

Grief

Commentary

Grief. It's something that in time is bound to affect us all. Yet, only ever encountering death at an early age - which being the loss of pets I had as a small child and my grandfather at the age of four- I've never really experienced it myself. I decided to use this as my topic to enable me to explore and understand grieving and how people cope with it.

After reading the novel "The Lovely Bones" by Alice Sebold, I decided that for my fictional piece, I would like to write a short story in a similar, unusual narration style; the protagonist being someone looking down at those she left behind, beyond the grave. I found this a really interesting way of looking at grieving from a different angle, and had not come across anything written in this style before.

In addition to my stimulus text, the recent teenage deaths of the Welsh town Bridgend that has been a focal point of the news in recent times also became of interest to me. I found it bizarre how so many tragedies had occurred in such a small space of time, within the same town. I examined into the stories more, and decided to write my own article on teen suicides.

To draw my readers in to my story, I used the declarative sentence "It was all over in seconds." By using this vague sentence, it creates interest within the reader; because they are enticed into reading on further to find out what my protagonist is referring to.

I wanted to create a realistic, natural, yet strong voice for my protagonist to allow my reader to be able to identify with her. I achieved a natural speech flow by including back tracking within my text; "(one he began to venture out of our ... his flat.)". I also included the ellipsis to further emphasise to my readers how my character was still struggling to come to terms with not being with her partner.

To further give the effect of spoken language, I used the idiom; "put the pedal to the medal," to portray my character's social status and age, as it is a saying associated with young people and fast cars. However, regardless of her social status or age, her romantic involvements and experiences allow a wide variety of female audiences to relate to her and sympathies with her situation.

I further emphasised my protagonist's emotional anguish with the emotive metaphor; "I'd feel my heart turn to stone and sink deep into my chest". Within this sentence, I've created both a romantic and a negative semantic field; the noun "heart" conjures up themes of romance and love, yet my use of the noun "stone" and the verb "sink" connotes negativity, due to the "heaviness" of both of these words. The use of "sink" in this context connotes drowning, and this allows the audience understand my protagonist's pain within the text.

I decided that to explore the more traditional side of grief, I would look at how, like in The Lovely Bones, relatives cope with the loss of a loved one. I felt that the best way to investigate this theme would be in a written article for a newspaper. Once I'd

(Word Count: 542)

existed, never meant anything to him. He'd look into her eyes as he'd look into mine.

Their relationship grew; he'd take her out and I'd watch him get ready, pretending that it was for me, like it was before. Knowing deep down inside that it wasn't left me crushed. As intense as the emotional torture was, I couldn't help but do it. I'd watch their dates; watch her fall into his arms. See them lie together; watch his fingertips trace shapes upon her pale, freckled skin; watch him leave butterfly kisses upon the nape of her neck. Watching this only evoked memories of when his hands once danced upon my own and his warm breath tease me, make me shiver all over. I'd feel my heart turn to stone and sink deep into my chest. He really had forgotten about me. To him I no longer existed - not even as a memory.

I'll always remember one day over any other. He'd asked her to fetch his wallet. When she'd picked it up, it had fallen open and a photograph had fallen out. Us. I recognized the look on her face; it mirrored exactly how I'd been feeling. Betrayal. She'd asked him who I was, demanding answers. We were more alike than I'd have liked to have believed; he'd fallen for us both, we both wanted him, and we'd both got the ability to reduce him to tears.

That's when he told her about me. Everything; how we'd met, how long we'd been together ... the accident. That's when she did something I'd longed to do; she held him. She held him tight, held him so he felt it.

I realised she gave him something I never could again. She brought the life back into his sad, drawn face, brought colour back to his cheeks. And most importantly, she brought back that smile. And as long as she keeps that smile upon his face, I'll be smiling up here too.

(Word Count: 903)

Sofia Coppola's film *The Virgin Suicides* focuses on five daughters from an American suburb growing up in the 1970s. All five girls commit suicide in the film in various different ways.

Experts fear that by providing teenage risk groups with the knowledge different methods of self sacrifice, this will only encourage more teenagers to take their own lives.

