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English 110 - Section G

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Reaching The Midline

In "Consider the Lobster" David Foster Wallace argues that it is difficult to think rationally into whether a lobster feels pain. Wallace mentions very human like characteristic that the lobster displays when being cooked. What this leads to is a problem that others shy away from due to the uncomfortable nature of this topic. While that is the easiest method is to avoid the topic, what Wallace tries to do is bring this problem attention so others could think over such a grey topic. Wallace asked question like "Is it alright to boil a sentient creature alive just for our gustatory pleasure?" This isn't supposed to make you uncomfortable but to question/challenge your own morals and reconsider based on what is presented in front of you because thinking people can only answer so many questions.

A personal dilemma I faced was when I was around 2 years old, I had a dog named pepper. She was lazy, but would always comforted you when you had been lonely. Pepper had bad legs, probably due to how she was bred, so she couldn't get too excited or she could hurt herself. Jumping to when I was 7 around winter time, I got off my bus to find that something horrible had happened. My dog had chased after the neighbor's cat and that's when my worst nightmare began. Pepper had lost the ability to walk. She had slipped on ice trying to chase the cat and crashed on her side as my nana helped her into the house. My parents and I had two decisions, euthanize her or let her suffer to an insurmountable degree. I ran into my room hiding from the choice that was presented in front of me. I couldn't rationally think in this situation, but

Commented [JM1]: Here you could maybe think about adding in an interesting hook

Commented [2]: Could provide more text evidence with David Foster Wallace.

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Commented [JM5]: Overall, this is a great start to your paper, I would consider adding in your other sources here too

my parents had made the choice without my input. We gave ourselves a day to enjoy pepper's company one last time, then came the fated day. While that was arguably the most rational decision, emotionally my parents and I couldn't just let her go. I went with my father to the vet while my mother stayed home bailing her eyes out. Personally, I wanted to stay with my mom, but felt I had to man up. Also, I didn't want to leave Pepper's side just as she did for me at a young age. Once we reached the destination, we watched the flicker of light from her eyes dim out. Today, I still don't know if I made the right decision or if there was a better option, all I knew was she would no longer frolic around our house anymore. The last thing I remember was mourning the day after during her birthday that she wasn't around for.

Commented [JM6]: I really like your use of your own emotions being involved, maybe consider adding in a connection to another article to compare to it.

Hal Herzog in "Animals Like Us" presents a similar view of being open to uncomfortable topics and make others question their own belief system as Wallace does. A key example of this concept was when Hal Herzog mentions Judith Black belief change when talking to her husband "Judith decided that it was wrong to kill animals just because they taste good. But what exactly is an animal? While it is obvious that dogs and cats and cows and pigs are animals, it was equally clear to Judith that fish were not...when they first met, Joseph, himself a meat eater, tried to convince Judith that there is not a shred of moral difference between eating a Cornish hen and eating a Chilean sea bass." Judith had this argument with her husband for around 3 years at the dinner table of this moral dilemma, speaking openly on what they agreed with and disagreed with till they finally reach a conclusion. Judith finally gave in to her husband saying "'OK, I see your point. Fish are animals.'" This change in opinion showed that the moral of eating animals can waver even when you start with a very firm belief. When openly considering each possibility, it's hard to come to a clear conclusion on what an animal could be or what we should eat.

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While others find it hard to find an answer, others such as the jains believe that their way of thinking is right. What Jainism has a commandment that forbids violence against all living creatures, of course including animals. The Jains had made this grey area of morality and pleasure into a clear black and white issue, violence is bad towards any living creature. Their thought process is straight to the point. Inflicting violence upon any thing that is noted as living is against what they stand for. The monks show this practice by “walking barefoot in the cool morning hours to avoid car travel, an activity they regard as irredeemably violent, given the damage it inflicts on living organisms, from insects to larger animals... During monsoon season, they forgo travel, to avoid splashing through puddles filled with microbes.” Unlike in most Americans, where we can decide about eating a burger due to the pleasure of eating one but Jains maintain their belief and go to extremes to avoid hurting any animal no matter how small.

Commented [JM10]: These points are all very good and cohesive, I would consider adding where the information came from as well as maybe diving deeper into what the quote means.

But why go to such lengths? Well, it is believed that “animals are conscious beings that experience, in varying degrees, emotions analogous to human desire, fear, pain, sorrow, and joy.” The Jain’s see animals as some us now look at animals, as conscious beings. While research hasn’t conclude yet on what emotion are present in animals. It’s clear that the Jains believe that they experience similar emotions as humans would.

Commented [JM11]: This is a good point, you could maybe bring this into the beginning of your paragraph as well to really reiterate your thoughts.

I was never raised in this sort of manner but I’m curious to those who weren’t Jainism and then converted over. Was it hard to transition if you ate meat before going to this belief? Did you ever waver and second guess what you were following due to the absence of meat? While I would argue that their view is black and white is there ever an acception to cause that grey midline to form? I don’t think that I could become apart of this religion due to the pleasurable moments I’ve had experience with meat and other foods that involve killing living creatures. It’s

Commented [JM12]: Here you could add in a connection to “Against Meat” and how getting rid of meat occurs for religious reasons but also for other values.

not that I don't sympathize with their cause but I'm selfish when it comes to what I eat and I wouldn't want to give that up.

Commented [JM13]: Good use of personal emotions here, maybe add in a real life instance of you feeling as though you are selfish for not giving up meat.

*** Dear Alex,

Overall, I believe this is an excellent start to your paper. I think that all your overall points and support are very strong. Be sure to include all article citations and page numbers. Also, be sure to double check grammar and sentence structure. Some of the sentences were a little bit confusing, and I think maybe if you reword some of them it will be better. The quotes you choose were very strong, but I think you could add in some more supporting points and elaborations of the interpretation of the data. Try to dive a little deeper into the conversation. I think all of your personal inclusions are also very good and could even be used in comparison and contrast to the other articles for an even stronger claim.