

WWUX7811

R.C.

For a stereotypical football player math would seem like a foreign concept, but it was no stranger to John Urschel- a former football player and mathematician. In his autobiography titled *Mind and Matter: A Life in Math and Football* written in 2019, Urschel and his wife Louisa Thomas address the very issue of the struggle of balance between two opposing worlds. The autobiography can be used as an outline or motivation for possible students and athletes reading in order to help them find their balance in their own life. By exploiting the irony of his converging worlds, comparing his attraction to both math and football and by explaining the cause of his attraction to each world, Urschel is able to capture the attention of the reader and draw them into his autobiography.

Math and football are known to be on two opposite sides of the hobby spectrum, but Urschel is able to use the irony of being involved in both to his advantage during his autobiography. Instead of showing how these two seemingly opposite hobbies can revolve around each other, Urschel displays their differences as diverging among themselves but converging within him. He states, "We all have multiple and sometimes diverging identities" (paragraph 4) which relates to his interest in football and math. He later states that "those two stories... converge within me" (paragraph 10). Urschel identifies that his two hobbies are known as being dividing and different from each other, but he later explains that although his interests should not mix with each other, they do for him. He has learned to find his balance in life between his two interests since they have mended to make him who he is personally. The attention being drawn to the different interests and identifying them as a combined aspect of his life, Urschel is able to identify the irony of his situation and use it to his benefit. He is able to attract his potential audience by giving them hope that although irony exists within their lives, it does not mean they have to sacrifice an interest.

Furthermore, Urschel takes time to compare his math and football experiences by continuously going back and forth between the two topics. He compares math as "a way to make sense of the world" in paragraph six, and football as a way to put him "in contact with something messier, something elemental and deep within [him]" in paragraph seven. Urschel compares the way that both mathematics and football have impacted and benefited himself throughout his life. By doing so, he sees math as a mental trainer while football prepares him physically. With two interests affecting two separate parts of his person, Urschel is able to further his knowledge and experience, since he has "stuck his foot in two worlds." He is able to use the comparison of both activities to his advantage in trying to gain the attention of his audience by exemplifying how having a wide variety of skills and interests can help an individual become more well rounded.

Urschel then goes back to the origin of his fascination with mathematics and football when he writes about the connection between both hobbies and his parents. He identifies his mother with mathematics as he states "my mother started buying me puzzle books and workbooks... encouraging my mathematical creativity and reasoning" (paragraph 8). He also identifies football with his father by stating "the other story is of my life in football, from the time I saw a picture of my father in pads" (paragraph 9). Urschel relates his hobbies to his parents because his mother introduced him to logical reasoning and mathematics and he was

fascinated by his father's role in football pads. By explaining the cause of his interests, Urschel is able to relate to his audience since most of his readers will have a connection to their own parents, similar to his.

Urschel is simply giving his potential audience the rough draft of his autobiography in hopes of grabbing their attention. Throughout his life, Urschel had struggled with finding a balance between the seemingly polar worlds of math and football, so rather than trying to combine the two interests he decided to engulf himself in each individually. This caused him to become a more well rounded individual both mentally and physically. Urschel exploits the irony of his situation, the causes of his interests and the differences between his interests in order to better relate to his audience since they are able to have a first hand guide of what it means to find balance.