

2018 Classical Literature Scholarship–2nd Place

The 80th Minute

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It started out as another Socratic reading assignment, with annotations and a strict schedule, but as the weeks followed this traditional reading homework became more than another pointless book. Instead, it became my lifeline, for it anchored me to a foundation from which I will never weigh anchor. As I stepped into Victor Frankel's shoes, his story became my story as I learned how suffering could make me greater.

It had been an exhausting three and a half weeks. On top of my overwhelming reading homework, I suffered immensely while I watched my best friend tear her ACL, as I learned my grandma's cancer had spread to her lungs, when I stood-by helplessly watching family members struggle with unborn children that were fighting for their lives, and as I had to bear the unexpected excruciating loss of my grandfather. At that point my suffering seemed endless I focused on just surviving. Each day I fought to concentrate during class, to socialize as if nothing was wrong, and even to keep my tears to a minimum during soccer practice. I truly felt like a prisoner suffering from the second phase, *apathy*. The shock from all the tragedy and my focus on survival prevented me from seeing any meaning in my suffering. I just wanted to close my eyes and live in the past. After reading 30 pages of Victor Frankel's nonsense, I was livid. I remember feeling, after one particular night, that I could no longer endure any more of his vain hope. I closed the book and shook my fist thinking, "Frankel is askew! Suffering is outrageous! It is pointless and especially worthless!" Completely distraught with the world, I opened my book one more time.

I turned to page 131, and suddenly it clicked. I read, “Man does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become in the next moment.” I paused. My heart sank. I knew he was right.

I immediately decided to apply Frankel's lessons. I understood and believed that his theory of *logotherapy* was correct. I remembered what he told me on page 78, “[Cydne your] unique opportunity lies in the way in which [you] bear [your] burden.” I realized that I needed to find meaning in my suffering if I was going to overcome it. It was the truth and I held fast to it.

Although my body was on the verge of becoming crippled from the physical, mental, and emotional beating I had received, I knew if I did not implement this theory in my life, I would dwindle. I closed the book and laid in bed pondering how I was going to utilize this theory. I woke up the next day, still bruised, but my hope had returned.

That day was the hardest test of my suffering, because it was the day in which I had to decide whom I wanted to become in that next moment. I got on the school bus and watched the world pass by at 70 miles per hour. I asked myself over-and-over, “Who am I going to be? Will I let my suffering conquer me or will I allow it to make me better?” These questions continued to roam across my mind as I started to warm up for my soccer game. Then the whistle blew and the first minute of the game began. Pushing all my suffering to the side, I focused on working. I dared not look at my mom seated on the sideline, but instead, I focused on the soccer ball ahead of me. I weaved, dived, and picked myself up and “Tweet Tweet Tweet!” The 80th minute rang and the game was over. I dropped to my knees and cried. I did it!

That night I laid in bed reflecting. I realized through this whole journey I was preparing for the 80th minute of life by deciding whom I was going to be. It was challenging, I wanted to give up, but in the end, I discovered a finer me. Never once did the pain cease, but my will to

bear it was grew through the meaning I discovered. I decided to be a person who chooses to recognize meaning in their suffering. I decided to stay close to my personal values and never compromise them. In the end, *Man's Search for Meaning*, helped transform my hard-hearted suffering into something far softer, moldable, and greater than I had ever imagined.