

14. "It is through literature that we learn about life. Through literature we profit from the experiences of others, comparing them with our own." - Bob Cameron

**Comment [AP1]:** Well organized, thoughtful, and cleanly written. Next steps: read your work aloud so that your ear can catch the (occasional) awkward phrasing that your brain forgives. 25.5/30

In Mitch Albom's *Tuesday's with Morrie*, Albom detailed his personal experiences with his professor Morrie Schwartz. Mitch also expressed how influential Morrie was to his friends, relatives, patients, and coworkers. Within this essay, the plot and story, character development, point of view, theme, and symbols will be articulated upon. The reader response theory and the above quote from Bob Cameron will be used to discuss how effectively Albom was able to convey his message to the reader.

**Comment [AP2]:** Clean!

To begin the analysis, the plot and story will be discussed to understand how the non-linear chronological order left an emotional impact through the rising action, the falling action, and through Bob Cameron's quote. As Morrie's condition worsened, the rising action progressed since the characters became more emotional and more concerned about what Morrie thought and felt towards his death.

**Comment [AP3]:** Interesting!

The duration of Morrie's funeral took place during the falling action. This was when Mitch had truly understood how much Morrie's teachings had influenced him: "I look back sometimes at the person I was before I rediscovered my old professor. ... I want to tell him what to look out for, what mistakes to [avoid,] ... to be more open, to ignore the lure of advertised values, to pay attention when your loved ones are speaking, as if it were the last time you might hear them" (190). The non-chronological order helped increase the depth of the characters' experience and this complemented Cameron's description of how the reader learns about their lives. The rising action developed with the ALS in Morrie, the falling action occurred when Morrie had finally died, and the non-linear chronological order helped to convey Mitch and Morrie's personal experiences to the reader.

**Comment [AP4]:** Word choice

Within the memoir, Morrie and Mitch were the main rounded characters, while a flat character was any character other than Mitch and Morrie such as their friends, family, and coworkers. If the author could have developed some of the flat characters, the reader would have profited from their

**Comment [AP5]:** Careful: common mistake in writing. "reader learns" is singular and "their lives" is plural. You need to choose one or the other. "...the readers learn about their lives..." or "...the reader learns about his life." Or, if you're worried about the whole sexist thing, "...the reader learns about life."

**Comment [AP6]:** harsh

experiences. Of the flat characters, Morrie's family required the greatest need for the development from flat to round since they spent the most time with Morrie and were most likely suffering from more emotional pain than Mitch. However, considering Cameron's quote, if the flat characters were to even be developed, then that may have taken away from the underlying plot, theme, or even Morrie and Mitch's relationship.

**Comment [AP7]:** I don't see this connection. You need to elaborate, here.

The point of view was exclusively presented through Mitch. Mitch had the ability to communicate Morrie's perception, how Mitch described himself, and how Mitch compared himself before and after Morrie's death. Mitch described Morrie's personality and how he had felt about things by describing most of his earlier experiences with Morrie and by describing his personality after Morrie had been diagnosed with ALS. Throughout the memoir, Mitch characterized his personality as being a person who, "never [cried]" (51), "traded lots of dreams for a bigger paycheck, and... never... realized [that he] was doing it" (33). Bob Cameron described that people learn as they compare themselves to another person's experience, and Mitch was constantly comparing himself to Morrie. Using reader response theory, I feel this was effective in communicating the life lessons that Mitch had learned. From analyzing the point of view, the theme of the memoir shone through.

**Comment [AP8]:** So many "Mitts" Consider rephrasing to avoid this repetition

The theme of the memoir was to explain that the greatest lesson in life was love and this can be backed by how the author worded the title. The title of the novel, in full, was *Tuesdays with Morrie: an old man, a young man, and life's greatest lesson*. From the title, one can identify that the underlying reason for picking the book up and deciding to read it would, at least partially, be based on the reader wanting to learn about "life's greatest lesson". One of the lessons Morrie communicated within the memoir was about the value of money and wealth. Morrie's mentally ill and depressed patients were, "well-off, from rich families, [but] their wealth did not buy them happiness or contentment" (111). The lesson that Morrie was trying to convey was that people should strive for their dreams, and it was through literature that Morrie hoped this lesson would be learned. After reading the book, it can be

**Comment [AP9]:** In what way? How is it being used here? Why do you feel it was effective? What response did it elicit in you?

**Comment [AP10]:** Good!

**Comment [AP11]:** fair

derived that the major theme of the memoir was to be at peace with what one desires, and that was Mitch's greatest lesson of his life.

Some of the symbols of the memoir was Morrie's dying hibiscus plant, the continuous amount of food that Mitch brought Morrie, and the concept of money. The hibiscus plant was a natural symbol that sat, "by a window in the study where [they] could watch [the] small hibiscus plant shed its pink [leaves]" (1) and by the end of the memoir, Morrie had used the plant to symbolize "[death] ends a life, not a relationship." (174) Mitch always brought two meals with him every Tuesday which represented a conventional symbol whenever he came to visit Morrie, as time went by, the fridge began to fill up with food. Throughout the memoir, the concept of money as a literary symbol had always been argued by Morrie as something that does not fulfill one's life, but rather through love. The hibiscus plant was used to show how one naturally dies, the food to show how Mitch's Tuesday visits were accumulating over time, and how money was not the solution to one's desires.

Comment [AP12]: nice summation!

