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You will need to carefully read the selection below and complete various activities using the essay as your basis.

Using the highlight function on your computer, you will need to mark the essay below. It will be necessary for you to read the essay several times to fully understand the essay and complete the markings in such a way that demonstrates a close reading of the essay. You will need to use the following chart to correctly mark the essay.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Highlight Color | Item to be identified | Use an X to indicate you have accomplished this task. Use NA if this task did not apply to this essay. |
| PINK | Mark the main idea of the essay. |  |
| AQUA | Mark key examples/ support for the main idea/ theme of the essay. |  |
| GREEN | Mark statements that you agree with . |  |
| YELLOW | Mark statements that are new to you or make you think in a new way. |  |
| RED | Mark statements in the essay that you disagree with. |  |
| GRAY | Mark terms/ concepts that you found difficult to understand. |  |

The time I began reading and marking this assignment was:

I believe in cigarettes. I believe in tearing the plastic wrap off a recently purchased pack of Marlboro’s. The act of sliding out the first, unadulterated cigarette, lovingly placing it between two yearning lips, and simultaneously flicking the tip of a black Bic lighter while taking that first, glorious pull of life and death is nothing short of a religious experience. I breathe in my fate; breathe out my existence in space and time.

I awake after a sleepless night haunted with thoughts of my newfound faith in uncertainty, of a future of empty successes and arthritis, and most of all, of my beloved angel, the angel that does not love me. I pull on a t-shirt, and creep, unnoticed by my sleeping parents, into the cool morning air of my front porch. With tears drying, I reach into the back pocket of my wrinkled blue jeans and fish out what my parents have so lovingly nicknamed my “cancer-sticks”. With the first inhale; I feel the nicotine coursing its way to the very core of my despair. Drag after drag, the “downfall of a decent Christian” (an implied nickname given to my newfound oral fixation by those who constantly misunderstand my actions) gradually brings purpose to my pain. The hopeless future, the questions of faith, and the lost love slowly but surely shift from the arbitrary occurrences of an uninterested wanderer to the definitive journey of my tragic soul.

There is no way to cure my depression. It will live, in one form or another, in me forever. The therapy, the medication, and the endless cups of coffee with concerned friends are not the means to an end, but instead a method of discovery. With every cigarette, every sorrowful binge on music that sweeps me back into her arms, and every midnight cemetery walk I find a new component of me that I never knew existed: a fraction of myself that invokes fresh tears, laughter, nausea, and most importantly, insight.

I don’t smoke to escape my ceaselessly tormented mind. I don’t smoke to activate my dormant mind out of numbness. In fact, I don’t know that there are any physically justifiable reasons why I gradually poison my lungs with tar. However, I do know this: amidst temporarily losing my motivation to live, contemplating the apparent hopelessness of my future, and deeply questioning my previously untouchable faith, I have stumbled across one, irrefutable fact. I collided with this realization one snowy night in my commonly frequented cemetery. On this night, perhaps only for one passing second, I felt with an absolute certainty, that there is such a thing called “truth”. In this eternal moment, I saw purpose and reason to my suffering. The questions, the despair, and the restless dissatisfaction with my life all contain a piece, no matter how infinitesimally miniscule, of this truth. I am only now beginning to understand that this truth is the loving and omniscient God that I was brought up believing in, but not ever knowing.

I smoke to celebrate life. I smoke to understand death. Most of all, the packs after packs of cigarettes bring me to a new and more complete view of the being which created me. I, a damn-lucky fool, have come to know God in the darkest hour of my life. I, who believed in God my entire life, now not only believe, but also feel his undisputable and real love. Through depression, through thoughts of suicide, and through Marlboro’s, I have purpose, satisfaction, and most importantly, God. Thank God that we all must find our own way.

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| Your response should be self-contained. When someone reads your responses, they should be able to tell which question you are responding to.  In marking the essay you should be clear in what idea and item you are reacting to. The markings should indicate a close and personal reading of the essay. Excessive markings or lack of markings may indicate a failure to have closely read and comprehended the essay. |  |
| Based on your reading and marking of the essay identify the main idea of the essay as well as support including direct quotations and evidence from the essay. Your response should be limited to no more than one (1) well written and adequately edited paragraph. |  |
| Using at least two (2) of the writing prompts below and in no more than three (3) well written and adequately edited paragraphs create a response to the essay:   * The part (s) of the essay I agreed with were * The part (s) of the essay I disagreed with were * This essay reminded me of/ made me think of * This essay made me think in a new way * This essay was similar to another essay |  |
| What question (s) would you like to ask the author of this essay? Explain your reasoning for wanting to have the answer to this question. |  |
| Having now read this essay I… |  |
| **Presenters Only:** You will need to have three (3) questions that you would like to present to your classmates during your seminar. |  |

The time I completed reading and marking this assignment was: