

The Harper Anthology

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I S S U E X 1 9 9 8

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William Rainey Harper College

Foreword

Strangely, I find it difficult to separate my feelings about this year's tenth issue of the *Harper Anthology* from my irksome, ever-present thoughts of Major League Baseball. Let me explain, and forgive me for digressing. I promise that the following story is, in a crazy way, appropriately placed in this Foreword.

In the Foreword to last year's ninth issue of the *Harper Anthology*, I compared the reliable presence of good writing in the universe to the rebirth of baseball in every blooming American spring. I wrote: "we [the *Harper Anthology* committee members] believe that good writing—poetic, lyrical, illustrative, substantive, altogether soulful writing—is perennial, like baseball." I must confess, however, that after writing those words, something dreadful happened...to me, and to the precarious balance of the globe: something that shook my faith in not only baseball but also the entire, lofty notion of perennialism. Specifically, in the fall of 1997 my beloved but historically beleaguered Cleveland Indians blew a ninth-inning, one-run lead over the Florida Marlins in the seventh game of the World Series. The Marlins' potent hitters came alive to tie the game in the ninth, and they won the game and the Series in the eleventh. At the end of the 1997 season the fat-walleted Marlins had existed for only five years; it had therefore taken them merely half a decade—practically no time at all by the standards of baseball—to acquire the Holy Grail of professional sports. On the other hand, the city of Cleveland, which houses one of baseball's oldest franchises, hadn't seen a World Series victory in 50 years, most of which have featured sober, conclusively dismal summers for Indians fans. Christian philosophers have been known to propose that contentment and especially justice are ultimately earned through a lifetime of hard-core monotony and toil. And yet, last fall, when I considered the

appalling newness of the lucky Marlins versus their long-suffering agelessness of Cleveland baseball, it was difficult to believe that justice had been served.

The media called the seventh game of the '97 World Series a "thriller" and a "classic," but the English language has not yet fashioned a term that accurately describes my perception of what the game was, and always will be, to me. The date was Sunday, October 26, 1997. I remember it as I remember my most harrowing nightmares, my most shocking moments of hysteria, my most significant, agonizing personal losses. Appropriately but pitifully, there was a light snowfall that night in Chicagoland, where (having their own teams to suffer) most residents feel neither joy nor pathos for Cleveland's typically never-quite-good-enough sports teams. I put on boots and a corduroy jacket. I headed off, afoot and alone, into the weather for a two-hour walk that grew into an exercise in depressive meditation. Before the conclusion of the game, I had been pregnant with the bright hope of a glorious Northern Ohio baseball supernova. After the game, as my weepy face hit the cold October air, my belly carried something like a stillborn of dejection.

Thus, last winter, in the wake of the Cleveland Indians' defeat, I thought that baseball had died...died, at least, where my enthusiasm was concerned. By extension, I wondered if all things supposedly perennial were, in fact, finite. In turn, I feared that I had lied to my readers in last year's ninth issue of the *Harper Anthology*: I feared that nothing—not baseball and not good writing—can be counted on in this slippery world. In last year's *Anthology* I had positioned baseball as a kind of paragon of resilience. But again, baseball—that which was, I believed, a symbol of rebirth—had died; the Cleveland Indians had killed it. I had given too much of myself to the Indians. Like a lover jilted too many times, I was finally affected with their tomb-like disposition of lethargy. I decided that I didn't care and said as much to those with whom I had formerly carried on extended baseball dialogues. When the Indians then lost crucial relief pitchers and their stellar third-baseman Matt

Foreword

Williams in off-season trades and expansion-draft pirating, my already apathetic heart grew a scab that was, I believed, harder and more deeply rooted than a Lake Erie winter.

(Again, I swear that a point—one related to the act of writing and the *Harper Anthology*—is coming.)

I am telling you, my readers, this story not because I hope to persuade you to feel sorrow for the Indians. (There's plenty of that in Northern Ohio. In Northern Ohio "baseball sorrow" has grown into very tall trees; those trees bear a shameful fruit, a foul substance that is firmer and more bitter to the tongue than buckeyes. Consequently, asking Chicagoland residents to feel for the Indians or [worse yet!] to convert to Indians fandom is tantamount to a meanspirited request that those residents wallow in endless dissatisfaction and grief.) Rather, I mean to highlight a success story, however small the "success" in question might appear to be. I carried my stony heart through the 1997/98 winter and proclaimed the irrelevancy of baseball. If I stumbled upon news pertaining to the Indians, I pretended not to pay sincere attention. If I fell into the Indians' spring-training reports in the February and March sports pages of the *Chicago Tribune*, I persuaded myself that there were loftier things than earned-run-averages and the commendations rewarded to Cleveland's rising stars. But the approach of springtime was accompanied, of course, by Nature's great thaw, which in turn occasioned the gradual shrinking and loosening of my aforementioned heart-scab. I cursed myself for being unable to sustain a well-warranted grudge but was gradually forced to admit that while I wanted to feel nothing for the Indians, I nevertheless felt something. In other words, in spite of my pretense of not caring, I cared. In May of this year, I dropped that pretense entirely and made faithful, daily forays into the 1998 progress of the Indians (who are, as I write this, poised to win their fourth straight American League Central Division title as they lead the division's second-place team by 11 games). Baseball was back; perennialism had not died after all.

Okay, this is a stretch, maybe a preposterous stretch, but here's my point: the resurgence of baseball in what I presumed was the rocky, infertile, altogether jaded soil of my heart is wildly connect-

ed to this year's *Harper Anthology*. I remember thinking last summer (1997) that some of the writings in last year's ninth issue of the *Anthology* were so good that they could not possibly be matched. I thought that writing at Harper had seen its zenith and that the quality of writing at Harper would necessarily decline from that point forward. That was a stupid thing to believe, just as it was stupid to believe that I could file away my disturbing Cleveland Indians fanaticism in a perfunctory manner. But this is a confession; I confess that that's what I believed. Happily, though, I have been proven wrong yet again, for this year's tenth issue contains equally commendable pieces by some of Harper's best students. Cleveland Indians baseball rebounded in the weary heart of yours truly, and good writing is back in the pages of yet another *Harper Anthology*. Good writing, it turns out, is perennial, as the selections in the following pages prove. I speak for all of the *Harper Anthology* committee members when I say that we are proud of this year's issue; the student writers in this issue have struggled admirably, and their productions are first-rate.

I owe much thanks to the Harper faculty members who brought their students' writings to the attention of the *Anthology* Committee. Thanks also to Michael Knudsen, Joan Young, Anne Frost and Deanna Torres (Deanna deserves a particularly hearty thanks) from the Marketing Services Center. Thanks to Peter Gart and the Print Shop staff.

Thanks to Harley Chapman, Dean of the Liberal Arts Division (and author of this issue's Afterword), and Pam Toomey, Liberal Arts Division Administrative Assistant, for their support of the *Harper Anthology*. Thanks, finally and especially, to the dedicated members of the 1997/98 *Harper Anthology* Committee members, who have been generous with their time: Jack Dodds, Peter Sherer, Kurt Neumann, Barb Hickey, Kris Piepenburg, and Richard Johnson.

The *Harper Anthology* Committee members hope that you enjoy this year's issue. We urge you to maintain the hope that all good things (baseball and good writing, for instance) will rise, in one form or another, again and again.

Andrew Wilson
Ohio Native and Chair
of the *Harper Anthology* Committee

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Mothers Who Murder Their Children

Joseph Abruscato
Course: Psychology 101
Instructor: Kimberly Ostrowski

Assignment:
*Students are to write an original research paper
which can compare and contrast different
researchers' perspectives on their topic or thesis
related to psychology*

Recently several stories of mothers who have murdered their children have made headlines. Susan Smith rolled her car, containing her two small boys strapped into their car seats, into a lake. Amanda Wallace wrapped a rope around her son's neck and hung him in a closet, ending his years of abuse. Awilda Lopez, after a long battle to regain custody of her daughter, snapped one night and beat her daughter to death. Elizabeth Ehlert, after giving birth at home, calmly walked behind the family home and tossed her newborn into a creek. All these women were found guilty of murdering their children. Amanda Wallace committed suicide in prison while serving her sentence.

Many experts agree that although there is some degree of mental illness involved in this crime, it is not always the case (d'Orban, 1979). What happens to a woman who carries a child for nine months, brings that child into this world, and then deliberately takes that child's life? Postpartum depression has been suggested as a cause for mothers to kill their children. This condition does not explain the deaths of older children. If mental disorder is the overwhelming reason, what can be done to prevent this from happening? Are certain mothers more at risk than others? Are there signs to look for? What makes a mother, often a symbol of love and nurturing, commit such an unthinkable crime? Research has shown that most mothers who murder their children often exhibit signs leading up to the crime, and that a crisis generally triggers the murder(s).

Historically, according to Sadoff (1995), the murder of a child by that child's mother has been happening for centuries. Several explanations have been offered. Population control and economics are two explanations that are ongoing today in various cultures. Female children are viewed as a drain on families' survival and are sometimes eliminated in favor of a male child. In some countries, such as China, limits are put on how many children a couple can have. In this situation a male child is also preferred so that the family name can continue. Also in primitive areas of Africa, Indonesia, and Polynesia ritual sacrifice is a normal experience. These types of deci-

sions were made collectively by families, religious groups or communities. Yet “the killing of a child by an individual mother, without community approval or sanction, has remained a mystery” (Sadoff, p. 601). The murder of a child, an unthinkable crime, is possibly so unthinkable that little research has been done as to the cause and prevention of this crime (Holden, 1996).

In Greek mythology the story of Medea is an example of a vindictive woman (Goddess). Medea married Jason and bore him two sons. After a time Jason decided to leave Medea for another woman. Medea, in a jealous rage over her lover’s plans, murders both of their sons in revenge (Stapleton, 1978). Could a failed relationship be so important to a mother that it could cause that mother to kill her children in retaliation? Although known for her treachery, Medea’s response does not conform to the normal idea of motherhood. According to d’Orban, the anger a woman feels toward her spouse can be displaced onto the child.

According to d’Orban, Bourget (1990) and Holden, Resnick was the first to review case reports of children murdered by their parents. He established a classification system of the motives of parents who murder their children. He also identified categories of child murder. Resnick said there were two types of child murder: The killing of a child on the day of its birth, called Neonaticide, and any other cases of a child killed by parents called Filicide (Bourget, 1990). The second category has been further broken down into three subcategories: a) Infanticide, the killing of an infant in the first 12 months of life; b) Early Filicide, the killing of a young child; and c) Late Filicide, the killing of older or adult children (Sadoff).

Resnick established five classifications in his motive-based system of Filicide. These are:

- Altruistic Filicide - The murder was committed to relieve suffering or to avoid abandoning a child by suicide.
- Acutely Psychotic Filicide- The murder was committed under the influence of hallucination, epilepsy, or delirium.
- Accidental Filicide - The murder was committed in a deliberate attempt to torment the spouse.
- Unwanted Child Filicide - The murder was committed simply because the child was not wanted.

(Holden)

Resnick believed that Neonaticide should be distinguished from Unwanted Child Filicide. The primary reason is “that mothers who committed Filicide were more likely to be psychotic than those who committed Neonaticide” and “that the majority of Filicides were undertaken for altruistic motives, while most of the Neonaticides occurred because the child was unwanted” (Holden, p. 26).

Scott (1973) suggested that Resnick’s system was too subjective and proposed another classification system. Scott’s five classifications are based on the source of the impulse to kill: a) Elimination of an unwanted child; b) Mercy killing, involving a real degree of suffering in the child and no secondary gain for the mother; c) Gross mental pathology; d) Stimulus arising outside the victim, such as anger at another, spouse revenge, or prevention of loss of a love object; e) Stimulus provided by the victim; for example, the object of the mothers temper, battering or frustration (Holden).

d'Orban (1979) used both Resnick's and Scott's classifications and came up with his own list of six classifications: a) Battering mothers; b) Mentally ill mothers; c) Neonaticide; d) Retaliating women; e) Unwanted children; f) Mercy killing. d'Orban's classifications are based on Scott's classifications with minor modifications to the criteria of each. He also added Resnick's category of Neonaticide. The order of d'Orban's list is by the frequency he found in his study.

In general the lists of Resnick, Scott and d'Orban are similar in content but differ in the interpretation of where each should be classified. This is due to the fact that many of these cases of Filicide involve multiple reasons for the murders. Some of those reasons overlap, and it is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for the murder.

d'Orban's study was conducted at Holloway Prison in England. He studied 89 cases of women who were in prison for killing their children during the six year period from January 1, 1970 to December 31, 1975. During that period he found that 81% of all child homicide victims under the age of 16 were killed by their parents. Of that 81%, 40% were killed by their fathers and 60% by their mothers. Of the victims killed by the fathers most tended to be older children. Bourget studied 13 cases in Ottawa, Canada, of children killed by their parents between 1978 and 1986. His findings were similar to d'Orban's in that 30.8% of the murderers were male and 18.7% female. In Holden's study, all of the 28 murder cases in the sample group of offenders were female.

The marital status of the offenders in the aforementioned research studies were as follows: Married women comprised 55%-62% of the offenders and single women 38%-45%. The single-women percentage included women who were separated or divorced. The single women were most likely to be charged with Neonaticide and were among the youngest age group (d'Orban, Bourget). The married women were most likely to be older and diagnosed as mentally ill (d'Orban, Bourget, Holden). The mean age of the offenders in

all three studies was between 24.6 and 27.3 years. The youngest was 17 years old and the oldest 50 years old. Bourget found that in 61% of the cases studied the offender was under "severe psychosocial stress prior to committing the Filicide" (p. 236). Also in Bourget's study the social status of all offenders was in the middle to lower class and none in the upper class.

In d'Orban's first classification, Battering mothers, family histories showed significant differences from the other classifications. In the Battering mothers category, there were higher incidents of parental discord, severe parental maltreatment, and separation from one or both parents. Stress factors also appeared highest among Battering mothers. Marital discord, domestic violence, housing problems and financial difficulties were the most common sources of stress. Bourget also found higher incidents of stress and abuse as a child in Battering mothers. Both d'Orban and Bourget agree "that the first six months of life constitutes the most dangerous period" (p. 235) for the child. In 89% of cases of children killed by Battering mothers the child was under 3 years old.

In d'Orban's Mentally ill classification, the offenders tended to be older, married and had previous psychiatric treatment; many had also attempted suicide by the time of the murder (d'Orban, Bourget and Holden). The majority of Mentally ill cases of Filicide involve the mother's suicide attempt. The murder of the children is justified by the mother because there would be no one to take care of the children after she is gone or "to save the child from some terrible fate" (d'Orban, p.1565). In these instances the women usually killed or attempted to kill all their children (d'Orban, Holden). Holden also found that 70% of mentally ill mothers were unemployed at the time of the offense.

In d'Orban's third classification, Neonaticide, the mothers were most often single, young and had no mental illness (d'Orban, Bourget, Holden). According to Bourget, "Most neonaticides are the result of an unwanted pregnancy and birth" (p. 235).

The women in this group could not confide the pregnancy to their mother and had no family support at the time of the birth (Bourget, Sadoff, Holden). In almost all cases, an attempt was made to conceal the offense (d'Orban). Most of the victims of Neonaticide are killed by an aggressive act rather than neglect or abandonment.

In the Retaliating women classification the offender is usually unstable, has a chaotic marital relationship and a history of suicide attempts (d'Orban, Bourget). These same authors suggest that the women use the murder of their children to manipulate their spouses or cause suffering. Retaliating women usually have multiple victims (d'Orban, Holden). The victims usually died of drowning, drugs or suffocation rather than physical assault (d'Orban).

The mean age of the victims of Filicide was 2.8 years (Bourget) and 89% were under the age of 5 years (d'Orban). The victims' ages ranged from newborn to 12 years. The victims' status at the time of pregnancy was 73% to 80% wanted and 20% to 27% unwanted (d'Orban, Bourget).

The data collected seems to show that most mothers who kill their children fall into two classifications: Battering mothers and Mentally ill mothers. Retaliating mothers could be considered Mentally ill mothers due to their unstable mental state. This is an example of the difficulty in classification of motive vs. impulse. Neonaticide accounts for less than 20% of the deaths caused by victims' mothers. In all the cases, there is little or no evidence that a mother will kill her children because she is simply an evil person: "Mostly, the killings are done in a state of fear, panic, depression, psychosis or in dissociate states" (Sadoff, p.604). Many of the murders could have been avoided if the potential risks had been recognized early.

Many of the mothers in the case studies were under significant stress prior to the murders. With no support system in place to turn to, these mothers were left to cope by themselves. A young, poorly educated mother can easily become overwhelmed. Doctors, social service personnel and teachers should be trained to recognize when a mother is unable to cope. Some warning signs include abuse of the children, lack of a support system or family, absent husband/father, or present crisis that makes the mother feel hopeless. Doctors should be aware of symptoms of postpartum depression and refer those mothers to psychiatric help. Many of the mothers showed signs of mental illness prior to the murders and were under a psychiatrist's care. These psychiatrists have a duty to assess the potential risk of these mothers to commit Filicide.

Another area of prevention is Domestic Violence. Many of the Battering mothers come from a background of violence in the family. They learned this violent behavior from their parents and are destined to pass it on to their children, if the children survive. Education in conflict resolution can be applied to end this cycle.

It is difficult to imagine a mother waking one morning and deciding to kill her child. Research has shown that there are signs and factors that lead up to the crime. Usually a crisis triggers the murder. Women who are at risk may have a clouded perception of the depth of their problem(s). Awareness and a community effort on the part of schools, churches, social organizations and family may prevent the murder of a child.

"People receive the least training for the most important job of their lives – being parents" (Sadoff, p. 605).

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Evaluation: *Mr. Abruscato not only synthesized the available data, but also created a cogent comparison of the resources.*

Emily Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"

by Joann J. Alicea
Course: Literature 105
Instructor: Barbara Hickey

Assignment:
Write a critical analysis of a poem.

Emily Dickinson's poem "Because I could not stop for Death" may reveal much more than the surface level concept of death being inescapable, as is directly implied in the first stanza. In order to see the many ironies Dickinson presents the reader with, the poem must first be read as if it only refers to the certainty and reality of death, but by looking deeper into the wording doors will fly open. Dickinson, like Robert Frost, wrote a great deal about nature, often personifying aspects of nature in order to present human realities. But Dickinson is equally known for her numerous poems about death and dying, and while it is true that Dickinson appears to be rather fixated on the nature of death, it is equally true that she uses death to explore much more complicated societal ideas, such as insanity, religion, and human dignity. Since it is impossible to truly and thoroughly get into the mind of Emily Dickinson, one must be open to the various, and perhaps outrageous, ideas presented, which include a simple death and burial story, the conflicts present in the benevolent and respectful nature of death, and the ironic relationship between marriage and death.

At first glance, Dickinson's poem seems to be about death, and perhaps a funeral procession starting with the unavoidable reality of dying in the first stanza. In the second stanza, the reader is presented with what seems a funeral procession as the narrator states, "We slowly drove; he knew no haste" (line 5). In the third stanza, a ride past familiar things is depicted; for instance, the school or significant places of employment and entertainment, common during the journey to the cemetery, is revealed as the narrator looks back on childhood, marriage, old age, and, finally, death. The third stanza exposes the inappropriateness of the clothing for life, but not death, through the chill felt by the narrator due to her light and delicate "gossamer" gown and her sheer silken shroud (lines 14 & 15). After a physical break in the poem, line 16 continues; "We paused" seems to imply a ceremony common at the cemetery before the casket is laid into the ground because of the reference to a "house"

combined with what is implied by the lines that follow; full of imagery, line 16 continues “a house that seemed / A swelling of the ground” appears to reveal the burial site and freshly filled soil upon a grave site, but it may also be a reflection of the cemetery at Amherst, where coffins are inserted into the side of a hill (lines 15 & 16). Then, in line 20, the “cornice, in the ground” suggests the presence of a headstone, or perhaps the cornice can be interpreted as the arch of the casket lying in the ground (line 20). Finally, the poem ends revealing that centuries have passed as the final stanza begins, “Since then’t is centuries,” when the narrator met with “Death,¹ first realizing she was headed “toward eternity” (line 24).

Rarely are Dickinson’s poems mere lessons or simple tales; they are tools of power, passion, and conflict. Dickinson’s “Because I could not stop for Death” is more than a cute poem about the certainty of death. By looking closely at what Dickinson says and then feeling and seeing the portrait painted by Dickinson’s words, a gentle nature, even kindness, surrounds death, and therefore a conflict between life, death, and the time that follows. In lines 2 and 8, the words “kindly” and “civility” reveal ironies and ideas not usually thought of in reference to death; in fact, the entire poem suggests a calm, while perhaps still sad, reflection on both life and death. The second stanza, while revealing the loss of both labor and leisure, shows no regret or anger in retiring to the “civility” of death (line 8). In the third stanza, reflections on a life, general or personal, are related through images of childhood, maturity, and old age. The images invoked in line 9, “children played,” suggest pleasure or fun, emotions expected of childhood; however, line 10 brings more consequential revelations (line 9). While the “lessons” in line 10 can refer to either schoolwork or the more mundane lessons life and age bring out, that they are “scarcely done” leaves the reader not only with knowledge that they have only been recently been completed, but also feeling more harried and less enjoyment (line 10). Maturity, or middle age, symbolized in line 11 by the “gazing grain,” and its implication of labor and fertility

intertwine reactions of drudgery and richness with the beauty of the fields (line 11). Finally, the image of a sunset is brought to mind by “the setting sun” as the third stanza closes, and with this picture emotions of peace and closure (line 12). As the poem comes to a close, the comparison of centuries feeling shorter than a day brings about feelings of confusion. There are no answers as to the nature of “eternity,” whether it is pleasurable or displeasing (line 20). Is the time past death unfulfilling or peaceful? Is it passionless or filled with the passion of a complete life? These questions go unanswered, without even a hint of feeling, making the steady reality described quite certain and the conflict of death’s nature, be it kind or cruel, unresolved.

A final view of the poem may lead the reader to believe that this poem is not really about death, but more about the narrator’s, or perhaps even Emily Dickinson’s, view of marriage. Emily Dickinson, perhaps a feminist before the era of feminism and women’s rights, may have been cunningly exploring the implications of marriage and the relationship between death and marriage in the poem. First, it must be recognized that three distinct people play a part in this poem: the narrator, Death, and Immortality. The narrator is most likely a woman because it is revealed she is dressed in a gown; therefore, it is easy to imagine that the only male revealed, Death (Death is referred to as “he” in lines 2, 5, 8 and so on) could be a male suitor. Immortality, mentioned in line 4, may be more difficult to imagine, but during Emily Dickinson’s time, a young, unmarried woman would have to be chaperoned in the presence of a male suitor; it would make sense that Immortality represents such a chaperone (line 4). In the first stanza, the narrator is exposed as engrossed in her own occupations: “[because she] could not stop for Death, / He kindly stopped for me” (line 4). In line 6, all aspects of the narrator’s previous life come to an end and have to be “put away,” much the way a woman of Dickinson’s time would have had to leave both her “labor and [her] leisure” upon marriage (lines 6 & 7). The sequence of the narrator’s life through symbols representing childhood, adolescence, fertility,

and old age reveals little; however, when combined with the apparent lack of passion and identity in this stanza, it becomes clear that the life summarized is a woman's and that it is meaningless. The narrator looks back on the struggles of childhood in this reading of the third stanza: "We passed the school where children strove / At recess, in the ring" (lines 8 & 9). Though for what the "children strove" is not said, one interpretation is that children, in general, strive to be regarded as equals to adults (line 8). Not only does this line state the lack of equality for women, it is placed strategically early in the time line of the third stanza, suggesting that inequality occurs early in life of the individual woman and of humanity. Then, the image of children "At recess, in the ring" presents the reader with an interrelated irony (line 9). First, a ring often represents marriage. Second, the childhood rhyme and game "Ring around the rosies" implies a tragic misfortune as it is a song or poem first sung during the Black Plague around the corpses of those who had died. The "Ring" symbolizing marriage combined with the death from the rhyme "Ring around the rosies" presents a haunting image of marriage and death before continuing quietly on to the "gazing grain," in line 11, a symbol of fertility, and the "setting sun," perhaps a reference to old age (lines 10, 11, & 12). Continuing into the fourth stanza, the frail nature of what a woman becomes is portrayed through the sheer gown and cape the narrator now wears as a wife, despite the chill. The home in the fifth stanza seems to the narrator nothing less than a grave and tombstone: through her eyes "a house that seemed / A swelling of the ground; / The roof was scarcely visible. / The cornice in the ground" (lines 16-19). The image of the house and death is difficult to dispute when the house also seems to be a burial site with the "swelling of the ground" suggesting the risen soil above a grave, and "the cornice," being at ground level, a tombstone (lines 18 & 19). Both leave a clear image of death in the home. As the poem closes, in the sixth stanza, the narrator observes that since she first came to understand the eternal nature of her ride with the

suitor, time has seemed to pass quickly. While this interpretation does not glamorize or diminish marriage, it presents a reality that was common in Dickinson's time and, sadly, for many women marriage continues to be synonymous with death, figuratively and sometimes literally.

While no one now or even then could ever dream of getting into the mind of Emily Dickinson, the various interpretations of her poetry, from the impersonal to the very personal, are still amazing. Dickinson's poetry reads beautifully and the words flow off the page, making it easy for today's readers to enjoy; however, it has been impossible to thoroughly interpret her writing and, in some cases, to transcribe, but her remarkably unique style, as well as her use of thematic expression, should encourage everyone to look deeper into the wording and meaning of her poetry. While some feel that Dickinson only presents a bleakness of humanity and reverence for nature (in such poems as in "Nature, the gentlest mother" and "The robin is the one"), it also appears that Dickinson was also attempting to express the realities humankind must face. While the certainty of death and the conflict surrounding the kindness and cruelty death and dying present are important, it is the idea of marriage and death being connected that is the most intriguing. Feminist theory and action has emerged and grown into an entity connecting women throughout the world, and Dickinson, though long dead, is still connecting, empowering, and enlightening women today.

Evaluation: *Joann offers a sensitive and sophisticated interpretation of Emily Dickinson's poem. Like Emily Dickinson's poetry, Joann's prose connects and empowers.*

See You Next Week

by Carol Arvo
Course: English 101
Instructor: Jack Dodds

Assignment:
Choose a community you belong to or know well from direct experience. Observe it firsthand, conduct interviews with community members, and then write an informal report in the “New Journalism” style. Aim to be vividly descriptive as well as informative.

Outline

Key Question: Why do people go to Sundance Saloon in Mundelein, Illinois on a regular basis to do country western dancing?

- I. Explain background of country western dancing
 - A. Explain names of country western dances
- II. Describe the physical aspects of Sundance Saloon
 - A. Western atmosphere
 - B. Stage for live band
 - C. Western dress
- III. Explain background of country western dancing popularity
 - A. Music changed to country rock
 - B. Garth Brooks was responsible
- IV. Interview people at Sundance Saloon
 - A. Ask questions to find out why people go to Sundance Saloon on a regular basis
 - B. Describe what is going on during the evening as questions are being asked
 - C. Report answers given to questions
- V. State conclusion based on interview questions

“Slappin’ Leather,” “Tush Push,” “Two Step,” “Double Two,” “Grapevine”—the words may be English but the meaning is foreign to everyone except “nighttime cowboys”: the guys and gals who have left their day jobs behind as they traded in suits, wingtips, and pumps for jeans and western boots. Tonight I am one of those “nighttime cowboys.” I straddle a barstool on the outside of a fenced-in dance floor at the Sundance Saloon in Mundelein, Illinois, and I know that “Slappin’ Leather” and “Tush Push” are names of line dances, that “Grapevine” is a particular step within a line dance, and that “Two Step” and “Double Two” are couple-dances.

The owners of Sundance have created a western atmosphere that suburbanites are comfortable with. The Saloon is predominately wood with a few cactus-shaped mirrors here and there on the walls. A large silver saddle hangs from the center of the dance floor to cast fleeting sparkles of light on the dancers instead of the usual silver ball found above ballroom dance floors. A small stage where a country band plays on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays is next to the DJ, right in front of the dance floor. Western shirts, jeans, boots, and cowboy hats, worn by almost everyone, create the rest of the atmosphere and provide the finishing touch. Dressing western style is part of the fun at Sundance. It is socially acceptable and that makes it okay for adults to pretend to be cowboys just as they pretended to be “cowboys and Indians” when they were children.

Although it has had different names in the past, Sundance Saloon has been around for at least twenty-five years. However, the popularity of country western dancing peaked in the early '90s. Part of the reason for its popularity was a change in the music from typical country western to music that has more country rock in it. Garth Brooks, a successful country western singer, is said to be responsible for a large part of this shift. Country western dancing has leveled off now and is no longer a fad, so why do normal, everyday people turn into “nighttime cowboys,” in all stages of expertise, who return night after night, week

after week, to twirl and step around and around a square dance floor? What compels them to be “regulars” even though they may be exhausted and stressed out from working all day? “Exactly what,” I wondered, “is the attraction of country western dancing?” More specifically, “What is the attraction of Sundance Saloon?” I decided to find out.

Since I had been to these fascinating bars before, I knew that the people were exceptionally friendly, but a different kind of “friendly” than is found in singles bars. “Country western” is a non-threatening, sincere type of friendliness that I personally find inviting, so I felt comfortable asking the woman sitting on a stool to my left, whom I knew as Beth, “Why do you come here to dance on a regular basis?”

Willing to talk about the subject, she responded, “I enjoy being here with the people. They are friendly, fun to be with, and I’ve made quite a few friends by coming every week. It also gets me out of the house.” Our conversation was interrupted by flashing lights announcing that the DJ had arrived at his station behind a panel of switches, knobs, and buttons lit up by little red, green, and yellow lights. With his earphones, he made me think he could have a part-time job between songs as an air-traffic controller. He started the evening with a fast dance called “The Skip.”

I turned back to Beth, who seemed happy to continue talking, and explained that I was researching why people came to Sundance every week. We ordered a coke, danced a few line dances, and then got back to talking. Another “regular,” Jenny, stopped to compliment Beth on the western shirt she was wearing, and I immediately gained another person to interview. Jenny agreed with Beth that the main reason for coming to Sundance was the people but added that she also valued the exercise and stress relief dancing provided, not to mention that it was just plain fun. There was no room for doubt when she emphatically declared, “I just love it here!”

While Beth and Jenny danced to the next two songs, I thought about what they had said. I thought it strange that neither of them had mentioned the music. When they returned from the dance floor, I asked them, "What about the music? Do you like the music here?"

"Of course!" they said in unison.

Now they were sensing my reporter's role and Jenny volunteered information before I could ask for it: "Some places are boring. The music is the same old stuff, but Sundance is better than most. There's such a variety of ages here that they have to play something for everyone. I don't dance the waltz, but they play it once in a while and I like to listen."

"Do you go anywhere else to dance?" I asked Jenny.

"Not very often," she said. "I usually end up back here. I've been coming here so long it's just not the same anywhere else."

Suddenly, from behind us came two arms, one on my right shoulder and the other on Jenny's left shoulder. Startled, we turned and saw James, another "regular" who usually danced only couple-dances, especially the "Two Step." He greeted us with, "What's up?"

After a brief explanation, he joined our conversation with his views on the subject: "I love to come here because I know just about everyone. If I don't know them, I ask them to dance. Some ladies only know line [line dances] so I have to teach them the "Two Step," but once they get the "slow, slow, quick, quick" down-pat, they don't have a problem."

Beth admitted that the step pattern for the "Two Step" took her a while to master, but once she did, she was saying "slow, slow, quick, quick" in her sleep. She commented, "The guy who taught me was soooo patient. I stepped on his feet so often I felt like I should shine his boots."

We all laughed, and this inspired James and Jenny to dance the "Two Step" just starting. I took this time to jot down a few notes. Beth, Jenny, and James had good reasons for coming regularly, but

did other people have other reasons for being at Sundance? We talked about this for almost an hour, off and on between dances. The answer would have to wait, though, because the "Cowboy Stomp," everyone's favorite line dance, was about to start. The barstools emptied and the dance floor filled as the opening notes announced the dance. It seemed as if the wooden floor would break into splinters under the stress of people stomping on the dance floor like a herd of wild mustang thundering across a Wyoming canyon. No such disaster though. The floor held up just fine, and after the dance we returned to our stools and ordered another round of Cokes. I had heard that a large number of people at country western bars were serious about dancing and that they tended to favor Cokes instead of liquor. Sundance was no exception. A quick look around showed that the cola industry and Sundance dancers were well acquainted.

Still wanting to find out other reasons people came to Sundance, I, along with Beth, Jenny, and James, who by now were just as interested in the answer as I was, approached about twelve people: male, female, young, and old. We found that a few came for the dance lessons given from 7:30 to 8:30 every night, and they answered as Dave Olson did: "I like the challenge of always learning a new dance. Bob and Lucia are terrific instructors. We learn a new dance every week."

Scott Wyman said, "I like the way each dance presents a blueprint. I have to learn specific steps for each specific dance." (Yes, he is an engineer during the day.)

Overwhelmingly, though, the answer was either, "I come here because I like the people," or "I have a standing date with a group that meets here every Tuesday."

Atmosphere, however, along with the music, drinking, dancing, and lessons, only serves to get the customer in the door. Once inside, people meet each other, become acquainted, and then become friends. Without a doubt, my interviews revealed that the majority of people who regularly go to Sundance Saloon go there to be in comfortable,

familiar surroundings with people they have met there and who have become their friends. The common love of country western music and dancing builds a camaraderie among them that transcends stress and fatigue. For them, Sundance is as comfortable as a “comfy” couch in front of a fireplace on a cold winter night. When they saunter through the swinging door, they leave their bad moods, hidden agendas, and business politics behind. For a few hours they are just nice people having a good time.

Time flew by. Morning was coming soon, and I had an 8:00 meeting at work the next day, so I thanked my fellow Sundance dancers and said goodnight.

Their response to me was, “See you next week.”

This made emotions tingle within me. I had accomplished more than I had set out to. I had gathered the data I needed from interviews, but I had also turned some dancing acquaintances into dancing friends. They had convinced me that my findings were correct. The attraction to Sundance Saloon really is the people, and because of that I am thinking about turning into a “regular.” Maybe I will see them next week.

Evaluation: Carol has written a light yet informative report about a community that may not be perceived as such. In the shape of a story, she provides insightful observations about what makes a community a community. Like most good reporters, she uses her subjects' own words as the foundation for her story.

The Paradox of J. Alfred Prufrock: An Analysis

by Myrna Begnel
Course: Literature 241
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:
Write a literary analysis.

