

Summary critique of "monuments to our better nature" essay sample

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Summary/Critique of “ Monuments to Our Better Nature” Essay Sample

When choosing what story to read out of “ 75 Readings An Anthology” one caught my eye; “ Monuments to Our Better Nature”. This caught my eye because I was intrigued to see what kind of monuments Byers talked about in the story. The moment I read he was talking about the monuments in Washington D. C. I knew this was the story I wanted to summarize and critique. During my spring break of my 9th grade year I visited D. C. and visited all of the monuments and fell in love with the city and everything about it and I had always been a history buff. In this narrative Byers successfully uses several literary techniques to describe his past in Washington D. C. and his time at the Monuments, I believe that he does this in a good manner and I agree with most to everything he states.

In the story Byers describes his time at each individual monument in D. C. and puts his two cents about each and every monument. First off he talks about the behavior of everyone visiting the different monuments and how they act. Byers states, “ Americans are not known for good behavior in public, but here we come subdued, reflective.” (60) While reminiscing about the Lincoln Memorial. During this excerpt about the Lincoln Memorial he emphasizes how Lincoln is sitting on a throne gazing over the mall. Byers’ continues on to the Jefferson Monument and writes about how it isn’t as popular as all of the other monuments. He continues to talk about the other monuments but never goes into great depth about them. And at the end Byers leaves the reader with this, “ Who can stand on the top step of the Lincoln Memorial and not think.

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I am a participant in a world civilization, I have history entrusted to me, we are all in this together- and feel it, for a minute or two, as the simple, honest truth." (62) The main point of " Monuments to Our Better Nature" by Michael Byers in my eyes is to put the Mall in D. C. and all of the monuments in D. C. into perspective of how much each and everyone of the monuments mean to America and the importance of them. Byers' says, " You are only a penny, the monuments tell us, but you are dearly counted." (59) to me this tells us that each one of us are important but we all have to be together under one nation for all of us to make a difference. All of the monuments allow us to show our love towards our country and a place where we can unite and show this love together.

Personally I think that overall Byers does a good job of getting his point across and puts good information on the table all through out the story. The main reason I chose this story was I felt like I would be able to critique this story well since I knew each and every monument he talked about in the story. When Byers says, " Not everyone goes to the Jefferson" (60) referring to the Jefferson Memorial I would have to say I have to disagree with this statement. When I visited the Jefferson it was just as busy if not busier as the Lincoln, Washington or the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I think by saying this Byers is trying to down grade the Jefferson Memorial and almost trying to convince people that it is not as important as all of the other memorials. Which is false. Every memorial nationwide not just in D. C. has equal importance to the United States and the people of the United States and each. One thing I agree 100 percent with Byers is when he says " Americans are not known for good behavior in public, but here we become subdued,

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reflective.”(60) When I visited D. C. I was at a lost for words when visiting each and every monument.

Just standing there looking at something that huge and something that has had such a great impact on America just makes me thankful for living in such a great country like America. The one Memorial that I visited that really stood out was the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This monument truly took my breath away to just stand there and see relatives of people who passed away touch their relatives names and just cry was sad but to know that they died fighting for the country we live in made it so amazing. Another thing I would say Byers does a good job with is when he says, “ It is one of American’s most venerable and trafficked pedestrian public spaces, where you can fly a kite alone or stand among a hundred thousand and hear a speech being given half a mile away by a barely discernible figure.” (62) This sums up what the National Mall and all of the monuments really are. Personally I believe that every person if given the chance needs to go to Washington D. C. and see the monuments. It will make being from America so much more bittersweet.

Overall “ Monuments to Our Better Nature” was a well-written story and had great detailed information in it. But I personally think that the only way to get the full effect of Washington D. C. and all the monuments is to see it in real life. Before I went I had done research papers on the different monuments and read about them but it was until I saw them up close and personal when I was truly amazed. Until the monuments are seen in person

and you see the other peoples reactions to them it is hard to put them into words.

Work Cited

Byers, Michael. " Monuments to Our Better Nature." 75 Readings: An Anthology. Eds. Santi V. Buscemi and Charlotte Smith. New York; McCraw-Hill, 2010. 58-62. Print.