

Ms. Alexander

ENG 3100-20

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Literacy Narrative

The living room was quiet, as always. I heard nothing but the light footsteps of my grandma and mom pacing back and forth alongside the gentle sobs and whispers coming from their lips. The officer who was sitting right next to me got up off the couch and offered his condolences to the family before leaving. I just sat there motionless while my mind raced on about all of the things that had lead up to this very moment: How I couldn't believe it had taken me this long to know what was important in life; to know who I should have kept closest all along. I sat there motionless while my mind raced on about how I was going to deal with this, how my family (rushing onto the scene) would react whenever they finally get there, how I was going to react when I finally realized that the people I had inadvertently done everything to dehumanize just 2 weeks prior...had the same exact thoughts and feelings, and cried the same exact tears. I hadn't seen her body yet. I didn't know if I would ever be ready to see her body.

Nice opening lines

My mind kept racing on as the family started piling into her house. I hadn't paid any notice. I just sat there wondering how I was going to possibly deal with losing one of the very few people who I knew would always be proud of me no matter what my life lead up to, and the one person that always made huge a point to tell me how proud she was every time I saw her. I didn't know how I was going to live my life knowing that the family who had inspired me to

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become a writer, the very same family whom I had shared constant memories with throughout my entire life, was no longer forcibly connected to my life anymore, and at any moment could disappear from my life without any sort of living bloodline connecting us. What if I go off the deep end and decide not to talk to them ever again like before? What if I suddenly decided to put my school, or my work, or my friends, or my hobbies before them? How was I going to live with myself knowing that, at any moment, I could lose the best thing that's ever happened to me to something for my own, stupid, selfish personal gain? As the mournful cries of the family grieving over my great-grandma's death started drowning out my own thoughts and feelings, I left the room and went outside as a last attempt to try to conceal my sudden overgrown thoughts and emotions.

Nice interior monologue

For once in my life, I didn't know what to do to get through something of this caliber. I didn't have a plan. I had no way of knowing what I was going to do. As I slowly started to calm down, I soon realized that I was going to have to get over this regardless of how everything plays out, and that one day I was going to have to reflect on this and realize how this shaped me into the person that I am going to be someday. I soon realized that I was going to have to push myself into my emotions, even if that meant I had to cry, or pray, or curse god for putting me through this. I needed to do something other than just sit there motionless and bottle everything in. I had to see her body.

I slowly walked passed my entire family (the product of her amazing life) through the living room, then the kitchen. I got slower and slower as I finally started reaching her bedroom on the other side of the house. I finally saw her. She was knelt down at her nightstand by her bed as if she was praying. I could tell that she had already done everything to go to bed; she had even kicked off her slippers. Her walker was on the other side of the room. Next to her walker, on the

Nice details

dresser, was her pillbox which no longer had the pills for that night. She hadn't knelt down to pray in almost 20 years because she was so afraid that she wouldn't be able to get back up. It was almost as if she had done it all on purpose, like she wanted to die in a position that best represented her entire life; like she wanted to go in a way that showed how thankful to God she was for having the pills she needed, and being able to walk the short distance that she could.

I still kept expecting her to breathe. I guess it was just the hope inside me that wanted to see her breathing again. Upon looking at her motionless body, I noticed that she was still wearing her life alert. I'd like to think that it meant she died instantly without pain, but there's a big part inside that knows she wouldn't have wanted to alarm her family. I guess that thought stems from the fact that just 5 days before then, my mom, dad, sister, and I had walked into her house to find out that she had been lying on the living room floor for over 3 hours, unable to get up, with her life alert wrapped around her neck the entire time. She said she didn't want to bother us. God, she hated that thing.

Nice voice

Later that day, the people from the morgue came by to take the body, and after the moment of grieving when the entire family watched from the front yard as she left her house for the final time, everyone was devoted to trying to make the best out of that situation. The first thing my cousin, Chris, and I did was explore the house, since we had never really gotten the chance to beforehand (we had been there plenty of times before, but had always stayed in the living room because that's where Great-Grandma Lee would always like to sit), and I instantly focused on going upstairs since I had never really been up there before. While we were up there, I found several old newspaper articles, letters, pictures, and diaries from/about all the various members of the family that had come and gone throughout her lifetime.

The transition between these two paragraphs isn't clear

My family and I had a week to plan the funeral, but more importantly, a week to laugh and to cry; to share and to make memories that I will spend the rest of my life cherishing. Day 1, we mourned and talked about how much we loved her and how much we'll miss her. Day 2, we set up the pop-up in the backyard (which was located in the middle of the quiet suburbs of St. Charles) and watched old movies that were projected onto the side of the house. Day 3, my cousin Meagan and I stayed up until 4:00 in the morning watching one of our favorite movies, *The Jerk*, while also trying to find the least perverted way to charge one of those rechargeable-shake lights that we found in, what we called, her "Alfred Hitchcock Basement". Day 4, my cousin Whitney and I auto tuned ourselves reading a message that was sent to her from a boy on Facebook calling her an "HIV Hippo". Days 5 and 6 were all devoted to finding pictures to display, to writing down our favorite memories to put into a pamphlet that we gave out, and to write down what we were going to say, all at the funeral.

Nice specificity

Upon exploring her house for a week, I found a newspaper article about my Great-Aunt Faye retiring from the shoe factory that she had worked at for over 50 years. I found a magazine devoted to the flood of 93 (something I was too young to remember, but still affected me and my family). I found card upon card, letter upon letter, from every Easter, every Valentine's Day, every Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Years, and St. Patrick's Day (some over 50 years old). I found an old bible that had been given to her over 70 years ago that had been in my family for well over 100 years. I had also found a diary that she had kept just 2 years prior that had a very touching entry in it about how much she appreciated my company during one of my visits and how it helped her cope with depression (something I still tear up about).

Nice details

I realized something when living in her house for a week with my entire family, and it's not just the fact that a 100 year old, termite infested, house could still survive the crushing

weight of over 50 people and counting. Everything I had any sort of interest in involved some sort of text. If I would see a newspaper article, I'd want to know what it was about; if I saw a card, I would check to see who it was from; if I saw a diary, I would read into it to know the thoughts and feelings of the person who have long since forgotten what they had written in there over 50 years ago. If there was a picture that had people I didn't know in it and didn't have anything on the back of it stating who it was, I would toss it aside, completely and totally uninterested. Everything I had seen in her house was a tribute to her life, and without the literacy needed to decipher the words and phrases indicating why, none of my appreciation for her past subjects would have ever been possible.

Literacy is what keeps us going. I may not always be surrounded by the people I love, but in my writings, I'll always have the memories. Literacy is the tool we use for therapy. I was never so sure of how much I love my family until I recalled the desperation of potentially losing them in writing this paper. Literacy is history in its purest form. Without it, I wouldn't have known anything about my great-grandma's life or what all my family has accomplished over the last century. Most of all, Literacy is hope. Who knows? Maybe someday, this paper will help someone going through my attic to learn what's really important in life...family.