

Death is inevitable

Business



Death is the end to one's life; it is tragic, terrifying but in the end, it is inevitable. Everyone fears death; some do not speak about it and others do not fear that it will come. Emily Dickson's poem "Because I Could Not Stop Death" and Andre Dubu's short story, "A Father's Story", depicts death from different perspectives. The poem expresses death as happy from the beginning of the poem to the end. The idea of death in the story comes towards the end of the story. Literature is an excellent way of expressing life and the way we view it.

"A Father's Story" is about the life of Luke Ripley, a Catholic who lost his wife and children through a divorce. The poem depicts death as gentleman taking a woman through her journey that ends at her grave. Literary works depict the theme of death in different ways. Death is a fact of life, and we all embrace it in different ways. Both authors accept the inevitability of death. The main character in "A Father's Story" is Luke Ripley a father who protects his daughter from death after killing a man with her car.

The story is about Luke's life; after his wife Gloria leaves him with his children through a bitter divorce. There are three different aspects of death; emotional, spiritual and physical. Luke goes through an emotional death after losing his wife and children. The story explains his life and how it is lonely and painful living without his family. Luke is a practicing Catholic and cannot marry another woman because of his faith. He loves his daughter Jennifer who is the last born and only girl among his children.

Jennifer is the only child who visits him often after the divorce. Luke shows love and compassion towards his daughter by protecting her from the

repercussions of killing a man. He is extremely protective of his daughter as a father and will do anything to protect her. This he does by going against his Catholic faith and not reporting the matter to the Police (Dubus, 1988). Luke goes through his emotional death after losing his wife and children because he cannot have another life like the one he had with his wife and children. He lives alone in a large house with his horses and radio.

He runs a stable, boarding horses and gives horse riding lessons. His life revolves around his horses and his relationship with 64 year old Father Paul, a Catholic priest. He attends mass every Sunday but is not a devout catholic. He expresses difficulty in practicing the Catholic faith and does not believe in giving to the Pope or Catholic Church. He prefers that the church helps the poor directly instead of spending money on church buildings.

He prefers Father Paul's church to the Vatican as it is simple. The lack of a serious relationship with other female companions is part of his emotional death. The emotional death is tragic because he knows that he cannot marry even if he wanted to because the Catholic Church forbids marriage after divorce. He has only had two female companions; both rode at his stable; one was in a bad marriage, and the other one is divorced. As a Catholic, he has broken the beliefs in chastity and marriage.

This emotional death was permanent in three ways; loss of his wife, his children and the knowledge that he will never have such relationships again. The only thing that keeps Luke alive is his religion and relationship with Father Paul that keeps his life together. Luke has brought up his children according to the Catholic faith but cannot force them to practice the beliefs

(Dubus, 1988). The theme of physical death comes towards the end of the story, when his daughter Jennifer hits a man with her car. Jennifer is scared and tells her Dad about the incident where she may have killed a man.

Jennifer fears death and the consequences if the man dies. Her father calms her down and listens to what happened and decides to go out and look for the man. As he searched for the man, Luke hoped that his daughter had not killed a man but an animal such as a calf or a deer. He prayed as he searched for the man and knew that if he found the man dead he did not want the incident connected to Jennifer. He finally found the man, checked his pulse and heart.

In his heart, he knew he should call for an ambulance and report the incident. Finally, the man's heartbeat stopped. Luke prayed again for the man's soul and considered this as his first sin doing nothing to save the man as he is powerless to do anything. Luke goes back to his daughter and tells her that the man is dead. He does not tell her the details of how he found the man. Luke loves his daughter so much that he knows that if it were his sons, he would have called the Police.

“ And if one of my sons had come to me that night, I would have phoned the police and told them to meet us with an ambulance at the top of the hill”(Dubus, 1988). The special love for his daughter affects his reaction to the death of another man. Luke decides to keep the secret of the dead man between him and Jennifer. The death of the man arouses his fatherly instincts to protect his daughter. The poem “ Because I Could Not Stop for Death” also looks at death as inevitable.

Death is the end of life; it is sad, depressing, horrifying but inevitable but in the poem it is gentle, warm and kind. The poem is about a woman and what she goes through on the day she dies. The woman never wanted to die depicted in the first line of the poem, “ Because I could not stop death”, she had a life before her death, and she had no choice on when she would die. It is not up to human beings to choose when they will die because death comes when we least expect it. The poem depicts death as a gentleman who is friendly, kind; not sad or depressing. In the poem, death is a gentleman on a horse that takes the woman on a journey to her final resting place.

