

Ernest hemingway, sylvia plath, and virginia woolf



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Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Plath, and Virginia Woolf – names that ring familiar to individuals that are close to literature, but for those that aren't, the names might not spark a definite image. Perhaps the only thing that might be known is that each of these talented authors committed suicide after battling mental illness. Despite the many authors that were not suicidal, the discussions of literature are stereotyped with mental illness, coffee shops, and the finding of one's self.

However, literature is valuable far beyond the typical realm that it is associated with. People often resist reading literature because they think that it is a process that is fully imaginary, and has no impact on or basis in reality. This view is not easy to dissuade, but if individuals fail to read literature there is an absence of individuality. Literature offers the reader a fresh, imaginative way to look at and understand the world, provides an understanding of the historical development of culture, and is simply entertaining.

The language that Theodore Roethke uses in his poem, "My Papa's Waltz" brings a sense of imagination and clarity to a situation that could be considered mundane or insignificant. The language of action is significant and can be found in each stanza of the poem. The character in the poem describes the dance with purpose, saying, "We romped until the pans/ Slid from the kitchen shelf" (5-6). The description could very easily have been changed to read, "We danced, causing pans to fall off the shelf." This alteration would leave the lines empty, with an absence of feeling.

Roethke, through syntax and language, directs the reader to specific emotions of joy and excitement that spark the memory to recall situations of similar feeling. These feelings that are motivated through language can also provide an understanding of the development of culture and the changes that take place in this development. Seamus Heaney establishes this understanding through his poem "Digging."

Heaney clearly establishes the historical pattern of manual labor that was part of his culture and past by stating, "The old man could handle a spade. Just like his old man" (15-16). We know from the literature that the process of manual labor, specifically the production of potatoes and peat, was part of the culture beyond the family through the comparison, "My grandfather cut more turf in a day/ Than any other man on Toner's bog" (17-18). Rather than simply stating what had been done in the past, and how things were changing in the present, Heaney shares a more encompassing understanding that sparks imagination.

He concludes the relation of the progression of culture with the final stanza, "Between my finger and my thumb/ The squat pen rests. / I'll dig with it" (29-31). The effects on imagination and the conveyance of culture are not the only reasons to read literature. There is also the basic purpose of entertainment. William Shakespeare's, Hamlet, can certainly serve this purpose of entertainment. The play involves elements of suspense, and action, with a climactic conclusion.

The different stages of the play bring the level of conflict to a forefront, and finish with a scene of action. The play was written to entertain, as good

literature should. There are many reasons to read literature, far more than have been related here. However, in a core sense, literature serves as a gateway to progression. The imagination is sparked and new ways of seeing the world are adopted through literature. The historical development of culture is shown through literature. Finally, the key reason for reading literature is that it serves as entertainment.