

The issues of
euthanasia in whose
life is it anyway essay
sample



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Brian Clarke raises the issues of Euthanasia in a play " Whose Life Is It Anyway? " He first raises it with a man who has a car accident and he has been paralysed from the neck down. His injuries are limiting and he will never recover from them. This character " Ken" does not want to die but wants to be discharged from the hospital, this will cause his death, as life outside the hospital for Ken would not be possible. He wants to be discharged from the hospital because he wants to feel free and die with dignity, but the doctor that is looking after him " Dr Emerson" is trying to save his life at all costs.

Ken eventually takes his case through the courts and wins. The language and the structure of the play is moralistic as it tells the story of whether euthanasia should be legalised or not and what a difficult subject it is to discuss. It is descriptive and detailed in the medical sense, which makes the play more realistic. " He was suffering from a fractured left tibia and right tibia and fibia, a fractured pelvis, four fractured ribs, one of which had punctured the lung and dislocated the fourth vertebra, which had ruptured the spinal chord".

The language from the medical staff towards Ken and others in the hospital is very professional and realistic. " What dose was it you prescribed? " " Two milligrams T. I. D". " That's very small. You might have to increase it to five milligrams. " " Yes sir". Throughout the play Ken gives a lot of complementary language to the female nursing staff. " You have lovely breasts". " I beg your pardon". " I said you have lovely breasts". " You look lovely", Ken to Dr. Scott. " Thank you".

Ken flirtishly compliments the female nursing staff showing that he is sexually frustrated and wants to act on the impulses he has, but the only way he can do that is verbally through compliments. The play also has linking with complimentary language suggestive language that has sexual innuendo. This type of language comes from Ken and John. " I've got some work to do for my exam". " Let me help... I'm an expert on anatomy. We could go dancing, down to the Barbados, a few drinks and then back to my pad for an anatomy lesson". " Let me get on... " "... the neck bone's connected to the shoulder bone.

The shoulder bone's connected to the breast bone... " Both Ken and John try to flirt with the female nursing staff, and surprisingly and eventually have some luck. During the time of Ken's hearing there is quite a lot of Latin and legal language. " Habeas Corpus". " A rite, judge, Mental Health Act, court, solicitor. " " This is a most unusual case. Before I make a judgement I want to state that I believe all the parties have acted in good faith. " There is a lot of persuasive language from Ken towards the Judge and the nursing staff, from his desire to win his case.

He makes it persuasive by using intellectual remarks about how he feels and his position in life. " It is not undignified if the man wants to stay alive, but I must restate that the dignity starts with his choice. Without it, it is degrading because technology has taken over from human will. My Lord, if I cannot be a man, I do not wish to be a medical achievement. I am fine.... I am fine. "

Ken creates humour with the nursing staff throughout the play, keeping the play light-hearted and not so deep and heavy with emotion in places.

“ Well, well, well... The randy old devil. He didn’t take long to get cracking did he? This line instantly implies to the reader that some romantic action has happened, but it is humorous and has no sense of bitterness in the remark. “ It was just dinner. “(Ken talking to Dr. Scott) This reveals to the reader what romantic action had gone on and whom the conversation is taking place between. “ It looks good tonight.... Minced beef. ” Here Dr. Scott proves that she is not comfortable talking about this subject, so she tries to change the topic of conversation, using his dinner as a scapegoat. “

Excellent... and what wine shall we order then? How about a '48 claret? Yes, I think so... Send for the wine waiter.

Here Ken is using sarcasm to show Dr. Scott that he is not really interested in his dinner, but more on how her evening went. Ken wants to focus his interests on other people’s lives to take away the focus from his. Ken makes it humorous by using sarcasm and creating vivid pictures in people’s minds of a glamorous life that he once could have had. The language is understandable to all because, “ Whose Life Is It Anyway” was designed as a television drama directed at adults. It has straightforward and modern language, written around 1978, that has to be, and is understood by all with different intellectual abilities.

