

Borges' blindness and dillard's seeing essay



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Borges' Blindness & Dillard's Seeing In Jorge Luis Borges' piece from *Ficciones*, "Blindness" and Annie Dillard's piece from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, "Seeing", we read writers' perspectives on their own blindness.

The writers contradict the common fallacies our culture has about blindness with their own personal experiences. Although both writers portray blindness in a positive light, each writer uses his disability to enhance his lives differently. Borges depicts his loss of sight as an opportunity to learn new things about life and himself, while Dillard uses her blindness as a way to better appreciate nature. Jorge Luis Borges gives his perspective as a blind man who originally could see but lost his sight due to an inherited disease.

Borges' positive attitude toward his blindness allowed him to explore different ideas he wouldn't have considered with his sight. He states that "since I have lost the beloved world of appearance, I must create something else" (2). For Jorge, this "something else" was to learn about different literatures. With some of his students, he began to read the *Anglo-Saxon Reader* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Even though he had "lost the visible world," Borges was going to "recover another" (2).

With this idea in mind, Borges not only learned about Anglo-Saxon, but also more about Scandinavian literature. Blindness to Borges was motivation to become better at literature. He cites many writers, such as Milton, Carl Peters, Edgar Allan Poe, and even himself, that do some of their best work while being blind. He urges people to realize that "blindness should be seen as a way of life: one of the styles of living" (5). Dillard looked at blindness

from a different perspective: being blind your whole life, then suddenly being able to see again.

She felt that when you're blind you are able to pay more attention to nature. A blind person can "analyze and pry" life (5). Dillard claims that this is necessary in order to truly see the world. Consciously verbalizing objects forces you to take in the object's characteristics, instead of casually noting them. Dillard also states "unless I call my attention to what passes before my eyes, I simply won't see it" furthering the idea that seeing something is when someone uses everything they know and relates it to what they are looking at.

In this way, someone can actually see nature instead of just look at it. But once a blind person learns to visualize objects without using her sight, it's almost impossible for a person who regains his sight to associate objects with different color blobs. As an example she states that "I couldn't unpeach the peaches" (4). Throughout her story, Dillard seems to see a supernatural side to nature that may only be seen while blind.

Both authors depict blindness is a positive light. Borges claims that blindness is not a "misfortune; it should not be seen in a pathetic way" (7). Instead of being a negative part of Dillard's life, she claims blindness has brought a new appreciation for nature and a new understanding of seeing at an object versus looking at an object. She can consciously interpret and find the meaning of nature instead of simply seeing it. Although blindness is often pitied in our culture, you see from these writer's that blindness can enhance your lives in ways never seen possible. After completely challenging

widespread ideas about blindness, it makes one wonder about the other loses of sense.

Do they enhance lives the way blindness has for these writers as well?