

The Quality of Life

Dramaturgy Packet

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What is Dramaturgy?

Dramaturgy is the practice of asking and answering questions about the script to find connections to the world we live in. A dramaturg on a creative team works to help enrich the development of a production by providing context to the artists regarding history, politics, culture, current events, literature, and other media.

WHY Statement

This show was chosen as a part of our 85th Season, but unfortunately did not make it to the stage due to the Covid closure. When considering shows to reopen the theater with, we were called to other stories that spoke more directly to what we were experiencing at the time OR that we simply knew would make us laugh. We knew that we needed to be thoughtful about when we could bring this show back to the stage. While we were not able to bring back the entire cast and crew to the production after 3 years, we are happy to say that the directing team of Scott Hernandez and Alex Frankel, as well as several of the actors will be returning to the production to help us tell this story that reminds us that there is no “right way” to experience grief and launches a beautiful discussion from contrasting perspectives about how to cope with life’s most challenging questions."

Jane Anderson

- College Dropout
- New York Actress
- Writer for Film, Tv, and Theatre
- Quality of Life
 - Geffen Playhouse 2007

Christianity and Religion

- Tenets of Christianity:
 - Use of intoxicants (Proverbs 31:4-7)
 - Spreading the Gospel (Matthew 28:19-20)
 - Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)
 - Using the Lord’s name in vain God gives us challenges (Job 40)
 - Value of Life (Deuteronomy 30:19)
 - Saved by faith/works
- Pentecostal Denomination
- Agnosticism

Forest Fire Ecology

- Forest fires spread twice as fast for every 10 degree gradient increase
- Luis estimate: 20mph
- 17 million acres destroyed in the United States 2020 and 2021.
- California is the state with the most wildfire damage in the country.
 - 2018-2022, 83 wildfires that resulted in death, serious injury, and/or property damage
 - 8.7 million acres burned (Reno, for comparison, has an area of 71,000 acres)

Effects of Marijuana

- Heightened sensory perception
- Altered sense of time
- Impaired body movement
- Changes in mood
- Impaired memory
- Impaired thinking and problem-solving
- Hallucination and delusions (in high doses)
- Marijuana vaporizers
 - THC reaches bloodstream more quickly
 - Peaks at 30 minutes
 - Effects wear off in 1-3 hours

Side Effects of Chemotherapy

- Changes to the blood
- Numbness in hands or feet
- Changes in hearing
- Changes in sexuality and fertility
- Memory changes
- Fatigue
- Nausea and vomiting
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Hair loss
- Mouth sores

Euthanasia

- The practice of ending the life of a patient to limit the patient's suffering.
- Different practices of Euthanasia
 - Active / Passive
 - Involuntary / Voluntary
 - Self-Administered / Other-Administered
 - Mercy-Killing
 - Physician-Assisted Suicide

Losing a Child

- Intense response due to:
 - Love for the unique child who has died
 - Special intimacy and strength of parent-child bond
 - Social stigma associated with child death
 - Isolation and loss of social support that follows such deaths
 - Challenge to parental identity as competent protector, provider, and nurturer
 - Existential crisis of finding meaning in life without parenting a child
- Leslie's Story

Sources and Additional Readings:

linktr.ee/rltdramaturgy



Leslie's Story

The night I learned that my son was dead was, and will be, the worst of my life. I am certain that nothing will ever compare to this pain... I screamed the word 'no' for hours until my voice was gone. I sat in silent shock while a police officer and the victim services person (close friends, as we live in a small community) sat in our small living room and spoke softly, about what, I have no idea. Somehow I realized when I got myself to bed that this was the first night I would not awaken at 2 AM wondering where my son Jordan was. Exhausted and mentally sick, I fell asleep for 10 hours, and did not even turn over. The morning brought shock and numbness. I was a zombie, shuffling to the bathroom, getting a coffee, going back to bed. I have no recollection of my husband being there, but he must have been on the same trajectory. The disbelief lasts for a very long time. I cried in gasps, I wept softly, I yelled at the sky. I continued to say the word 'no.' I slept 15 hours out of every 24 for a long time.

The few days, weeks, and months after losing a child are otherworldly. I welcomed visitors and the lovely food they brought but I had no other sense of emotion or connection. I felt like a person made of stone and alternately, cloud. I was not in control of anything around me. Family arrived from all over, friends were scattered through my days. "What is death," I asked myself over and over. My boy, my only child, had vanished from the planet.

I dealt with the police, the coroner, the funeral home. I ordered a wicker basket for a green burial. Somehow I was able to rise to the occasion of the burial and the memorial. I had written an obituary, submitted it to the local paper, explaining that his was a drug-related death. I did the eulogy and spoke of Jordan's struggles with the hungry ghost. Only the grief that surrounded me made Jordan's death real. I had to console people, I had to respond to awful questions and difficult comments ("It's God's plan" is one of the worst along with "Everything happens for a reason"). I had to keep my act together in public. I had a frightening new identity—I was the unthinkable—a mother who had lost a child.

... Which brings me to this: We will not get over our grief, we will not go through our grief. Our grief becomes part of who we are. Living with the pain slowly becomes the new normal... As I write this, it has been 3½ years since Jordan died. I do not go a week without tears. There is a place inside me that carries the weight of a headstone. But I am stronger for it. And occasionally now I find moments of joy.