The characters are convincing, as their language is very professional and realistic. Also the names of the different characters used and the jobs that they have been given are very common and recognised in this age. The characters in “ Whose Life Is It Anyway? “, are doctors, nurses, patients, family, social workers, solicitors, judges, cleaners, psychiatrists, sisters, ward orderlies, junior registrar, consultant physician, Barristers, and other hospital

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workers. Each character has a different life structure and they all use different type of language according to the character.

Sister Anderson is a strict woman in control, professional, distant from her patients, but polite and friendly, and she has an authoritative manner. “ Wipe your hands and put the pillows behind Mr Harrison; we don’t want to have him on the floor. ” Nurse Sadler is a young, keen, new nurse, who is obedient but slightly unsure of herself. “ Can you manage for a moment Nurse? ” “ Oh, yes Sister. ” Here Nurse Sadler seems to be trying to do her best and impress her employers by being obedient and using her initiative by being to work independently.

Ken tries to lighten the atmosphere for Nurse Sadler by talking to her, to get her to relax, as I think that he gathers that she is a new recruit. “ Is this your first ward? ” By asking her a question she has to reply and they now have a topic to talk about. “ Yes. I’m still at P. T. S. ” In her nervousness, she assumes that Ken will know what “ P. T. S” is. “ What’s that? Primary Training School? ” “ Yes, I finish next week. ” Nurse Sadler probably feels slightly foolish but continues the conversation by talking about herself and the future, which will make the conversation lead onto a new topic. “ And you can’t wait to get here full time.

Ken makes the conversation lighter by making this comment or question humorous. “ I’ll be glad to finish the school. ” Nurse Sadler does not answer Ken ‘ s question directly but goes around it by saying what she will be looking forward to. She is evading a direct question. “ All students are the same? ” “ Were you a teacher? ” “ Tut tut; second lesson. You mustn’t use

the past tense. " " What do you mean? " It is revealed to the reader that Ken is or was a teacher but in his eyes he still is. He is recollecting on a past experience to teach Nurse Sadler something about himself that she most likely did not know.

Even if Ken is not teaching in a school anymore he believes that he can still teach whilst he is alive in any shape or form he can. Dr Emerson is an extremely professional man who is very determined, in charge and dominant. The reader discovers this from this passage, that Dr Emerson knows what he is doing and what is best for the patient, even if they do not believe that it is the best option for themselves. This shows that Dr Emerson does not have much consideration for his patients' thoughts on their treatment as they obviously most of them have not had medical training like he has, although the patient does know how they are feeling. Dr Emerson, I am afraid I must insist that you do not stick that needle in me. "

" There... It's all over. " " Doctor, I didn't give you permission to stick that needle in me. Why did you do it? " Dr Emerson went against Ken's wishes showing that his methods pull towards medical status of the patient instead of listening to the patients own impressions of their condition and what action they want to take because of it. " It was necessary. Now try to sleep.... You will find that as you gain acceptance of the situation you will be able to find a new way of living. From this the reader learns that Dr Emerson deals with his patients entirely different to the way the nurses do. He is less tactful to spare their feelings and although what he says is very likely true and the nurses say the same thing, he does it in a lot less caring way.

Mrs Boyle is a very professional but very patronising medical social worker, and is very optimistic about her patients. We learn this from the extract from the piece. " Try not to dwell on it. I'll see what I can do to get you started on some occupational therapy. " " My name is Mrs Boyle. Here we see that she is very optimistic and tries to get on to improving her patients' as soon as possible. This shows that she is eager to do her job and obviously takes pride in it. Ken then says to her, " And you've come to cheer me up", giving the reader the impression that he is not looking forward to his " so-called help" and believes that it is more of a burden or a chore than help. " I wouldn't put it like that. "

Mrs Boyle is polite and has obviously endured many troublesome patients and has good, polite answers to reply with. " How would you put it? Ken does not seem convinced yet and acts towards her like he is trying to break her down being able to be rid of her and left alone. " I've come to see if I can help. " Mrs Boyle yet again replies politely trying to convince Ken she is harmless and the time of them together will eventually benefit him greatly. John is a porter at the hospital. He is a relaxed man who is generally very friendly and easily has the ability to cheer people up. John is chatty and easygoing. He is in a steel band and he aims to go professional with that career.

