

Death as a theme our town essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the play *Our Town*, the people of Grover's Corners mask their worries and thoughts about death in their quest for happiness. In the first act, a few deaths occur, and the attitude of the people towards these deaths is a negligent one of briefly acknowledging death and moving on. Also, the children in act two who are faced with adulthood are reluctant to accept the burden, through their hesitance to grow up and approach death. In the third act, when we finally get a clear picture of death, the reader sees that the people who are dead are regretful that their mundane lives were incomplete, not realizing the importance of life until they are dead. This method of living proves unfulfilling, as the dead arduously mourn their trivial lives yearning to have made a difference. The stage manager directs the flow of the play throughout, and his transient attitude towards death reflects Grover's Corners overall outlook on a life that tries to mentally avoid death. This stance is established primarily by the stage manager in his first act narrative, which hastily describes the fatalities, masking their importance and reality. Want to tell you something about that boy Joe Crowell there. Joe was awful bright graduated from high school here, head of his class. So he got a scholarship to Massachusetts Tech. Graduated head of his class there, too. It was all wrote up in the Boston paper at the time. Goin to be a great engineer, Joe was. But the war broke out and he died in France. (P. 9) This brief account demonstrates the importance placed on a mans death. The people of Grover's Corners live in a world where change is frowned upon; consequently, the means of dealing with such a great adjustment as death is to prevent themselves from thinking of it. In the stagnant society of Grover's corners, death is the ultimate obstacle, and ignorance is the remedy.

Another instance where the stage manager subtly demonstrates this practice

of evading notions of death is his intervention in scenes that broach the topic. Only it seems to me that once in your life before you die you ought to see a country where they dont talk in English and dont even want to. The stage manager enters briskly from the right. He tips his hat to the ladies (P. 21) The stage manager again in his embodiment of the town must intervene on this discussion and he proceeds to change the subject. This represents once more the towns hesitance to talk about things upsetting the daily routine of Grovers Corners, one of these being death. What if the rooster didnt crow in the morning? Or the train for Boston never came? Or someone went to Paris? Death is the one thing the citizens of Grovers Corners cannot rely on, and that mystery is what makes death the ultimate barrier for them. In their reluctance to face adulthood, the young adults of Grovers Corners struggle to cope with the burden of adulthood that alters everything. George Gibbs does not want to grow up, because it is the next step down the road that he does not want to see the end of. Listen, Ma, for the last time I ask you All I want to do is to be a fella. (P. 78) George wants to stay a teenager, and not go through these transformations because of what they represent in the long run. Even though he must move on, George attempts to hang on to the rituals that he once enjoyed. Now, Ma, you save Thursday nights. Emily and I are over to dinner every Thursday nightyoull see. (P. 78) Also, Emily shares the same plight with clinging on to the childhood she has come to know and love. Dont you remember that you used to say, - all the time you used to say all the time: that I was your girl! There must be lots of places we can go to. Ill work for you. I could keep the house. (P. 79) Emily wants to stay a child for the same reasons that George wants to be a fella again; she doesnt want to face the realities of lifes alterations. She ends up trying to

control something she cannot, just as the people of the Grovers Corners try to beat death by ignoring it. This simple life is an unfulfilling one, and by focusing of the evasion of death, life flies by the citizens of Grovers Corners. The regretful dead of Grovers Corners express their sorrow in the final act and reflect on the importance of life and taking advantage of what the world has to offer. The graveyard folk discuss the importance of not worrying, and living life for what its worth, without the apprehensions. Look! Father Gibbs is bringing some of my flowers to you. He looks just like George, doesnt he? Oh, Mother Gibbs, I never realized before how troubled and howhow in the dark live persons are. Look at him. I loved him so. From morning till night, thats all they are troubled. (P. 97) The living never grasp the value of life, because they agonize too much over its ups and downs. Life is a roller coaster that these people constantly try to flatten out, and get rid of the ups and downs, such as death. But absence makes the dead grow fond of life, wishing they had taken those opportunities of going to Paris, instead of achieving bliss through ignorance of the vices of life. Now you know! Thats what it was to be alive. To move about in a cloud of ignorance; to go up and down trampling on the feelings of thoseof those about you. To spend and waste time as though you had a million years. (P. 109) By not thinking of death, the citizens of Grovers Corners have their lives rush by them, and their happiness achieved by negligence of death is a brief, uneventful happiness. Now the dead realize the importance of savoring life because they have come to understand death, instead of ignoring it. In Grovers Corners, evading notions of death begets a false sense of happiness that leads to a very mundane enjoyment of life. These unfulfilled people have not found happiness; they have found escape from the apprehensions of death.

Pascals statement is a misleading one. People must stop to smell the roses every once in a while, or life can fly by them. The real key to happiness is realizing what short time you have and grasping on to it, which means taking chances. Happiness also includes accomplishing something with your life, and leaving a legacy for others. In Grovers Corners, the citizens bliss comes from ignorance, but towards the end of the play the reader sees that awareness is the real key to happiness.

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