

AFTER DARKNESS

PLAN

Mrs Taito, to Ibaraki after he and his wife lost their baby: “Time heals all wounds, you’ll see.” To what extent does *After Darkness* supports the idea that all wounds can be healed.

Contention: Piper suggests that over time, grief can be diminished, but overall, the underlying pain is ever-present, and heavily influences individuals’ thoughts and actions.

Point 1:

The wounds inflicted by his tarnished relationships with others witnessed Ibaraki struggle to reconcile with his actions towards them and their consequences.

- Never got to apologies to his wife – that wound never had the opportunity to heal
 - “Kayoko’s rejection pained me more than the loss of our child”
 - “I want to return to you...But I can’t” p.284
 - “I’m sure your wife will be glad to see you after all this time... She’ll see things have changed” p.280
- Sister Bernice – never reconciled
 - “She had closed a part of herself to me”
- Ibaraki’s regrets and evident debilitation by his past relationships
 - “Not just Stan – all he others. I could’ve done something. I could’ve helped them, but I didn’t”

The wounds inflicted by his tarnished relationships with others witnessed Ibaraki struggle to reconcile with his actions towards them and their consequences. His troubled relationship with his wife heavily burdened Ibaraki throughout the novel, inflicting emotional wounds upon him, and causing him a great deal of regret. Following their altercation, Ibaraki hoped that his “wife [would] be glad to see [him]”, however, Kayoko statement of “I want to return to you... but I can’t”, punctured this desire

Point 2:

The burden of Ibaraki’s painful past was carried with him in his time at the camp, and his actions and behaviour were heavily influenced by those wounds.

- At the end of the novel, he still is pained by his past
- His dark memories of his time at the lab were always with him
- Regrets, reflections
- He is ashamed of his past and separating with his wife, and this, in turn, affected the relationships he made with others
- “If I closed my eyes I saw the people I had dissected years earlier, their bodies ravaged by disease” p.286
- “The heartbeat of a long-buried memory” p.291
- “like a light exposing my flaws” p.105

Point 3:

Ibaraki’s transformation over time assisted the restoration of his accumulated wounds

- Ibaraki did learn to grow from his past, and while pain was still present, it faded.

- P.138 “...if its hit by a bushfire it grows back from the root.... It’s a tough tree... it’ll survive almost anything”
- “it was an opportunity to start a fresh. I would regrow from the embers of my former life, like a Mallee tree destroyed by bushfire”
- P. 291 “I thought I would never be able to forget. But over time, the memories faded”
- “I promised I would never look back” p.281
- “The silence was not a suppressant, but the opportunity to renew” p.281
- “I felt as if a weight had been lifted, releasing me from the past” p.131
- “Do you have any children?’ ‘No’ I said. And for once I didn’t feel uncomfortable admitting so” p.126

Quotes

“some things are best left in the past” p.292

The struggle and ability to deal with pain was contrasted in Christine Piper’s historical fiction, “After Darkness”, illustrated by the protagonist, Tomokazu Ibaraki, and his struggle to reconcile with his devastating past. Piper suggests that over time, grief can be diminished, but overall, the underlying pain is ever-present, and heavily influences individuals’ thoughts and actions. Ibaraki’s broken relationships heavily burdened him as time went on, and

ESSAY

Mrs Taito, to Ibaraki after he and his wife lost their baby: “Time heals all wounds, you’ll see.” To what extent does *After Darkness* supports the idea that all wounds can be healed.

The difficulty and ability to deal with pain was contrasted in Christine Piper’s historical fiction, “After Darkness”, illustrated by the protagonist, Tomokazu Ibaraki, and his struggle to reconcile with his devastating past. Piper suggests that over time, grief can be diminished, but overall, the underlying pain is ever-present, and heavily influences individuals’ thoughts and actions. The wounds inflicted upon Ibaraki by his tarnished relationships with those he loved, witnessed Ibaraki lose sight of his identity, and stumble blindly when attempting to form other relationships. The burden of Ibaraki’s painful past was carried with him in his time at the camp, and his actions and behaviour were heavily influenced by those wounds. However, in spite of the difficulties he faced, Ibaraki was able to grow from his past, this transformation assisting the restoration of his accumulated wounds.

