage years through adulthood) - dependence (late adulthood to death) seems to be the resounding tone throughout our textbook as well, where life is a set stage of transitions from birth-maturing-aging-and death. We care for people when they are young, nurture to foster mature and productive adults,

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and then again care for them when they cannot do so for themselves. I have and would recommend this book to anyone and everyone, not only for the way it touches me when I recollect upon it and makes me cry with tears of hope and gladness that such a person lived but also for the numerous and invaluable lessons it imparts upon its readers. Alblom has made me change the way I see the world, I see aging as a wonderful and beautiful part of life, not a process to detest but to relish in its loveliness and splendor.

There is a beauty in aging that I had not recognized before this book; Morrie Schwartz imparts a sense of hope upon future generations with his witty and jovial aphorisms and the most profound outlook upon life, death, aging, and most of all love.