Through much of his poetry, T.S. Eliot explored the plight of the individual struggle to determine the meaning of existence within the framework of a changeable world. In particular, Eliot viewed modern society and the influence of modern technology as a cause of *spiritual* alienation to the human experience. Within Eliot's writing, this alienation furthers the tensions and contradictions that inherently follow an introspective examination of the definition of human existence. Eliot's early poem, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, portrays the duality of tension between appearance (to society) and reality (within an individual) which applied to a generation on the precipice between antiquity and modernism—an issue examined by Eliot in his doctoral dissertation at Harvard (Ellman and O'Clair 270). Eliot's Prufrock is a realist who views himself and others with discerned honesty. On the other hand, Prufrock's realism is discordant with the perceptions of a society that appears to place value on the "face" that is prepared to "meet the faces that you meet" (Eliot 273). In other words, Prufrock is isolated within a society that emphasizes appearance over substance. Yet, Prufrock is unable to overcome his own inertia and indecision to communicate the importance of his reality over fraud.

While studying philosophy at Harvard, Eliot may have been directly influenced by Kierkegaard, who defined the tensions of the human existence on several developmental levels. Kierkegaard defined the first level as the aesthetic one, where

...aesthetic man in order to escape from committing himself to duty or responsibility, tries to lose himself in sensual or intellectual experience. Refusing to assert himself in moral choice, he takes refuge in superficiality and variety, trying to enjoy the fruits of life without becoming involved in living. The more he tries to escape, the more he is haunted by despair at the meaninglessness of his life. (Cahilli2)

Kierkegaard's definition of the aesthetic man clearly parallels the character of Prufrock in the poem. For

in Prufrock, the reader observes a man who cannot commit to decision, a man who over-intellectualizes, and a man who despairs because he comprehends his inability to transcend disconnection and establish emotional contact as an essential component of the spirit. Prufrock's dilemma lies in his knowledge that he is inferior, a failure; yet, he cannot force himself to become an active participant in the solution. In order to reach this sobering conclusion the reader must carefully examine the nuances of the work itself.

The title, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, gives the reader a false sense of the true meaning of this poem. Upon first impression, one may believe that the poem will be a classic love poem. The title, as later revealed, is tragic irony—for Prufrock never sings his song, nor does he ever declare love. The name, J. Alfred Prufrock, also hints at self-derision, or at the very least, playfulness. The bourgeois sound of the name denotes an image of a man who is a member of the circle of high society. Again, as the poem develops, the reader realizes the irony of this image; for Prufrock creates an image that he presents to the rest of the world, while realizing the destruction of his own self-esteem.

The poem continues with a very important epigraph from Dante's *Inferno*:

If I thought that I was speaking to someone who would go back to the world, this flame would shake no more. But since nobody has ever gone back alive from this place, if what I hear is true, I answer you without fear of infamy. (Eliot 272)

It is quickly apparent that the *love song* and the weighty message of the epigraph are incongruent; for a love song implies light-hearted expression, while the epigraph is a confession of evil. The ultimate relevance of the epigraph only becomes completely apparent at the conclusion of the poem. The context of the epigraph, however, is relevant. The speaker of the epigraph is Count Guido de Montefeltro, a Counselor of Fraud, who openly confesses to Dante, the poet, that he has committed the sin of fraud. The Count only speaks because he believes that Dante

will not escape from hell alive. The epigraph soon becomes a metaphor for the hell in which Prufrock envisions himself to be. For Prufrock's poem is a declaration of his own fraud. Furthermore, because there is little outward action within the poem and the tension and drama are internal, Prufrock, like the Count, believes that no one will ever hear or understand his internal dissemination.

The poem continues innocently with the first two lines, "Let us go then, you and I, / When the evening is spread out against the sky" (Eliot 272). Once again, an initial impression of these lines indicates a lightness which naturally accompanies the style of a love poem. The "you" of the poem is intentionally vague. With the first reading, one automatically assumes the "you" to be a woman. With subsequent reading, however, there is no clear answer as to the companion's identity. It does become clear that this voice is not female, as Prufrock later categorizes women by the pronoun "one." While Eliot claimed that the "you" of the poem was an unidentified male companion (Ellman 273), careful reading of the poem and epigraph suggests the "you" to be Prufrock's alter ego. In lectures, "Eliot on several occasions drew attention to the three voices of poetry: the voice of the poet talking to himself he called the first voice; the voice of the poet talking to listeners he called the second; and the voice of the poet speaking through another character—a narrator, observer, or actor—he called the third" (Braybrooke 13). The "you" of the poem functions as a shadowing observer that doubles as Prufrock's consciousness, indicating the multiple identities of Prufrock. In essence, the "you" and "I" become only "I." The assumption of the "you" as consciousness is given additional credence by the epigraph. Prufrock does not believe he can escape his own hell of ineffective communication, and he therefore cannot speak openly to anyone but himself or his own consciousness.

After the innocence of the opening lines, Eliot quickly shifts the mood:

Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,

The muttering retreats
 Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
 And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
 Streets that follow like a tedious argument
 Of insidious intent
 To lead you to an overwhelming question...
 Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
 Let us go and make our visit. (272-73)

Eliot abruptly alters any lure of a lighthearted tone by presenting a bleak urban setting for the poem. The presented images are representative of any "modern" city. Because Prufrock does not name his city, he intimates *this* city as a typical depiction of many such cities which he has visited. Prufrock and his companion consciousness are presented as patients in need of surgery, conveying the necessity of open examination. An etherised patient is a patient prepared for surgery, numb and about to be cut open. The patient becomes a metaphor for Prufrock, for he is ready to open himself to the world to be examined, and more importantly, to have any disease removed. It is interesting to note Eliot's careful placement of the word *etherised* in lieu of *anesthetized*. Prufrock is not asleep for the surgery or examination, but rather awake, in a numbed state, which makes it difficult to distinguish between the real and ethereal. In this state, pain is not gone, but simply deadened.

The aura of this first stanza depicts a desolate, unhealthy, and treacherous atmosphere that leads to the challenge of a question. Prufrock, however, is hesitant to explore the question, which the shadowed observer wishes to confront. Prufrock keeps the consciousness at bay, impatiently imploring him not to query further. The implication is that the question is of such great importance that Prufrock does not dare face the reality of examination, either internal or external. His consciousness seems to urge Prufrock to decision or action. But Prufrock puts the "you" off. The question will wait until they reach their destination.

Eliot continues with the famous lines that are repeated twice within the poem:

In the room the women come and go
 Talking of Michelangelo. (273)

This room is presumably the one where Prufrock is going to speak. Though the reader knows nothing of the women, there is a notion that the women are haughty, perhaps contemptuous of Prufrock. They are a representation of a fraudulent society that ignores Prufrock, discussing current culture and what is "in vogue." Because Eliot uses the same lines twice, the reader is meant to note the falsity of appearance that is a very real part of Prufrock's environment.

After presenting the image of deception, Eliot returns to a description of the city:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the
 window-panes,
 The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the
 window-panes,
 Licked its tongue into the corners of the
 evening,
 Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
 Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from
 chimneys,
 Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
 And seeing that it was a soft October night,
 Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.
 (273)

This stanza is reminiscent of the Biblical passage, "there is a time for everything, a time to live, a time to die..." (Ecclesiastes) in which time can be seen as both a friend and enemy. Time allows Prufrock to encounter reality through the preparation of a "face" or image that he wishes to portray to a society that largely isolates him. But what this image is to be is part of the overwhelming question within the meaning of Prufrock's existence. But time is also an enemy, as it lets Prufrock continue with his indecisiveness. By postponing a confrontation of the question, Prufrock's resolve to make a decision is weakened. Prufrock is rife with contradiction and paradox—he wishes to raise the issue of reality and appearance, yet he continues to "drop" the issue, leaving it once more to another time. Within this short passage, the phrase "there will be time" is

often repeated as a chant, its repetition indicative of Prufrock's state of mind. Prufrock attempts to convince himself and his consciousness that there will indeed be time to make a decision, but it is apparent that a moment of crisis is impending. The final line of the strophe contradicts the importance of Prufrock's weighty decision with the banality of taking toast and tea. Again, the internal emotions are shown to be significant in stark contrast to the triviality of everyday society.

After a reappearance by the women who speak of Michelangelo, the poem continues with another mention of time:

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?'
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!')
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to
the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a
simple pin—
(They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are
thin!') (273)

This passage further emphasizes Prufrock's indecisiveness. He wishes to turn back and never make his declaration. For the first time in the poem, there is a glimpse at the profound insecurity and alienation that are part of Prufrock's experience. Prufrock perceives his physical condition with harsh reality. But what is more psychologically devastating to Prufrock is his perception of how he is viewed by others. He realizes that he has flaws but is contemptuous of others who notice these flaws. Though he imagines himself as one who cannot assimilate, Prufrock falls prey to the need for approval of appearance, as evidenced by his fastidious placement of a pin upon his "rich and modest" necktie. Eliot again uses irony to show the paradoxical dimensions of Prufrock as a man who is conscious of himself and his reality, but who cannot assimilate or communicate with a society that does not appreciate authenticity.

In the next short stanza, Prufrock finally asks himself the question, "Do I dare disturb the universe?" (274). Will he reveal the real significance of his existence and the image that he wishes to portray? But Prufrock begs the question once more, "In a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse" (274). The crescendo of the moment begins to pass and Prufrock once again hesitates. He wavers on a decision, because he himself is not yet sure of what meaning he has. Prufrock assumes that a declaration of self is not final because time will change the concept of self. Additionally, an image that is presented to society will change even more quickly by the imposition of societal perceptions and stereotypes.

Prufrock's decision to continue indecision is reinforced in the continuing verse, "For I have known them all already, known them all—" (274). "All" is a representation of the people contained within the "room," that is, the larger, fraudulent society that classifies Prufrock. Because of his own concern over appearances, Prufrock has lived by measuring his life "with coffee spoons" (274); he has allowed himself to live only in small amounts, without a generous appreciation for his own spirit and his own humanity. Prufrock continues by stating, "I have known the eyes already...the eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase" (274). Prufrock continues to deride those in society who categorize him. He compares himself to a pinned butterfly—an insect. Prufrock as an insect is insignificant. But as a butterfly, he becomes a beautiful insect, as appearance still has consequence. Society traps and classifies Prufrock as a specimen of loneliness and alienation. Prufrock finally knows what it is that he should say and how it should be said, but he cannot convey his thoughts to a society that formulates his thoughts and actions. He cannot fathom making a grandiose statement when he has been made to feel dirty and ashamed. This sentiment is echoed in the haunting words, "Then how should I begin / To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways? / And how should I presume?" (274).

Eliot devotes one more stanza to his concept by showing Prufrock as having known the “arms that are braceleted and white and bare” (274), meaning that he is aware of the women in society who consider him with mean-spiritedness and scorn. Yet, he describes the women “in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair” (274). The women are not as they appear to be. For in truth, or light, they have the flaws that are contained in humanity. Prufrock insinuates an air of presumption toward these women because he knows that they are concerned only with appearance, when in reality, they have flaws similar to his own. Yet, Prufrock has an attraction or conflict with this concern for appearance when he states, “Is it perfume from a dress / That makes me so digress?” (274). While he clearly ridicules the women for their concern with appearance, he is drawn to the same concern, despite his own contempt.

At this point, the mood of the poem reverts again to images of the city:

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow
streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the
pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of
windows?...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.
(274)

With the shift in tense, there is a shift in understanding within Prufrock. He finally comprehends the loneliness of his life as an individual within a fraudulent society. The smoke rises to reveal the truth that Prufrock’s life is not fakery. Prufrock becomes conscious not only of himself, but also of how he feels when he is among others. He becomes “more than the inhabitants of the drawing room, precisely because he knows he is less than they” (Spender 34). This realization, however, alienates Prufrock completely. It is therefore fitting that he wishes to be nothing more than a pair of claws, where he is brainless, without feeling and emotion, and distant

from the endless strife of communication.

After the epiphany of self-understanding, Prufrock returns to his laments, making one last but wavering attempt at communication. The weight of fraud and decision are again compared to the fog and the cat. The burden of decision and communication is heavy—it tires and numbs Prufrock to the point of resignation when he states, “I am no prophet—and here’s no great matter; / I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker, / And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker, / And in short, I was afraid” (Eliot 274). The moment of declaration is over for Prufrock, as he begins a long (several stanzas) diatribe deriding his own importance. He mocks his own inferiority and inability to establish communication with those that he most desires. Even death laughs at his cowardice and inertia. Fear of further rejection has paralyzed Prufrock into inaction. This is evident as Prufrock laments,

Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
To say: “I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all”—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: “That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all.” (275)

Prufrock second-guesses his decision not to communicate his emotions and his real image, as if the meaning of existence could be simplified into a ball and rolled away. The comparison of Prufrock to Lazarus only highlights Prufrock’s spiritual death, for his lack of communication is his emotional death. He is not like Lazarus, who rose from the dead to tell how it was to be dead. This passage further intensifies the message of the epigraph. Prufrock is in a hell worse than Dante’s; although Dante returned from hell, Prufrock will never escape his. If Prufrock were to escape, through communication, he would be misunderstood. Like the Counselor of Fraud, Prufrock betrays the truth because he becomes as false as those he criticizes.

Prufrock continues by trivializing his existence when he claims that he is not Hamlet, a heroic character with the ability to choose what he should be and *if* he should be (a direct correlation to the overwhelming question). Rather, Prufrock envisions himself as Polonius, a peripheral and pompous character who is intelligent, yet politic and often ridiculed by others. The comparison is an appropriate and accurate reflection of Prufrock's state of mind. He does not dare disturb the universe, like Hamlet. Prufrock envisions that his timidity and tendency to maintain the status quo deserve the ridicule from those that he has scorned in the past.

The absurdity of Prufrock's situation and examination of existence is summed up in the words:

I grow old...I grow old...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a
peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk
upon the beach. (275)

Prufrock no longer makes grandiose metaphors or comparison. His universe, which was previously "squeezed into a ball" and "rolled" inevitably to question existence, has merely become a pair of overfastidiously rolled-up trousers and a peach. Prufrock's idea of the daring is to wear white trousers and to avoid getting them sandy. The inability to communicate has caused Prufrock such tremendous spiritual pain that his only solace is to mock the situation, reducing himself to the level of the trivial.

The last images of the poem contain references to mythical mermaids:

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me,
I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown
back
When the wind blows the water white and
black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and
brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.
(276)

Prufrock can be viewed as a hero on a quest (of self-determination). But heroes are men of action and dignity. Due to his own inertia, Prufrock becomes mired in inaction and self-disgust, and therefore cannot see himself as a heroic figure. The mythical mermaids were known only to sing for heroes. Because no one envisions Prufrock as a hero, the mermaids will not sing to him. Even on a mythical level, Prufrock remains outside the realm of communication. The mermaids are a positive image of what could have been for Prufrock had he chosen decision, both on a real and spiritual level. There is an interesting use of the pronoun "we" within the last stanza, which once more indicates the presence of Prufrock and his subconscious observer. Both Prufrock and his alter ego have failed to reconcile conflict and have only lingered *near* communication (the mermaids), asleep to the possibilities. It is the voices of humanity, of reality, that wake Prufrock and his consciousness—only to drown them. The morose message is that human existence destroys the spirit. Prufrock dies spiritually within his own concept of hell, from which he sees no escape.

Introspection and comprehension of the human condition within societal existence is a timeless struggle—one that is perhaps even more applicable to today's changing society than Prufrock's. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* embodies the spirit of all people. Prufrock is not merely a person, but a state of mind in that a bit of Prufrock lies within us all, asking the question, "Who am I?" It is therefore fitting that Prufrock and his observer, the consciousness, examine the apprehension that exists between inward reality and societal appearance. Prufrock is more a hero than he envisions because he at least attempts to quantify his existence within the universe. Though his loneliness is exaggerated, I suspect many would identify with Prufrock and his emotion.

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Evaluation: *Whenever Myrna puts pen to paper, the reader can expect great things. This essay — which concerns one of the most challenging poets of the twentieth century — is stellar. Much of the published material on Eliot's Love Song falls well short of the copiousness and overall quality of Myrna's essay. I read this one again and again, with pleasure.*

Capital Punishment: To Kill or Not to Kill

by Robert Burgett
Course: English 101
Instructor: Martha Simonsen

Assignment:
*Write an argumentative essay.
Support your thesis with solid evidence
and sound reasoning.*

Should society kill people who kill people? Or should murderers be removed from society and serve life terms in prison? Does execution serve as a means to an end for society as a whole, or does capital punishment serve as an end for the emotional revenge of the few? The issue of capital punishment is heated by two aspects: retribution and deterrence. I am going to examine these two aspects, as well as the negative judicial effects that were a direct result of the reinstatement of the death penalty by the Supreme Court in 1976. And through this examination, I am going to argue my conviction that life imprisonment is the only morally acceptable punishment for murder.

The only punishment for murder is death according to Immanuel Kant's theory of punishment. The punishment must always equal the crime. "There is

no *likeness* or proportion between life, however painful, and death; and therefore there is no equality between the crime of murder and the retaliation of it but what is judicially accomplished by the execution of the criminal" (199). According to Kant, the retribution for murder by death reinforces the importance of the victim's life; life imprisonment may be painful, but does not equal the lost life of family and community.

I agree that any kind of life does not equal a death, but I do not see how life is valued through another death. Society does not have a moral obligation to provide revenge and happiness for the few, such as the family of a murder victim, and to completely disregard the moral obligation to provide life for the whole. Life imprisonment respects all human life. Anthony G. Amsterdam, an attorney who has represented many capital punishment candidates, states that the "only difference between life imprisonment and capital punishment is precisely that imprisonment continues to respect the value of human life" (204). Retribution is an emotional reaction, not a logical action. The Supreme Court, in *Furman v. Georgia*, claimed that "retribution is no longer the dominant objective of criminal law" (*Gregg v. Georgia* [1976] 191). According to this claim, our justice system should not be used for revenge.

