Me Talk Pretty One Day

A Review

Assignment

Select one book to review from the Book List. Write a 4-6 page review of the book, following the guidelines provided. Include an Introduction, Summary, Critique and Recommendation.

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February 16, 2013
Introduction

The book I chose to review is *Me Talk Pretty One Day* written by David Sedaris (2000). This book is a collection of essays written by Sedaris spanning from his childhood to his life currently. This book was not on the Book List but I was given special permission to use this book by Professor Chase as opposed to one on the list as I am a Speech Pathology major and not an Education major. I chose this book because it was written by a person with a speech impediment and so is relevant to my major. As a speech pathologist I will be working with both children and adults with various speech impediments or other speech problems. This book was far more helpful to me while a book dealing with individuals with mental or learning disabilities would not be very helpful since that will not be an area that I will work in after I attain my degree. I also chose the book because I have read works by Sedaris before and knew that I would not be bored or disinterested when reading and would not have trouble writing about it.

Sedaris gives his audience a look into his life and his thoughts about many different topics. *Me Talk Pretty Some Day* is a humorous book that was written for people with a sarcastic sense of humor and a non-judgmental attitude. Sedaris helps teach the importance of differences in this book. It is not for the faint-hearted, those who are opposed to swearing or children but can teach an important message in any or all of it essays.

Summary

Again, the book is a collection of essays written all by Sedaris on his life, his family and his relationships. He is openly homosexual and that plays a part in his writing, especially when...
he writes of his childhood. Honestly though, the title of the book is rather misleading. There are only two essays in the entire book which refer to his speech at all. The essays are “Go Carolina” and “Me Talk Pretty One Day”. However, he spent a while heavily into drugs and does say “due to drug use and a close working relationship with chemical solvents, it was all I could do to remember my zip code, let alone an entire conversation devoted to the pleasures of direct sunlight” (182). He frequently mentions how his intellect suffered from his stint of drug usage. However, I will discuss only the essays that are relevant to the class.

The essay “Go Carolina” is specifically about his first experience with a speech pathologist. He compares the first time he is taken out of class to a suspect being approached in their home and being arrested. He is taken out of classroom and taken to another room to work with the speech therapist, Miss Samson. As they walk to the classroom, he is questioned about his preference of football team, Carolina or State. He answers with State and she then points out his speech inadequacies. Sedaris says “It was my first war against the letter s, and I was determined to dig my foxhole before the sun went down” (6). She attempts to help him correct his speech but uses many ways that were ineffective and only served to make him more determined to thwart her in any way. He begins to avoid words with the letter s in them and says “I failed to see the hissy s as a solution to the problem and continued to talk normally, at least at home, where my lazy tongue fell upon equally lazy ears” (11). He also believes his lisp is an indicator of his homosexuality as he compares himself with the other students receiving speech therapy and their imminent homosexual tendencies. At the end, Miss Samson hasn’t helped him at all and he never has his lisp eradicated.
In the essays “Me Talk Pretty One Day” and “See You Again Yesterday”, Sedaris is addressing how he begins to learn a whole new language at 40 years of age when he moves to Paris, France with his boyfriend, Hugh. He speaks of how he has such difficulty picking up French and comes to France knowing only one word in French, bottleneck. Due to his drug use, Sedaris has a difficult time with learning and remembering new things. He enrolls in a French class in order to try to make a go at learning the language. However, he teacher is mean, judgmental and temperamental. She often makes rude remarks to the students and calls them unkind names. Sedaris tells how he has such difficulty with getting the gender of nouns correct and how at first he could only speak nouns. However, as he began to spend more time in France, he “went from speaking like an evil baby to a hillbilly ‘Is thems the thoughts of your cows’ ” (164). His French eventually comes together some when he realizes that as his French teacher is insulting him, that he can understand each insult and feels accomplished. However, he soon learns that just because you can understand it doesn’t mean you can speak it and he answers her in broken French.