Similarly, it's also feared by professionals that James Mangold's 1999 popular teen flick *Girl, Interrupted*, predominantly set in a mental institution portrays mental illness as somewhat fashionable and even desirable. The film revolves around characters suffering with such illnesses are considered interesting and quirky, one of whom quoting Dorothy Parker's poem *Résumé*.

The two film's quotable scripts have become memes and can be found posted all over teenage

girl's web pages and blogs.

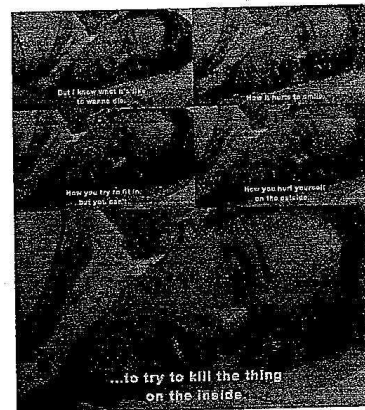
Shockingly, there has been a significant rise in much younger children committing suicide. In October 2008, eight year

Résumé

Razors pain you;
Rivers are damp;
Acids stain you;
And drugs cause
cramp.
Guns aren't law-
ful;
Nooses give;
Gas smells awful;
You might as well
live. [3]

- Dorothy Parker,

old Rex Boateng was found hanged from his bed. It's though that the child acted out of guilt after stealing £20 from his father's wallet. Rex was sent to his room whilst his father decided his punishment. His



Girl Interrupted meme reads: "But I know what it's like to wanna die. How it hurts to smile. How you try to fit in, but you can't. How you hurt yourself on the outside ... to try and kill the thing on the inside."

hanged body was found by the boy's brother, 16.

But just where do you draw the line between art and serious psychological illnesses? Another major worry for unknownst parents is the enormous rise in the rates of self harm amongst the British teenage population. Over the last ten years, the number of young adults self harming has risen by 50%. And once more, the internet is seen to take the blame.

The rate that information can be passed around the internet is so fast, it is virtually impossible to stop; the information distributed in blogs, social networking

forming the act via a live feed to the internet.

Briggs, 19, announced his intentions in a body building web forum, yet his threats were not taken seriously by the site's moderators and even more disturbingly, he was encouraged to overdose by some of the sadistic members on the forum. Briggs streamed his suicide to video site www.justin.tv, his motionless body lying upon his bed for several hours before a handful of the video's 1,500 viewers called the local police, said one report.

However, none of the twenty young tragic deaths of Bridgend have been linked to such internet forums.

Which leads us to further question: what drove these teenagers - with so much potential and countless possibilities ahead of them - to act in such an impulsive, sporadic, and tragic manner? Why is it such an attractive and somewhat fashionable thing

to bring yourself to do?

Emile Durkheim, a theoretician who specialises in suicides, has come up with a hypothesis for the motivation behind teenage suicides, by defining three different types of suicide; altruistic, egoistic and anomic. Within this theory, Durkheim



states that "Suicide is a multi-dimensional behaviour and difficult to define" and that these assumptions are generalised. [1]

Anomic suicide is generally regarded amongst psychologists as the best explanation for suicides committed amongst the teenage population. This assumption is based upon the attributes of anomic suicide including solitude and seclusion due to dramatic social changes, ranging from

deaths or relationship breakdowns with loved ones, to moving to a new area and feeling isolated and detached from previous friendships in addition to less specific attributes, for instance, anxiety, depression and fixations with death and dying.

Other psychologists argue that this trend is due to media influence; that suicide is now considered fashionable and attractive. With musicians, actors and other well known personalities in the spot light for taking their own lives, it's feared that youngsters will follow in the footsteps of their idols and attempt to end their lives in similar ways. The most famous among certain teenage social groups being Nirvana front man, Kurt Cobain who died after a self inflicted gunshot to the head in 1994, and more recently, prestigious fashion designer, Alexander McQueen.

"There is a certain appeal of suicide and especially where celebrities

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Topic: Grief

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Plays:

Clockhouse Theatre Co Production of *Midsummer Night's Dream*

Poetry:

[3] Résumé - Dorothy Parker

