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A-Block English
Reardon

Symbolism in Aristotle and Dante

Have you ever wondered how people that were gay were treated in the 1980s? In *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, a realistic fiction novel by Benjamin Alire Sáenz, Sáenz explores this. In this novel, Sáenz uses tears as a symbol to show how difficult it can be to come to terms with the fact that you're different from other people that you know.

Tears symbolize Ari's path to understanding he loves Dante. Ari doesn't understand that the reason he saved Dante was because he loved him. After Ari rescues Dante in "The Different Rules of Summer", he wakes up to find that his mom and Dante are crying (111, 117). When Dante keeps on repeating that Ari saved his life, Ari responds by saying that he doesn't know why he did it (117). This becomes a point of confusion for him when his doctor tells him that he's "on to your kind" (123). This shows that it is very difficult for Ari to understand that he is gay, and that is also tears is the perfect symbol for Ari not understanding he likes Dante, because Ari saying that he doesn't know why he saved Dante causes Dante to cry.

Ari's unwillingness to realize that he loves Dante is symbolized by tears. Ari doesn't want to think that he likes Dante, because he doesn't think that's the way it's supposed to be. After Dante kisses Ari, Ari tells Dante that the kiss "didn't work for me", which causes Dante to cry (255), but then in the end of the novel, when Ari discovers what is wrong, he realizes that he

unintentionally lied to Dante about the kiss (358). It's so difficult for Ari to understand that he likes boys that he even lies to himself about it, and causes Dante to cry in the process, which is why tears symbolizes Ari not understanding that he is gay very well, because it causes him to say things that make Dante cry.

Tears represent how much Ari cares for Dante. When Dante is beat up, Sam cries and tells Ari what happened, Ari goes to the hospital, and at the hospital, finds Mrs. Quintana crying next to Dante (309). Ari is so mad that he shoves Daniel and beats Julian up, because he loves Dante, but he doesn't know why he feels this way (315). This shows that tears symbolize Ari's love for Dante, because this isn't something most people would do if their friend was hurt by someone, and it shows how much hurt Ari is willing to go through for Dante, even if it means causing his mom to cry.

Even though tears symbolize how difficult it can be to come out in this novel, Ari still manages to do it, which shows that it is possible to come out. It is also getting easier for people to come out because of organizations that are dedicated to supporting these people, and these people help other people come out.