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Abstract

For centuries, theatre artists have been creating works of art that embody the human experience. After all, that's what theatre is, telling stories of the human experience and sharing those stories with other humans. There have been works that discuss familial issues, death, abuse, trauma, and even mental health. Even though the National Institute of Mental Health has reported that one in five US adults are living with a mental illness, there are members of the general public that still believe that mental illness does not exist. Many theatre artists have been creating artistic pieces that work to challenge this and other misconceptions about mental illness and mental health in general. Though many theatre artists approach the subject of mental health with their own interpretation, the utilization of mental illness as a focused topic is something that aids both the story and the overall audience experience. This paper will take the opportunity to examine a handful of pieces of theatre, including *Dear Evan Hansen*, *Next to Normal*, *Lady in the Dark*, and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, that incorporate the topics of different mental illnesses and explore the storytelling techniques utilized in these pieces and the impact those techniques have on the story and the audience experience.

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