

PinkMonkey Literature Notes on . . .

Sample MonkeyNotes

Note: this sample contains only excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format and content.

Tuesdays With Morrie

by

Mitch Albom

1997



MonkeyNotes by Sharon Radisch

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KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The novel takes place during 1995, in Morrie's study, in West Newton, Massachusetts. Mitch and Morrie meet every Tuesday, in his study, to discuss the meaning of life.

Morrie was a college professor for most of his career, and Mitch took all of his classes offered, when he was in college. When Morrie taught small classes, he would often hold them in his study, at the.....

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Major Characters

Morrie Schwartz - The novel is centered around him; Morrie is Mitch's former college professor who was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gherig's disease); he meets with Mitch in his home every Tuesday to teach him about the meaning of life.

Mitch Albom- Morrie's former student; he has since become a journalist and leads a very fast paced life; finds Morrie after hearing he is sick on "ABC's Nightline" and visits him every Tuesday.

Minor Characters

Ted Koppel - a famous television newsman/personality; he interviews Morrie three times for the "ABC's Nightline" show; he eventually describes Morrie as his friend and is almost in tears during his last interview with Morrie.

Charlotte - Morrie's wife, who is also a college professor; she keeps her job as a professor even while Morrie is sick because it is what he wished for her.

Janine - Mitch's wife; she takes a phone call from Morrie, whom she had never met, and accompanies.....

Additional characters are identified in the complete study guide.

CONFLICT

There are two conflicts in this novel: the major conflict is Morrie vs. ALS and the second, minor conflict, is Mitch vs. himself. Morrie must come to terms with his illness and accept his coming death from ALS. In the meantime, Mitch, his former college student, visits him every Tuesday. Mitch has.....

Protagonist

Morrie Schwartz is the protagonist of *Tuesdays with Morrie*; he is the character around which the.....

Antagonist

The disease, Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), is the antagonist of the story. This is the disease from which Morrie is suffering throughout the novel. We see the disease gradually begin taking over.....

Climax

Mitch visits Morrie for the last time, when he is very close to his death; after years of trying to.....

Outcome

At Morrie's funeral, Mitch has a conversation with Morrie, in his head, and feels at ease due to.....

SHORT PLOT/CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

Morrie Schwartz was Mitch Albom's favorite college professor. At the start of the novel Albom recalls a memory from his college graduation day: he is saying goodbye to Morrie and gives him a tan briefcase with his initials on it. They hug and when Mitch steps back he sees that Morrie is crying. Mitch promises to stay in touch with Morrie but he never does after college.

Since his graduation, Mitch has become a newspaper reporter and husband. He leads a very fast paced life and is constantly working and traveling. He has become so engrossed in his work that it consumes his life.

The novel recommences about sixteen years after Mitch's graduation day; Morrie has since been diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. Since Morrie's diagnosis, he began jotting down ideas and thoughts onto scrap paper, yellow pads or even envelopes. He also wrote philosophies about living knowing death was very near. One of his friends was so taken with his writing, he sent them to the *Boston Globe* reporter, who wrote a feature story about Morrie. The story intrigued one of the producers of the show, "Nightline", who.....

THEMES

"Love each other or die" (pg. 163) - Throughout the book, Morrie recites a quote by his favorite poet or this variation in his own words. This is one of the most important lessons he wishes to teach Mitch and express on "Nightline". Morrie feels that love and compassion are necessary for a person to be fulfilled. Morrie says that when love abounds, there is no higher sense of fulfillment one can experience.

Additional themes are identified in the complete study guide.

MOOD

The mood changes slightly throughout the novel; however, the mood is mostly solemn because we know from the very beginning of the book that Morrie is dying. At times we can feel Morrie's positive.....

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

Morrie Schwartz was one of Mitch Albom's college professors. Since his college graduation, Mitch and Morrie gradually lost touch; however, Mitch rediscovered Morrie during the last months of his life and they were able to rekindle their friendship. Mitch visited Morrie every Tuesday, in his study, which turned into a private lesson on how to live life. *Tuesdays With Morrie* is the magical result of Mitch and Morrie's time spent together in the months leading to his death.

Mitch Albom is not only a best-selling author, he is also a newspaper columnist for the Detroit Free Press, radio host for ABC and WJR-AM in Detroit.

Albom is a native of Philadelphia, PA and attended Brandeis University, where he obtained his.....

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

The Curriculum

Summary

Mitch Albom opens the novel with background information on Morrie Schwartz. Morrie was one of Mitch's favorite professors, in college, at Brandeis University. Mitch introduces Morrie to his parents and gives him a briefcase for a gift. They hug; and when Mitch steps back he can see that Morrie is crying.

Notes

This first chapter introduces the reader to the setting, mood and theme of the novel. We learn that Morrie Schwartz was Mitch's favorite professor from when he went to college. It is also foreshadowed that this novel will be centered around Morrie's last class, which was given in his home, to Mitch Albom. The theme of the class was the meaning of life and Mitch was the only student. It is apparent that this novel will be reflective, somber and hopefully enlightening. For we also know that at the end of the lesson- the "graduation" (1), will be Morrie's funeral.

