

Death Treats All Alike

CITATION

Alexander the Great was puzzled to find the Greek philosopher Diogenes examining a heap of human bones. “What are you looking for?” he inquired. “I am searching for the bones of your father,” replied Diogenes, “but cannot distinguish them from those of his slave.”

PRAISE

Diogenes was a wise man to have uttered such a perceptive comment. He is to be praised as a man ahead of his time, calling for an ideal state in which there will be no social distinctions, no slavery, and no special privileges.

PARAPHRASE

Death pays no attention to rank, social standing, prestige, reputation, money power, or achievements. When people of different ranks die, one cannot distinguish the king from the slave.

PROPOSITION (what is the subject and point of this anecdote?)

In this anecdote, Diogenes is expressing the simple idea that death is the great leveler, that death treats all alike.

REASON

Death is the great leveler because it puts all persons in the same rank or position. It abolishes social inequities, injustices, privileges, and unfairness.

CONTRAST

By contrast, life divides people by rank and social position. It fosters social inequities, injustices, privileges, and unfairness.

ANALOGY

Just as at the end of a chess game the king and the pawn go into the same bag, at the end of life, the king and the slave, the body of the rich man and that of the poor man, go into the same earth.

EXAMPLE

Ramses II was a powerful Egyptian king who had a statue of himself constructed to show his power and might, a statue that would outlast the ravages of time. But after his death, time and the forces of nature destroyed the statue that was the symbol of his vanity. Death truly is the great leveler.

OPINION

The apostle Luke stated a very similar idea in Acts 10:34, when he said that God is no respecter of persons. What was meant by that is that God sees all humans alike; such superficial differences as rank or wealth mean nothing in God's eyes.

EXHORTATION (urging wise action)

Diogenes believed that strength of character is the most important virtue. All else -- honor, power, wealth and reputation -- are vain trifles. Diogenes exemplified in his life what he often put into words. We should follow his advice and not judge people by rank, reputation, race or ethnicity, for death treats all alike.