Portrayals of Suicide in Narrative Fiction

MEDIA AND YOUTH SUICIDE: BEST PRACTICES FOR REPORTING AND STORYTELLING

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Suicide is complex – there are almost always multiple causes including mental illness. These illnesses are treatable.

- Research shows that mental illness or substance abuse is present in 90% of the cases of suicide

Recommendations:
- Show warning signs
- Don’t show suicide preceded by a single event like job loss, divorce or bad grades
- Avoid sensationalizing and glamorizing
- Add statements about treatment options and resources

(source reportingonsuicide.org)
Suicide in Narrative Films/Television?

- Ordinary People (1980)
- The Big Chill (1983)
- Dead Poet’s Society (1989)
- Girl, Interrupted (1999)
- The Virgin Suicides (1999)
- The Hours (2002)
- 13 Reasons Why (2017)

- My small film is “The Valley”, in select theaters and on demand on June 8
The Valley

- Not Perfect
- Depicts depression as being the root cause of the suicide
- Shows symptoms: difficulty concentrating on academics, erratic sleep, anti-social, eating issues
- Does not have any instructional content on suicide
- Focuses on devastation of family and friends
THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION ESTIMATES THAT MORE THAN 35% OF COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION

IN THE UNITED STATES SUICIDE HAS SURPASSED HOMICIDE AS THE SECOND LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH AMONGST TEENAGERS AGES 15-19
For support contact:

Crisis Text Line
741741
www.crisistextline.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness
1-800-950-NAMI
www.nami.org

American Association of Suicidology
1-202-237-2280
www.suicidology.org