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Eighth Grade

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*Topic: Monstress by Lysley Tenorio*

What the Heart Wants

Many are often faced with a decision between what is accepted and what is correct. We feel the need to get the approval of those who surround us instead of us ourselves. However, the mere bystanders are no more than just that. We must overcome our worries and do what is necessary. After all, what will matter most later in our lives is what our actions were rather than what they were thought of. Albert Einstein explained this: "What is right is not always popular and what is popular is not always right." This, I believe, is the foundation for *Monstress*, a collection of short stories by Lysley Tenorio. Throughout the collection, readers explore the lives of young Filipino immigrants who must face decisions regarding their families, society, and most importantly, themselves. Tenorio writes about these decisions, and through reading his stories, and analyzing his style, we can see that we must always do what our heart wants, although it may not be what society accepts.

We can first see this truth in the story, "Monstress." In this story, we examine the life of Reva Gogo, a young actress who stars in her boyfriend's films. The films are cheesy, B-horror films, in which Reva must play the monster. When a new director, Gaz Gazman, picks Reva and her director up to help direct a new film, Reva ends up an actress in it. After seeing her act, Gaz decides to keep her for future movies, though it would mean leaving her boyfriend to go back home. Seduced by the money and fame, she stays, later regretting it. Although Gogo wants to go home, she knows that she will be ridiculed for not taking the opportunity, and regrets the choice for the rest of her life. If she had done what her heart wanted, she would have been happier. Another example of this theme is in the short story, "The Brothers," in which a young man, Edmond,

is to bury his transsexual brother who was shut out of the family. After meeting one of Eric's friends, Edmond learns more about his brother. He starts to feel guilty about leaving Eric when he needed him most. However, if he had done what he thought was right and stayed by his brother's side, instead of thinking about what society would think about his brother's change, Eric would have died a happier man.

We learn again that the most important thing to do is the right thing instead of the popular thing. Finally, we can see the importance of this theme in the story, "Felix Starro," in which a young man is forced to participate in the deceitful family business of faith healing. His grandfather tricks customers into believing that they have been healed through the use of fake blood and curses. Knowing it is wrong, Felix decides to emigrate from his country to America. He decides this after seeing this grandfather "heal" a young pregnant girl, by telling her that there is not a baby anymore. The man leaves, ending the family business. He does what is right, rather than what his grandfather wants him to do. Tenorio's stories show his theme: we must always do what our heart wants, although it may not be what society accepts.

The theme is also shown through the author's style and the variation of narration. One example is in the story, "Help," where there is a use of reflective narration. The choice of narration in this story helps the readers see the thoughts of the characters after the actions have been completed many years into the future. In "Help," the main character is asked to fight the Beatles, a popular band at the time. The protagonist's Uncle Willie retaliates against insults directed at Willie's girlfriend, Imelda Marcos. Even after admiring the Beatles deeply, the main character decides to obey his uncle and do what he believes is right: avenge their insults. Through his reflective narration, readers can experience looking back upon this memory many years later knowing he did what he thought was right instead of what most people would have done.

Tenorio's style of narration is also shown in the story, "Super Assassin," in which there is a present tense narration. This narration helps the author show the theme, as readers can see the character's thoughts as they act, knowing

there will be no influence on them later. The main character, a delusional boy who believes that he is a superhero, wishes to get revenge on the school bully. As the story unfolds, readers understand the thoughts of the protagonist, and his thoughts while acting. In this story, the boy switches a can of deodorant with a blowtorch, believing that this would teach the bully, Brandon, a lesson. The boy believes that he is protecting the school, even if it means getting the disapproval of others. The use of present tense narration is important in getting across the theme.

*Monstress*, a collection of short stories by Lysley Tenorio, helps readers journey through the lives of Filipino immigrants. In each story, we read about a different experience with different choices, risks, and chances. Tenorio develops amazing characters with his own style and detailed situations. However perhaps the most important experience for the reader is learning the lessons about the choices that *Monstress* has to teach. A great read for everyone, *Monstress* shows that no matter what others may think of it, we must always do what the heart wants.