He has the great quality of being able to cheer Ken up whenever he sees him or is around. " Music. We got a steel band-with some comedy numbers and we're getting around a bit.... We're auditioning for Opportunity Knocks in four months. " John has the tactfulness, in a way, to not ask Ken how he is and bring the attention and focus on him, whereas Ken most likely wants to <https://assignbuster.com/the-issues-of-euthanasia-in-whose-life-is-it-anyway-essay-sample/>

hear about something else like John's life, interests and his future. This shows John to be a good character and good people person and seems to interest Ken in his qualities without Ken becoming jealous.

" That's great... Really great... I like steel bands... There's something fascinating about using oil drums-make something out of scrap... Why not try knocking a tune out of me? " " Why not? " Ken seems to genuinely mean what he says here to John showing his true interest for unusual past times. John becomes a friend to Ken because John is not false to him, trying to avoid saying anything that will upset or offend him; he is just himself, which Ken shows that he admires from a person. Doctor Claire Scott is a Junior Registrar in the hospital. She is professional, friendly, chatty and intelligent.

She always puts others before herself and treats her patients as human beings, not an object to cure of its illness. These few quotes tell the reader quite a lot about her personality and method of treating her patients. " You're bright and chirpy this morning. " Dr. Scott talking to Ken. Dr. Scott greets Ken in a bright, warm and friendly way opening Ken up to her. She also compliments him, making him feel better about himself therefore trying to speed up his acceptance of his new life.

" It's marvellous you know. The courage of the human spirit. Ken also seems to be acting in a brighter and reasonably chirpy mood, praising the strength of himself. " Nice to hear the human spirit's ok. " Dr. Scott gets along well with Ken as they speak the same sort of language and she seems to be sympathetic of his position but does not pity him. Dr. Scott works hard and

seems in control but relaxed at the same time. She is very concerned for all her patients.

“ Sister. It’s Mr. Harrison. He seems a little agitated this morning. ” This quote proves that Dr. Scott takes notice of every change in mood Ken has and what she can do to make him feel better, being a very caring Doctor. Yes, he’s beginning to realise what he’s up against. ” “ I’m changing the prescription and putting him on a small dose of Valium. I’ll have a word with Dr. Emerson. Thank you Sister. ” This shows that Dr. Scott puts the extra effort to make sure of the comfort of her patients. Ken has a view of the professional skills of the nursing staff. He believes that the nursing staff are not treating him like a human being with a character and a personality but just another patient to be cured to their ability and then sent away.

Ken says to a Nurse about their professionalism and how that they have to keep emotionally separate from the patients and he does not like it. This is what the nursing staff have to do to be “ professional”, and they have to emotionally keep their distance from a patient, to prevent emotional distress when a patient is lost or their condition worsens. It would prevent them from them helping others and doing their jobs properly. Ken also says this to Mrs Boyle, the hospital Medical Social Worker. Ken gets angry with her professionalism and how she always tries to avoid the reality, from an optimistic point of view.

This causes Ken to want to talk to other people with everyday life problems that he used to be able to relate to from having them himself. One of the staffs’ car ran out of petrol on the way to work. “ You and the doctors with

your appalling so-called professionalism, which is nothing more than a series of verbal tricks to prevent relating to your patients as human beings. " Ken wants the Doctors and Nurses to show their true self to him without covering it up with " professionalism". He feels that they might as well with him anyway as he is most likely going to be a patient for a very long time there.