Deterrence is another key motive behind the support for capital punishment. This is the belief that the execution of a murderer will deter potential murderers from killing. Ernest van dan Haag, a professor of Public Policy at Fordham University, writes that criminal law should "protect the lives of potential victims in preference to those of actual murderers...hundreds of thousands abstain from it because they regard the [death penalty] with horror" (211). Capital punishment thus is a strong deterrent of future homicides—through fear of death. The risk of having potential murder victims is a risk that should be prevented. To give no sympathy to accused murderers by executing them should protect possible murder victims.

I strongly disagree with the view that capital punishment somehow deters future acts of murder. In order to be a potential murderer, one most likely has no respect for his/her own life. Certainly, most, if not all, people who commit the act of murder are in some way mentally deranged—not concerned with consequences or filled with fear because of the latest execution covered on CNN. Furthermore, statistics show that from 1989-1996, the average number of death-row inmates has been 280 a year. Executions doubled from 1994-1995 and did not alter the yearly sentencing of 3,000 capital criminals in 1996, nor did capital punishment alter the 280 yearly average selected for death row of that 3,000 (Lemov 30). “For the past 40 years, criminologists have...compared homicide rates in countries and states that did and did not have capital punishment...*none* of [the research] found that the death penalty had any statistical significant effect upon the rate of homicide” (Amsterdam 206). Clearly, there is no evidence that capital punishment prevents/controls murder.

Because of these moral and rational arguments concerning the death penalty, the legal system has taken pains to kill criminals. Ohio’s Attorney General, Betty Montgomery, is discouraged with the slow system of appeals which sometimes takes up to 15 years. To uphold “due process,” Montgomery helped write a law, passed by the legislature in 1995 and based on similar laws in Texas and California, that forces death-row prisoners to make their appeals in a more limited time period” (Lemov 32). According to advocates of such laws, the law is the law, and capital punishment should be enforced in order to fulfill justice. Fighting to enforce punishment after a conviction questions the respect we have for justice.

On the other hand, the reason behind the lengthy system of appeals is to uphold justice. The rights of the accused must be administered. The National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers states that the criminal justice system is intended to provide an error-free system to ensure justice (Lemov 32). “Two-thirds of the death-penalty convic-

tions... are overturned on the basis of incompetent trial defense” (Lemov 32). Prior to the 1960’s, evidence surfaced to prove the innocence of the already executed in several cases and “reviews of the trial and sentencing record grew out of that situation” (Lemov 32). With the percentage of errors in the judicial process, the fulfillment of capital punishment is slow and expensive, but such consequences are unavoidable because of the immoral act of taking a life. Because of the finality of death, the cost of killing an inmate is approximately two million dollars; incarceration costs are roughly \$20,000 a year (Kaplan 28). Such consequences of the death penalty are needed ironically to provide the most ethical means of killing a human being. With the death penalty in our legal system, it is morally appropriate to take painstaking and expensive measures to make sure it is properly administered. The value of life is evident and could be honored with life imprisonment instead of death.

Because of the ethical conflict produced by an act of execution, punishment for the crime of murder should entail life imprisonment. Death should not be an option for punishment in our justice system. John Rawls, professor of philosophy at Harvard University, writes: “justice as fairness is to think of the parties in the initial situation as rational and mutually disinterested...one must try to avoid introducing into [the situation] any controversial ethical elements.... The initial situation must be characterized by stipulations that are widely accepted” (56). A narrow scope should be applied to our justice system—a system that is blind to ethical conflict and agreed upon by all people being “rational and mutually disinterested” (56). Therefore, a family member of a murder victim should not be taken into account concerning justice because of the obvious emotional and extremely interested position. Orwell, in his essay “A Hanging,” concentrates on the execution of an inmate in India. He completely excludes the reason as to why the inmate was in his position. I believe that Orwell is implying that the issue is not what the criminal did, but rather what punishment

should be morally condoned. "By combining his falcon's power of observation and his keen but controlled humanism, Orwell gives his essay the shape of a tragic poem" (Bal 261). Orwell is against sanctioned executions, and the strength of "A Hanging" comes from his personal experience as an officer being forced to control his emotions concerning an execution. Lewis E. Lawes, former warden of New York's Sing Sing Prison, writes that "not only does capital punishment fail in its justifications, but no punishment could be invented with so many defects" (Dispaldo 19).

Similar to Orwell, Justice Harry Blackmun of the Supreme Court considers the death penalty to be a "machine of death," and Blackmun has stated that machine is in "high gear" (Cole 20). Forty-two countries have abolished the death penalty since 1976; "[1976] was when our own Supreme Court revived the death penalty" (Cole 20). Our society somehow justifies execution as a punishment, even though we are in the minority who still practice it. The death penalty is an illusion of a proper solution to murder because of the temporary happiness acquired by the victim's family, friends, community, etc. But if one thinks logically, execution is not punishment; it is an end—the same end that all humans experience. Justice should be punishment for the guilty, not death. The legal system must not combine the idea of punishment with the idea of death; the latter is incomprehensible. What takes place after death, nobody knows; it's a mystery. A person witnessing an execution would "[see] the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it's in full tide" (Orwell 43). A justice system that condones violence as a solution to violence will produce people who use violence as a solution, providing for no solution, only additional problems such as an increased crime rate. Society has leaders and those leaders should set examples for proper ways to act, not improper ways to react. Imprisonment is, and always will be, the only ethical and rational punishment for murder.

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Evaluation: *The topic is familiar but the argument is powerful, well-researched and intelligently argued.*
One of the best argumentative essays I've had in a 101 class.

Pillow Talk

by *Melanie Duke*

Course: Political Science 101

Instructor: Molly Waite

Assignment:

Take any aspect of American Politics and create an original piece (poem, play, story, etc.) based on it.

“My love, my sweet,” she coyly cooed,
“What is this gossip of a feud?
At lunch today I overheard
Some news I thought to be absurd.

They said that you and Al don’t speak
Since raising funds caused such a shriek.
You surely can’t think Al’s to blame.
He’s only playing the old game.

The interest groups have lots of dough.
So what if a few favors flow?
It’s just that way in government.
You should know that as President!”

“Dear Hillary, my love, my sweet,
It’s just that Al’s not too discreet.
He’s taken cash from foreigners
And some suspicious characters.

The timing of these incidents
Points out our grave incompetence.
Whitewater dangles o’er our heads.
Our future hangs by just a thread.”

“Oh, nonsense, Bill. It’s just a game.
Republicans want to defame,
In hopes the White House they can grab,
And they don’t care whose back they stab.

McDougal doesn’t know a thing.
There is no mud that he can sling.
Besides a pardon you can give;
I won’t become a fugitive!”

“Dear Hillary, my love, my pet,
I have another grave regret.
Miss Flowers, whom I barely knew,
Has given a new interview.

And Paula Jones, her case still looms.
I must look like a big baffoon.
I find these women treacherous.
They make me look so lecherous.”

Pillow Talk

“Bill, my love, my darling dear,
Your escapades I do not fear,
For we have bigger fish to fry.
Amendments I’d like ratified.
Our health care system is a mess,
And vilified in our free press.
The FBI has overstepped,
And needs some strong new leadership.

And Medicare is ruining us.
Its costs are simply scandalous.
The partial-birth abortion foes
Their views on all wish to impose.

And now we have this cloning thing
Which seems to anger the right wing.
And Janet Reno’s Waco stance
Strikes me as simply arrogance.

Our jail system is a joke.
Say no to drugs is up in smoke.
The handicapped want their fair share,
And welfare moms are in despair.

Illegal immigrants sneak in.
Our schools need more discipline.
Environmentalists decry
That forests are in short supply.

So Bill, your little troubles seem
Quite small within the larger scheme.
And further ills are eminent
Until a woman’s President!”

Evaluation: Melanie has humorously and cleverly connected her study of campaign politics and Bill Clinton’s affairs to the content of the course. She documents the relationship well in her poem.

Leaving the Prison of Snopesism: An Analysis of Faulkner's "Barn Burning"

by *Barbara Fudali*
Course: English 102
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:
*Write a literary analysis;
use at least three outside sources.*

"You got to learn to stick to your own blood or you ain't going to have any blood to stick to you" (Faulkner 419): this is how Abner Snopes, from William Faulkner's short story "Barn Burning," understands loyalty to the family. He wants his youngest son, Sarty Snopes, to believe in the same values and follow his path in life. But even though Sarty is only ten years old, he is not easily influenced by his parent's strong personality. At a surprisingly early age, Sarty already has a clear picture of what is right and what is wrong. In spite of his father's dominance, Sarty manages to stay true to his own beliefs and break free from his father.

It is clear that at the beginning of the story Sarty does feel strong loyalty to his father. Sarty thinks of the judge as "our enemy, mine and his both. He's my father" (417). But this is also the time when Sarty begins to doubt his father's rightness as he realizes that he expects him to lie in court. "He aims for me to lie" (417). So when the judge says, "I reckon anybody named for Colonel Sartoris in this country can't help but tell the truth, can they?" (417), Sarty knows he cannot lie. He is not forced to testify against his father, but "Ab unjustly accuses Sarty of intending to betray him at the hearing, and he correctly recognizes that his son is moving out of childhood, developing a mind of his own and is no longer blindly loyal" (Volpe 163).

Sarty's loyalty does not only come from his need for affection and intuitive love for his father but also from the "fear and terror" (428) he feels toward him. The truth is "Ab Snopes is a barn burner, a violent, destructive man" (Volpe 163), and according to Karl Zender, Abner's personality consists of two qualities: "his 'ravens and jealous rage,' which produces his gratuitous acts of provocation and revenge, and his tyranny, which produces his attempts to control the mind and emotions of his son" (Zender 50). Abner is cold, unemotional and full of "his ferocious conviction in the rightness of his own actions" (Faulkner 419). That is why it is hard to agree with Karl Zender, who argues that "vengeful, tyrannous, Ab is nonetheless governed by a desire for his son's affec-

tion, a desire which he characteristically expresses not in its own form but aggressively, as something Sarty must learn" (52). Ab does not recognize his son's different and new, just-emerging identity. He "attempts to make his son an extension of himself" (Volpe 163).

However, Sarty resists him and when Ab stands in court the second time, this time trying to sue Major de Spain over the value of the ruined rug, Sarty is not close to him, because his father cannot expect total devotion from him anymore.

Because of the distance that the father has put between himself and his son, Sarty can pull away even more from his father and look at him more objectively. As a result he feels as if he is "being pulled two ways like between two teams of horses" (Faulkner 424), but he again decides to defend his father and stand with his family.

Sarty's struggle culminates when he is exposed to Major de Spain's house, which is as "big as a courthouse" (420), "pretty and white" (421). He is amazed. Moving from one place to another at least twelve times within his short life is too much to handle for a little boy. All he wants is stability. But this is not the way of life that full-of-rage Abner chooses for his family. When looking at de Spain's house, Sarty feels "the spell of this peace and dignity" (420). The "spell" is so powerful that Sarty hopes his father "will feel it, too. Maybe it will even change him now" (421).

But because he is too young, Sarty does not yet understand that "there is no pure whiteness... because all whiteness—all peace and dignity—is a distillation of someone's sweat" (Zender 53). This is what Abner has tried to teach his son, but the way he wants to convey his message is insensitive and too harsh. Abner is probably trying to keep his son disillusioned, but it is still too early for this lesson. What he needs to experience first is love and affection. And this is exactly how James Ferguson feels about the little boy when he says "in spite of his sensitivity and his intuitive sense of right and wrong, the little boy is too young to understand his father and [the] complexities of moral choice he

must make" (435). If Sarty had learned this lesson, he would have been able (at least partially) to justify the motives of his father's acts. For Sarty, Major's house is the symbol of truth, security and stability—of a life that he never had. He feels "peace and joy" (420) and that this time people who live in this house "are safe from [his father]" (420). However, later as he watches Abner getting ready to burn de Spain's barn, he realizes that his father will never change, and what he will understand later is that the greater the wealth the greater his father's jealous rage that bursts out in the flames of the fires he sets.

Finally, because of his awareness of life's new possibilities, such as peaceful, happy life, Sarty decides to defy his father and warn Major de Spain. He makes a decision which is enormously difficult for him; he struggles with the decision for a long time until he knows he is right. His father is about to burn the symbol of "peace and dignity" (420), the house that symbolizes a promise for a new life. He cannot let his father ruin his dreams.

By warning Major de Spain, Sarty is trying to protect the last hope for a better future after a childhood of misery, unhappiness and instability. "Torn between strong emotional attachment to the parent and his growing need to assert his own identity" (Volpe 163), he chooses independence. Alone, but free of "fear and terror" (Faulkner 420), Sarty begins his journey into adulthood as he walks "toward the dark woods" (Faulkner 428).

Because of the fact that he does not have a strong role model to follow, Sarty's victory is even greater. Even though his father's "ego is so great it creates a centripetal force into which everything must flow or be destroyed" (Volpe 164), his father is the last person Sarty wants to follow. Sarty is proud that he did not let his father destroy the power of his will. He does not want to become "the will-less, abject creature" (164), as his weak mother did. Thus, though his father "cannot tolerate any entity that challenges the dominance of his will" (164), brave Sarty defies the dictatorial Abner, and he rejects the oppressive Snopes blood-line. Sarty is, in turn, a young hero who concludes that it is preferable,

ultimately, to abide by a principle of decency, albeit in solitude, than to resign oneself to life-long Snopesism and/or immorality.

Some may feel that Sarty betrayed his father; I would argue that it is Abner who betrayed his family by preventing them from having a stable, decent life, and thus Sarty's obligation to remain true to his father is altogether lifted. The boy is free to pursue rightness in the forms of "peace and dignity" (Faulkner 420) outside the familial lines, because he shall clearly never acquire such a life within the confines of Snopesism.

In the beginning of his unknown future, "his fear and terror of his father are gone. Only grief and despair remain" (Volpe 164). He steps into the "dark woods" (Faulkner 428) as into the unknown, hard-to-predict future, but there is promise in the rising sun and singing birds. The only thing that he can expect is that this is not the last choice he will have to make. Throughout his life he will have to make many more decisions. There are no rules to follow; he just has to go by instinct, stay true to himself and be brave.

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Evaluation: *As Barbara knows, I am among Faulkner's most zealous fans. Thus, I was delighted to receive this compact, insightful essay on what is perhaps Faulkner's most celebrated short story. Barbara does a beautiful job of uncovering and engaging young Sarty Snopes' intense dilemma; she argues convincingly for the boy's heroism.*

The Dangers of Mercury

by Ali Garner

Course: Chemistry 100
Instructor: David Macaulay

Assignment:

The assignment was a written report about a chemical element. The goal was to integrate information from several good sources—at least three print sources and at least one Internet source—in order to learn more about the element. The report did not have to be footnoted but it did have to include a list of references used.

The element mercury is a silver metal: the only metal to be liquid at room temperature. It is element number 80, and its chemical symbol is Hg. It has a fascinating appearance, which has led to the nickname “quicksilver.” Mercury is a very important element and has many commercial uses, but its widespread use also can be hazardous. Mercury poisoning is a very serious problem in the world today. In this paper I’ll review the history of the element mercury and the main sources of mercury contamination. Then I’ll talk about the symptoms of mercury poisoning and some steps that are being taken or that need to be taken to avoid mercury contamination.

Mercury has a long history, so long, in fact, that the discoverer of this element is not known. There is evidence that it was used by the Chinese as long ago as 2000 BC. The Almaden mercury mine in Spain has been in operation since 400 BC and continues to produce mercury today. Some of mercury’s many uses include purifying other metals, killing germs, preventing mildew, protecting seeds, and measuring temperature. Although mercury has been used for so many years, the hazards of the widespread use of mercury weren’t realized until modern times. The first indications that mercury use could be dangerous were noticed in England in the early 1900s. Mercury was used by British hat makers to process felt, and as a result of their continuous exposure to the element many hat makers suffered severe neurological damage. This led to the phrase “mad as a hatter.” Unfortunately the discovery that mercury could cause health problems has not stopped the occurrence of many disasters involving mercury poisoning. In the 1960s thousands of people in Minamata, Japan were killed or injured because they ate fish contaminated by mercury in industrial dumpings. Then in the 1970s almost 500 people were killed in Northern Iraq because they ate flour on which mercury had been used as a fungicide. There continue to be instances of mercury poisoning today from a variety of different sources. Efforts have been made to reduce the amount of mercury contamination in the envi-

ronment and to educate the public about its hazards, but we have a long way to go.

A major source of mercury poisoning, as in the case of the disaster in Minamata, Japan, is contaminated fish. Mercury is found in high levels in fish in streams, lakes and even oceans. At first this problem was attributed to wholesale industrial discharges into waterways, but government regulations which restricted that pollution failed to greatly reduce the contamination. Mercury is common in fish in waterways whenever rain washes pollutants from the air. The problem is so severe here in the Great Lakes area that pregnant women are encouraged to avoid eating fish caught here.

The fastest growing source of mercury contamination today is garbage burning. There are many items which, when burned, release mercury vapor into the air. Even coal releases trace amounts of mercury into the air when burned. Batteries are the single largest source of mercury in the waste stream. The government has mandated that mercury be removed from household batteries and many other household products, but huge amounts are still found in medical, industrial, and military products. Until recently most latex paint contained mercury. Even cremation can cause mercury pollution, from the mercury found in dental amalgam fillings. There has been quite a bit of debate as to whether dental fillings are a source of mercury poisoning while intact, and that issue has yet to be resolved.

Accidental mercury poisoning is not frequent, but is nonetheless tragic. Broken thermometers or other household items containing mercury have been known to cause severe damage and even death, especially to children. Precautions must be taken whenever mercury is present. Those who work in chemical laboratories, dental offices, or in other situations where mercury is frequently used must take special care to avoid contamination.

The effects of mercury poisoning depend on the type of mercury involved. There are three important types of mercury. The first is elemental mercury which gives off mercury vapor at room

temperature. This vapor can be inhaled and then go into the bloodstream. Elemental mercury can also be absorbed through the skin. But if elemental mercury is swallowed it usually just passes out of the body. The inorganic compounds—an example of which is mercuric chloride—make up the second type of mercury. These compounds can be inhaled, can be absorbed into the skin, and can also pass through the stomach into the body. Many inorganic mercury compounds also cause irritation to the skin and mucous membranes. The third type of mercury, organic compounds, can enter the body through the skin, lungs, and stomach.

Once mercury enters the body several things happen. This depends on the dosage (whether it is one-time or chronic), and according to its portal of entry into the body. Exposure to very high doses of mercury in the air can cause coughing, chest pains, difficulty in breathing, and eventually pneumonia, which can be fatal. If a large dose of inorganic or organic mercury compounds is swallowed it causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and severe kidney damage. Either kind of exposure to a pregnant woman causes mercury poisoning in the mother and severe birth defects to the fetus.

A one-time high dose of mercury or chronic low-dose exposure can also lead to the disease of chronic mercury poisoning. The first symptom to appear is usually tremors of the hands, as well as the tongue and eyelids. This can progress to the point where balance, speech, and walking are affected. Other symptoms are changes in mood or mental state, such as those experienced by the hat makers in England. Irritability, fear, depression, excitement, apathy, and loss of self-confidence can occur. Hallucinations and memory loss, as well as inability to concentrate, are also common. Other health effects include problems of the gums and mouth, irritation to the skin, and discoloration and irritation of the lens of the eye.

Several steps must be taken to reduce the incidence of mercury poisoning. The first is that the public needs to be better educated as to the hazards of mercury poisoning. Parents and teachers should

be especially careful about warning children not to play with thermometers or batteries or any other substances suspected of containing mercury. If mercury is ever spilled proper measures must be taken to clean it up and decontaminate the affected area. The local poison control center should be contacted in the case of suspected mercury poisoning or spillage.

Next, those people who are at greater risk for mercury poisoning because of their working environments must take special precautions. Procedures for handling and disposing of mercury should be posted and the hazards of contamination made clear to employees. Exposed workers should be evaluated periodically to make sure that they are not experiencing any adverse effects of their potentially hazardous environment. Signs and symptoms of mercury poisoning should be elicited. There are two types of tests that can be used to check for mercury poisoning: measurement of mercury in the blood and measurement of mercury in the urine. Individuals whose examinations show signs of mercury poisoning should be removed from the workplace for the sake of their health and safety.

Perhaps the most important step to take in reducing contamination is more government control of mercury waste. Restrictions have been placed on garbage burning and dumping of contaminated waste, but stricter standards should be set. There are ways of disposing of mercury that are much less hazardous, but unfortunately more costly, than the methods now used. More restrictions and better monitoring of mercury disposal are necessary for public safety.

Mercury is an interesting and important element with many commercial uses. But unfortunately its long history is filled with incidences of disease and death. Mercury poisoning is now largely the result of unwise disposal and misuse. People who use mercury must be aware of the symptoms of chronic mercury poisoning. It is essential that we learn more about the safe handling and use of this necessary element.

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Evaluation: This paper is chemically accurate and it communicates technical information about the dangers of mercury in an easy-to-understand manner. People who are not students of chemistry can read and comprehend Ms. Garner's paper. The sources cited are appropriate and approach the subject from a variety of viewpoints. This paper meets three of the requirements of good science—sound research, good organization and clear communication.

Who Says, “Cheaters Never Win”?

by Julie Hirsch
Course: English 101
Instructor: Peter Sherer

Assignment:
*Define a term which labels an important behavior
or movement. Introduce an identifiable speaker.
Use a variety of definition patterns.*

Many of the negative generalizations that people make in reference to theater actors and their way of life are outdated and untrue. However, one generalization about actors is true: at some point in their careers, all good actors cheat. Now, I don't mean that there are a bunch of married actors having affairs backstage, or that actors actually have their lines hidden onstage so they can just read them (although, on rare occasions, both of these occur). Cheating to actors is actually just a part of the illusion of the theater. Cheating is a trick an actor will use to give the impression that he is looking at the person he is speaking to, and yet he never really turns his face away from the audience.

This trick is used ostensibly in live theater when two actors are engaging in dialogue yet not standing parallel to each other. For example, if one actor is delivering a speech downstage center (the middle of the stage and closest to the audience) while his partner on stage is positioned upstage left (to the audience's right, and the farthest part of the stage from the audience), in order for the downstage actor to look at his partner as most people do in ordinary conversation, the actor would need to turn his back to the audience. Because the actors are not parallel, and because we need to see their faces, the actors must cheat. The downstage actor will use a maneuver known as profiling which will allow the audience to see about half of the actor's face. The downstage actor will make almost a half turn to his left, take a step or two stage right, and focus on a stationary object. These movements give the impression that the actors are looking at each other, and yet, most likely, the downstage actor can scarcely see his partner.

Cheating helps the audience understand a scene fully as it ensures that the audience can see the facial and body expressions of both (or, in some cases, all) actors on stage. I am currently working on the play *Sabrina Fair*, on which both of the Sabrina movies are based. In one scene in this play Linus Larrabee Jr. and Sabrina Fairchild are in the middle of an argument. Sabrina is standing upstage center, and Linus is positioned downstage right.

The dialogue is as follows:

- Sabrina:* That takes power.
Linus: It's the only way to keep alive.
Sabrina: I see. It is the most exciting game in the world, isn't it? With life-sized figures. And the one who loves is captured.
Linus: The answer is not love.

By this scene in the play, the audience is aware that Linus likes to control people, and Sabrina has become his latest victim. Linus has already tried to convince Sabrina to marry two different men in as many weeks. Given that history, and the previous dialogue, the audience would have no way of knowing that, while playing his game, Linus has fallen in love with Sabrina. The only way the audience can understand this is by being able to see the facial expressions of both actors during this scene, and during the other scenes they share.

Cheating is a useful trick that enables the audience to see the various facial expressions of the actors. Cheating is especially helpful to the audience when what is being said actually has some underlying meaning. Shortly after the aforementioned scene, Linus and Sabrina decide to get married. If the audience were unable to see the actors' facial expressions, and thus perceive the emotions behind the words in the scene, they probably would not accept this ending to the play. The audience would likely wonder what possibly could have happened offstage to allow for this turn of events. As they see the facial expressions of the actors, the audience hopefully knows the feelings these characters have for each other.

Most of us don't want to be caught cheating. Actors, however, know that cheating can sometimes be the right thing to do.

Evaluation: Julie's essay teaches those of us who appreciate stage productions about a term that we should know. This stipulative definition surely gives new meaning to the word "cheating."

Diabetes Mellitus

by Nicole Hollingsworth
 Course: English 101
 Instructor: Joseph Sternberg

Assignment:

*Teach us what something is, something we ought to
 know better than we do. Demonstrate effective
 defining skills.*

I glance at my boyfriend's face as I slowly and painlessly glide the 29 fine gauge needle into my left leg. The look in his eyes tells me that this act bothers him almost more than it affects me. It hurts him to know that since I have progressed through my pregnancy, I have developed gestational diabetes. In addition to all the physical, social, and emotional adjustments that come with being pregnant, I now have the added responsibility of monitoring my blood sugar levels with finger pricks four times a day and injecting myself with high dosages of insulin before meals and bedtime. At the same time, I see how proud he is of me because no matter how fed up I get, I don't quit, since my actions determine the health of our unborn child.

What is gestational diabetes? Gestational diabetes is a common disorder found in pregnant women. The complete scientific name for this metabolic disorder is diabetes mellitus, the inability of the body to properly use the glucose (sugar) provided by food during pregnancy. Gestational is one of the three most common forms of diabetes. Unlike other types of diabetes which last a lifetime, gestational diabetes almost always goes away upon giving birth. I am one of the 12 percent of women that develop gestational diabetes, which makes it the most frequently occurring metabolic disorder in pregnancy. In dealing with diabetes, I have learned what it is, what causes it, its effects on mother and child, and how it is treated.

Gestational diabetes develops sometimes in the last half of pregnancy; for me, it wasn't until the beginning of my seventh month. This condition develops at this time because that is when the mother's body must greatly increase the amount of nourishment provided to the growing baby. At the same time, the levels of placental hormones peak; these hormones weaken the effects of insulin in the mother's body.

As the baby grows, the need for nourishment grows with it. Glucose (sugar) provides the basic nourishment for the mother's body as well as the baby's. An adult can eat extra food to obtain additional nourishment, whereas the baby is dependent

on the mother to break the food down into glucose. The glucose then passes through the umbilical cord and placenta to the fast-growing baby.

To meet the baby's need for nourishment, the body must produce an ever-increasing supply of insulin. Insulin is the hormone that allows glucose to move from the blood stream into the cells. If the body doesn't produce enough insulin, the blood glucose levels will rise. If the levels get too high, it is harmful for the growing fetus. It is not known why the body's insulin needs are two to three times higher in the second half of pregnancy than when a woman is not pregnant.

In addition, the cause of gestational diabetes is still unknown. What is known is that in some women pregnancy causes changes that interfere with the way insulin works. The body isn't able to produce sufficient amounts of insulin to handle the extra demand of the baby. The body or placenta also might produce hormones that interfere with the insulin that the body does produce. The body in return reacts by producing more and more insulin and by releasing more and more glucose, stored in the liver. The result of these bodily actions is that the glucose piles up in the blood stream because it can't be used up by the body.

Eventually excess glucose is processed by the kidneys and spilled into the urine, but some excess glucose stays in the bloodstream. Large amounts of glucose in the bloodstream damages blood vessels and nerves. It also interferes with the normal functions of the body's organs and puts the fetus at risk.

There are several risks for the unborn child. Macrosomia, meaning "large body," refers to a baby who is larger than normal for its developmental age. Mothers with high glucose levels are more likely to have very large babies because high levels of sugar in the mother's blood can turn into large amounts of fat on the baby. If the baby's pancreas is making extra insulin to handle the mother's high blood sugar, it can result in hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) for the baby at the time of birth. Jaundice, the yellowing of the skin caused by a waste product named bilirubin, can be a problem

with gestational diabetes if the baby grows too quickly and must be delivered early. There is always a high risk of premature birth with gestation diabetes. This puts the baby at risk for respiratory distress syndrome, in which the lungs aren't developed enough for the baby to breath on its own.

Along with risks to the baby come risks for the mother. Premature labor and delivery and cesarean are more common than in other pregnancies. Cesarean delivery is used to avoid problems when the baby is too large. Women with gestational diabetes also have an increased risk of toxemia and urinary tract infections. Toxemia, also called pre-eclampsia, is pregnancy-induced high blood pressure, which is extremely dangerous for baby and mother. Large amounts of ketones, the acid produced when the body breaks down fat because there is no other source of energy available, moving through the placenta and into baby's blood are harmful to the fetus. They also run the risk of having gestational diabetes in later pregnancies. In addition, they have a 60 percent chance of developing permanent diabetes later in life.

In order to prevent these risks to myself and my baby, I do what I need to do to control my glucose levels. Most cases of gestational diabetes are controlled by a diabetic meal plan that can easily be followed by the mother and other family members. It can also be controlled by learning how and when to exercise in a way that is safe for mother and baby. The exercise burns up calories (glucose) and thus directly reduces blood glucose levels.

An essential part in the management of my diabetes is the procedure called self-blood glucose monitoring. A quick finger prick with a lancet allows me to place a drop of blood on a hand-held portable glucose meter, and in seconds I know precisely what my glucose levels are at the time of measurement. The quick procedure allows my doctors and myself to fine-tune my control program.

Unfortunately, in my case, diet and exercise are not enough to control my diabetes. I require insulin injections to keep the glucose levels in a normal range. Some diabetics only need one injection a day,

but I need injections when I wake up in the morning, before I go to sleep, and before my three daily meals. The insulin that I use is “human” insulin that is manufactured but identical to what the human body produces. This reduces the chances of allergic reactions and developing a resistance. The injections are painless and quick because of modern needles and syringes. The only physical signs of this disease are the frequent bruises that are scattered about my arms and legs due to misplaced injections.

Just like the bruises, the diabetes will go away. No matter how inconvenient the monitoring and injections, I will continue until the day my baby is born. The simple pricks in my body’s limbs are a small price to pay to ensure my baby’s health.

Evaluation: *A combination of sharp, clear words and plenty of information enrich this instructive essay.*

My Bird

by Akiko Ishihara

Course: English as a Second Language

Instructor: Wallis Sloat

Assignment:

Write a journal entry (which will be shared with one of your classmates) about one or more of your favorite childhood memories.

Most people have at least one or two special and unforgettable memories. One person might say it is his great high school experience, or another one might say it is her wonderful honeymoon trip. When I was a young girl, I had a small blue parakeet that was my first and might be my last bird in my life.

On my ninth birthday, my mother gave me a male baby bird that was only two weeks old, so he was very little and didn't have enough feathers to cover his skin, and he was so cute and lovely that I was very glad. The baby bird was male and was always singing, "Peep! Peep!" so I named him Peetan and I became his mother on the day I met him. My mother knew that I had wanted a bird for a long time, since my older sister already had her own family of birds in which there were more than eight babies, and I was envious of her. My sister taught me how to raise and keep him. He was too young to eat by himself, so she showed me how to feed him. She said, "At first, hold him softly in one hand, and then spoon up some of his seed and bring it to his mouth. Can you see he needs your help to eat? Be careful. Don't feed him too much." I already knew about this because I had seen my sister do it before, but it was the first time I fed my bird by myself, and it was so exciting and amazing. I could feel his warmth, his soft feathers, and the beat of his heart, and I thought I would protect him from everything that would hurt him.

After school, I went back home as quickly as possible, and I played with him every day. He always waited for me to come back, and when he saw me, he flapped his wings in the cage. When I was at home, I usually opened the cage so he could come and go freely. Of course he could fly, but he stayed around me all the time. While I was doing homework, he was singing on my shoulder or playing with my pencil, and while I was eating dinner, he always wanted to eat everything I ate, so my mother had to tell me to keep him inside of the cage again and again. Because I knew well he wouldn't

fly away from me even if he could, I sometimes took him outside and played with my friends. He was usually on my shoulder and head or in my pocket, so they were surprised to see him outside and asked me why he didn't fly away, and I said, "Because we are best friends," but actually, I didn't know the reason why he didn't fly away even though he could. I also wondered about it.

I always spoke to him while we played together, and he began to say some words little by little. For example, he could say (in Japanese), "Hello, good morning," "Akiko, how are you?" "Peetan is pretty," and so on. I knew he just imitated my voice, but his chattering sounded as beautiful and cute as his songs, and I sometimes wondered if he knew the meaning of his words.

It was a severely cold winter in 1990, and I had studied hard every day in order to pass the examination to enter the university. I had to study all day long, and my sleeping hours became shorter and shorter, so my mother sometimes took care of Peetan because I was too busy and tired to do it. One day, I saw him standing very still in the cage. He looked cold, so I got worried and talked to my sister who said I should take him to a doctor, but on that day I couldn't do it because I had to take a trial examination. When I met a doctor, it was two days later, and he said my bird had caught a cold, so I should keep him warm and calm. He also said my bird would have been seventy to eighty years old if he had been a human being because he was already ten years old, so it might be hard for him to get well again. Though the doctor gave me some medicine, and I took care of Peetan according to the way he said, Peetan looked worse and worse. I was so anxious for him that I hardly studied very much, and I talked to him for many hours to cheer him up or to relax him, but he didn't seem to recover. I took him to meet the doctor again and again, but he only repeated, "I am sorry. I can't do anything more for your bird. Your bird is going to die naturally." About a week later, Peetan died in front of my eyes. He looked like he was suffering a lot because he flapped violently and crazily in his last

moments. I was already eighteen years old, but I couldn't help crying madly even though my family was there, so they were surprised because it was the first time that I cried so loudly in front of them since I had grown up.

Peetan gave me a lot of marvelous and incredible memories that I will never forget, but I loved him too much to have another bird. He was my first and my last bird in my life.

Evaluation: Expressing her feelings in a second language, Akiko manages to combine a simple, straightforward style with an excellent use of detail to share with her readers the wonder, tenderness, and ultimate sorrow which she experienced as a child taking care of a beloved pet.

A Time to Every Purpose

by Marie Jarosch
Course: English 101
Instructor: Jack Dodds

Assignment:

*Write a narrative essay in the autobiographer's role.
In a series of vignettes, describe a process of
significant self-discovery and change.*

The warm steam from my morning shower blankets the mirror before me. With my towel I clear a small section to reveal a familiar face. Although she is familiar, I am seeing her for the first time. She is older now, her cheeks slightly thinner, yet softer and richer in tone. Crinkling eyes and a sparkling smile replace the tearful, bitter gaze of her younger days. The days of anger and frustration stemming from her life with an alcoholic, and her later battles with grief brought on by the untimely death of a precious loved one. Today her face reveals a confidence in herself, and serenity gained through accepting her past, then moving forward. She looks at the backside of thirty with enthusiasm, and a renewed hope for her future, but memories of those days remain clear, even today.

