

The lovely bones argumentative essay



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The Lovely Bones In Alice Sebold's moving novel *The Lovely Bones*, Sebold explores various elements of humanity and the emotions that accompany it by crafting a story that readers can instantly connect with. She is unforgiving with the degree of how blunt and straightforward her tale starts out, as the main character Suzie Salmon is brutally raped and murdered within the very first chapter. The rest of the book examines her family and friends and how they all cope with this loss; this is all from the perspective of Suzie herself, who resides in a heaven-like state of being for the majority of the plot.

Sebold conveys the idea that horrid, repulsive choices and actions can send ripples down the lives and futures of a wide range of people, and that those choices and actions can be either detrimental or constructive for those effected, depending on how each individual responds to the hardships. She is able to effectively display this claim throughout her story by applying the use of pathos in the somber mood and themes of the plot and by exercising symbolism in the connection between certain objects, people, and events that tie the novel together.

The most blatant element of *The Lovely Bones* that an audience first connects with is its use of pathos. Loss and grief are central to its ability to tug at readers' heartstrings. When Suzie is raped, pathos is percolating through the pages as the reader instantly feels pity, horror, and sorrow for this little girl they've known for less than a chapter. Regardless of whether that reader has a daughter or not, they can still sense the innocence and vulnerability of Suzie, and connect it with a personal memory of vulnerability they have had themselves.

And because the news and media relentlessly emphasizes and publicizes sexual harassment and abuse and exploit it for all it can, readers are drawn to this familiar sense of sadness and sympathy for these victims. It has become second nature for them. Also, the fact that Suzie is so young when she dies and that she was forced to leave a perfectly typical family behind to try and keep everything together helps bring to light Sebald's claim that dreadful actions and events not only affect those directly involved, but also indirectly effect a much wider circle of people.

The pathos in Suzie's death is evident as it is what the entire story revolves around, and what affects the readers the most. Out of all of the various characters, Suzie's death brings about the strongest reaction in her father, and he eventually ceases to function as a father and husband, allowing the grief of the memory of his daughter to consume him. The audience can put themselves in Suzie's father's shoes and feel the grief he feels. American readers can accomplish this quite successfully because of how Americans perceive the importance of death.

The average United States citizen is isolated from most of the problems of the world, at least directly, such as war and hunger and other crises that can lead to large numbers of dead. Americans live in a bubble where very little dreadfulness takes place relative to the rest of the world; therefore, death is less commonly accepted in the U. S. , which is why American funerals are made to be such a complex and important ordeal. Suzie could be a substitute for any friend or family member to a reader, and that reader can feel the pain that he or she would feel if that friend or family member was lost forever to the darkness of death.

In addition, Suzie is imprisoned in her version of heaven, unable (for the most part) to interfere or interact with her family. She is only allowed the small pleasure of watching from afar. Suzie cannot let go of her family, and her family cannot let go of her. It is a vicious cycle of melancholy and depression that is only resolved once Suzie's fate is accepted by both her family and she herself. Not only is pathos imperative to the development of *The Lovely Bones*, but symbolism is essential as well.

The narrative of Suzie's view of her family after her death is filled with slight, miniscule associations that tend to lead the reader to believe that everything is connected and everything happened for a reason. For example, when Suzie first goes missing, the family's porch light is left on so she can find her way home. This is more of an emotional safety net for her family than to actually help her home. If the light is still on, they can still aimlessly and hopelessly believe that she could still be out there and be alive.

It is turned off when Suzie's father ventures outside to try and capture his daughter's killer, signifying that the prosecution of him would provide closure for him and his family. Readers feel compelled to empathize with this, mainly for the fact that most people have been in denial about something emotionally taxing in their lives that they refuse to accept, and the difficulty of finally letting go and accepting fate and reality for what it is. Secondly, Suzie's mother's choice of books symbolizes where in her life she is and how she feels about life itself. When she was young, she read college books about literature and philosophy.

Yet once she had children, she turned to cooking and gardening books. After Suzie's death, she loses touch with her family, dusts off the covers of those college books, and once again treats herself to intellectual stimulation. She is free and independent when she reads her college books, and when she does it after her daughter's death, she reads because of the distance she creates between her and her husband and children. She wants to be young again, away from the feelings of sadness and loneliness she associates with her family, and she has an affair and leaves her family shortly thereafter.

Many audience members can identify with this because they want to be young and independent as well. People aren't usually compelled to look forward to growing up and inheriting endless responsibilities, as most people reminisce about some time in the past when they were liberated from the responsibilities of life. Lastly, the title of the book, *The Lovely Bones*, is in itself a symbol. Yes, it can apply to Suzie's body and her death, but even more than that, it can symbolize how her "bones" brought her family together and created connections among them that could never be broken.

She even says, "These were the lovely bones that had grown around my absence: the connections - sometimes tenuous, sometimes made at great cost, but often magnificent - that happened after I was gone." This makes readers feel better about the events that occurred in the story, because the disgusting actions that occurred in the first chapter had some positive effects in the long run, and out of misery and sadness came love, compassion, happiness, and even life in the form of Suzie's future niece.

Throughout *The Lovely Bones*, pathos and symbolism are utilized to show the theme of the story, the grief and loss that occurs to so many people out of just one single event. Readers can identify with a great majority of Sebald's work, because of how American society is set up and the personal experiences readers have had that are similar enough with the story, and they are able to interchange the emotions felt in both their reality and within the fictitious plot.