

## “A Million Little Pieces”

A million reasons exist for reading James Frey’s literary masterpiece, *A Million Little Pieces*. Recent criticism and scrutiny for supposed false information shined the spotlight on both James Frey and his works. Frey’s accusation of “duping” Oprah Winfrey and the rest of society who reads his books overpower the truth within his story. The fact of the matter is that this tale of drug use, addiction, and treatment serves an educational purpose in the constant battle and campaign to keep kids off drugs.

We learn to not judge books by its cover. I am guilty of this crime. During my last visit to New York, the bright blue cover with the tiny colorful dots resembling medication caught my eye as it sat on the counter in my parent’s kitchen. The six-hour flight back to the west coast allowed the majority of the book’s completion. Upon closing the back cover, I immediately thought of all the students I want to read this book. This story has to be effective when talking to students about staying away from drugs.

When asking one of my students in a sophomore honors English class her thoughts on how to prevent drug use in young people, her response simply stated, “Hearing real life horror stories”. Voila! Here is where *A Million Little Pieces* plays its role.

James Frey is an addict. James Frey used drugs and alcohol. James Frey went to rehab. James Frey got the help he needed. James Frey met people who ultimately changed his life. James Frey is still clean and sober. James Frey is one of the few who survives.

Part of being a writer is having the liberty to embellish the truth. Changing the names of people and places protects the identities of those who do not necessarily want revelation. Focusing on the embellishments of his truth instead of recognizing the lessons taught demonstrates media’s propaganda at its best, especially when significant experiences are absent from daily news reports.

The raw writing in *A Million Little Pieces* is powerful and captivating. It ignores many grammatical rules, using a colloquial style. This conversational format makes the story easy to read. Some might argue that the subject matter and language in Frey’s book falls within the parameters of being inappropriate for young readers. Students meeting the requirements of being a teenager sometimes watch violent movies, play “mature” video games, listen to profanities in their music of choice, and often know much more than what adults think they should.

Reading a true story of how drug and alcohol use screws up your life is educational. Other controversial books, such as *Go Ask Alice* by an anonymous writer, have significant impact on student readers. Knowing that a real person experienced such horrific events makes a person think twice about their actions and behaviors.

Parents of teenagers who read *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey should consider the potential positive impression of this story. Creating a personal book club between

parents and high school teens might possibly assist in promoting good choices within the world of peer pressure.