

READING 1

You are going to read an article about the importance of words. For questions 16-20 choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D).

What's in a Word by Jon Foreman (Adapted from Huffington Post Jan/25/2010)

Communication is quite a process. In a speaker's mind, a thought is conceived, then spoken, heard, and then ultimately gives birth to new thought in the listener's mental landscape. For example, when I say "tree," a picture builds in your imagination, a new life-form within your mind; a platonic idea of an oak tree or a maple tree appears out of nothing within your thoughts. This mental icon represents your understanding of the word. (Incidentally, this apprehension is independent of the speaker's intentions). In many ways, words are metaphors pointing to the objects they represent. The word "tree" is not a tree; it is simply a placeholder for the real thing. Our understanding of the world is built upon a deeper set of presuppositions. Meaning demands meaning. Reason demands reason. The same is true for words. Words are our framework of meaning. Every one is a metaphor reaching to something beyond its simple spelling and articulation.

Words have incredible power. Words create worlds. The words we use define ourselves and the world around us. They shape our reality. Our words determine our ideologies. Words are the keepers of history. Words are the foundation upon which we build our lives. This holds true even for wonderful words like Love, Light, Justice, Honor, Truth, Joy, Peace, Redemption, Happiness, or Beauty. These are beautiful words, yet they are words we know only in part. Tragedy, we see this word in print daily, but what does it mean? Hans Urs von Balthasar says that tragedy is dependent upon a belief system. "The meeting of these two words, 'tragedy' and 'faith' is deeply significant, for what is broken in the tragic presupposes a faith in the unbroken totality." Hope is believing in a world that does not exist yet, a concession towards the kingdom of the heavens. To hope is to believe that life could be better. It is ultimately our belief in this "unbroken totality" that allows for the potential of tragedy. For without this hope, tragedy is no longer tragedy -- it's simply expected. Without a belief that allows for a better world, the tragic is fact.

The artist is a bridge between despair and hope. The artist, more than anyone else is responsible for the re-creation, re-definition and re-thinking the world around us. Every poem, every song, every painting has tremendous possibility. Each of these creations could be a letter of resignation to The World That Is or a window into The World That Is Not. Each poem/painting/song could be a vehicle to a new reality, one in which the artist plays a part no matter how small. The artist paints a world into existence. The canvas, the paint, the brush--these known quantities of existence and reality are tools for stepping into the unknown. The notes of the song are a bridge from what is to what is not yet.

I don't write songs when I'm happy. When I'm content, I take my wife out to dinner, I go surfing. I hang out with my friends and play ridiculous cover tunes when I'm happy. But when I'm depressed, I turn to look for something beyond this life. When I'm lonely and nothing makes sense and the world has lost its flavor I search for notes and words that usher in a transcendence that soars high above the tragedy. I look for to

song to understand the present tragedy in the context of a hope for a better world. I look for words that remind me of a bigger story, for songs that acknowledge the tragedy and move beyond it. I look to artists who give me windows, words that can create new worlds.

Is it escape? Is it a coping mechanism? Maybe a bit, but I feel that it is much more than that. The song becomes a hopeful defiance. A declaration that the injustices and absurdities of our postmodern existence are not the final downbeat. Music becomes a confession of disbelief in the world that surrounds me. A refusal to believe that these tragedies and horrors are the ultimate end. The song is written in defense of a world beyond this one, in defense of Truths that seldom make it to the front page of the newspaper. Words do create worlds.

16. According to the article, what statement best explains what is a word?

- a) it represents a mental icon which is identical for everyone
- b) it produces a framework which is the same for everyone
- c) it creates a mental image which is the identical for everyone.
- d) it represents a metaphor beyond the actual spelled and spoken word for everyone

17. According to the article is it possible:

- a) for hope to exist independently.
- b) for hope to exist connected with tragedy.
- c) for tragedy to exist independently.
- d) for hope and tragedy to exist but not be connected.

18. According to the article, what don't words do?

- a) they create worlds.
- b) they shape reality.
- c) they convince others to do our bidding.
- d) they determine our ideologies.

19. According to the article, which statement best describes what a song can become?

- a) a way to convince people of your ideas .
- b) a way of rebelling against everyone.
- c) a great way to spend the time.
- d) a good way to become popular if you are an artist.

20. Which of the following statements summarizes the main idea of the article?

- a) An artist has a great responsibility.
- b) It's important to do what you want in life.
- c) The two most important words are hope and despair.
- d) Words are the building blocks of songs.