The Syllabus

Summary

Morrie could sense that his health was suffering, when he could no longer dance; this was even before he was diagnosed with ALS. Morrie loved to dance to any music and even with or without a partner.

As he aged into his seventies, breathing became harder, walking more challenging, and sleep troubling; he began to see doctors and was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), which is also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Despite his terminal illness, he kept swimming, with help of course, and even insisted on teaching a class at the University.

Notes

Mitch Albom presents more insight to Morrie's character in this chapter. We see that he is carefree, loves to dance, a distinguished sociology professor, and determined to live his life to the very fullest, to the very end. When Morrie had to give up dancing, he kept swimming; when he could no longer dress and undress himself, he got help and still swam; when Morrie had to go to the bathroom, he asked one of his visitors to hold his cup; when Morrie was suffering from the terminal illness, ALS, he still taught a college class.

Morrie was innovative and inspirational to those around him. Upon attending a funeral, he felt sad that his deceased colleague never got to hear all of the praise said about him; Morrie held his own living funeral where he could hear the praise and tribute paid upon him.

The Student/ The Audiovisual

Summary

Mitch explains what has happened to him since he last saw Morrie on his college graduation day. He moved to New York City with high hopes of becoming a musician. However, upon the death of his uncle he soon saw his life to be too short to waste time playing at empty venues, committing to unreliable bands, and writing songs which he thinks will never be heard. Mitch decided to continue his education at Columbia University, obtaining his Masters Degree in Journalism.

One evening as he was flipping through the television channels, he heard the voice of Ted Koppel ask, "Who is Morrie Schwartz" (23)?

The chapter then flashes back to the first time Mitch met Morrie: it was their first class together in the spring of 1976. It was a small class and Morrie asked Mitch what he preferred to be called. Upon telling Morrie that his friends call him "Mitch", Morrie told him that he hopes one day Mitch will think of him as a friend.

Notes

Since the death of his uncle, it seems that Mitch was trying to make the most of his life by accepting job after job, accomplishment after accomplishment. He did not keep touch with any of his college friends, or even Morrie. Albom gives us the impression that he was so busy trying to live his life that he never stopped to realize he wasn't.

The Orientation/ The Classroom

Summary

Mitch arrives at Morrie's house still on the phone with a producer about one of his stories. He does not want to end the call so he pretends he is looking for something in his car. When Morrie sees Mitch, he hugs him with so much affection, after almost sixteen years of not seeing him. The two sit in the house and Morrie begins to speak about his looming death.

Mitch and Morrie talk for over two hours that day, mostly about Morrie's sickness. Mitch eventually leaves to catch his returning flight and hugs Morrie good-bye.

These chapters flashback to Albom's college years; Mitch nicknamed Morrie, "Coach" and recalls the lunches they ate together in the cafeteria.

Mitch began appreciating the study of human relations and caught Morrie's contagious passion for books. They would often talk after class and Mitch even consulted Morrie advice about this confusing stage of his life.

Notes

In these two chapters it is apparent that Mitch is ashamed of the person he has become in the sixteen years since he has seen Morrie. Mitch feels guilty for staying on the phone, in his car, while Morrie is anxiously awaiting his arrival. Mitch feels even guiltier when Morrie welcomes him so affectionately. As they sit and talk Mitch feels embarrassed that he is no longer the same as Morrie remembered him; he only hopes to fool Morrie into

thinking he is the same.

For the remainder of these chapters we can tell that Mitch is very uncomfortable around Morrie and even about the person he himself has become. We can only infer from this, that Morrie will discover Mitch's confused personality and help bring him back to the person he wishes to be.....

OVERALL ANALYSES

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Morrie Schwartz - Morrie, to whom the title of the novel refers, spent most of his life as a sociology professor at Brandeis University. He continues to teach as long as he can even after being diagnosed with ALS. He realizes that he is dying and learned to accept his death; he wanted to share his philosophies, on the meaning of life, with the world. He is successful in two ways, through the "Nightline" show with Ted Koppel and through Mitch Albom and this novel. He and Mitch met every Tuesday to do.....

Mitch Albom - Mitch is a sports writer who gave up his dream of becoming a musician for a life of money, success and materialism. Since his college graduation he has become very disillusioned and has since devoted his life to money and success. He works most days and nights dedicating little time to.....

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

Albom wrote the plot very straightforward with little ambiguity and complicated historical references. He has a tendency to include flashbacks to his college years from when he was a student of Morrie's; he does this to give background on his once, slightly naïve and less materialistic self, so the readers have a.....

Exposition

In the Exposition, introductory material is presented which gives the reader the setting, creates the tone and presents the characters and other facts necessary to understanding the story. The exposition takes place through the first four chapters. "The Curriculum" (1) tells us that there will be a class taught, on the.....

