A Product of our Past

People are a product of their past. The events we have experienced have shaped us into the people we are today. Some things from our past, we are able to overcome them and grow. We see them as in our past and never have to worry about them again. The experience is still there, but it helped make us who we are and we grew from it. In the other hand, other things from our past can haunt us for the rest of our lives. It seems that no matter what you do, the event is always in the back of your head. There is always something there to remind you that it is still there. Louise Gluck illustrates the past haunting someone in the poem “Gretel in Darkness.”

According to suite101.com, the poem describes the aftermath of the well-known childhood story, Hansel and Gretel (Wood). The poem is much more then that once it is broken down and looked into. The poem describes a girl named Gretel that is haunted by a murder she committed for her brother. She struggles with the fact that she can’t go on with her everyday life like everyone else has. She does not understand why she cannot forget and move on. The event of the murder haunts her daily. The poem illustrates the struggles that come from events in the past, a relationship between a brother and a sister and leaves us with the question of what would you do for your family.

The poem “Gretel in Darkness” is a poem that shows a girl that feels like she is in the dark. She feels alone and thinks she is the only person that relives the pain. “Now, far from women’s arms/ and memory of a women,” with this we see Gretel does not have a mother there
to comfort her (l. 7-8). This can make her feel more alone. When kids need comfort, they usually go to their mother. Gretel does not have a mother to rely on to be there when she needs comforting. Since she does not have a mother, and her father seems to be busy with other duties, she relies on her brother for comfort. Even though she does not have a mother, we can see her father takes good care of her. He seems like a good protector. “My father bars the doors, bars harm/from this house”(l.11-12). Gretel does not understand why she still can no forget even though her dad has the house protected. She has many struggles in her life because she cannot forget.

Through everyone’s life, there is always one event that seems to haunt the back of their mind. These haunting bring in many struggles in our lives. The biggest struggle is not being able to forget what happened. In “Gretel in Darkness,” she too struggles with not being able to forget. We can see this through the line, “Why do I not forget?” (10). Nothing she does helps her forget the memory of the murder. She does not understand why she cannot put this memory behind her. On top of this struggle, she also does not understand how everyone else can just go on like it never happened. To her it feels like she relives the event every moment of her life. She sees the people around her acting like the event never even happened. You can see this in the line, “No one remembers...as if it never happened” (13,16). Even though there is family around to talk to, you can seem alone. You are lost in your own memory and with that it seem as if no one around.

Gretel even questions this, “Am I alone?” (l. 21). She feels like there is no one to talk to because everyone else has moved on.

Even through the struggles, you can see the bond between her and her brother. The relationship between a brother and a sister is a special bond. The bond between Gretel and her
brother is portrayed in the poem, “Gretel in Darkness.” Gretel relies on her brother to be there and comfort her in her time of need. We can see this when she says, “Nights I turn to you to hold me” (l. 19). Clearly, Gretel is hurting and needs her brother to be there to comfort her, since her mother cannot be. Gretel does not see that he is there to comfort her. “Even you, my brother…you look at me as though….it never happened” (l. 13, 14, 16). He can see that the event hurts her, so he tries to act like it never happened to comfort her. He is also protecting her by trying not to hurt her any more.

After seeing the sacrifice Gretel gave for her brother, it leaves the question, what would you do for your family? Family is everything to a person. No matter what happens in your life, you know that your family will be there for you. For Gretel, the question was not a question to her; she knew she was willing to do anything for her brother. She knew that her brother meant more than anything to her. “I killed for you,” she was willing to do anything for her brother, even kill (l. 17). Also through her sacrifice, her brother gave too. “You meant to leave/as though it never happened” (l. 15-16). With this line, you can see the brother wanted to leave, but did not. He seen his sister was hurting, depressed, and needed him and he stayed for her. He seen that she needed him more then he needed to leave. Love for a family member is a powerful thing. The love and bond we have for our family will push us to do whatever it takes to protect them.

As we can see, events from our past can haunt our everyday life. “Gretel in Darkness” is a good illustration of a brother and sister relationship, the struggles that can come from the past events and leaves us with what we would do for our family. Gretel and her brother share a special bond in the poem. Gretel struggles with feeling alone and wondering why she cannot forget the past. The poem makes you realize what people would do for their family and show there are no limitations when it comes to protecting a family member. Events from our past can
haunt our everyday life and there are many struggles to overcome. The key is remembering the past is the past and made us into the great individual we are today.
**Work Cited**

