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How Fight Club Changed My Life

Once, I was a young boy who believed everything I heard, yet I knew nothing. I was impressionable and weak. Above all else, I was confused. I did not understand myself, and I did not realize why I wasn't happy. Everything always went wrong. I felt my life slipping away into oblivion with no palpable meaning. My life was an endless array of homework, band camp, theater, girls, and a myriad other things that were not making me happy. Day after day, like a tumor, I felt weakness and futility grow inside me. Author Chuck Palahniuk writes, "This is your life, and it's ending one minute at a time (29)." I was lost with no map to guide me...until I read Fight Club, by Chuck Palahniuk. It engraved in me a sense of mortality, helped me see the world for what it really is, and led me on a journey away from my malformed childhood and into a beautiful new life of curiosity and truth.

"Someday you will die, and until you know that, you are useless to me (76)." These words, written by Palahniuk, struck me in a way few others have. Like most teenagers, I often host a feeling of invulnerability towards death. Until I read Fight Club, I never stopped to think that one day everything will fall apart; I will die and the world will forget me. Palahniuk helped me realize, "How everything you ever love will reject you or die. Everything you ever create will be thrown away. Everything you're ever proud of will end up as trash (201)." After all, "On a long enough time line, everyone's survival rate drops to zero (176)." "Someday I'll be dead without a scar and there would be a

really nice condo and car (49).” When I am dying, what will I be thinking? Will I feel good about my life?

These questions haunted me, made me realize that most of my life was a complete waste. I was *not* being bold enough; I was *not* following my dreams; I did *not* know what I truly wanted (I am still not exactly sure what I want). I was not free. It was as if a colored filter had been placed over my eyes. I saw everything in various shades of a single color, but I wanted to see the real world, the whole spectrum of life. I was a prisoner in the iron bars of my own mind. In Palahniuk’s words, “I felt trapped. I was too complete. I was too perfect. I wanted a way out of my life (173).”

Then, I began to wonder: When I die, does it really matter if I feel good about my life? Is perfection really the answer I am looking for? “Nothing is static, even the Mona Lisa is falling apart (49).” I had spent my whole life wondering why I wasn’t satisfied, and in the meantime, my life was passing me by. “This is the greatest moment of your life, and you’re off somewhere missing it (77),” Palahniuk says, “Quit treading water and do something with [your] life (83).”

The answer hit me like a dump truck. If I live wholly in the moment, only then will I truly be alive. What good are worries and regret? Palahniuk writes, “A moment is the most you could ever expect from perfection.” Whenever I fail, it is best to simply accept my failure and move on. I have chosen to accept my foibles as a beautiful necessity in life, for it is impossible to separate myself from them. I cannot not change the past, so there is no use regretting it. I cannot change the future, so there is no use dwelling in it. All I have is the moment, and that is where I will live.

It was as if I were reborn. With all the new time I spent *not* criticizing myself, I began to truly live. Given, I am still the same eccentric boy on the outside, but on the inside I am an explorer. I am Ferdinand Magellan on a quest to understand the world. Without a looming cloud of grief or a tempest of sorrow, I can sail without restraint across the seven seas, even to the ends of the earth. Today, right now, I am free.

Thus, here I am on my epic journey. But where am I going? A doorman in Fight Club says, “A lot of young people don’t know that they want...they think they want the whole world. If you don’t know what you want, you end up with a lot you don’t (46).” This could not describe me better; I am the love-child of too many desires. I need to find my one true passion. I am trying, but I often stumble upon my own feet. My mind moves too fast for my body to keep up, or is it the other way around? I confuse myself, often running in endless circles, and as the novel predicts, I have much in my life I do not want or need.

I feel like I am crossing a long, narrow bridge while a tempest rages about me in the night. Aside from an occasional flash of lightning, I usually find myself blindly wandering down that bridge with no end in sight. Palahniuk talks of how young generations have no purpose or place in society. He writes, “I see the strongest and smartest men who have ever lived...and they want to give their lives to something...We don’t have a great war in our generation, or a great depression...the great depression is our lives (149).” For now, all I can do is make the best of the path I am on, for when I reach the end, there will be no turning back.

Fight Club means much more to me than I can explain in so few words. It has guided me through the most exciting journey I have ever seen. It changed my life and

opened my eyes to the world. I know there are still parts of life I cannot see, but every day I get a little closer. With the help of Fight Club and numerous other writings, I now embark on a lifelong journey to find myself and discover true reality. In his last chapter, Palahniuk concludes, “We are not special. We are not crap or trash, either... We just are, and what happens just happens (207).” On the day when I find myself, I will look back, and I will smile.

Palahniuk, Chuck. Fight Club. New York: Owl Books. 1997.