Having used reader response theory and Bob Cameron's quote, Mitch Albom was effective at conveying his message. Through the plot and story, character development, point of view, theme, and symbols that were discussed, Albom identified which subjects needed to be elaborated upon and which of these subjects deserved subtleties. Therefore, when someone thinks of Morrie Schwartz, Albom will receive full credit for the amount of moral and philosophical education that was transmitted through Morrie's death.

Comment [AP13]: Careful: phrased this way, it makes it seem that Mitch Albom was the one who used reader response theory and Bob Cameron's quote.

Comment [AP14]: Good!

Comment [AP15]: Nice!

## Works Cited

Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie: an old man, a young man, and life's greatest lesson*. New York: Broadway Books, 1997.

15.

Death and Loyalty: A Comparative Essay between King Lear and Tuesdays with Morrie

How would you feel, act, and behave if you found out you were soon going to die? For Morrie

**Comment [AP16]:** Well done! Well organized and well-supported! Next step: use transitions to link body paragraphs and watch out for (again occasional) awkward phrasing. Still, very nice work! 44.5/50

**Comment [AP17]:** Nice opener!

Schwartz of *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom and King Lear of *King Lear* by William Shakespeare, they both agreed to themselves that they “would not be ashamed of dying” (Albom, 10), but only one character perished with pain, while the other left his world with love. Morrie and Lear will both be compared in understanding how they came to understand their mortal situation, to understand loyalty, and to how the elements had treated them. In these situations, Morrie and Lear gain the deepest wisdom on who they are to themselves from the actions they took as they both faded away from the living world.

**Comment [AP18]:** awkward

**Comment [AP19]:** interesting!

The speed which both characters accepted their death varied greatly since Morrie did not grieve about his death, while Lear drove himself to insanity in escaping the concept of his fall. It was in August of 1994 (Albom 10) that Morrie discovered he was going to die, and from that he decided he was, “going to live... with dignity, with courage, with humor, with composure.” (Albom, 21) Lear did not accept that he was going to die and still wanted to be treated, “every inch a king” (Shakespeare, IV vi 122) while he was dividing his land up between his daughters. Lear stuck to the concept of his righteousness so much so that he began to identify himself as two people, one piece of him as a father and another as a king; this shone through from a statement to his daughters, “Which of you shall we say doth love us most?” (Shakespeare, I i 52). As both characters entered into their tragedy, Morrie was capable of choosing to live out his life in grace, while Lear was driven to insanity to keep his title, his land, and his knights.

**Comment [AP20]:** Love this!

**Comment [AP21]:** Very nice!

**Deleted:** .

**Comment [AP22]:** Solid quote that could use some elaboration/explanation

Transition?

As tragedy manifests within one’s life, dependency gradually thickens and loyalty is tested. For Morrie, loyalty was a blessing, while it was the final tragic blow to Lear. Morrie had many people within his life who stayed loyal to him, such as his family, his coworkers, his community, and from Mitch; “My

**Comment [AP23]:** Word choice. I don’t know that dependency can “thicken”

**Comment [AP24]:** Nice!

**Deleted:** to whom

old friend,' he whispered, 'you've come back at last.'" (Albom, 28). Lear was only concerned with himself in the beginning and instead of identifying who was loyal to him, he played into his enemies by scorning his followers (Cordelia and Kent) for not being at par with his tricksters' (Cordelia's and Regan's)

deceptions. It was not until later that Lear understood how much Cordelia truly loved him and it wasn't until she died that Lear was also able to understand that he had also abandoned Kent, his servant.

Comment [AP25]: Nice!

Deleted: was dead

"Kent; who in disguise / Follow'd his enemy king, and did him service" (V iii 255) and after the King had died, told Albany that he would follow him even further into death (read: through suicide); "I have a journey, sir, shortly to go; / My master calls me, I must not say no" (V iii 382). Loyalty, for Morrie and Lear, was exceptional in that both their servants/friends helped them through their battles as they slowly perished. Transition?

Comment [AP26]: Reverse the order for consistency  
Morrie then Lear, friends then servants.

Accepting one's mortal situation and loyalty are two topics that have already been discussed, but the final piece will discuss how Morrie and Lear survived from the elements that had tested them. Of the two, Morrie endured ALS to the point where he would wake up, "some mornings... [and] cry and cry and mourn for [himself]" (Albom 21), but would later hold on to his sanity and, "get up and say 'I want to live . . .'" (Albom 21). The elements lambasted Lear through love, which was ironically what Morrie was capable of holding on to, and was caused by the betrayal and the death of all his daughters and followers; "The wonder is, [Lear] hath endured so long: / [Lear] but usurp'd his life" (V iii 376). As Morrie's health was taken from him and as Lear's sanity diminished as his followers fell to his mistakes, they both learned how to die with love. Transition?

Comment [AP27]: We don't really need to discuss discussing

Comment [AP28]: Great word!

Comment [AP29]: Nice!

From the actions that Morrie and Lear undertook as their deaths grew ever closer, wisdom deepened as they were emotionally tested. Morrie and Lear were compared in how they were able to accept their mortal existence, who was loyal to them, and how they had survived their tragedies. From all this, one can only understand that to die while having others to support you is far more heart-warming than to die a man regretting his actions for disloyalty.

Comment [AP30]: Nice!

## Works Cited

Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie: an old man, a young man, and life's greatest lesson*. New York: Broadway Books, 1997.

Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Toronto: Signet Classic Shakespeare, 1998.