It is late October, 1983. The clock on the wall says it's 2:00 am, and we have just come home from a Halloween party at my brother's house. After putting Monica, our four year old, to bed, I wash my face and throw on a T-shirt, ready to get some sleep myself. Tom, still in his hobo clothes, is frantically rummaging through the dining room for something to drink. Watching his desperate search, I recall the hungering passion I once felt for this man, now replaced with bitter indifference. Resentment and anger take the place of the deep respect I felt when we married, just five short years ago.

"Where's the bourbon?" he turns to me asking.

"There is none," I reply.

His eyes bulge from their deep sockets, filling with rage. As he bends to lift the oak chair before him, the veins in his long, skinny neck pop, trying to escape from the body that holds them. He hurls it at me, barely missing. Forcibly he pushes me towards the front door, his firm grip tight around my biceps. "Well, go get some!" he shouts, the strong smell of whiskey filling the air between us.

"Tom, I'm not going anywhere. I'm not even dressed!" I cry.

Shoving me out the door, he stands in the entry preventing me from returning. Like the devil him-

self, he glares at me with his big, brown, sinister eyes, daring me to defy him. Casually, he turns back towards the house and slams the door shut behind him.

Standing half dressed on this frigid October morning, I can't control the tears streaming down my face. I am ashamed, embarrassed and scared. Where do I go? What do I do? Why do I let him do this to me? Barefoot with only a T-shirt to protect me, I run the half mile to the closest pay phone. Knowing I am out of options, I place the collect call to my mother, twenty miles away. Through the tears, I swallow my pride and tell her my story. For what seems like hours, I sit crouched in that phone booth waiting. My mother drives me home, the strong Roman Catholic preaching the entire way about my duties as a wife. Why did I call her? Why didn't I just stay on that lawn and freeze? I will *never* call her for help again.

* * * * *

Two years have passed since that frightful Halloween night. Life is not ideal these days, but it is tolerable. Wine has replaced the bourbon in Tom's bloodstream, softening the violent outbursts he was once prone to. Now he falls asleep after dinner while watching television. Our relationship has a formality about it that doesn't appear to bother Tom. He seems content as long as his shirts are ironed and his meals are warm when he comes home from work. As for me, my children are my world. Monica now five, and Jennifer our one year old, provide me with the love and warmth missing from my marriage.

The girls adore their father, and he them. Jennifer's big, brown, mischievous eyes shine like marbles as Tom walks through the back door at the end of his work day. Her impish grin reveals the dimples in her pudgy cheeks as she charges to greet him. Monica, her freckled face already buried in Tom's coat, has beat her sister once again in their daily battle for their father's attention. It is the girls' loyalty and affection for Tom that keeps the facade of our happy marriage from falling apart.

* * * * *

It is August, 1986. The girls have just returned from a long weekend in Pennsylvania with their father. The lengthy weekend apart has been a welcome relief from our recent exhausting discussions of divorce. Tom is no longer able to control his drinking, yet he fails to admit he has a problem. His increasing dependence on alcohol is affecting more and more of our lives. His health is deteriorating, our finances are suffering and his explosive temper scares me. In order to keep things civil, I have agreed to remain in the house until I complete the project I started earlier this summer—painting the exterior of our home.

A neighbor's son, Michael, has been helping me with the painting, Michael working mainly in the front of the house, the girls helping me in back. I glance over to see Monica and Jennifer, each armed with a paintbrush, awkwardly swiping at the siding. Jennifer, dressed in a white T-shirt and diaper, is getting more paint on herself than on the house. It is comical to watch the two of them, and I realize how much I have missed them while they were gone.

That evening during dinner, Monica chatters on and on about their weekend, while Jennifer, irritable, squirms in her high chair. Feeling as though the long drive and change in schedule has probably worn her down, I move Jennifer to the sofa across the room, so she can relax and be more comfortable. The sight of her paint-splattered legs makes me smile, as I think of how much fun she and Monica had helping me today. I'll have to bathe her before putting her to bed, but for now I return to my dinner.

Monica continues with her weekend play by play, and pretending to listen, my mind drifts to thoughts of how the divorce will change my life. No more polite family dinners with Tom. No more house or days spent at home with Monica and Jennifer. Tears fill my eyes as I look at Tom. What could have changed between us? Why is there more comfort in alcohol than in my arms? My days are so lonely. Warm hugs and loving kisses from the girls no longer satisfy my needs. What will my

mother say? She has lived in a loveless marriage for more than thirty years. She told me not to marry him. She will say, "I told you so."

Monica and Tom have finished their dinners, and I sit with a full plate still before me. "Marie, why don't we just put Jennifer to bed, and you can give her a bath in the morning? She looks so tired," Tom suggests, breaking my trance.

Pushing myself away from the table, I nod, "I think you're right." Jennifer, having fallen asleep on the sofa, looks so peaceful. I feel guilty having to move her. Lifting her gently, I carry her down the long, narrow hallway of our three bedroom ranch to the last room on the left. The white French provincial bunk bed she shares with Monica waits invitingly in the newly decorated, lavender and white floral-papered room. Kneeling down, I softly slip her between the lilac colored sheets and watch her settle into her favorite sleeping position. She is facing the wall, her chubby legs tucked into her stomach, and her diapered bottom sticking up in the air. "I really missed you, Sweetie," I whisper, lightly rubbing her back in small circles. With my head resting on the bed beside her, I move my hand to her chunky arms, feeling the crusting paint on her delicate skin. "I'll give you a bath tomorrow," I say softly. "I promise."

Morning brings a clear day. Michael is already outside painting in the front of the house. Tom left for work hours ago, and Monica is watching television in his room. It is getting late, and Jennifer is still sleeping. Breakfast is ready, so I decide to go and wake her. She is lying on her stomach facing the wall, her small legs tucked up under her stomach, just as I left her last night. Quietly, I reach down turning her body to face me. Ripping my arm out from under her, I run from the room screaming. My legs failing beneath me, I cower in the hallway, rubbing my head as if to erase her haunting face from my mind. My loud, hysterical screams fill the house. Michael comes running through the back door, "Marie, are you okay? What happened? Covering my ears with my hands, elbows squeezing tightly against my knees which are snug against

my chest, I continue screaming with uncontrollable tears streaming down my face. Seeing Monica's puzzled look. Michael walks into the room, but only for a moment. "Monica, take your mom to the sofa," his trembling hands guiding Monica through the hall, "She's not feeling too good."

Within moments, police, paramedics and fire department personnel are in our home taking control. Michael has taken Monica to a neighbor's house, while I sit frozen on our sofa. Uniformed strangers walking in and out of my house like it was theirs. Sitting next to me with a walkie-talkie holstered on his shoulder is the fire department chaplain. Two young paramedics in the room with my baby report their grim findings. "There are no physical signs of abuse," a voice announced, his words ripping through my heart like a knife.

"It's standard procedure," the chaplain explained. "They have to check for abuse."

Suddenly, I remember the paint stains on Jennifer's arms and legs. Ashamed and embarrassed, I start to cry once again. The chaplain offers me a handkerchief. Wiping away the tears, I say, "I wanted to give her a bath last night, but she was so tired."

"Everyone of these guys has kids of his own. This isn't just a routine call," he says as he wraps his arm around me and holds me close. My body numb, my eyes swollen and sore from all the wiping, I rest my head on his shoulder wanting this to be a bad dream. If only I could lie down, this would all go away. Commotion in the hallway brings me back to reality. Out of the shadows a stretcher draped with a white cloth emerges. Jennifer's small body, barely noticed beneath the white fabric, lies strapped down against the moving frame. One of the paramedics walks over to me, his face drawn and eyes red. "Would you like to see her before we leave?" he asks, "We did what we could to clean her up. We really couldn't do very much." With a hard swallow he continues, "I'm really sorry."

The next several days pass slowly. Friends and family fill our home. It becomes difficult for me to

leave the room where I last left her—alive. Sitting beside her bed I remember the paint-splattered legs and pray for God to wake me from this horrible dream I am dreaming, but God does not answer my prayers. Tom and I barely speak to each other now. Neither one of us blames the other, but there seems to be nothing left to say. The coroner has confirmed that there was nothing we could have done. So why do I feel like I failed her?

The morning of the funeral, I enter the softly lit church already filled with familiar faces. As I watch them watching me, my mind recalls the countless friends who have offered their senseless words of wisdom these last few days. None of them could possibly understand the pain. Their words of comfort only isolate me more. To signal the beginning of the service, the organist starts to sing. The words vaguely familiar, I sing along in my mind, “a time to be born, a time to die... A time to every purpose under heaven.” As the service continues, I recall the words of that song, and sit wondering, “What was God’s purpose in all this?”

* * * * *

One year has passed since Jennifer died. Monica and I have an apartment only ten minutes from Tom’s house. Monica is spending the day with her grandmother, and I have taken the day off of work. My plan was to visit Jennifer at the cemetery, but at three o’clock this morning when I awoke, my plan changed. Deciding to throw myself a pity party instead, I sit on my living room floor with a glass of White Zinfandel, a box of Kleenex and a bowl of popcorn. The letters JKW written in thick black marker on top of the brown cardboard box before me attract my attention. The box, filled with the only physical evidence left from Jennifer’s short life, has not been opened since I placed each precious memory into it last year. Slowly and cautiously I lift the cover, exposing the treasure. Carefully, I remove each cherished item, one by one. For hours, I sit touching and smelling each article of clothing for any hint of my precious baby’s scent. A video tape of Jennifer’s first year of life brings her back, if only for a short time. Buried deep in the bottom of

the box are cards and letters tied with a multicolored ribbon from concerned family and friends sharing in our sorrow. Reading each one, I sit crying. A pamphlet from the foundation for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome lies just beneath the bundle. On the back of the pamphlet, a phone number for Dr. Julius Goldberg, a research scientist working at Loyola University in Maywood Park, IL., calls to me. Later that day, I dial the number.

* * * * *

Three days later, I am sitting across from Dr. Goldberg in his west suburban office. He is not what I expect, although until now, I did not realize I expected anything. He is a short man with black and gray thinning hair. His rather large office is practical and unadorned, much like its resident doctor. His desk looks old and not very expensive. The wall behind his desk is filled with a row of closely lined file cabinets. Even the chairs we sit in look as though they have been in this office for a long time.

As I continue to scan the room, a manila folder on the desk between us draws my attention. Jennifer’s name is type written across the top, startling me for a moment. Dr. Goldberg opens the folder to review its contents. Although his words immediately escape me, his gentle tones provide comfort and I feel as though he truly understands my sorrow. He explains how each file cabinet along the wall contains folders much like this one. Each folder represents a piece to the puzzle he has dedicated his life to solve. He shares my grief, as honestly as if he had experienced it himself. For four hours Dr. Goldberg candidly answers my long list of questions. He listens patiently and encourages me to continue as I share my memories of the joys Jennifer brought me. A soothing hug is all that he can offer beyond his own frustration at my loss. It is 10:00 pm and Dr. Goldberg kindly walks me to my car. Driving home my eyes fill with tears, but I finally realize that Jennifer’s death was not my fault.

* * * * *

Seven years have passed since that visit to Dr. Goldberg's office. Months of counseling, years of reading self-help books, and time have helped me recognize the poor choices I made, resulting in my failed marriage. Jennifer's premature death still saddens me at times, but now I accept that it always will. My personal relationships have been examined, perhaps too closely, as my fears of another failed marriage raise red flags of caution. Good men have been left confused at the abrupt end to our seemingly comfortable relationship.

Just as I started feeling that life would always be this way, I met George. It was our company Christmas party where friends first introduced us, but it didn't take long for me to notice the needed balance he adds to my relationship with Monica. He accepts Monica and me as a package deal, allowing me to enjoy our relationship without the guilty feeling of deserting my daughter. George has no children of his own, but his sense of Monica's needs amazes me. He has taken her into his heart, and offered her the love and guidance she craves. He also understands my frailties, and loves me anyway. The three of us have become a couple.

When George asked me to marry him, I waited for that scary feeling I associate with standing at the edge of a cliff, afraid of falling off. It never came. Now on our wedding day, the only fear I have is that he will change his mind. As I look out the window of the small Lutheran Church where we have chosen to start our lives, I see George and Monica standing in the parking lot giggling and laughing openly. My fears subside as I watch them chasing each other playfully, as though it were just another day.

The service has begun, and I am pleased to see so many of our family and friends here to share our joy. Each portion of our service has been carefully selected, giving special meaning to this turning point in our lives. George sits to my right and Monica on my left as we listen to my sister reading the words we have chosen.

"The next reading is from Ecclesiastes Ch. 3.1.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die, and time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance..."

The words ring in my mind as the service continues. Once they represented the end of a special part of my life, but today they signal a new beginning. They are words of hope for our future. As George and I stand to exchange our vows, I look over to Monica, my maid of honor, who is smiling and nodding her approval. It is a perfect day.

* * * * *

The steam has cleared, and I look at the familiar face in the mirror before me. My hair still tangled, but now almost dry. I giggle at the very sight of me. Sudden laughter from the living room tells me George and Monica have returned from Video Update with this evening's entertainment. They will be amused that I am not ready, since I am usually waiting for them. Quickly I brush the snarled mess on my head, and get dressed.

George is in the kitchen serving up the pizza we ordered for dinner. Fresh flowers on the dining room table tell me that Erik, Monica's boyfriend, is here too. As I take my plate from the counter, George asks, "Well, aren't you going to open your card?"

"What card?" I ask.

"The one on the table by your flowers." Suddenly, I realize the flowers are for me. The card, so typically George, says, "To Babe, With Love, George J."

Evaluation: Marie has written a poignant, powerful story of painful experience, discovery, and transformation. Like all good writing, her story speaks with a human voice and shimmers with insightful, telling details.

Racism: What Does It Bring?

by Jennifer Jenkins

Course: English 101

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

To explore your attitudes about cultural differences, compose a collage of first thoughts, short life-experience narratives, a response to a reading, and an imagined or remembered dialogue.

Review your writing and arrange the pieces any way you like. Write a conclusion after rereading the whole thing.

When I first think about the word race, I think of the color of skin, because this is what society has defined race as. Race is something everyone deals with, like it or not. It is something you cannot change about yourself, and you cannot help but see if you look at a person. Although the amount of pigment in a person's skin should not matter, to many it does. Most people associate racism with things such as the Rodney King incident: police officers beating a black man. This is not always the case. Although it's called reverse discrimination, racism from other minority groups against Caucasians also exists.

I remember when I was a sophomore in high school, riding the school bus home. Although my school was predominantly white, my school bus

was predominantly Latino-American. I was one of the few Caucasians on the bus. It was not uncommon to hear shouts of Spanish back and forth with a few words of profanity in English. On the Mexican Independence Day, the Mexicans on the bus were ecstatic. I had no idea what was said (I speak very little Spanish), but it was obvious they were enjoying the holiday from the smiles on their faces. I thought that that was cool. Being proud of your culture and heritage is a great thing, and I believe everyone should possess such a pride. My friend had a different opinion though. She sat next to me on one of the olive green seats and rolled her blue eyes. She scooted so close to me that she was about an inch away from me and I was cornered next to the window. She leaned over and whispered in my ear, "This is so stupid. If I went to Mexico I wouldn't celebrate the Fourth of July."

"Why not? They're proud of their country. What's wrong with that?" I retorted.

She did not reply but flipped her dirty blond hair and began to whine about some guy whom she'd had a crush on for three years and who had managed to cheat on her and all of her closest friends, but she still liked him. I listened as intently as I could, although the conversation seemed to be a repeat of the twenty we had had previously. As her loud, nasal voice droned, the excited yells in Spanish grew louder as they passed a Mexican flag around. The seats in front and in the back of us were each taken by Mexican boys. Apparently, the boy in back of us tried to pass the flag to the boy in front of us, but somehow the bright green, red, and white flag fell in my lap. Immediately, I handed the flag to the boy in front of me with a timid smile. I did not understand his black eyes glaring at me with such hatred. "Stupid white bitch," he spat at me as he ripped the flag out of my hands. My head slapped back on the seat as if he'd punched me, and my friend listed off her own words of profanity back at him in my defense. What had I done wrong? Could I not touch their flag because I was not of Mexican heritage? I was only trying to be nice, but I was slapped with words of racist hatred.

This is what the world has come to. Instead of becoming indifferent to race as Martin Luther King dreamed of, people have dubbed the white race as the slave owners or are entirely afraid to face the issue of race at all.

* * * * *

Me: Why did you call me stupid white bitch?

Guy on bus: That's what you are. You should leave our flag alone and bother your own.

Me: I only wanted to give you your flag back.

Guy on bus: Yeah right. I heard your friend talking about us celebrating a Mexican holiday. You were just trying to ruin our fun and take away our flag. You just hate Mexicans.

Me: Your friend dropped the flag on my lap. Besides, didn't you hear me tell her that I thought it was cool that you were so proud of your heritage?

Guy: I don't believe you. I know your kind.

Me: By saying that, you are being as racist as you accused me of being.

Guy: It's not racist; it's the truth. I've seen you turn your nose up when Jose or any of my friends tries to talk to you. You just won't because they ain't white.

Me: Your friends make me uncomfortable. They say things that embarrass me.

Guy: They're just talking.

Me: It could also be called sexual harrassment.

Guy: You'd let a white guy talk to you like that.

Me: I never have before.

