

An Analysis of Nineteen Minutes

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I Introduction

“Nineteen minutes” is a book concerning psychology of committing crimes. It also talks about the relationship among peers, and the nervousness and distance between a teenager and a single mother. The reason we choose this book is that we want to discuss the inside conflict and quarrel of humanity. For example, if we were Peter, who was bulletted in the book, what action would we take? Would we tolerate everything just like Peter did in the first place? Or would we try to better the situation? And what subsequence would we suffer if we really ask someone to help? And who or what actually caused Peter to commit such a tragic crime? Those who teased at him? Or what is more scary, the whole society? The author, Jodi Picoult, is really good at guiding us seeing the issue in a different light. She represents the tragedy in neither a severe nor a critical way. She just “tells” the story. But by just “telling” the story, we can still sense the helplessness delivered by the main characters.

II Thesis

1. Characters

1.1 Peter

Peter was boy who was worth sympathizing in this book. On the surface, he had a normal family, nice parents, a wonderful brother, and also his best friend from his

childhood, Josie. All of them made him seem to be a normal child. However, everything changed when he entered school. He couldn't belong to any group in school, for he wasn't good at anything- not good-looking, unfashionable clothes. Thus, he was a freak in everyone's mind. Some guys that were very popular at school, liked to play dirty tricks on him, as well as Matt and his friends. To our surprise, Peter's brother, who was good at almost everything, was also one of guys being mean to Peter. Maybe Peter could have stood to this vicious power if he had got some comfort from the friendship of Josie. But to his sadness, Josie abandoned their friendship and became Matt's girlfriend, one of the cool guys in that group.

All of these began to twist Peter's mind. He started to invent cruel online game, a kind of shooting game. Then, he studied his father's guns secretly and stole them. When Matt and his friends played dirtier tricks on him, he began to select the people he wanted to shoot at, to hurt, and even to kill. At first, he had selected Josie, but she meant too much for him, so he gave up.

In our opinion, Peter didn't mean to be so cruel. He once tried to tease a new classmate like others did to him. At first, he successfully hurt the girl's heart seriously and it seemed that others could accept him gradually. However, he was painful, for he totally knew the feeling about being teased at by others. It was the environment that made him to take revenge on people in such a cruel way. Although we don't agree to

his method, we are on his side, for he was only one of the victims of the morbid society.

1.2 Josie

Her personality was very much like Peter's. Both of them were contradictions. The only difference was that Josie was luckier than Peter because she could be accepted by the "high class" students in school. However, being on the spotlight did not make her feel comfortable and pleased; instead, she was under a lot of pressure and often in panic. In her mind, she wanted to return mediocrity but she could not because she had to meet everyone's expectation. This led to the swaying between fantasy and reality and even the endless suffering. As a result, she chose Peter but not her beloved boy friend Matt at the very moment----in the dressing room. Moreover, she valued the relationship with her Mom, so she was hurt seriously at when her mom ignored her due to busy work. Maybe this matter had something to do with forming her individuality, too. Not able to fulfill what she wanted, she began to hide herself and the miserable life also started. She did not feel relieved until she killed Matt.

1.3 Matt

Matt, who was Josie's boyfriend, was the kind of people that liked to bully others. He liked to insult someone whom were easily been targeted at, for instance, Peter, to show that he was the superior. In other words, he established his position among his

peers by teasing and knocking down others. He even took off Peter's underpants to make an exhibition of Peter himself! Also, he regarded his own dignity as the most vital thing. That's why when Josie unexpectedly appeared in the rest room before a football game, he was so angry and even hurt Josie. The main reason he stayed with Josie was that he considered being with her was quite proud, since Josie was such a pretty and charming girl, which would make him feel more superior.

1.4 Alex

Alex was a single mother as well as a judge. Being a judge was not quite an easy job, so she had to spend more time and effort on it. Gradually, the time which she spent with Josie seemed less and less, and they were more and more like two strangers only living under the same roof. She did not know how to be with Josie and she did not even really understand her. To make it even worse, unconsciously, no matter where and when she was, Alex always tried to act like a solemn judge, which made her daughter stay far more away from her. They had no access to communicating with each other appropriately. Therefore, the relationship between Alex and Josie gradually worsened. Not until the violent event happening on campus did Alex realize how much she had lost --- the happiness of accompanying Josie's growth. So after the event, Alex started trying to mend the relationship between them. She began to pay more attention to the inner thoughts of Josie. Though the whole thing went out of her

imagination afterwards, their relation indeed progressed a lot.

2. For or Against the Judge's Decree

2.1 For

As far as the social aspect is concerned, the legal cases do harm to many parents, students, and teachers, not to mention a murderer. Therefore, to the whole society, it seems to be the only reasonable way that can make up for the victims.

