Fathers

The most exhilarating day of a man’s life is the day he becomes a father, although becoming a father can be difficult and challenging at times. The definition of a father, as defined by the dictionary, is “a man who exercises paternal care over other persons; paternal protector or provider” (“Father”). The definition above is saying that a father is someone who takes care of a child and provides for them, just as Martin Espada tries to explain in his poem “My Father as a Guitar.” Also, some say that being a father is not something special and it can be quite awkward at times just as in “Not Bad, Dad, Not Bad” by Jan Heller Levi. Although these poems are about two different kinds of father figures, they are still trying to show just how important and influential the relationship between a father and child can be. Whether a father is loving or distant, the most essential quality for a man to transform into a father is to make sacrifices that improve their child’s future.

In the poem “My Father as a Guitar,” Martin Espada wrote, “//... lectured my father/ that he had to stop working. / and my father said: I cant. / The land lord won’t let me...” (Lines 3-6). The idea behind this is that the father is actually putting his family before his own health. The father is present in the child’s life and is a primary provider for the family. The dedication the father has to provide for his family shows just how serious he takes the fatherly role. E. Flouri wrote,” Father absence has negative consequences for children’s behavior.” (1090). What Flouri is trying to say is that, without a father figure, a child can develop behavioral issues, which can
cause difficulties throughout the child’s life. The child in the poem will most likely not suffer any behavior problems because they have a father figure who provides and cares about his family.

Some children do not have a father like the one mentioned above; some children have fathers who are actually not fathers at all. The poem “Not Bad, Dad, Not Bad,” by Jan Heller Levi, showcases a totally different kind of father figure. Jan wrote, “/... You wouldn’t win any medals, Dad,/ but you wouldn’t drown.” (Lines 8-9). This is referring to the fact that the father does not give his all for his child, but he did not abandon the child. The father figure mentioned above is seen all over the world, just as Nicholas Davidson wrote, “Fifteen million American children, one quarter of the population under 18, are growing up today without fathers” (para.1). This does not mean that there is no father, but that the father may be there, but he does not provide nor care for his child. This is also shown when Jan wrote, “/...I always thought I was drowning /in that icy ocean between us...” (Lines 14-15). The child sees the father in their life, although the father does not see the child. In this kind of situation, such as the one above, the father figure does not care nor acknowledge that the child is in their life.

Several results can occur when a child is given inadequate amounts of love and care from a father figure, just as Iryna Cuplin wrote, “Absence of the biological father in early childhood has been linked to depressive symptoms in mid-adolescent...”(921). A child raised in a home without a father figure is more likely to suffer from depression and other problems, which can lead to difficulties in the child’s life. Unlike when Martin Espada wrote,” my father is a guitar, /with a hole in his chest/ where the music throbs/ between my fingers” (Lines 21-24), indicating how the father sacrificed himself for his family, and showed as much affection toward his child as possible. The child, talked about in the poem, has a father figure that does anything for his
child, and the child controls what the father does and why he does it. This kind of father-child relationship will result in an outstanding life for the child because they have someone to look up to and be their hero in a time of need.

Difficulties in a child’s life can impact the development of the child; the role of the father figure influences the child’s development. Yeon Yoo, as well as others, wrote, “The rapidly changing roles of fathers within contemporary family structures and accumulating evidence regarding fathers’ influence on children’s development... [sic]” (591). The father’s role in a child’s life dramatically affects how the child will grow and develop. The father in a child’s life represents nourishment, and, if the child is malnourished, he or she cannot fully develop into a well-structured human being. The child will find difficulty in easy activities, and find it difficult to understand their role as a parent when the time comes. Jan Levi made a good point when she wrote, “I think you are most yourself when you are swimming...” (Line 1). The idea that the child’s father is more comfortable swimming than when he is around his child says a lot about his role as a parent. The father feels awkward and out of place when he is around the child, which allows boundaries and distance to form between the father and child leading to more complications in the child’s life. The idea that a father and child can be so close but so far apart is very mind boggling, but it is very true and can cause unhealable damage to the child.

The two poems discussed throughout are very different, although they have some similarities. In the poem “My Father as a Guitar” Martin wrote, “...The heart pills are dice/ in my father's hand, / gambler who needs cash/ by the first of the month” (Lines 7-10). The father in this poem is gambling with his own life to make sure his family is well taken care of, and gives his all for his child and family. The father discussed here is the ideal father, and shows his kids that he will do anything to keep them safe and alive. The father discussed in the poem “Not Bad,
“Dad, Not Bad” is a totally different story. Jan wrote, “/...I always thought you were moving too slowly to save me, / When you were moving as fast as you can [sic]” (Lines17-18). The child thought their father was just not giving his all, although he actually was, which means that the father did not try very hard to provide or give the child what it needs. The father-child relationship between these two poems is very different, and can cause one child to flourish in life while the other child will struggle through life.

The fathers talked about in these poems are very different; although they are both fathers, they are not the same at all. Some people say that one of the fathers is a true father, while the other is not a father at all. The father in “Not Bad, Dad, Not Bad” acts if he does not care about the child, and shows no emotion nor acknowledgement toward the child. Jan wrote, “/... as though your yawning” (line 5), which shows the father is tired of his current situation involving the child, although the child has done nothing wrong the father does not want the child around him. The father in this certain situation seems to show their child as little affection and care as possible. The father figure used in “My Father as a Guitar” is one for the books; the father figure used in Martin’s poem shows the child the most affection and love possible. The father in Martin’s poem gives his full capability, even though the father is dying he still wants his child to know that his father loved him dearly. The father-child relationships used in these poems can come to a surprise to many, but many children live day-to-day with these father figures.

A Father is someone who “... exercises paternal care over other persons; paternal protector or provider” (“Father”). The definition of father is very vague, although the one used above is very accurate in explaining what exactly a father figure is. In simpler terms, a father is someone who cares and provides for a child, while also showing the child the love and affection he or she needs to flourish. A father-child relationship is very influential in the way the child will
grow and develop. The two poems, throughout this discussion, use father-child relationships to show just how the child feels about the father. The child will first see the father as a care giver and provider, but the child will soon realize that the father they have is either a true father or one who just has a child. Fathers are not just here to give us life, but they are here to show us how to live life and exceed. Everyone in the world has some one that gave them life, but only a few children can say they have a father.
Works Cited


