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Paper 1 Assignment

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How to Live or a Life of Montaigne portrays successful ideas such as opening up to new things, seeing the world, and accepting others. These are not the only concepts throughout the book; there are many other concepts that are of great importance as well. The book may not have been interesting to some, but it provides a much deeper message than most books. The message that one might pick up may also be different depending on the reader, but in reality, the main message really is to opens one’s mind, heart, and soul to society today and gives many things a chance before giving up or turning them away. Montaigne changes his view on many different people, cultures, and events and writes about situations from his lifetime and his era in history to help today’s society in opening up to anything.

I was not stimulated to learn more about Montaigne because the book did not really intrigue me. It was a tough read for me but I believe I got the major points down. While Montaigne provided very good messages throughout the book, it was not the most exciting book. I learned a lot about Montaigne throughout the book and the essay “Of Cannibals.” I learned about his culture and how he viewed other cultures, such as those in Brazil. One of Montaigne’s most powerful answers to “How to live” was the answer “See the world.” The answer “See the world can mean so many different things; it all depends on the reader. It could mean travel the world and try to see as much as one can in one’s lifetime. It could also mean be open to all different kinds’ cultures. It even could mean to live in different places and get accustomed to new cultures. The answer “See the world” could also mean relaxation and taking a break from work or training and just to get out and go for a hike. You do not have to climb Mount Everest but perhaps just a big hill with a nice view and just “See the world.”

Bakewell provided detailed information about Montaigne which really helped me understand Montaigne. Montaigne can be an interesting person to understand for several reasons. First, he lived almost five centuries before our time when life was much different than it is today. Second, he was European and came from a much different culture. It is not hard to connect with his messages because they can still be applied today. Bakewell does a good job of helping the readers understand Montaigne and his time frame and compare it to today’s time frame so that the readers can better understand the messages of the book. Bakewell provided great information about Montaigne, but I would not call the information valuable. What I would call valuable is the messages that Montaigne provides throughout the book.

There were several answers to the question “How to live” that were interesting and applicable to my life. Those answers were “Pay attention, see the world, don’t worry about death, reflect on everything and regret nothing, and do something no one has ever done before.” Those five answers to the question “How to live” were the most important to me. The answer “Pay attention” was the most valuable answer because it cannot have a bad consequence. Paying more attention to anything will help us see things more clearly, and it will help us gain more knowledge. Montaigne’s favorite “pastime”, as Bakewell called it, was paying attention. After his accident and his near-death experience he became obsessed with detail and paying attention to almost everything. Bakewell said “Montaigne the man walked one way and Montaigne the writer followed behind him taking notes on everything he saw.” This passage from the book shows how much Montaigne wanted to learn from the world around him. As students of a new college, we should take a similar approach because it cannot hurt us. We will learn either how to do something or how not to do something. There are so many things that first-year students can learn by simply paying attention, such as little tricks to succeed, places to go, things to eat, or classes to take. An hour of paying extra attention might be the difference or sixty seconds could be. We should keep our minds open and pay attention and look for the details that will help us succeed.

The answer “Don’t worry about death” was one I really connected with because of its deep meaning. This answer had a different impact on me than all of the others, because it is something that is not very easy to do. It is difficult to not think about when you are going to die or how you are going to die. Death could happen at any point, as Montaigne found out for himself. He almost died unexpectedly, but he managed to survive. His message is to live life to its fullest. Do not sit around and not do something because you are scared or lazy. That opportunity might never come again. Therefore, we should take the opportunities given to us and live them to the fullest. After Montaigne’s near-death experience, he began to focus on life and pay more attention, because he did not want to miss out on anything. We should do the same. We should focus on life and not worry about when our time will come to an end.

I have used the answers “Pay attention and see the world” the most here at Holy Cross. To me, these answers are the most beneficial for incoming freshmen because they require new students to open their minds and be open to new ideas. The best way to really get involved and meet new people is to be open to everything that is around you and pay attention to what people are saying. I have paid attention to the types of people here to find out who I should hang out with and who I should avoid. I also have paid attention to professors and advisors to see what classes interest me. I also have opened my mind to new classes as well to try and see what classes are interesting and not. I have also investigated clubs and activities that might interest me. Paying attention to what the college has to offer and actually trying what is offered is part of living the college experience.

Reading “Of Cannibals” helped me understand Montaigne because it showed how open and interested Montaigne was with other nations. He did not say the people of Brazil were messed up and do not deserve to live. He was sympathetic and interested in their customs and their culture. He would not have written such a detailed essay if he was not interested in the culture of Brazil. In conclusion, Montaigne was a success because his teachings should help almost all of the first year students. The answers Montaigne provides in his book can be applied to all the first year students and their adjustment to college. They are great tips and great ways to succeed and become involved at college.