* * * * *

In paragraph 27 of Malcom X's "Learning to Read," he describes the torturous slavery the black people endured. He speaks of evil white men with whips, chains, guns, and clubs, who were slave catchers and the black mothers who watched their babies being dragged off and never saw them again. He then describes Nat Turner, a black preacher who "put the fear of God into the white slave master." He writes that "Nat Turner wasn't going around preaching pie-in-the-sky and 'non-violent' freedom for the black man." Nat Turner led slaves to kill fifty-seven whites. Malcom X writes that Nat Turner's example is thought to have been the

inspiration of John Brown "to invade Virginia and attack Harper's Ferry nearly thirty years later, with thirteen white men and five Negroes."

In this writing, Malcom X does not speak of whether or not he endorses such violence, but history shows that unlike Martin Luther King's dream of peace between the races, Malcom X preached against the white man. It was he who inspired blacks to rally up and attack whites. Violence was his answer to achieving civil rights.

I can remember my grandfather telling me about an incident of violence that he had to deal with during the civil rights movement. He had just stepped in his old pick-up truck and thrown in the groceries when two huge black men pulled him out, began to beat him with Coke bottles, and called him racist names. I don't know if it was their intention to beat him to death or maybe to just beat up a white man, because my grandfather fortunately managed to get back in his truck and drive off.

I would like to know the point of violence against whites? What does it accomplish? My grandfather was not hurting anyone; he was only getting groceries for his family. The only point I can make out of those racist acts of violence is revenge. Blacks were oppressed in those days and their ancestors were slaves, so perhaps they wanted whites to feel powerless as they had. I can understand this, but this type of revenge on ancestors could very well be true for anyone. I am part Native American. So would Malcom X encourage me to begin shooting and killing everyone who is on my land as others did to my ancestors? Even if someone told me I should, I could not. No one did this to me, my *ancestors* endured such harsh treatment. Though I feel terrible for all of the Native Americans who were killed, starved, and forced to move from one land to the next only to have it taken away once more, there is nothing I can do to change history. I still believe Native Americans are discriminated against just as any minority group is, but I feel that it is more respectful to protest against discriminatory acts peacefully and legally.

* * * * *

For the past ten years of my life, I've heard contradicting messages about who I am or who my friends are; these messages only seem to tell me who society is predicting we will be. Part of this prediction is based on the color of our skin. Blacks should be proud of their African culture, and Mexicans should be proud of their Mexican inheritance. So what is the Harper family down my street to do? Mrs. Harper is African-American and Mr. Harper is caucasian. According to those who are against such blending of the races, the children are supposed to be confused, but these children seem fine to me.

Society keeps telling us that we need to have pride in our heritages, and frankly, I'm confused. Most who celebrate their heritages focus on one particular one. That's all fine and good if everyone else wants to pick their favorite, but I'm just as proud of my Irish ancestry as of my Native American and Dutch ancestry. It seems to me that all this pride in heritage has produced is favoritism in certain heritages, yet society wants us to be multicultural. Pride in heritage should be in all heritages, not just in the ones that are selected by society as "good."

What we need to learn to celebrate is unity. Americans have become overly concerned with pride in the past and not pride in the present. I'm proud of my ancestry, but I'm proud of being an American. Being an American is not a certain race, but a country. Perhaps what we need is more pride in our country.

Pride in our country will keep us unified, but pride in our separatism will only keep us just that—separate.

I can remember going to my best friend's house in fifth grade almost every day. Emilia and I were inseparable. After school we would walk home together, do our homework, and then skip over to the other one's house. We were usually at her house for some reason.

I remember each time I stepped in her house, some spicy food would be cooking, and the aroma would make my mouth water. Just the smell of her

mother's cooking made my stomach growl ferociously with hunger.

I don't think I really expected her house to be any different from my own, although her living conditions because of her parents' employment were different from mine. Her father worked, and her mother was temporarily a house-wife. My father had recently been laid off at the time, and my mother had begun working a few years before. Although her house was different because her mother was always home and mine was not, it was not that strange because that had been my situation a few years earlier.

It is strange to me to hear things about how Mexican homes are all crowded with illegal immigrants, and that the men are all lazy. Mr. Realivasquez was one of the hardest working people I knew, and my house contained more people than Emilia's house. To be honest, her house didn't seem that much different from my own.

I think racism is something that mankind is a long way from overcoming. People need to start within their own hearts first and learn not to hate differences, but appreciate them; secondly, people need to learn not to teach racism to others. If you ever watch young children, you'll notice that they do not care what color their friends are. Unfortunately, we teach them at a young age to hate what is not like them. If we could only keep the openmindedness we possessed in childhood, we could overcome this ridiculous hatred.

Evaluation: Jennifer's detailed narratives within this collage are especially poignant, and I like the way she uses various material to develop an argument against racism.

Hamlet's "Cool Behavior"

by Daphne Joyner
Course: English 102
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

As you know, Shakespeare's Hamlet does not take decisive action even after he seems to be reasonably sure that his uncle (King Claudius) murdered his father. Over the years, many scholars/readers have criticized Hamlet for what they see as his inability to act, his dreadful hesitation, his tendency to think and think to the point of being "paralyzed," in a sense, by a kind of immobility.

In your essay, take the position that Hamlet is wise to refuse to rush into anything. In other words, defend Hamlet's cool behavior. Carefully and logically support his slow, methodical journey toward revenge.

Hamlet is Shakespeare's most popular tragedy. One reason for this popularity is the reaction of the main character, Prince Hamlet, to the awkward situation he is put in during the play. Hamlet's father, the King of Denmark, has died suddenly. The dead King's brother, Claudius, marries Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude, and swiftly assumes the throne, a throne that Hamlet fully expected would be his upon the death of his father. Hamlet's father's ghost confronts Hamlet and tells him that his death was not natural, as reported; rather, it was a "foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.25). Upon hearing this the Prince swears revenge. However, he doesn't go along with instant revenge, but instead decides to act "as swift / As meditation..." (1.5.29) and decides to pretend to be insane in order to mask an investigation of the accusation brought by his father's ghost. The question of why Hamlet puts on this "antic disposition" (1.5.172) and delays in killing Claudius is the central question of the play. If Hamlet had swiftly embraced revenge, the way scholars have presumably wanted him to, the play would have ended before it began; but that fact does not satisfy or explain the deeper reason(s) why Shakespeare was reluctant to endow his hero with the quality of urgency. There is one critic, namely Sigmund Freud, who goes so far as to say,

The play is built up on Hamlet's hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motives for these hesitations and an immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result. (1432)

Even so, I feel Hamlet's dreadful hesitation at many points in the play are actually very understandable when his past and current situation are considered. Indeed, Hamlet's indecisiveness has given the play its depth and generated the different characters that make the play interesting. These reasons are why I am going to defend Hamlet and sort out some points that may have been avoided or not taken seriously.

The first point in the play where Hamlet's hesitation is apparent is after he is visited by a ghost who tells Hamlet he is "thy father's spirit" (1.5.9). The

ghost goes on to say that his demise was not accidental; rather it was “murder most foul...” (1.5.27), and that it was Hamlet’s uncle, King Claudius, who was the perpetrator. It would seem at this point that Hamlet’s plan of action should be clear; however, there are other factors which distract Hamlet. One factor is mentioned by Coppelia Kahn in the work “On Cuckoldry in *Hamlet*”:

Hamlet’s well-known misogyny and preoccupation with Gertrude’s faults are an outlet for the rage mingled with shame he feels at his father’s situation.
(1435)

In other words, Hamlet is confused by feelings he has for his mother after his father’s death. The ghost’s exhortation to “taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven...” (1.5.85.86) confounds him even more. Certainly, if his mother witnessed her own son murdering her husband this would violate the ghost’s admonition; this causes complications in Hamlet’s plan of action. He is also forced to consider public opinion, and so must keep his suspicions from the King’s subjects before he acts, lest he is accused of treason. He acts wisely, like a good investigator, and formulates a plan. Another factor which comes into play is the fact that the King is also surrounded by many members of his court, including his wife, counselors, and Polonius. This view is also supported by A.C. Bradley, who observes “The King was surrounded not merely by courtiers but by a Swiss body-guard: how was Hamlet to get at him?” (120). As a result there were few opportunities for Hamlet to deal with the King in private.

Hamlet’s second hesitation comes about when he stages the mock play that was based on the ghost’s testimony to see if his uncle will really show any guilt as the details of the play are presented. By so doing, Hamlet draws our attention to how murders are investigated in the present day, whereby clues and evidence, like a fingerprint, the weapon used or the DNA derived from blood found at the scene, are used to pin-point the murderer. Unfortunately,

in the 1600s, when the play was written, the tradition fell more along the lines of an eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth. This is why the investigation of the “brother’s murder” (3.4.38) becomes a personal crusade for Hamlet, rather than a public investigation. As Karl Werder states in his *The Heart of Hamlet’s Mystery*,

It is not to crush the King at once – he could commit no greater blunder – but to bring him to confession, to unmask and convict him. That is Hamlet’s task, his first, nearest, inevitable duty. (107)

With this perspective, the intentions of Hamlet become clear when he asserts that “the play’s the thing / Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king” (2.2.547-48) and thereby have evidence to find the King guilty. I praise Hamlet for not making a miscalculated judgment, killing the King in front of the unknowing audience watching the play, generating confusion, and possibly throwing the country into turmoil. In addition, Hamlet could not go ahead with the act of revenge because his mother was present at the play. Her witnessing her own son murdering her husband would surely violate the ghost’s admonition to Hamlet to “leave her to heaven” (1.5.86). Again, had Gertrude seen Hamlet take Claudius’ life, she might have lost her sanity (and subsequently even her life, just as Ophelia lost her reason and life after learning that her lover killed her father). For these reasons, Hamlet’s hesitation after the mock play is quite understandable.

The next point in the play where Hamlet’s behavior can be analyzed occurs after Claudius leaves the scene of the mock play. Hamlet comes upon the King and finds him in the confessional. This gives Hamlet an opportunity to avenge his father’s death at that moment, but instead Hamlet procrastinates. He struggles with his religious beliefs and his inner self knowing that if he kills the King then and there while he is confessing his sin he might do a favor to the King (a favor that is “not the vengeance to which the criminal is condemned” [Werder 109]) by offering him a safe passage to heaven. As Hamlet himself says, “And now I’ll do’t. And so ‘a goes to

heaven'" (3.3.74). It's not what Hamlet wants to happen to Claudius; he wants the King to suffer the same fate as the late King Hamlet whose spirit cannot rest until his death is avenged. I know that most critics would love to see Hamlet take action immediately because this is his chance, but they forget that Hamlet has consequences to weigh again, both private and of the state. He is dealing in his own mind with the traditional Christian belief that you cannot take a person's life while he is confessing, lest Hamlet become a bad person and the one to suffer the guilt. This would not help him avenge his father's death; indeed, it would make things worse. Instead, Hamlet was hoping that after the private confession the King would also publicly confess; this would make any action against Claudius more acceptable. Hamlet also felt that killing Claudius at that moment would send Claudius's soul to heaven—a much better place than the purgatory where Hamlet's father dwells. The ghost has told Hamlet how he died "With all my imperfections on my head" (1.5.79), so Hamlet decides "Up sword; and know thou a more horrid hent" (3.3.88). In other words, he should not commit the murder then, but instead wait for an occasion when the King is engaged in some less righteous act.

It finally happens at the end of the play that Hamlet kills Claudius; ironically, he does so with the same sword that has poisoned himself. However, during the span after Hamlet met the King at prayer, and before Claudius dies, Hamlet travels to England and returns to Denmark. Upon his return, he still does not act directly against the King; instead he has to deal with Laertes (the son of Polonius, whom Hamlet killed in a previous scene) and Ophelia (Laertes' sister, and the object of Hamlet's love). Why does Hamlet still hesitate in attacking the King? As one critic puts it, "The drama knows of no delay!" (Werder 111). There is a lot for the royalty of Denmark to deal with during the timespan of the play, and there is no one more occupied than Hamlet. So even though Hamlet is not rushing to put Claudius in his grave, after his return from England he is confident, as shown by

his words to Horatio: "the interim is mine" (5.2.73). He is assured to the point that he feels he can allow the King to suffer a little while with a guilty conscience, and worry about what he (Hamlet) is going to do to him (Claudius). This is evident in the tone of the words Hamlet speaks to Horatio just after the mock play: "I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound" (3.2.255). Hamlet is also no longer worried about being misunderstood about acting against the King, asking in a mocking way,

*...is't not perfect conscience,
To quit him with this arm? and is't not to be damn'd,
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil? (5.2.67-70)*

And he is getting over the grief he has felt over his father's death, and the anger he has felt toward his mother. Now the table is finally set for Hamlet to act; a lapse of time now is simply his moment to right himself, catch his breath and prepare for the end.

The play ends with Hamlet dead, but not until he accomplishes his wish to avenge his father's death. When Hamlet was in mourning for his father's sudden death, he expected his mother to do the same; he even hoped that they would lend each other support so they could comfort one another. But Hamlet's mother chose to marry right after the King's death. What a shock to a son who is in mourning! A mother is supposed to be there for her child in good and bad times—especially the bad times. I deeply sympathize with Hamlet's struggles to move on and to deal with the task of avenging his father's death that the ghost laid before him. It was not an easy task; there were many obstacles in the way, such as his mother's luscious appetite for companionship, the presence of the palace counselors and bodyguards of the King, and his own thoughts. Hamlet tries to keep everything under control during the play, and in the end he dies a hero's death. I praise Hamlet's courage and I feel that all of us have a bit of Hamlet in our hearts at all times, especially when we lose a loved one that we will never see again. A loss like this can devas-

tate the survivors and change their lives forever. Hamlet teaches us to stand firm no matter the obstacles and difficulties we face on our path of life. Can anybody see past that?

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Evaluation: *Daphne's paper is a solid response to the assignment. Though many readers have, over the years, cast Shakespeare's Prince Hamlet as a coward, Daphne points out that Hamlet's character deserves the scrutiny of a more sympathetic, understanding critic. I like the reasonable tone of Daphne's argument, and I admire the confidence with which she presents her overall thesis.*

The Wall between My Parents and Me

by Magda Jurgiel
Course: English 101
Instructor: Martha Simonsen

Assignment:
Use James Baldwin's essay,
"Notes of a Native Son,"
as a jumping-off point for your own essay.
Select a particular statement to expand on.
Provide plenty of specific support for your thesis.

Thesis: I realized how the conditions of life in America created a thick wall that blocked the communication between parents and children. And I also realized that this wall existed between me and my parents.

- I. The reasons for the lack of communication.
 - A. My parents' materialism.
 - B. My own materialism.
 - C. The amount of time required for studying.
 - D. The choices of spending free time.
- II. My concern to change this situation.

It was one of those long-awaited Fridays. But before I could start enjoying the weekend, I had to endure five long hours of intensive thinking at school, then five hours of work, where I had to deal with people whose only intention (it seemed to me at the moment) was to ruin my day. After work, I rushed home to get ready to go out with my friends. When I opened the door, the first thing I saw was my mom preparing dinner. As I walked in, she smiled and asked how my day was. (It was one of those routine questions that I knew by heart and learned to expect every day.) I didn't even have time to answer her when the phone rang. I left my mother in the kitchen, and I ran to my room to pick it up. It was Eva.

She screamed, "You're still at home! We are all waiting for you!"

"O.K. I'll be over in fifteen minutes," I replied, although I knew that the ride itself took ten minutes, and I still had to get ready. So, I hurried to the bathroom, and I heard my mother's voice behind the door.

"Are you going out tonight?"

"Of course I am going out, Mom. It's Friday," I answered.

"Where are you going? Who are you going out with?"

"Mom, I don't have time to explain!" I screamed, irritated. "Why do you always have to bug me about everything?!"

Silence answered me.

I finished getting ready and rushed to the door. As I ran by the kitchen, I heard my mom again.

"Have a good time, but please be careful."

A thought that she is always going to treat me as a little kid crossed my mind. Still in motion, I turned my head to give her one of those angry looks, but what I saw stunned me. Here was my mother, a spoon still in her hand, smiling shyly at me. In the bright kitchen light I saw every wrinkle on her once pretty face, every tired muscle on her body, and her sad eyes. And those eyes seemed to tell a story, a story of pain and disappointment so

familiar to every parent who has lost communication with a child.

I could not stand that sad look that she unconsciously gave me. I fled from the house. I tried not to think about what I had seen, but I couldn't get the picture of my mother out of my head. This incident made me think about James Baldwin's essay "Notes of a Native Son." In this essay he says, "It seems to be typical of life in America, where opportunities, fancied and real, are thicker than anywhere else on the globe, that the second generation has no time to talk to the first" (124). Suddenly, I understood exactly what he meant. I realized how the conditions of life in America created a thick wall that blocked communication between parents and children. And I also realized that this wall existed between my parents and me.

The process of creating this wall required long years, during which many little bricks of lack of time built up a tall barrier that blocked almost every conversation between my parents and me. The clay for some of those bricks came from my parents' materialism. In the spirit of the American tradition, the pursuit of money forced my immigrant parents to work long, back-breaking hours, which left almost no time for family life. My parents' intentions were good—they wanted to provide everything for the family; that was the reason they came to the land of "opportunities, fancied and real" (Baldwin 124). They wanted me and my sister to have everything, or even more, that the average American teenager had: a nice house in a safe neighborhood, a car, nice clothes, and a generous allowance to spend on whatever we wanted. But work exhausted them mentally and physically, and took so much time that they forgot about some things every family needs more than money—concern for children, recognition of their accomplishments, and interesting conversation, which are all necessary for good communication in a family.

