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Ava Toledo

Humanities

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**To Get Help**

It is a fact that depression affects 17.6 million of Americans a year. Because this is such a big issue, it is not a surprise that Philip Beard or William Shakespeare would base a story on it. Dear Zoe by Philip Beard is a letter from Tess DeNunzio to her younger sister, Zoe, who passed away on September 11th from a hit-and-run accident. Tess has a hard time moving on, but with the help and support from her family and Jimmy Freeze, she gets stronger. William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet is a tragic play about two young lovers who should not be together because they are from rival families, but they are blinded by love and end up dying when they kill themselves. In both stories, Tess, Romeo, and Juliet have problems with being depressed. Depression is an illness that has affected many teens including the main characters from Dear Zoe and Romeo and Juliet. Even though the characters share the same theme, the way they approach it is different.

The characters Tess and Juliet are similar because they are both depressed and think of suicide. Juliet: “I’ll [be] to my wedding bed, And death, not Romeo, take my maidenhead!” (Shakespeare 139). Juliet has been informed that Romeo is dead. This shows that she would rather die than get married to someone other than Romeo, like Paris. Juliet is thinking of committing suicide which is one of the signs of depression. Tess is depressed as well and it can be shown in the next quote. “Sometimes I am even angry at Em for being in the bathroom that night and for knowing something she couldn’t have known, and I wonder if she knows the other thing, the thing Mom knows but would never tell, the thing you know but that I need to tell you

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anyway to not feel like I’m lying anymore” (Beard 168). Tess has thought about suicide, and sometimes looks back on the time where she was going to kill herself and wishes that maybe it could have gone different but Em stopped her. Tess and Juliet are alike because the both of them are depressed.

Even though the main characters from Dear Zoe and Romeo and Juliet have a similar theme of depression, their actions are different when it comes to suicide. Romeo: “Come, biter conduct, come unsavory guide! Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on the dashing rocks thy seasick weary bark, Here’s to my love. O, true apothecary, Thy drugs are quick, Thus with a kiss I die” (Shakespeare 227). Romeo does not talk to anybody about the problems he is facing. He commits suicide without even thinking about his future or family. In addition to that, Romeo and Tess approach their depression in more ways than one. For example, Tess says, “So that’s when I told him about you. Everything” (Beard 168).Tess finally realizes that she has been only hurting herself by not telling Jimmy about her problems. She needs to tell others about Zoe’s story in order to let herself heal. Tess gets better because she finally seeks help by talking to people who care about her. Unlike Romeo and Juliet, who died for love because they could not be together. In conclusion, the difference between Tess and Romeo are that Tess gets over her depression by seeking help from people who care about her while Romeo and Juliet cannot help, but to want to kill themselves, because they never seek help from others.