

Relationships in James Agee's A Death in the Family

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Spending time with each other, having strong morals and giving a lot of love are a few of the things that give families hope and happiness. In the novel *A Death in the Family* (1938) by James Agee, a family has to use these advantages in order to make it through a very difficult time. During the middle of one night in 1915, the husband, Jay, and his wife, Mary, receive a phone call saying that Jay's father is dying. Ralph, the person who called, is Jay's brother, and he happens to be drunk. Jay doesn't know if he can trust Ralph in saying that their father is dying, but he doesn't want to take the chance of never seeing his father [again](#), so he decides to go see his father. He kisses his wife goodbye and tells her he might be back for dinner the next day, but not to wait up for him. Dinner comes and goes, but he never arrives. That night, Mary gets awakened by a caller saying that Jay has been in a serious auto accident. She later finds out that he died. The rest of the novel is about Mary and her family's reactions to the death. This experience for Mary and her family is something that changes their lives forever, but it doesn't ruin them. If someone has a close person to them deacease, he or she feel as if they cannot go on, but because of the close family [ties](#) that Mary, Jay, and their children [shared](#), they know that they will be able to continue on after Jays death.

When Jay gets the call to visit his father, it seems as though he is making a life or death decision. As it ends up, that is what he made, but it is almost as though he knew that his going to see his father would ultimately change his life. After Jay received the phone call, he took his time in getting ready ...

... middle of paper ...

...ed lines: 'Daddy didn't come home. He isn't going to come home ever any more. He's--gone away to heaven and he isn't ever coming home again" (237).

A single tear was all she cried when she told her children about her mate, best friend and lover being killed. Now, that has to take a lot of strength.

All through the times of the intense expectation, overwhelming sadness, and inspiring hope in this novel comes a feeling of relief in knowing that this family will make it through the wearisome times with triumph in their faces. The relationships that the mother shares with her children and parents are what save her from despair and ruin, and these relationships are the key to any and all families emerging from the depths of darkness into the fresh air of hope and happiness.

Works Cited:

Agee, James. *A Death in the Family*. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1972.

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