

The Death of a teacher, the birth of a new perception—

Book review on Tuesdays with Morrie

Reading 'Tuesdays with Morrie' gave me a great chance of self-reflection. When I first read this book, I saw nothing but a tragedy. I felt Mitch's pain. I felt his grief. I thought, back then, that I was a great reader; why not? I felt the same as the author! I boasted to my classmates what a great reader I was, that I was able to cry reading a book. Only to discover today, three years later when I reread the book, that I have missed too many things, far too many to say I have read the book.

'Death ends a life, but not a relationship'. This was the first thing that I learnt when I reread the book. Life is often filled with tragedies; one cannot help to be sad when one's beloved ones die. When I was reading this book, one of my favourite teachers passed away. I can still recall vividly that complicated feeling, the feeling of a tremendous sadness. Yet not only sadness, you also feel a great loss, you felt part of you died too. That night, I looked upon the stars and asked: why? Is this what a person leaves behind after his death? A person as good as my teacher, a person who had spent his lifetime pouring out all he had to nourish the others. However, what was left after his death? Just ashes under the earth?

However, I know now it was not. If it had not been him, I would not be able to write in English. But more importantly, if it had not been him, I would not know what love is. It was him who gave me this book-Tuesdays with Morrie.

I remembered him asked me during one of his lessons, he was teaching us to count in English. 'Emily, can you tell me what comes after a million?'

'I...I don't know, sir.' I answered sheepishly. I was never confident in English. I was never a good student, not me. But anyway, who cares what comes after a million? One can't possibly count that much.

Later that day, he gave me this book, he told me that he believed in me. He said that I could be a great writer, if only I tried hard. I was touched, but I still was not taking his words very seriously. I studied harder but I never opened the book. I thought I would always have the chance to read later. He asked me occasionally if I had read the book. He would like to discuss the book with me.

'Umm... later, sir. I have got loads of other things to do.' was always my answer.

At last, when I could not resist his urging any more, I opened the book and read. Only to know that two days later, before I could finish the book, he died in a car accident. We never had the chance to discuss the book. It was all too late. I blamed myself for that. Why, why play this huge joke on me?

It was when these lines in the book appeared before my eyes: 'Death is as natural as life. It's part of the deal we made', 'Learn to die and you learn how to live.' We all know perfectly that we are going to die someday, but it seems that no one ever admit to this truth. 'Everybody knows they're going to die, but nobody believes it' was what Morrie told us. We always think: Dying? It has nothing to do with me. I still have years to go before I die. What would I do if I die today? I would say 'I love you' to my friends, I would apologize to the people whom I have wronged, I would tidy up my things...but I am not doing these now because I do not have the time. Besides, I am going to last for years before I breathe my last.

Really? Don't you think life is unforeseeable? You know well the things that you would like to do before you die, but you are not doing them until it is too late. Why don't you start earlier? 'Better to work now than to regret' was what my teacher always told me. Living each day as if it is the last day of your life may seem depressing, but in fact, it is the most optimistic thing that you can do. Today can really be your last day, right? There is always this possibility. Tell the others that you love them, do something to show your concern to them. These things can only be words when they are said, or even clichés when they are said too often. Try to go an extra mile and put your words to deeds! 'The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning .' was what Morrie taught us. Merely knowing something that we should do is not enough; putting them into action is what we should do.

'Am I ready?' I always ask myself after reading this book. 'Am I ready to die today?' Sadly, 'I don't know' is sometimes the answer. Very often, I want to linger on earth longer and fulfill my 'dreams' first. My 'dreams' are probably the same with many others': I want to be rich, I want to achieve higher grades, and I want a promotion in my job. I want to own a large house in the mid-levels... but sometimes, I cannot help asking myself, are these really what I must do? Are money, authority and power so important to us?

Very often, we try to burry ourselves with accomplishments, just like Mitch. He once said, 'with accomplishments, I believed I could control things. I could squeeze in every last piece of happiness before I got sick and died, like my uncle before me, which I figured was my natural fate.' That was my life before I reread this book, I studied really hard, wanting to top my class. That was after my teacher's death, I wanted to make the most out of life, so I studied extra hard. I thought: I am going to fight for myself and myself alone, I am not going to think about anything about the others if they come in my way in achieving my aims. Why bother caring about the others? My life is so short!

I was jealous of people who got higher grades than I did. Before I knew it, I hated everybody. I thought badly of everyone. I saw everybody in my class as my enemy. I had no friends. I buried, or you may say stifled, myself with loads of work. I took up many responsibilities inside and outside school. I wanted to be an all rounded student. I wanted to get a job with a high pay in the future. 'So many people walk around with a meaningless life. They seem half asleep, even when they're busy doing things they think are important. This is because they're chasing the wrong things.' may be the best portrayal of me. Luckily, later I realized that life could not go on like this forever. You may chase after materialistic things, but they will never satisfy you. I love that line of Morrie, 'Money is not a substitute for tenderness, and power is not a substitute for tenderness.' There was one line in the book that stroke me like a lightning 'Love is the only rational act.' Victor Hugo's line in Les Miserable says 'Life's greatest happiness is to be convinced we are loved.' Love conquers all. That is all you need to know about life.

Looking at the clouds, I remembered my own teacher's death. Did everything of him really died with his body?

Maybe he did not know it, but his encouraging words gave me the confidence that I lacked in writing English. That is the motivation that I write this book report of Tuesdays with Morrie. Mitch saw the book as his term paper and I see this book report as a memoir of my teacher. Of course, my work cannot be compared to Mitch's, but sometimes, I believe, it is the heart that matters most. I now know trillion comes after million and zillion goes after trillion. Most importantly, I know what it means by infinity. I now know who can count this much. It's the teachers and the students that can count this much. Ask Mitch and you will know what I mean. I am sure he loves Morrie so much that even the infinity is not enough to count his love.

'A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.' I am lucky to be passed on this love of a great professor-Morrie. And I am now passing this love onto you. Death is a sad thing, but it is never the end of a relationship or even a person. You do not need magic wands or wizards to call the dead back to life. All you need is a potion- and I am now telling you about this mysterious potion. It is just simple- it is love.

The end