

A grim perspective essay sample



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I'm convinced that some mothers are just life geniuses. Take my mother for example. As she made breakfast for all of us kids in the morning, she gave us the advice for the day. That was the only unsolicited advice she ever gave which made everything she told us those mornings more meaningful. I remember a common theme of finding value in the smallest of actions or gestures. She often said that it was important to first view the parts then take in the whole. Viewing matters in this way gives us a larger perspective on things that would normally escape our attention. Grief has this same effect on a person's angle of view. Sometimes, grief makes us notice things that would normally escape our attention, or it makes us view normal, everyday things with a new perspective.

"A Temporary Matter", by Jhumpa Lahiri, is a short story depicting the tribulations of a grief-stricken failing marriage. Husband and wife, Shakumar and Shoba, have recently suffered the loss of their first child who was a still birth. The grief they feel has taken a large toll on their marriage, making it harder for them to communicate and work through the issue. The silence has reached such a high point that they rarely see each other and Shoba treats their house "like a hotel instead of [their] home." "Although the main action of the story revolves around very important life events such as the death of a child and the end of a once happy marriage, the narrative is mostly centered around little things in life" (articlemyriad.com).

So, dinner plans, work, and dentist appointments depict how the small things, "temporary matters," are actually something important and complex. Shakumar and Shoba don't talk about their pain, he just narrates the changes he feels by talking about changes in small habits. They are only

able to speak when a power outage leaves them in darkness every night for a week. Sweetly and innocently telling each other small secrets each evening only while they can't see the others face, symbolizes the lack of honesty and communication which has taken over their relationship since the death of their child. The weight that the small things have on Shakumar show Lahiri's main focus: don't weigh only the big actions because the smallest of things determine which way the big actions sway.

Dealing with the same grief of a lost child, the main character in Michael Chabon's "Along the Frontage Road," has just suffered the death of his seventeen-week-old daughter. He now sees the world as it is without being biased by how it was when he was a boy. Furthermore, his childhood view of the world serves to darken his already murky impression of life" the ache that I get every time I imagine my little son wandering in my stead through the deepening shadows of a genuine pumpkin patch, in a corduroy coat, on a chilly October afternoon back in, say, 1973. I don't mean to imply that we have somehow rendered the world unworthy of our children's trust and attention.

I don't believe that, though sometimes I do feel that very implication lodged like a chip of black ice in my heart." Chabon uses small details of a common task, picking out Halloween carving pumpkins with his son, to contrast his youth in Massachusetts in the 1970's and his sons youth in the big city. He notices the landscapes differences, the gaudy decoration, and things as simple as the cashier stand resembling a barn, that he might not have noticed if it weren't for his grief.

These simple images give Chabon's main character a larger view on life instead of the bias perspective a spotless outlook from a life uninterrupted gives. Similarly to Lahiri, he can't discuss his grief. Except in this case he is incapable of communicating his feelings because of the ignorance of the child. His son wouldn't be able to comprehend the strong emotion that his father is feeling because of lack of maturity and life experience.

Often, grief makes people give attention to things that would usually elude their view, or it makes us view simple, everyday things with a fresh perspective. Think of the loss of a loved one. Many times, at the funeral or similar event right after death, friends and family recall the little idiosyncrasies of their beloved deceased: the way he took his coffee, his bedtime routine, or his normal route to work. These little habits hold more meaning and are further examined because of this grief. The common theme of a grief opened perspective in both Lahiri's "A Temporary Matter" and Chabon's "Along the Frontage Road" shows that in the event of a tragic accident, ones view of the world is broadened and unslanted. Shakumar and Shoba lose their marriage swiftly after they lose their child. They no longer communicate and rarely see each other.

The grief they feel from their loss makes Shoba stay at work and Shakumar stay at home. Now Shakumar picks up on the little changes in his wife's habits to come to the conclusion that they were not happy and their marriage was ending. Chabon's character, while grieving his daughter, can see the reality of the harsh world he is raising his son in in comparison to the seemingly lovely wholesome world of his childhood. Both these mens' perspective were opened because of the grief that encountered. Their grief

gives them the ability to see the importance of viewing first view the parts first, then then take in the whole.

“ Grief teaches the steadiest mind to wander” (Sophocles from Antigone). After a seemingly awful event, like the loss of a marriage or loved one, grief sets in. This strong emotion is usually seen as something to get through or as a healthy healing process. Try viewing grief as a gateway to enlightenment and therefore happiness. Through Lahiri’s “ A Temporary Matter” and Chabon’s “ Along the Frontage Road,” one can see that grief opens your perspective, showing tiny details that would most likely escape your attention.

These minuscule elements, the way Shoba stops cooking or the barn-like cashier table, give the griever a more open and unencumbered perspective on life. Therefore, it is more important to notice the flowers that make up that beautiful landscape and examine the individual brush strokes that complete the masterpiece.