Furthermore, looking from the law aspect, because Peter's defense counsel failed to appeal that the reason why he had committed the crime is was mental oppression, he was in terms of the laws deserved to be sentenced. If the judge didn't put Peter to the capital punishment, the laws would be slackened and no longer be accepted by people. Consequently, in accordance with legal principles, the judgment certainly strengthened the credibility of the law.

Peter was not allowed to take revenge on others by shooting them, although he was also worth sympathizing for. You may say," But he had been hurt a lot by his classmates and brother for a long time. It's time for him to take revenge on them." However, there were lots of solutions to solving his panic. Peter wasn't God, so he was not allowed to end up others' lives, for whatever purpose. For us, Peter was a selfish guy, since he never thought about how his parents would feel and how others would treat the parents of the murderer. His mind was totally twisted by cruel online

games and revenge. In the end, Peter was put into jail. We think it was a good result because Peter needed to have a serene place, some time, and some punishments to make him know what he did was really a horrible crime.

2.2 Against

However, Peter's life was never fair. You may consider it was the spinelessness and eccentricity in his personality that led to the error he made; nevertheless, it is reported that the peer pressure really has something to do with the behavior one makes. Having been brought up in the hostile environment since Peter was little, he had become isolated gradually. Because he dared not revenge on the spot, the hatred accumulated. As a result, it all erupted.

In our opinion, we think he was innocent because it was not his native personality causing the crime but the vicious conditions made him behave like this. His mother's dotting on him, the classmates' insulting all brought about his resentment. In fact, Peter had already been a strong-minded person, for the tolerance before resulting to the violence. On the other hand, he spoke for the depressed in the society, that is, he was a representative. He was in such a tragedy, so he could only tackle everything in a tragic way. Wasn't he the most pitiful victim?

III Conclusion

When one day we hear a boy shoot several of his classmates. We may consider he a bully or a psychotic. However, the author leads us to think about the deep meaning----how different it is for a teenager to get involved in peers. Moreover, in today's society, lots of parents are too busy to care about their children. Consequently, they satisfy their children with various concrete materials rather than spiritual ones. Due to lack of parent's concerns, children are inclined to express their complaint in a drastic way. For instance, commit suicide or hurt others. However, parents don't meditate on "why" their children committing such a silly crime. They just want to know "how" to stop them from doing so. Thus, they consider their children patients and oversee them, instead of giving them a hand to go through this tough time. No one is an inborn parent, and it takes time to learn how to give love to children and make them feel beloved. In particular, parents should spend more time on children in today's modern society. Then, teenagers will have healthy minds. Hence, there are less violence and tragedies in the world.

IV Reference

"Nineteen Minutes"—Judi Picoult

Nineteen Minutes (2007) is the fourteenth novel by the American author, Jodi Picoult. It was Picoult's first book to debut at #1 on the New York Times Best Seller list. This novel follows the unfolding of a school shooting, including the events leading up to the incident and the aftermath of the incident. The story begins on March 6, 2007 in the small town of Sterling, New Hampshire, tracking the lives of a number of characters on an "ordinary day." The characters include Alex Cormier, a superior Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen is one of the powerful poems of William Butler Yeats, precisely painting the picture of the Irish Civil War which took place during the twentieth century. Yeats wrote a few poems which had violence as a theme. Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen is one of them. It not only depicts the situation of Yeats's time but also the violence in general. The poem comments on the horrors of the war and the degradation of human nature. Summary: Nineteen Minutes introduces a sixteen year old boy named Peter Houghton who commits a high school massacre killing ten people and injuring nine people. It is revealed shortly after the school shooting that Peter was a person who was bullied frequently, so he decides to end it by creating a school shooting. One of the surviving victims is a girl of the same age as Peter, Josie Cormier. She is revealed to be his only childhood friend but abandoned him in order to become more popular. As time goes by, Josie Cormier experiences the pain of losing loved ones and Peter spends time thinking of how. If there is a Nineteen Minutes SparkNotes, Shmoop guide, or Cliff Notes, you can find a link to each study guide below. Among the summaries and analysis available for Nineteen Minutes, there are 1 Full Study Guide, 4 Short Summaries and 8 Book Reviews. Depending on the study guide provider (SparkNotes, Shmoop, etc.), the resources below will generally offer Nineteen Minutes chapter summaries, quotes, and analysis of themes, characters, and symbols. Nineteen Minutes. by Jodi Picoult. Pages Semantic Scholar extracted view of "An Analysis of Nineteen Minutes" by Rosa Kou et al. @inproceedings{Kou2008AnAO, title={An Analysis of Nineteen Minutes}, author={Rosa Kou and Jana Hsu and Susan Su}, year={2008} }. Rosa Kou, Jana Hsu, Susan Su. View PDF. Save to Library. Create Alert. Cite. Share This Paper.