Student Name

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British Lit

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Title

Prompt: The purpose of an essay of evaluation is to assess the value or worth of a topic. Consider a topic that is included in the book (such as trends, social media, travel, or service) and explain the importance of this topic in the book.

*If I Stay* by Gayle Forman captures the story of a teenage musician caught with the decision between life and death. As Mia is trapped in this in-between world all alone, she revisits many of the memories that brought her to the present moment in time. Mia is able to see her own dying body as well as her parents’ already deceased bodies, making this reality even more surreal. The choice of life or death falls upon Mia when she learns that she can decide what her fate will be after the disastrous car accident. Throughout Mia’s flashbacks and current observations at the hospital where she is located, the topic of music plays a great role in leading Mia up to where she is. Born to a family of rock stars, Mia always had musical talents, unlike most other kids. The cello was what attracted Mia at such a young age, and it became her passion and possible ticket into her dream school of Juilliard. With the impending decision of life or death after having lost so many, Mia doesn’t know if her love for music will be enough to save her from letting go.

The story begins with brief introductions of Mia’s family’s love and appreciation for music. Although Mia’s taste in classical music differs from her parents’ edgy rock tracks, the family as a whole appreciates the musical arts equally. Mia was afraid that her former rock star parents would not approve of her playing such an odd instrument, but she was reassured at a very young age: “But in my family, playing music was still more important than the type of music you played, so when after a few months it became clear that my love for the cello was no passing crush, my parents rented me one so I could practice at home” (Forman 23). Mia’s uniqueness was admired and accepted by her loving family, for any musical inclination was respected by them. Even after the car crash that left Mia with the decision to stay or go after losing her parents and brother, all that was left intact of the car was the music playing from the radio. This scene symbolizes the impact music has throughout the book and on all of the characters, even when everything else seems to come to a bitter end. Music will always prevail in Mia’s life.

The entrance of Mia’s boyfriend, Adam, into her life helps mold her love for music and its emphasis in the story. As a lead singer and guitarist of his own band, Adam is able to fully appreciate Mia’s dedication to playing the cello. Even when Mia and Adam seem to have no common ground as a couple, Mia’s household of music appreciation is what always bring them together. It’s when Mia falls deeply in love with Adam that she is later faced with the ultimate decision of staying at home to be with him and his band or traveling to Juilliard to follow her dreams as an aspiring cellist. Mia’s present situation leaves her instead with the option between simply living or dying after the catastrophic event. Adam uses his love for Mia and her love for music to help coax her into staying in the real world: “Adam has placed headphones over my lifeless ears and is laying an iPod down on my chest…It is Yo-Yo Ma…In comes the cello, like a heart bleeding. And it’s like something inside of me implodes” (232). When Mia isn’t sure if Adam’s love is enough to save her after losing so much, it is music and the reminder of her passion for him on their first date full of classical music that she so dearly admires that brings her back to life. Music greatly impacts all of Mia’s relationships in the stories and, in turn, signals her death in the car accident, as well as her dream trance into life at the hospital after. With the love of the rest of Mia’s family, her boyfriend Adam, and her cello, Mia can make it through staying and continuing to pursue her musical dreams like her parents would have wanted.

*If I Stay* is an inspirational story for any young woman with trouble in weighing the importance of parts of her life. Mia’s character is seen struggling throughout the entire book with wether she will live or die as most would after experiencing a life-changing car crash. The one thing that prevails throughout the entire novel, even when Adam’s love seem to waver and Mia’s parents are not present to help, is music. Music is present when Mia’s family enters the wreck, when Mia decides to stay, and all throughout Mia’s childhood. The story uses melodies to connect the pieces, when it seems that nothing else can. Mia’s ability to relate to her family and Adam though her own type of music, although much different and but not unappreciated, greatly places the importance of music in the novel.

1. Would you be able to dedicate as much of your time to what you love as Mia does to her cello? What would you dedicate your time to, if you answered “yes”?
2. How do Adam and Mia seem to stay together even though they are so different?
3. Would you choose to stay or go if your parents just died in the car accident you were in and you had lost so much?
4. Do you think that Mia should feel as if she were adopted for being so different from her parents? Do you think it’s possible that she really doesn’t belong to her family?
5. Do Mia and Adam work well in balancing their differences as a couple? In what ways do they work well together or against one another?