The first line of the poem, “ Because I Could Not Stop Death, He kindly stopped for me” shows the woman refusing to accept her death, but death came to her in a kind way. The horse drawn carriage carries the woman and immortality to her final resting place. The woman knows that she will die, and death is the first step to eternal life. The end of the poem, “ I first surmised the horses’ heads, Were toward eternity” to mean the horses heads represents her grave and once buried she would live in eternity. The ride on the horse is a metaphor for the woman’s life. The ride passes through different places depicting what the woman went through in her life.

The horse rode slowly, in no hurry to give her a chance to see her life passing through different stages. The carriage passes a school where the woman sees children playing symbolizing her innocent childhood. The simplicity of children playing depicts that death is a part of life. In the third stanza, the recess symbolizes the beginning of her life, and the “ setting sun” symbolizes the end of her life. The sun passes the woman meaning that

she is moving away from the bright light of life, and towards darkness, that is death.

It is now becoming chilly, and death is finally approaching. The woman expresses that she is cold, and her gown is not warm enough for the journey. She is not prepared for death and the journey she is going through is her life. At the end of the poem, the carriage stops at a house with a swelling on the ground. The woman has arrived at her grave, her final resting place. At the end of the poem it is clear that she is dead and is always reliving the last day of her life “tis centuries, and yet each, Feels shorter than the day” (Dickinson, 1983) and lives eternally.

The poem depicts the death as the end of a journey that we go through in life. We cannot predict when we will die, but it is inevitable. There is eternal life after death. Poems and stories use personification of characters and symbolism to portray death (Quinn, 2006). Emily Dickson’s poem uses symbolism portraying death as a gentleman who is kind to the woman who is facing death.

In Dubu’s short story death created emotions and regrettable actions by the father when he had to cover up the death of the man. The story and the poem both depict death as inevitable. Death causes human beings many emotions; fear, depression, apprehension and sadness. In the story, the father ignores his religious beliefs to protect his daughter against the consequences of killing a man. He accepts that his daughter caused the death of a man but is not willing to suffer the consequences of losing his daughter.

In the poem, the woman accepts death even though she cannot stop it.

Death in the poem is kind and gentle. It views as death as part of life and should not be feared. There are differences in the way Luke Ripley viewed the death of the man his daughter killed and the way the woman in the poem viewed death. In the story, when the father found the body, he did not do the honorable thing about the man's death despite his religious beliefs.

He did not bother to call his best friend, a Catholic priest to give the man his last rites when he died. The father did not call the police or an ambulance when the man was still alive. Instead, he left the man to die with no dignity. There was no justice for the dead man's family because the father and daughter decided to cover up the death. The father failed to report the incident to the police and never told the priest about it.

The death of the man caused the father to fear the persecution of his daughter. His religious convictions were not enough to dignify the death of the man. Death is part of life as depicted in the poem. The woman was not ready to die, but she still died. We cannot predict death, but it will come in its own time. When it does, there is nothing we can do.

Different perspectives in literature view death in different ways. Death is the only thing that separates man from life. This separation causes us anxiety and touches all mankind (Bloom & Blake, 2009). We fear our own death and the death of loved ones. Death is cold and dark; everybody fears the dark. Literature is a way of explaining what death means to mankind.

Death is tragic, but Christianity alters its darkness with the idea of immortality or life after death (Rickman, 1996). The short story, "A Father's
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Story” by Andre Dubus and the poem “ Because I Could Not Stop Death” by Emily Dickinson are literal works that explain death from different standpoints. In the story, the father goes through an emotional death due to the loss of wife and children. He is forced to protect his daughter due to the death of a man she killed. These are different emotions created by a death. The father sacrifices the death of another man with the love of his daughter.

The daughter killed an innocent man due to drinking alcohol. The father’s decision to cover up the murder will affect the daughter in future. The death of the man will be in her conscience. The woman in the poem cannot prevent death as she has no control as death is inevitable. The emotions of death through the poem are kind and warm.

Death is inevitable as we have no control over it, it will come, and we shall eventually die. The story and the poem are similar in terms of the inevitability of death but different in how we view death. Literature enables us to face fears and anxieties of death.