Essay 1: Analysis of text

In the story, the author tries to portray the condition of his relationships with his father from various aspects and tries to express the difficulty he had in trying to understand the nature of affection his father showed him throughout his childhood, and as he grew older. He intends to express how he felt about the relationship between him and his father by revolving the story around the arm wrestling matches he used to have with his father. The essay ‘*Arm Wrestling with My Father’* is authored by Brad Manning and intended for the freshman audience in high school which aims to demonstrate to the audience that there are different ways through which people express their emotions, and one is not necessarily superior or inferior than the other.

Reading through the story, Manning is able to provide a deeper insight into the nature of the relationship between him as a child and his father, and how it evolved and developed over time. Since one's relationship with their parents remains an essential component of development, the setting appeals naturally to the reader, which Manning further builds upon by making use of various rhetorical appeals and metaphors through which he expresses the nature of his relationships and the thoughts and emotions that he felt at each moment. His description of his father as “the master with clenched fists” {Manning, "Arm Wrestling With My Father", 2017, 112} is a reflection of how the clever use of language captivates the audience as he narrates how the dominating aspect of the ‘arm wrestling-based relationship’ eventually tilted towards him.

Manning intends to convey to the reader that it is possible for care providers to express their emotions towards the person they care for in different ways, and by pondering over those subtle ways and the changes therein with time, one can understand the love they may have. For Manning, he saw how the nature of their relationship evolved from bonding through arm wrestling and baseball to a hug and the saying of “I love you” by his father {Manning, "Arm Wrestling with My Father", 2017, 114}. He would not write to him but attach newspaper articles for him regarding the things his mother told him to be careful about. He expects the reader to realize that there is more to these relationships than what meets the eye.

One of the most important message Manning tries to convey is that the bond he had with his father was more psychological and physical rather than emotional. He demonstrates this through describing the nature of the physical relationship in which he initially would feel ‘inferior’ from the ‘dominant master’ – his father. For his father, it would be a way to transmit love towards his son by engaging him in a competition, but Manning could only then see it in terms of victory or loss, “But Dad would always win; I always had to lose” {Manning, "Arm Wrestling With My Father", 2017, 112}. Boys are often not brought up to share and express their feelings and emotions, so the way they interact together by practicing sports is an expression of that love, which may manifest itself differently with the mother. However, we also understand that his father also realized that he too was expressing his love through sports, but realized that his son might have missed the emotional aspect to it, so he gave his son a hug and told him that he loved him.

When Manning grew older and was able to win from his dad, the realization within him, in my view, is what he wanted to convey to the reader. The way he would initially see the interaction in terms of winning and losing alone but eventually realizing what it meant, after he started winning and feeling guilty about it, is what probably prompted him to write the piece. The other reason that may have driven him to write the essay was that he wanted to share with the other sons out there that physical and emotional aspect of love can sometimes be the same. Both his parents loved him, but his mother would be more verbal and sentimental about it while his father would display that love physically.

Manning wrote a piece that manages to captivate the reader’s heart. My analysis of his work is based on the perception that men and women are hard-wired and conditioned differently. This leads them to express their emotions in a different manner. One way of expression is not necessarily greater than the other, but sometimes a child may need both.

Further questions that may be pondered over in the reading are:

1. How does paternal love differ from maternal love in Manning’s case
2. Why prompts Manning’s father to realize that he needed a verbal expression of love also?

References

{Manning, "Arm Wrestling With My Father," 2017}