

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2016

Massachusetts Center for the Book

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Level III Honors Award

Dear Robert Frost,

I read your poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay" in *The Outsiders* several years ago in sixth grade and was not affected at all by it, or so I thought. I went on living, not acknowledging the meaning behind your words contributing to the theme of the story – that no matter how much bad there is in the world, there will always be something to appreciate. In September of 2013, my mother was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. My world turned upside down, not knowing what my future would look like. My mother lost her short battle, and I said goodbye. Confusion, anger, and sadness engulfed my life and took over. Now a freshman at the time, I vaguely remembered a poem I had read years before about how "nothing gold can stay" and appreciating things while they are here. After pondering and searching for this poem left and right, just as I was about to give up, your words were displayed on my Google search screen, and a smile grew across my face. I came across your poem once again, but was affected in a deeper and more thoughtful way because of the exact connection to what I had been going through. Your poem within the context of the novel using symbolism and dynamic characters connected me to the thought that there will always be evil and loss, but appreciating the good will make it all worth it.

There were months and months of little socialization, going through the motions, and depression connecting to my loss until I read your words again. Reading the lines "So dawn goes down to day. Nothing gold can stay", filled my eyes with tears. Gold, in this case, is not symbolizing the solid jewelry material, but happiness or good in a situation, like my mother. Even though it was a tragic event changing my life seemingly for the worse, I gained empowerment over time. Appreciating the time I had with my mom made the grievance of loss somewhat bittersweet. I chose to look for the better and focus on what she had taught me and how I could live on and share my experience. Your beautifully articulated words were the light at the end of a dark tunnel. It opened my heart to the idea of no matter how much bad there is, there is always something to be grateful for. You taught me another lesson with the lines, "But only so an hour". Setting a theoretical time limit spreads the message of how nothing, no matter how horrible the feelings are, will stay forever. Thus, you must appreciate the good while it is still there. This provided different perspective and has helped me cope tremendously with the death, for I knew that it would get better eventually. Viewing the world like this has helped me realize the better in all bad situations. I now can share my new knowledge of gratification with others that take simple things for granted. These symbols helped me look at the still standing good of my situation, even if it was significantly sad.

The people contributed to the story I first encountered it in, and has a comparison with my life, looking at the positive good side of change when there is evil. In *The Outsiders*, Johnny and Pony Boy are representing gold in terms of your poem. Within the story's progression, they became more aggressive, and lose their innocence, contributing to the message of nothing gold can stay. Although they lost something, the character change was not all for the worse, for they interacted in a better way with characters by the end of story. I have similarly changed, as these characters, with the same sense of losing innocence and the end of childhood. Even though ending childhood at thirteen, when I lost my mother, was detrimental, it has helped me gain maturity and become independent. No matter how bad the situation or change, there is always something to be thankful for, sometimes an even better gain of knowledge.

Your poem created a realization of mine as to how there is always something of which to be appreciative, no matter the evil circumstances. There is a tremendous amount of evil and sorrow in the world, but using poems like yours brings hope and the brighter side becomes easier to focus on. Before reading your poem, I was lost and full of sadness. After reading and analyzing, the thought became clear and I began to appreciate the good aspects in life. Even if Eden sank to grief, as I did, there is still the memory of the beautiful garden, like my mother. I am now confident to express that no matter how bad or evil a situation may be, there is something to be thankful for. Thank you for changing me for the better and showing me the good of the world.

From,

Kelsey

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Grade 10