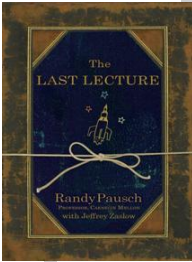




Fr. Michael Goetz Library Learning Commons Teacher's Book Review



The Last Lecture, Randy Pausch Reviewed by Ms. Cosgrove, May 2nd, 2013.

Sometimes a particular book finds its readership among a select group of people. This week's selection is a popular choice among graduates and those in a state of transition. Its focus is life lessons and the instructor is a computer science professor from Carnegie Mellon University.

In the last few years, a trend has emerged in which university professors give talks entitled "The Last Lecture". The professors are asked to structure their deliveries around an imagined scenario in which they are faced with their imminent deaths, in order to speak about the ideas, the principles and the values most important to them. In this particular case, Randy Pausch didn't have to imagine his death because he had already been diagnosed with terminal cancer. He titled his famous lecture "Really Imagining Your childhood Dreams" and it has become known as a "How To" manual for living life fully and honestly.

After receiving the tragic news, Randy and his wife, Jai, never bemoaned the unfairness of it all. Their attitude was summarized in five little words – "Let's saddle up and ride." His life's work was based on problem solving and Randy Pausch used this directive in approaching all aspects of his personal and professional life. One of my favorite quotations from his lecture focuses on the subject of complaining. He states:

Too many people go through life complaining about their problems. I've always believed that if you took one-tenth the energy you put into complaining and applied it to solving the problem, you'd be surprised by how well things work out.

The book is full of pithy little statements like "Dance with the one who brung ya," which emphasizes the importance of loyalty in relationships or "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity," to underscore the value of a work ethic in our lives. However my favourite piece of advice has to do with the power choice plays in shaping our own destiny when he writes, "We cannot change the cards we are dealt with, just how we play the hand."

I didn't read this book. I devoured it. It made me think, once again, about my own personal mantra having to do with my belief about the importance of perspective. Sometimes when we back up and away from our lives we see, with greater clarity, what really matters.