The End

**Nicole Bruno**  
Eighth Grade  
St. Vincent de Paul

*100 Year Anniversary of 1915 Panama-California Exposition*

One hundred years ago, the most legendary event occurred in beautiful San Diego: The Panama-California Exposition of 1915, which began on January 2, 1915 and ended on January 1, 1917. It was organized to commemorate the opening of the Panama Canal that was built across Panama. As a result of the Panama Canal, distance and costs of international shipping were cut shorter. "The eyes of the world are focused on the Sun City and the honor not only of the great state of California, but of the great West are paced in our keeping." This statement by President G. Aubrey Davidson boldly states the role of San Diego in the exposition and why this remarkable city was chosen to host it. According to my research, San Diego was chosen to host this historic event because they desired to be the first American port of call for ships traveling north after westward passage from the Panama Canal. Balboa Park, a large historical landscape located in the midst of San Diego, hosted it because of its widely known business figures and convenient location. Historic structures, fascinating buildings, and convenient transportation were famous attractions in the Panama-California Exposition of 1915.

From researching this incredible exposition I have learned about its great legacy that has spurred growth and development in San Diego, California. Theodore Roosevelt addressed this in his speech at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion on July 27, 1915: "It is so beautiful that I wish to make an earnest play...I hope that not only will you keep these buildings running for another year, but you will need these buildings of rare, phenomenal taste and beauty permanently." I have discovered the breathtaking outcomes of the exposition that have greatly affected the city of San Diego and its inhabitants, including myself. St. Francis Chapel and Spreckels Organ Pavilion are two buildings for the Panama-California

exposition that still stand today.

In addition, the California State Building was inspired by the Church of San Diego and receives an outpouring of daily visitors. The Botanical Building is well known for its rare plants, and the Cabrillo Bridge is remembered for its passage of swift transportation. Lastly, visiting the California Bell Tower that resembles the formation of a Spanish ship and is titled "San Diego's Icon," has become a popular past time for Californians. Today, Balboa Park has been transformed into a collection of historic museums that honor the significant events that occurred a century ago.

In conclusion, the Panama-California Exposition provided a better and richer life for Californians then and for the many generations to come. Because of this wonderful exposition, I am able to enjoy and visit Balboa Park to indulge in the priceless knowledge that is stored within its deep roots. Now that I have deeply researched this phenomenon, I have a greater appreciation for Balboa Park and will never underestimate its history. One hundred years later and as a native San Diego, Balboa Park and the 1915 Panama-California Exposition remain just as important and meaningful to me. I look forward to visiting the 2015 remembered of the exposition! Consequently, Balboa park still and will continue to receive hundreds of daily visitors that wish to enrich their knowledge of San Diego's history. Happy anniversary to the Panama-California Exposition of 1915. I never realized that its importance would ever impact my life as greatly as now.

The End

**Ashley Meader**  
Eighth Grade  
Standley Middle School

*“If all the books in the world were about to disappear, but you could save one, what would it be? Why?”*

Books are incredible. These little bundles of ink and paper can change your mood, your life, and even the course of history. They can make you cry, make you laugh, inspire you, and even open your eyes to the world. They are, simply put, amazing. But, what if they were all to disappear? There, then gone? That is, all but one. Which one book, out of the billions that have been created over the period of human history, would be allowed to stay? Although this decision would be anything but easy, I would choose “The World Book Encyclopedia,” 2015 Edition to remain.

“The World Book Encyclopedia,” 2015 Edition is a nonfiction work consisting of 22 volumes. Illustrations make up a copious percentage of the book, most of them in color. The encyclopedia is designed for students and lacks the overly formal tone of other encyclopedias, making it both useful and easy to understand. The work covers a vast variety of topics, but focuses on medical, scientific, and technological information. This is the reason I would choose this work to stay, instead of another fiction piece. We as humans have made so many advances in the field of science, medicine, and technology in the past two centuries. If all nonfiction books were to be cast into oblivion, we would have no basis for advancing even further. We would have to rewrite all science textbooks, rerun millions, perhaps even billions of experiments to regain all the information we had lost. It would be an unimaginable step backwards for us. We couldn’t train new doctors or scientists. What would they learn from? We couldn’t possibly teach them from memory. Losing nonfiction would have a dangerous impact on the human race.

Some may argue that we would be okay without the informational genre.

They may say that the lack of fictional works would have a greater impact on the human soul than the lack of nonfiction would have on the rest of the world. Although that I agree that the disappearance of fiction would be a devastating loss, I believe that having scientific and medical information is simply more beneficial to the continuation of the human race. Medicine and science save lives. Think of hospitals 300 years ago compared to hospitals today. Think of how far we've come. A substantial amount of that information and progress would be lost with the disappearance of nonfiction. Progress in technology would come to a halt. Hospitals would take a leap backwards. People would die. And all this would be because we chose a fiction work to stay.