Rising Action

The Rising Action is the events that build from the conflict. There are two conflicts in this story: the first being Morrie's struggle with his fatal disease, ALS; the second being Mitch's struggle with himself in.....

Climax

The climax is the high point of the story and also the point at which the outcome can be predicted. The climax in this story does not happen until the last Tuesday Mitch and Morrie spend together. Throughout the novel and for the entire time Morrie has known Mitch, he has been trying to get him to open up.....

Falling Action

The Falling Action is the events after the Climax, which close the story and lead to the resolution. The falling action begins just after Morrie makes Mitch cry. Morrie dies not too

Resolution (Denouement)

The resolution is the outcome of all the events in the story. During one of the Tuesday lessons, Morrie says to Mitch, "you talk I'll listen" (188); implying that after his death he still wants Mitch to talk with him just as.....

THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

"Love each other or die" (163) - Morrie stresses this quote and theme throughout the novel. He feels that an abundance of love and compassion is the highest sense of fulfillment that one can experience. The expression of love and compassion is very important to Morrie, especially since he lacked such expression in his childhood. With the early death of his mother, and his busy father, Morrie did not feel a sense of love until Eva came into their home. Eva nurtured and cared for him as if he was her own child and Morrie carried this sense of love and

compassion with him for the rest of his life. Because he was void of love at an early age, for the rest of his life he continuously offered his love and compassion to others.

Love is also important to Morrie as he is nearing the final days of his life. He feels that without the care of those who love him, he would perish. Morrie is not afraid of dying, as he so often tells us throughout the novel, but he hangs on because he wants to share his story and his lessons to Mitch and the rest.....

Additional themes are analyzed in the complete study guide.

POINT OF VIEW

The story is told in the first person, limited point of view. In the first person, the narrator does participate in the action of the story; however, it is important to note that since the narrator is.....

QUOTES - IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

1.) *"Once you learn how to die, you learn how to live."* (82) - Morrie

Morrie says this during the fourth Tuesday when he and Mitch discuss death. Morrie feels that people refuse to believe that they will one day die, and therefore, do not live their lives as fully as they would have liked and also have many regrets as they become older and their death becomes closer. He feels that once we learn and accept that we are one day going to die, we learn to live our lives fully and without any regrets. Morrie repeats this quote frequently throughout the chapter to emphasize how important and helpful it is to accept death, and what a benefit it would be to living the remainder of our lives. Morrie also wants Mitch to see how he is able to appreciate the smaller, more genuine things in life, knowing that his death is approaching.

2.) *"You closed your eyes. That was the difference. Sometimes you cannot believe what you see, you have to believe what you feel. And if you are ever going to have other people trust you, you must feel that you can trust them too-even when you are in the dark. Even when you're falling."* (61) - Morrie

During one of the flashbacks to when Mitch was a student of Morrie's, he recalls this specific class in which Morrie had the students participate in "trust falls". The students stood with their backs to their classmates and tried to fall backwards relying on the others to catch them. Most of the students were.....

Ten quotations and analysis are listed in the complete study guide.

SYMBOLISM / IMAGERY / MOTIFS / SYMBOLS

Food - Aside from dancing, one of Morrie's favorite things to do is eat. Each Tuesday Mitch stops at the grocery store and brings Morrie a bag of food. Shortly after Mitch starts this tradition, Morrie is no longer able to eat solid food. Mitch does not find this out until a few weeks later when Morrie's wife, Charlotte, shows Mitch all his food she had stored away in the freezer and refrigerator. Each week Mitch continues to

Additional symbolism / motifs / and imagery is analyzed in the complete study guide.

IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY

Title: *Tuesdays With Morrie*

Author: Mitch Albom

Date Published: September 1997

Meaning of the Title: The title, *Tuesdays With Morrie*, refers to Mitch and Morrie's weekly Tuesday meetings, in Morrie's home, in which they discussed the meaning of life.

Setting: Morrie's home in West Newton, Massachusetts.....

STUDY QUESTIONS - MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUIZ

1. How did Mitch and Morrie meet?

- They were childhood friends
- Morrie is a friend of Mitch's father
- Mitch interviewed Morrie for a story in one of his papers
- Mitch was a former student of Morrie's

2. What disease was Morrie diagnosed with?

- a. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)
- b. Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- c. Colon Cancer
- d. Epilepsy.....

ANSWER KEY

1. d 2. a 3. c 4. b 5. d 6. c 7. e 8. b 9. d 10. d 11. a 12. c 13. a 14. d 15. b

ESSAY TOPICS / BOOK REPORT IDEAS / STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How is popular culture and the media represented throughout the novel? Describe how Morrie has created his own culture. Pretending you are Mitch, use what you have learned from Morrie's teachings to outline a new set of your own cultural values by which you will begin leading your life.
2. Describe how Mitch has suffered under the demands of the media and pop-culture. Illustrate a personal experience where you may have suffered as a result of pop-culture values and demands; how did you escape and create your own values, like Morrie? If you were not able to, how could you apply Morrie's teachings to see through pop-culture values?

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