Critique

*Me Talk Pretty One Day* by David Sedaris is a good book. Since it is a collection of essays it is difficult to pin down a central theme for the entire book, but there is definitely a theme for each essay. Sedaris is both gay and an adult with a serious lisp, both things could be a reason that people ridicule or judge him. However, he has embraced himself the way he is and never expresses any regret not blames anyone for how he turned out. So I believe the main theme of the book is acceptance. Sedaris is open about his homosexuality and feels nothing wrong with being the way he is. An example of this can been seen in one of essays about how every
summer, he and his sisters had a tanning competition called “Miss Emollient Pageant” with the winner receiving a sash, crown and scepter. Even as a teenager, he has embraced his sexuality and is comfortable in his own skin which is not always how it is with teenage boys. He does make some self-deprecating jokes but that is not out of the norm for anyone writing a humorous book. He is not judgmental and is accepting of all his family for their oddities and quirks just as they are accepting of him and his differences. This is important for teaching individuals with exceptionalities because as a teacher or a speech pathologist, it is our job to help the client or student and not judge them. We are to accept them the way they are and to be there for the student.

This book also exemplifies one of the four pillars of the SOE Conceptual Framework, Ethics. In order to make a tough decision regarding one of your students or clients, you MUST have effective ethics. It is possibly one of the most important pillars of all. Sedaris’s stint on drugs, while it shows a lack of ethics at the time, also shows that he was able to overcome it. He never stole or harmed anyone while he was on drugs, like many people end up doing. So while his ethics were impaired, he never truly lost them. He realized how buying and doing drugs was wrong and stopped. There will be tough decisions that I will have to make as a clinician, especially if I end up working in a school. If I believe that a child is being harmed at home, whether it is physical, mental or emotional abuse, it is MY responsibility as his/her SLP to report that abuse to the police. In order to be able to make those kinds of decisions, I have to have a good set of ethics. If I do not, those children that I could have helped will suffer and some may not make it into their teenage years.接受一个学生原本的样子也是有效的
use of ethics. If you cannot accept a student for being different than what makes you think you will be able to make a difficult decision which could change their lives for better, or for worse?

Another pillar that is exemplified in *Me Talk Pretty One Day* is Life-Long Learning. Sedaris begins to learn a completely new language in his mid-30s when he moves to France with his boyfriend. He does not finish college at what is considered the “normal” age but actually goes back to finish his degree when he is in his late 20s/early 30s. He shows how life-long learning isn’t just going back to school. Sedaris takes a teaching job and in his essay, “The Learning Curve”, it can be seen that he learns that there is more to teaching than he expected. He learns from a new experience like we all do as we grow older and experience more of life. Teachers and SLPs alike must continue to learn and update their information in order to give their students and clients the best service and help possible. If you are trying to teach a student how to do fractions but your information is outdated, how is that student supposed to do the best he/she can do? Your students/clients deserve your best and in order to give them that, you must be open to new ideas and improved methods.

**Recommendation**

While this book is humorous and a very good read, I would not recommend it for the purpose that we were supposed to read a book for. It does not really address much in the way of disabilities, mental or otherwise. If the book was not a collection of essays that approach many different times and parts of his life and addressed his speech impediment, it would have fit the purpose. As it is, it did have some beneficial parts to it. Some of the pillars were supported and the overall theme of the book, acceptance, is apropos to teaching children with exceptionalities. Acceptance can be hard to come by for people with disabilities. The world is a
much harder place for people who are affected by disabilities, whether they personally suffer or a family or friend does. People can be very cruel but hopefully, as people with disabilities become more prevalent in society, people will begin to accept them for what they can do and what they can’t. Sedaris says “It’s always been the little things that encourage me” (243). That is something I think that people who work with people with disabilities should keep in mind. It is the little victories that encourage others continue to strive to do better. To help our students and clients, we should try to give them as many small victories as we can because that can make the biggest difference in someone’s life.
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