Now say we went ahead and chose a fiction piece anyway. The choice is made, the deed is done. All literary works are gone. All that remains is one single book. But what genre? Some like fantasy, some like historical fiction. Some people like romance novels, while others despise them. How could the human race with all its diversity and preferences possibly choose a single book that everyone would like? A unanimous vote on genre alone would be impossible, but what about all the other factors that go into a story? Would we choose first or third person? One character's point of view or many? How could we possibly choose one single book without starting riots? Fiction works, like people, are incredibly diverse. To pick just one to satisfy all people until we write countless more would be literally impossible. There is absolutely no way. That's why I would choose "The World Book Encyclopedia." Nonfiction is simply nonfiction. Information. Any preferences as to what kind of material interests the individual most are satisfied with the encyclopedia's pictures and diagrams for people who are visual learners. Out of the many books out there, "The World Book Encyclopedia," 2015 Edition is one that would satisfy the most people in the time it would take to recreate fiction novels.

One of the characteristics humans have is the ability to adapt to different circumstances. After this disappearance has taken place, and only "The World Book Encyclopedia," 2015 Edition remains, people won't just shrug this off and look into a novel-less future. No, we would start making more books to

avenge those we've lost. To do this, though, we would need inspiration. Ideas. Observations and scenarios to twist into a delicious plot. This is provided by science. For many, inspiration comes by either observing something in the world, or taking what we know about science and either defying it or building off of it. By choosing "The World Book Encyclopedia," 2015 Edition to stay, we would take the first step towards rebuilding humanity's lost library by leaving ourselves inspiration and ideas for future books.

Losing all but one book would be terrible. An unimaginable tragedy. All that culture, all that emotion, just gone. But, like all other tragic events, one must rise above the sorrow and prepare for the future. Choosing "The World Book Encyclopedia," 2015 Edition would do this. By preserving our knowledge, experience, and history for future generations to advance on, we could eventually build the next dynasty of literature.

The End



**Maeve Miller**

Eighth Grade

St. Therese Academy

*“If all the books in the world were about to disappear, but you could save one, what would it be? Why?”*

If all the books in the world were to disappear, which would I choose to save? I believe that a book should be exciting, yet informational. Well, at least my favorites are. If you have ever read “Tuesdays with Morrie” by Mitch Albom, you have experienced joy, torment, and utter sadness in 199 pages. It has made me feel what I was numb to before—love that goes beyond our nature, love for a person I have never met and perhaps will never meet. Despite this, I will cherish the thought of a teacher, Morrie, unable to think like any other but able to see the world in love.

“Tuesdays with Morrie” is about a graduate and his old professor, dying of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (or ALS). Although this horror slowly broke down Morrie’s body, it changed his thoughts on life and death. In the story, Mitch, the graduate, revisits one of his old beloved college teachers named Morrie Schwartz. This ill man agreed to redirect Mitch through lessons every Tuesday. As the book goes on and Morrie decays, he talks to Mitch about everything he has learned in his many years. The bond that grows between the two men is unbreakable love—love through brotherhood and friendship. In the end, when Mitch graduates and the professor dies, Albom is able to relinquish his sorry to live out what Schwartz tried to teach him every week: to love with his heart and not his mind.

By now you must be asking why I would choose this book. Well, if you have ever read this novel, you would know that it is written in a way quite different from any other. The chapters are full of enlightening stories, and there are these little quotes at the end of the chapter from philosophers. Something about the book gives me a feeling of determination to become a better student, daughter,

and overall person. Another silly thing about it is that keeps my mind spinning off is that such a stark book could intrigue me when I am constantly searching for detail. Gentleness is imbedded in the words, and I cannot express how much love and sorrow Albom has written in so few pages. His writing is so simple yet it fills my mind with thoughts of beauty in life.

Believe me when I say the piece has truly impacted my life. Perhaps it is having Morrie as a role model that has encouraged me to purge my soul of malevolence, but I believe that the main cause is through a quote. Morrie explains, "Sometimes you cannot believe what you see, you have to believe what you feel" (p. 61). This saying has taught me that love cannot be seen, for it is a verb. What really rattles my brain, though, is how this was underlined when I bought the novel [book]. The person who did this, in my opinion, wanted to point out the quote and enlighten me. That is complete kindness, compelling a stranger to change their life for good. A book so unseen, so plain, is what has given more power throughout my thirteen years, and every time I see the image of Morrie in the front, I become resolute in living out his liturgy. It is truly a novel [book] of a thousand stories, a thousand feelings, and one love.

The End