

Rachel Misita

Mrs. Graning

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*Me Before You*

The book *Me Before You*, written by JoJo Moyes, is a story about love, the meaning of life, and sacrifice. It begins in a small town in the United Kingdom. The story is about a family with a quadriplegic son, named Will Traynor, who is in need of a caregiver. Will has made the decision to go to Switzerland for assisted suicide, and has promised his parents he would give them six months to live. Camilla and Steven Traynor, his parents, are wanting to change his mind. Camilla is looking for a caregiver for Will, and comes across Louisa Clark. Louisa and Will establish more than just a friendship. They fall in love. Louisa is not successful in saving Will, and in the end he follows through with his plan. After Will's accident, he thought his whole life was over and that he had lost everything. Through his relationship with Louisa, he learns that very important parts of him are still there. Even though Will Traynor is prideful in the way he explains his disability, he is still thoughtful in his actions, and playful in his humor.

Will Traynor suffered a life changing injury when he was struck by a motorcycle while walking across the street in a rainstorm. He became severely disabled and then thought his life was not worth living anymore. In the beginning of the story, Will talks about his accident in a prideful manner. He used to go on adventures, travel around the world, and be a daredevil. He would say that everything was taken away from him and he could no longer do anything. Will fails to be grateful for what he does have and can do, and instead he stays focused on what he

can not do. Being completely dependent, Will thinks his life is not worth living. This accident left him paralyzed from the neck down and he has only a little movement in his fingers. Will requires twenty-four hours of care and needs to be fed. Early in the story, Will meets Louisa and he starts to rediscover his old self.

When Will first meets Louisa, he shuts her out. Over time, he becomes thoughtful and comes to see her as a real person, and not just a caregiver or an odd and weird girl. For example, he agrees to live for six more months with his parents before using assisted suicide. He is thoughtful in this because he considers their request to wait and see if things get better for him. Another example is when Will goes to his ex-girlfriend's wedding. Even though Will's previous best friend Rupert marries his ex-girlfriend Lissa, he still is considerate and goes to the wedding. Before meeting Louisa, he was stuck in his self-pity. Once he meets Louisa his character and outlook change and he is willing to go out. Rather than staying isolated all the time, he goes on a tropical vacation, and to a classical music concert. Even though he does not enjoy horse races, he goes with Louisa to a horse race. Moyes shows this when Will says, "I hate horses and horse racing. Always have. But you didn't bother to ask me," (152). Another example of Will being thoughtful is when he tries to get Louisa to go through the maze, but then he realizes she was traumatized by it earlier in her life, and he comforts her. The best example of his thoughtfulness appears in the letter that he wrote for Louisa for her to read after his death. Moyes supports this when Will writes, "I am conscious that knowing me has caused you pain, grief, and I hope that one day when you are less angry with me and less upset you will see not just that I could only have done the thing that I did, but also that this will help you live a really good life, a better life, than if you hadn't meet me," (367). Even though Will Traynor seems like a sulky, sad character, he has a very playful side to him.

Will Traynor has a playful personality, under all of his negativity. His relationship with Louisa helps him discover this side of himself. Louisa is a quirky young woman who is very different from the previous women in his life. Her quirky personality and style gets his attention in a way that sets him up to make changes of his own. Will would judge her style. But over time, he allowed himself to like it. Will says, "You are scored on my heart, Clark. You were from the first day you walked in, with your ridiculous clothes and your bad jokes and your complete inability to ever hide a single thing you felt," (Moyes). For example, Louisa invites Will to her family birthday party. As a gift, he gives her a pair of bumble bee tights. This was a playful gift. Louisa had told Will that she had a pair of bumble bee tights when she was younger. His gift stands out as the funny one and would appeal to Louisa's childlike tendencies. The story tells of Will's playfulness at the wedding also. Louisa asks Will to dance with her. Moyes shows this when Louisa asks, "What do you say, Will? Going to give me a whirl?" (263). Will accepts her invitation and lets her sit on his lap while they dance on the dancefloor in his wheelchair. This shows he is playful because he forgets about the wheelchair limiting him and holding him back. He uses it to have fun.

Louisa has drastically changed Will's outlook on life. She has made him happy, and he wants to get up in the morning. Louisa loves him and wants him to not go to Switzerland for assisted suicided. But, Will does not change his mind. Moyes proves their love when she writes, "All I can say is that you make me...you make me into someone I couldn't even imagine. You make me happy, even when you're awful. I would rather be with you - even the you that you seem to think is diminished - than with anyone else in the world," (325)

Will Traynor's character has remarkably changed from the beginning of the story to the end of the story. Will has allowed his character to become thoughtful and playful, which is a change from his more prideful personality in the beginning of the story. After Will became severely disabled, he thought life was not worth living unless he could be an able-bodied person. His relationship with Louisa help restore his old personality. His playfulness and thoughtfulness blossom within the six months that they know each other. This story has proven that a person can love someone no matter what, and that life is worth living. Sometimes one must take different paths to find one's way.

JoJo, Moyes. *Me Before You*. Penguin Books, 2012, USA

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/06/books/review/me-before-you-by-jojo-moyes.html>

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