
The Short Film Dear Basketball: Kobe Bryant's Life And Career

In "Dear Basketball", NBA basketball star Kobe Bryant announced his retirement from the sport through an emotional and poetic farewell masterpiece. The Los Angeles Lakers Legend released his Poem on November 29th, 2015, which was later converted into an oscar-winning short film, directed by Disney animator Glen Keane. Kobe Bryant was truly a titan of the game, playing for two decades, winning five NBA championships, securing two Olympic medals for Team USA, and drafted to the league straight from high school. His unexpected ode was released during his final season with the Lakers to portray his true love for the sport and explain that his retirement was near. The exigence of Kobe's poem was greatly justified and purposeful with the intent to leave the sport portraying his devotion and commitment to the sport. Instead of simply announcing his departure, Kobe crafted an emotional piece of art intending to send a deeply meaningful message to his audience and millions of lifelong fans.

In this short film that was produced based on the Poem Kobe wrote, he portrays the story of his life through his true love for basketball. In four minutes, Kobe attempts to prove to his audience childhood dreams should be pursued with perseverance and a full heart of spirit. The film is narrated by Kobe through a chronological order beginning with when he fell in love with the sport at age six. Kobe opens with a touching metaphor of him rolling up his dad's tube socks and shooting them in his mini hoop hanging from his bedroom door. He would pretend to shoot game-winning shots, which initiated his first-love for the game. The tube sock represents the ball that he would be shooting years later sinking countless game-winning shots in high school and with the lakers. From here on out, Kobe personifies the ball and treats it as if it was his first love. He quotes, "A love so deep I gave you my all — from my mind & body to my spirit & soul", demonstrating the affection he created for the sport early in his life. Also by titling the film and poem "Dear basketball" he shows the audience that this poetry is written directly to the sport in a letter format. He continues his metaphor by mentioning how he never saw the end of the tunnel, yet only saw himself running out of one. The reference to the mysterious tunnel can be literally viewed as him running through the tunnel at the Staples Center in Los Angeles or figuratively as never seeing the end of his time cherishing moments on the court.

Along with personification, Kobe uses apostrophe in his narration to speak to the ball as if it's alive. He states he "ran up and down every court after every loose ball for you. You asked for my hustle. I gave you my heart". He treats the game of basketball like someone he possesses eternal respect for and sacrificed everything to provide this figure with his loyalty. "I played through the sweat and hurt not because challenge called me, but because YOU called me. I did everything for YOU because that's what you do when someone makes you feel as alive as you've made me feel." By continuously referring to basketball as "you", Kobe further demonstrates his powerful level of commitment and transcendent love. He continues to refer to basketball as "you" to explain how although his mind and heart are as strong as ever, his body cannot handle the pain anymore. This point about how he cannot continue is the main thesis of the poem and his overall message he is portraying. While explaining how his career is rapidly approaching its conclusion, Kobe Bryant is motivating the youth to follow their passions to make the most out of life.

Kobe argues his point by creating a very emotional atmosphere surrounding his message through the short film's delivery. In the film, inspiring sad music is playing in the background to implicitly display the satisfying yet emotional completion of his career. An appeal to pathos is exemplified through the music demonstrating his journey from starting with just a hobby to growing as a player and developing through constant struggles and will-power to move forward. Additional appeals to pathos and strong conflicting emotions are presented throughout the film as Kobe is shown as a young boy growing into the successful man he was at the end of his career and inspiring children to believe anything is possible with enough effort and dedication. Additionally, Kobe uses appeals to ethos by presenting himself at the beginning of the short film as the basketball star he had become at the time of writing the poem. Right before speaking about him rolling up his father's tube socks, there was a short scene of him achieving the game-winning slam dunk in a professional game on the Lakers. By beginning with this legendary and jaw-dropping dunk, he immediately gains credibility as a talented player who is well respected by many fans. Finally, to persuade his audience that his time has come to an end, he appeals to logos by using logic and reason to validate his decision to move on from this stage of his career. He details that although his mind and heart are fully ready to continue his passion, his body has taken enough damage over time to continue his successful career. In the film, his skeleton is pictured with bones and parts of his body that appear to be bruised, showing his audience it is not safe or logical to continue pursuing his love for the game in a professional setting. By utilizing the rhetorical triangle, Kobe is effectively able to persuade his audience that his basketball era is officially over and convincing them to understand his reasoning behind the shocking decision.

Another method Kobe Bryant uses in "Dear Basketball" to emphasize his passion for the game is through using extensive repetition and choosing his word choice thoughtfully. Throughout his animated poetry, he uses the word "love" six times while only using the word "ball" twice. This carefully constructed ratio allows him to appeal to any children with a dream, not only those interested in basketball or sports. His repetition of "love," carries throughout the poem until the penultimate line, "Love you always," which serves as a closing to his letter.

Overall, I believe that Kobe Bryant's message is extremely effective. His short film was so inspiring and appreciated that it won an Oscar award in 2018. What made his story so effective was his efficient use of rhetorical strategies scattered throughout on top of the mix of emotions inflicted throughout the brief film. Rather than merely a love letter to the sport, the film seemed like a way for Kobe to express his grief and a form of self-therapy for him to move on to his next chapter in life. This four-minute-long story was incredibly impactful on the audience since he was an icon who changed the entire dynamics of the sport. Kobe Bryant is the image that comes to mind when many think of concepts such as hard work and perseverance. He was always determined to outwork everyone on and off the courts. The audience can learn from his incredible story of how a young boy with dreams was able to achieve feats completed by very few. The audience should care about analyzing Kobe's rhetoric to deeply grasp the values he portrays. It is crucial to understand from the film that when one discovers their passion, they will never need to go to work and that people's attitudes will determine their altitudes in life. By analyzing Kobe's message throughout "Dear Basketball", fans all over the world and I can learn from his story is that if we make sacrifices and commit our minds, bodies, spirits, and souls into what we love, we can accomplish anything we genuinely believe in and impact many other lives to keep the cycle of inspiration alive.

After Kobe's recently passed away in January 2020, I was determined to learn more about his

story to examine how one individual can impact the lives of so many humans from so many backgrounds. After analyzing Kobe's poetic masterpiece, I have gained a much deeper appreciation for the values he embodied. His respected reputation and legendary status were achieved through his pure love for what he contributed to this world, which is something we can all learn from his incredible life journey navigating the game of basketball and beyond. Throughout his break-up poem "Dear Basketball", Kobe Bryant was consistent with his major themes of love and Unremitting continuation of time using his well-structured rhetorical strategies, and the irony of his unfortunate death will allow his impactful legacy to live on for generations to come.

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