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English 122

5 September 2018

Reading Response: On Keeping a Notebook

1. There was a certain eerie feeling as I read “On Keeping a Notebook” by Joan Didion. Her writing was more of an existential review of the perception of the world in the eyes of an individual, as she explains the importance of keeping a notebook. She begins by introducing the readers to “*Dity crepe-de-Chine wrapper, hotel bar, Wilmington RR, 9:45 am August Monday morning.*” (Kelly 107). It was a single confusing phrase that explained a women wearing Peck and Peck who would rather stay at a bar than lunch in New York, thus beginning the confusion for the readers. Didion describes the compulsive urge to jot memories in a notebook very similarly to a diary, which Didion makes clear was not her forte.

2. It wasn’t until we begin to read the core of her essay in which everything starts to piece together. Didion describes her notes in the notebook to encapsulate “how it felt to me: that is getting closer to the truth about the notebook”(Kelly 106). I began to understand what she meant.

3. Ever since I was young I too had an interesting way to memorize and “see” in a different way. To Didion, her funky notes in her notebook was her way to remember the event, as it would act as a specialized trigger that allowed her to simulate the event again in her mind. I use colors filling a certain geometric shape, such as a yellow triangle, which reminds me of my first puppy. He would never bark and I rememebr the countless nights I would stay awake, mesmerized at the very puppy that had entered my life. I would stare in awe as he moved from his bed to the food bowl and nibble on each pellet; however, it was the pain of this puppy’s passing that embroidered a yellow triangle into my memories.

4. Of course, Didion’s essay did not end there. The author continues to explain that “we are brought up in the ethics that others, any others, all others, are by definition more interesting than ourselves; taught to be diffident, just this side of self-effacing.” (Kelly 107) which was enough to let me know why jotting notes down is so important. It didn’t have to be one that could be agreed by others nor did it have to make any sense, as long as you as a writer could be reminded of that specific time of day, mood, feeling, or thoughts.

5. Overall, Didion explained the importance of writing notes regardless of it being understandable to others. Didion clearly proves to the readers by the end of her essay, that even if you are jotting down a single word, as long as you are able to keep in touch with it, it is enough. “It is a good idea, then, to keep in touch, and I suppose that keeping in touch is what notebooks are all about.”(Kelly, 110)