The wounds inflicted by his tarnished relationships with others witnessed Ibaraki struggle to reconcile with his actions towards them and their consequences. His troubled relationship with his wife heavily burdened Ibaraki throughout the novel, inflicting emotional pain upon him, and causing him a great deal of regret, lowered self-esteem and loss of identity. After she left him, Ibaraki stated that “Kayoko’s rejection pained [him] more than the loss of [their] child”, and “...without Kayoko, there was no need for [him] to stay in the city”, showcasing the hurt imposed upon him. This heavily burdened him throughout the novel, the, illustrated by the admission that his “greatest regret” was that “he wasn’t there for her”. His self-consciousness about his separation was evident by the way he interacted with others, showcased by comments that “cut to the deepest parts of [him]” during mention of his wife. His loss of worth impacted his relationship with Sister Bernice, who tried to connect with Ibaraki, but couldn’t due to his inability to open up. Bernice stated that “Whenever [she] felt [they] were growing closer, [he] seemed to step away” which then prompted her to “[close] a part of herself to [him]”, further burying Ibaraki’s self-worth, and increasing his cowardice in remaining silent. Furthermore, Piper conveyed to the readers that wounds don’t always have the opportunity to heal, the death of Kayoko occurring before Ibaraki was able to reconcile his actions to her. The result of his flawed relationship with his wife was that Ibaraki was

unable to commit to relationships with other in the future, Piper communicating that wounds often leave an imprint on one's future, and influence actions and decisions.

Throughout Ibaraki's time at the camp, his actions and decisions were heavily influenced by his past at the laboratory, Piper highlighting the idea that wounds don't always fully heal with time. When Ibaraki "closed [his] eyes [he] saw the people [he] had dissected years earlier, their bodies ravaged by disease", this mental image ingrained in his mind and affecting the way he lived his life. His "stained...association with the laboratory" left a large impression on the protagonist, his views on the world forever changed, and his life lead with constant guilt. As Ibaraki continued to work as a doctor, his dark memories of what he did at the laboratory remained with him, impairing his work. This was demonstrated when he attempted to tend to a patient, but "[his] mind was a jumble of images" consisting of "a swollen node" and "black dots on a child's belly". Without assistance, he admitted that "could not have done [the surgery]", and this was due to the pain his past had inflicted upon him, highlighting the fact that not all every memory can be healed. Through the heartache and distress the intense work Ibaraki performed at the laboratory caused him, the difficulty to leave things in the past was exemplified by Piper. While the protagonist tried to mend his pride and self-respect, the memories and knowledge of all that he did constantly returned and haunted him, exhibiting that not all pain can be reduced overtime.

While the knowledge of the past constantly revisited and troubled Ibaraki, he did somewhat learn from his past, and to some extent was able to reconcile with his actions and emotionally heal. Ibaraki's transformation was mirrored by "a Mallee tree destroyed by bushfire". He vowed to "regrow from the embers of [his] former life" and "never look back" on the pain and heartache his past triggered. His growth as a person was instigated by these difficult circumstances, alongside the lessons he learnt from people around him, and assisted the restoration of his accumulated wounds. The protagonist admitted that he "thought [he] would never be able to forget" about the atrocities of his former life, "but over time, the memories faded" and he had "the opportunity to renew", like the Mallee tree. Ibaraki used the power of speech and acted courageously to relieve the burden of his past by speaking out about laboratory. Furthermore, even the protagonists' appeasement with his separation from his wife became apparent, acknowledged by the fact that "for once [he] didn't feel uncomfortable admitting" it to others. The "almost imperceptible grooves of the past" were ever present with the now-mature character, but Piper used his transformation as an illustration of the opportunity to grow from earlier times, and the tendency of scars to fade.

Piper's portrayal of an individual with a severely damaged past allowed her to portray the idea that wounds inflicted from the past are difficult to overcome, but as time goes on, they do fade, and people have the opportunity to grow from their past. Ibaraki's troubled relationships with his wife witnessed him become emotionally inadequate and caused him to lose his sense of purpose, making it difficult for him to form relationships with others. Furthermore, his tarnished memories of his association with the laboratory caused the protagonist much grief and caused him to struggle with his self-concept in the future, However, as time progressed, the pain he withheld faded and he was able to move on and reconcile with his actions.