

Interpretive essay on the dark night of the soul essay sample



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Richard Miller's essay "The Dark Night of the Soul", contains a variety of authors and writing styles. He includes five stories all relating to the subjects of violence, racism, crime, ect, of the modern day world. In these five essays Miller gives several shocking examples of how these subjects of violence can have such a large influence on today's behavior in society. In an environment filled with much evil the question poses, "what is the outcome of a society at large that displays these ills?" Some might say it could lead to larger, more threatening problems, or maybe it can teach us a lesson and give society rejuvenation or peace. The first of Miller's essays begins with the events that occurred at Columbine High School in 1999. Two young men, before both committing suicide killed twelve students and a teacher. In addition to the shootings the planned attack involved a fire bomb and 99 other explosive devices. The personal writings of the perpetrators depict motives of wishing to rival with the Oklahoma City bombing. Instead of just accepting the actual evidence of something this large many members of society such as newsreporters, writers, or movies try to cope by looking for blame of many kinds.

Blaming these acts of violence on violent movies, video games, or a certain kind of music, bullying, inattentive parents, the internet, or religion. Miller asks, "What legal or educational response could be equal to the challenge of controlling the behavior of so many students from such varied backgrounds?" (421. Miller). With such a system so corrupt of the wrong responses to events, such as Columbine, it's merely impossible to predict or even stop someone from trying to escape from normal surroundings through violence and crime. The boys chose to escape from reality through reading,

writing, TV, and video games. For most of us, the lines between fact and fiction are very clear and we are able to use that to find peace or creativity. Miller suggests that possibly reading, writing, and meditation are the only sources that can teach us properly about humanity. Miller explains that in the writings of the two young men no one was to blame but themselves and nothing was going to stop them from their plans. That leaves speculations that this was merely something that could not have been detected, but only two misguided boys that mistook their fiction and turned it into reality.

The second part of the essay "The Prince of Darkness", Miller uses the work of Martin Amis's "The Information", to discuss the healing works but also the harm of reading and writing in a culture. Writers are being compared to criminals, depicting the imagery of literacy creation being possibly physically harmful. Amis says, "the criminal is not like an artist, the criminal resembles the artist in his pretension, his incompetence, and his self pity" (425. Cited by Miller). Amis's novel explores what society can produce in times of despair or worry, like creating great novels or stories, but we live in a time where good things don't last long. Only the production of sadness or hopelessness will have any lasting significance on the public because that's what they like to hear. Many studies show that, as humans, we care more about the threat of bad things than we do about the prospect of good things. Miller's third essay "Following The Word", is written with the use of a favorite story of mine, John Krakauer's "Into The Wild". Krakauer's book was written through pieces of a journal of a young man named Chris McCandless.

Chris is another example of someone whose lines between reality and fiction were blurred. He is seduced by writing and begins to believe that the stories

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he was believing was real and used it to escape from reality in search for something like enlightenment. McCandless graduated from Emory in 1990, donated his remaining college funds to charity, burned his identification and remaining money, and set out for a great adventure to disappear into the wild. Unfortunately, in 1992 Chris was discovered dead in a school bus in the Alaskan wilderness by some ice fisherman. McCandless was someone who had desire or need for human relationships, instead he satisfied his desires with books and adventures.

He was a man of peace and good intentions without any plans to become reckless or incompetent, the exact opposite of what he saw himself becoming. He left to escape from the evils of society and unintentionally becoming one of them. McCandless' story will continue on to spark debate on whether the power of the natural world versus the power of books or television can cause foolishness in making decisions that could potentially harm themselves or others. Miller states " McCandless actually believed that it was possible to escape the bonds of the corporatized world and reach a space of greater calm. He knew this because his books told him so." (429. Miller).