

## One Word Essay: Silence- The power of silence

The Oxford dictionary defines "Silence" as "Complete absence of sound", if you cannot hear anything then you are in silence. "Silence" origins from the Middle English, from Old French, from Latin "silentium", from "silere" meaning to be silent.

Silence can be perceived in different perspectives; a philosophical thought experiment from George Berkeley an Irish philosopher published a book called "A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge" (1710) states that "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" This raises questions regarding observation and knowledge of reality. The fact that some people who have better hearing than most are able to hear more sounds; that means if one person thinks that it is quiet, the other might think that there is silence. For example, a younger person may hear high-pitched noises whilst older people might not. But then again there is a possibility of them using hearing aid. A person in a room may not hear any sounds, but a person with hearing aid may be able to hear sounds.

Silence is an experience, it just simply never happens while we are alive. If one is in an anechoic chamber, an area deliberately created to exclude all external sounds and minimize absolutely any sound we may make when inside it, we 'hear', very loudly, the sound of our blood being pumped through the veins close to our ears. But because the silent environment is so strange and foreign to us, our receptive mechanism for sound is 'turned up' high, and what we actually hear is perceived to be extremely loud. Some think that the perception of silence is felt to be portentous, and with all our senses keyed up, whatever we 'hear' will be greatly magnified.

There is a well-known idiom "Speech is silver, Silence is golden", silence is important for paying respect to people. It is not deferential to disturb someone who is speaking out their thoughts; it is not polite to make slurping sounds while drinking or talking while eating. It is not polite to share your opinions during a movie; it is just as rude as getting every last drop of soda through a straw in an almost empty cup.

Silence is valued and required when reflecting about something and it is important to be quiet when people are praying, to be respectful to people's beliefs. It allows people to listen to one another more effectively; it gives you a clear view into the hearts of others. It is difficult to concentrate on a test or assignment if someone is making noises. When reading a book, the presence of silence is appreciated, in some cases welcoming and soothing. If someone is focusing on playing a video game and someone makes a sudden noise, it affects the person's reflexes, it causes that person to falter and the words "GAME OVER" will appear on the pitch-black screen. When you drive, disruptions from other people in the car or from a cell phone can distract the driver, causing disastrous accidents to occur and putting other people's lives in danger.

Silence can also be found when you are in the deep side of pool, surrounded by the water. And you look up and see how the light bounces off the surface of the pool, while the tightening feeling of the your chest increases and the absence of your breath decreases. And when you resurface, breaking through the water like a dolphin, taking in generous amounts of air into your lungs the silence of either fear or relief is over, you realized the beauty of silence for a moment either calms you or pictures flashes through your mind that you may be in silence forever.

With silence, speeches are made more dramatic with the powerful silence between the lines, creating suspense and capturing the audience's attention. It is used in music, to distinguish other periods of sound and allow dynamics, melodies and rhythms to have greater impact on the listeners. It is the same silence that holds the tension in the air after a heated argument, the tension so thick that you could slice it open with a sharp knife. It is the same silence that is equivalent to an empty paper, like when your heart is blank and deprived from sensation. It is the silence that makes people feel lonely to the core of their hearts, empty like the endless depths of the ocean and isolated from the rest of the world.

It is the same silence that rests between lovers, the comfortable peaceful silence that no words are needed to be spoken, because simply sometimes silence speaks louder than words. Silence is loud because it commands attention, it demands to be heard. It is the same silence when you exchange eye contact between you and your friends across the room, like a different type of Morse code that only you two could understand. It is the same word, "silence" that is used in famous works like Shakespeare, "Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. I were but little happy" *Much Ado About Nothing*, (Act 2, Scene 1, line 317) from Claudio, as he speaks to Beatrice about Hero.

"Seeing her sitting there unresponsive makes me realize that silence has a sound." Was said from Jodi Picoult's novel, *My Sister's Keeper*, this means sometimes even if we don't speak, our actions speaks louder than our words. Even to the eyes of other people, including our loved ones. It is the same feeling when you receive bad news from someone, when you become paralyzed, numbed, silencing the outside world as the newfound news sinks into the depths of your mind, clouding all your judgments.

Right from the beginning, before the Big Bang, the cosmic universe only consisted silence, where no form of life existed except for the constant flow of stars, galaxies and mere silence. It is the equilibrium of sound waves that we learn in Physics, the opposing force of sound and how it travels. But now, the form of silence can be rarely heard. The constant bustling noises of the city, the busy traffic and blaring car horns, the never ending shouts and yells heard, even if sound appears as whispers, silence can be rarely heard.

A picture is silent, it is not a video yet it is worth more than a thousand words; this could be spoken about the refugee crisis from Syria. During September 2015, a picture depicted a dark-haired toddler, wearing a bright-red T-shirt and shorts, lying face down in the surf not far from Turkey's fashionable resort town of

Bodrum. The contrast between where the photo was taken and the toddler's death was ironic. Within hours, the picture went viral, it sparked up controversy online on social media platforms like Twitter under the hashtag #KiyiyaVuranInsanlik (humanity washed ashore). This showed how refugees have to fight and survive in silence, the harsh reality of how a little three year old's life ended just because his family was running away from the war, and hoping to seek a better life. And reflects on how big of an impact war has on modern civilization.

And although we can no longer find ourselves blanketed by the veil of silence, we conform ourselves to activities that give us the same sense of peace, like reading, meditation or yoga. I am incomplete when I am not in a noisy environment for I grew up where noise is apart of whom I am, a part of my society.

However some might argue that silence is not powerful, that it is not golden to the hearing deprived group of people. Some people choose to have selective deaf ears, like if our parents nag us about school work or how you didn't do this, or you didn't do that. But parents only nag because they care about you, and what you to have a better life. So in this case, is silence powerful or is it just a tool?

No matter how we perceive or try to attain silence, we never truly have it. For when we try to get away from the noise of life by going into a quiet room, removing all distractions, making ourselves stop thinking, and just craning your neck to hear the sound of deafening silence. To some it might be scary, to some it might be comforting, but nonetheless silence will always speak louder than any gaze, words, actions or behaviour.

You are most powerful when you are in silence, because people never expect silence. They expect words, actions, defense, and offense, back and forth. They expect you to leap into the fray; and they will be ready, with their fists up, words like acid dripping from the corners of their mouth ready to spit at you. But if you remain silent, their acid-like words will be swallowed by their own pride, and you will be safe, because you kept quiet.

And that is the power of silence.

Word Count: 1501 words