I also took an active part in constructing the barricade preventing the communication between my parents and me. Trapped by the surrounding materialism, I myself got a job. This took away a lot of

my time that I could have spent with my parents. Money provided by that job was supposed to fulfill my dreams of brand-name clothes, expensive makeup, and all the other luxuries that the consumer society of America finds essential for a happy life. I was like the protagonist in the famous late-nineteenth-century writer Kate Chopin's short story "A Pair of Silk Stockings." I found myself wanting more and more unnecessary things that I thought would make me happier. What I forgot was that neither money nor the things it can buy could substitute for something I had wasted—the time I could have spent with people who love me.

This waste of time resulted also from the fact that I was an immigrant student striving to do the best at school. Although it is a global phenomenon that children spend much more time at school and studying than with their parents, I needed to spend even more time on studying since I didn't know English well. I had to put in a few extra hours every day in order to master the language and do well at school. My parents encouraged me to study, but sometimes I didn't have time to exchange even a few words. At moments like that, I saw my parents' sad looks that seemed to express disappointment with the amount of time my studying consumed. This constant lack of time made the communication with them even harder and increased the barrier between us.

Even as I became fluent in English, the wall between my parents and me didn't stop growing. I improved in the language and finally accepted the American culture, which made it easier for me to meet new people. Although I didn't have to study as much, I spent most of my free time with my new friends, not with my family. The idea of going out with them seemed like much more fun than staying home and talking to my parents. And even when I stayed home, I sat in front of the "thief of time," the television set. Somehow TV shows at fifth-grade reading level stimulated my brain more than a conversation with my parents. My friends and TV were more important than maintaining communication with my mother and father.

The barrier blocking the communication in my family is not a unique one. Most American families experience the same situation. Both children and their parents strive for money, not only to survive, but also to satisfy their desire for luxuries. Children spend most of their time at school or studying. They choose to go out with their friends or to watch TV during their free time instead of doing something with their families. So, since lack of communication exists in most families, should I give up hope for restoring it in mine? Is "How was your day?" and "Are you hungry" all I am going to hear from my mother? Will I ever be able to talk to my father about my last boyfriend? I surely hope so. But somebody has to make a first step and try to annihilate that wall between us. So I will turn off the TV set tomorrow, and I will start a meaningful conversation with my parents; or even better, I will take them out for dinner. Wait a minute! Tomorrow I have to write that paper for English 101. Then I will go out with them on Sunday. No, Sunday I promised Natalie that we will go shopping. On Tuesday I have to work. On Wednesday and Thursday I have to study. On Friday I was invited to that party. On Saturday and Sunday I will be at U of I to visit a friend. Maybe Monday? No, I have to...

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Evaluation: *Detail, dialogue and relentless self-scrutiny distinguish this portrait of the uneasy process of growing up American.*

Having My Baby

by Lisa Katsenios

Course: Reading 099/English 101

Instructors: Christine Poziemski
and Barbara Hickey

Assignment:

*Write a narrative essay about an event that
significantly changed your life.*

Moments after the birth of my daughter, the doctors gave her only a fifty-fifty chance of living. She came two months early and had difficulty breathing. She was born at Northwest Community Hospital on Sunday, March 14th, 1976, at 6:00 am. Hearing that my firstborn might die had to be one of the worst moments of my life. The birth of my first child was an emotional roller coaster that took me from the heights of happiness to the depths of sorrow.

I had a good pregnancy for the first seven months. Two days before my daughter was born, I started having sharp pains and feeling very uncomfortable. The next day my mom came to stay with me and help me out. That night the sharp pains came again, and this time they didn't go away. I knew something was very wrong. My husband and my mom rushed me to the hospital. The doctors did everything they could to stop the labor but nothing helped. I thought that the night was never going to end.

Early the next morning my baby was born. She was only 4 1/2 pounds. I was so happy to see her. My husband and I had created a human being, and we were so moved that we both had tears in our eyes. She appeared to be a perfect little girl, but we were also concerned because of her size. We both got to hold her for awhile, and it felt as if we were on top of the world. As we were holding her, we noticed she was having difficulty breathing. The doctors would have to take her away from us. We were crushed and very concerned.

The doctors tried to open her breathing passage, but they were unable to. We almost lost her. They suggested she be put in an incubator. I had only a few minutes to say good-bye to my baby before she was rushed to Lutheran General Hospital where there was the necessary equipment to save her. My husband went with her in the ambulance. I was devastated because I couldn't be with my baby, and I didn't know what the future would hold for her. It was difficult for me to see other moms with their babies when I had no one to hold. Not even sedatives could soothe the sadness and grief I felt

because I couldn't be with my baby. I didn't sleep at all that night.

I must have called Lutheran General a billion times the next day to hear any new information, but the answer was always the same—there was no change. Finally, in the following morning my husband called me and told me that she had been breathing more easily, but not yet on her own. Later that afternoon my husband picked me up, and we drove to Lutheran General. He informed me that her breathing had become steady. Despite the good news, I still felt empty inside. When we arrived at the hospital, the doctor took us to a special room where all premature babies were cared for. The doctors tried to prepare me for what I was going to see, but I was so anxious to see her that everything else around me was a blur. I didn't hear a word anyone said. The nurse made me wear a mask and gloves before I entered the room.

My heart was beating 100 times a minute, and I couldn't wait to see her. I walked in with my husband, and all I could focus on was my daughter. I wanted to hold her, but all I was allowed to do was look. Wires pierced her body from head to toe. Her eyes were also covered to be protected from the bright lights. I felt so bad for her, and I thought to myself, what have they done to my baby? I began to cry, and then I fainted.

When I came to, I was in another room. I asked to see my baby again, but they wouldn't let me see her unless I promised to look at her only through the glass of the incubator. I agreed. During the two weeks that she stayed in the hospital, I spent most of my time with her. Eventually, I was allowed to hold her and feed her. When she gained almost a pound, I was allowed to take her home.

When we arrived home, she was still tiny compared to the seven-and-a-half- or eight-pound babies I was used to seeing. I bought her the bulkiest clothes I could find and dressed her so her arms wouldn't look bony when people came to see her. It took a few months before she caught up to what should have been her normal weight. Her birth was an emotional and unforgettable experience.

Even though I have three children now and I love them all dearly, I'm still overprotective of my first daughter and very sensitive to her needs because of what I went through to bring her into this world. My second daughter was seven-and-a-half pounds at birth, and my son was ten pounds. He surely made up for the pounds my first-born was missing. From her original four-and-a-half pounds she has grown into a healthy twenty year old, and there is a special bond between us that I think will be there for the rest of our lives.

Evaluation: A native of Greece, Lisa did not learn English until she was a teenager. Her mastery of the language is truly impressive.

The Planting of the Rose

(Confessions of
Emily Grierson's Father)

by *Eric Knox*

Course: English 102

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Rewrite a scene from a short story.

Assume the voice of a character from that story.

I worry about my daughter. Emily has always been a bit strange, but I've done my best to take care of her. I've tried to protect her from the outside world. I just don't think she has the ability to grasp its complexities. Sometimes I worry that I've actually been too sheltering of her. Now, as the end of my life draws near, I fear that she will remain alone in this house and let her life decay around her, as this neighborhood is sure to do eventually. She simply hasn't developed the social skills she'll need when I'm gone.

I've pondered long as to how I should handle Emily's inevitable circumstance, but there simply isn't time to undo the damage I've caused her. Perhaps if Eleanor, my wife, had lived through the birth, Emily might have had a more normal childhood. My responsibilities outside the home prevented me from being much of a father, and I was sadly nonexistent as a mother. Aside from meals and stories before bedtime, my daughter had an unimaginably lonely childhood. Most days, she would simply arrange her dolls in her room. She would keep straightening until she had them just

right; then she would never touch them again.

There have actually been a few suitors, but I turned them all away. At first it was because I thought no one was good enough for my little girl. But later I realized that Emily simply couldn't handle that type of relationship. I have been almost the only man in her life since she was born, so she has no idea what the relationship of a husband and wife is. I feared that at the first sign of amorous intent from her new husband, Emily would simply come running back home.

I hope that I have not failed completely to provide for my daughter's future. Since I first learned of my impending end, about a year ago, I have spent all of my efforts ensuring that her life, as she has always known it, can go on for as long as she wishes. It is my hope, however, that at some point Emily will decide to venture out on her own. Until then, she can stay here. I just made the last payment on the house today. Tomorrow, a new Negro, Tobe, will arrive to care for me in my last hours and to care for her for as long as she requires his attentions. The house is in good repair and should weather a number of years without need of any major repairs. The front walk still has a slight tilt, but hopefully the Jefferson government will get around to fixing that sooner or later. Finally, I spoke to Colonel Sartoris this afternoon, and he agreed to do whatever he could to see that Emily would be taken care of.

There is nothing more that I can do. I grow weaker by the hour, and I feel that soon my dark visitor will come. Emily is strong and smart. I'm sure that, given enough time, she'll be ready for a life of her own. After I die, she'll be forced to let go of me. I can only hope that my death will finally give her the impetus she needs.

Evaluation: Excellent response. There's imagination here, of course, but also real depthful understanding of Faulkner's presentation of the Southern code of gentlemanly honor (fathers protecting daughters, men protecting [over-protecting] women, etc.).

Life Is Too Short & A Guardian Angel

by Denise Konomidis
Course: English 101
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:
Write a personal experience essay.

Is it possible to offer your reader a more informative explanation of Thalassemia?

Life Is Too Short

More tears slowing dripped from my red and puffy eyes, to my burning cheeks, down to my pillow which was already soaking from tears. The pain that I am feeling inside of me is so intense; I feel like I have been stabbed in the heart. "Why did you have to take him, God? Why did this have to happen to him, God? Nineteen years of life is too short. Why didn't you listen to my prayers last night!" Why...

All these thoughts were racing through my mind as I stared at my bedroom ceiling, crying. I was trying to figure out why God would want to take such a good person as Taso away. Taso died of Thalassemia, which is a cousin of sickle cell anemia, a deficiency in iron. He had to inject iron into his blood with needles, and one day he just decided that he was tired of doing it. Taso was the brother of my good friend Maria. I had known him since I was in first grade, so we also became close friends because I was always over at their house. All those years though, I did not know that he had this sickness. Why didn't anyone tell me! The family said that they thought that my family knew, but we did not.

Taso was a high class gentleman. He would wear school, when he attended Harper College. He guy, and everyone knew him, and adored him.

Taso was the type of person that would go out of his way for you. I remember being at his house one day, and he called up a radio station, and dedicated a song to me. I was very young at the time, so I don't remember what the name of the song was. I thought it was the sweetest thing someone could do, and I felt honored.

I started developing a crush on Taso when I was ten years old. My feelings had been recorded in my diary:

Good! Are there any additional diary entries that you could insert here?

12/18/88 Dear Diary,
I'm in love with Taso! Does he like me too?

However, I never let him or anyone know how I felt about him. His looks were not what attracted me, for there are two other brothers in the family who are

gorgeous, and he was actually the least handsome. What attracted me to him was his consistent goodness to all, and his huge, warm, and caring heart. He would go the extra mile for anyone. If you needed a ride, he would be at your doorplace in a flash, no matter how far your destination was.

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Taso didn't let his sickness get in the way of him living a happy life. He never complained. This is astonishing considering what he had to go through. Sticking needles inside of you every day is not something you would do with a smile.

had

Taso told me what he was going through. I know how I felt about him. But now it is too late.

Taso died on November 14, 1992. It was the saddest day of my life. The night before, we received a phone call from his aunt. She said that Taso was in the hospital and unconscious. I prayed to God all night asking him not to take Taso away. I prayed and cried until my weak body could cry no more. I wanted to go see him at the hospital, but my mother explained that they wouldn't let visitors in, only the family. The next day, we were informed about the devastating news; Taso was dead.

omit this comma

There seems to be an abrupt shift in focus here. You need a smoother transition between your declaration of anger and your discussion of the wake.

Why didn't God listen to my prayers? Taso was the perfect person! A role model to all! He needed to stay on earth to influence more people! So, why didn't God answer my prayers? My sadness turned anger. The wake was very hard for me. It was my first time at a wake of a young person, and a personal friend. The room was crammed with family and friends. I slowly squeezed by with a struggle to his open casket. I didn't recognize him at first. His face seemed very large, and bloated. Tears blurred my vision, and I quickly did my cross and walked away. I went to console the family, but it was hard, because I needed consolation also. I hugged Maria, and we started talking about all the memories of Taso.

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We remembered the first day I had been to her house, and I met her brothers. Taso liked me from the start, and took good care of me. Her cousins came over, and we all went into the basement. The boys set up the basement to look like a casino, and there were different games to play. But I didn't know how to

omit this comma

play anything. Maria's cousins started making fun of me, but Taso stuck up for me. Taso taught me how to play, and he even would give me chips from his pile to play with, when I ran out. He stayed by my side, and we instantly became friends. I think the cousins were jealous of me, because I started going to Maria's house. They wanted her to play with them only. I could tell that they didn't like me, and they were always at her house when I went. On New Year's day, their family had a party, and we were invited. When I got there, Taso informed me that the cousins were planning to do tricks on me, and he told me that I could sit with him and the guys. He was always looking out for me, and I admired him.

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add an apostrophe: Year's

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Capitalize: Day

In a month and a half, five years will have passed since Taso died. I have changed a lot during that time. I feel ashamed for the anger that I felt towards God because there was a purpose for what happened. There was a purpose for Taso being put on earth, and there was a purpose for God taking him away so quickly. I decided that I was going to figure out what that purpose was.

has

Taso had been in several of my dreams, during the past four years. One dream that I vividly remember is that we reunite, and he tells me that he is not sick anymore. I tell him how much I have missed him, and we go out to lunch. As we are eating, and talking, he suddenly disappears. I start crying and calling for him, and then I wake up. My face is burning from tears.

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My dream told me that Taso is not sick now, that he is happy in heaven.

I tried analyzing my dream, as a start to my mission of figuring out Taso's purpose. My dream told me that Taso is not sick now, and happy in heaven. That still didn't help me much, though. Why did he leave in my dream so abruptly? Maybe God needed him back, just like he needed him when he took Taso away from earth, abruptly. Taso's purpose was to spread happiness and good will to everyone. His purpose was to show that even though there may be something wrong with you, you can overcome it, and live a happy life. I now try to live one day at a time. I don't keep my feelings to myself anymore, and I totally regret keeping my feelings from Taso. Life is too short.

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Denise:

I admire the earnestness with which you've approached the highly sensitive topic of premature death, and I truly believe that this draft has the potential to grow into a very fine personal experience essay. Below are some suggestions/questions that you should consider as you revise:

- 1.1 *Have you provided your reader with a satisfactory "portrait" of Taso's physical characteristics? Of course, what Taso looked like is less important than the quality of his character. Nevertheless, your reader might appreciate an illustrative (at least a somewhat illustrative) portrayal of Taso's face, clothes, etc. In your revision, try to do more in that regard. A fuller "portrait" of Taso's physical characteristics would make this tribute to him more expansive and/or complete, I think.*
2. *As I've noted in the margin of the first page of your essay, your paper could use a more explicit description of Thalassemia (what it is, what it does, etc.). While it is true that this is a personal experience essay—not a factual explanation of a medical condition—it is also possible that your paper, as it stands now, leaves your reader only partially informed with respect to the particulars of the disease that afflicted and finally killed Taso.*
- 3.1 *As you revise, try to be more clear on how Taso responded to his sickness. You say, near the beginning of this essay, that he grew tired of the daily, grueling treatments (the needle-injections of iron). However, did Taso actually benefit from Thalassemia in any strange way? (For example, did his unfortunate condition provide him with a kind of wisdom that is usually associated with the elderly? Did his knowledge of the fact that his time on earth was limited make him more discerning than most young men?)*
4. *Could you develop your description of the wake scene? Undoubtedly, attending the wake was an intensely powerful moment in your life, but your draft perhaps hasn't yet caused your readers to feel the fullness of that intense power. Did the sight of Taso's body cause you to be haunted by any alarming images? What wasn't there (what didn't you see) when your eyes came into full contact with Taso as he lay there, motionless, in the open casket.*
5. *Think about a new title; "Life Is Too Short" sounds a bit too much like a cliché.*
6. *Please schedule a one-on-one conference with me. In that conference, we'll work on restructuring and enriching your conclusion. I believe that your conclusion to this paper could travel more deeply (and even a little more poetically) into your heartfelt sense of what Taso's death means to you and/or how his death has permanently changed you.*

A Guardian Angel

More tears seeped from my red and puffy eyes, to my burning cheeks, and down to my pillow, which was already soaking from tears. The pain inside me was so intense, a knife in the heart. “Why did you have to take him, God? Why did this have to happen to him? Nineteen years of life is too short. Why didn’t you listen to my prayers last night? Why...?”

All these thoughts were racing through my mind as I stared at my bedroom ceiling, crying, struggling with my brain, contemplating why God would want to take such a good person as Taso away. Taso was the brother of Maria, my good friend since third grade. Because I was often over at their house, Taso and I also became good friends. All those years though, I did not know that he had a sickness, *Thalassemia*, for which a cure has not yet been found.

Thalassemia, an inherited anemia, prevents the body from producing enough hemoglobin to carry oxygen from the lungs to all parts of the body. (You cannot catch it from other people.) The life expectancy of people with *Thalassemia* is about twenty years, but some patients live longer. The patients need regular blood transfusions, but the transfusions infuse the body with an overabundance of iron, which can be removed by something called *Desferral*. *Desferral*, however, is not a cure.

As Taso was getting older, the number of necessary blood transfusions was also increasing, which in turn required him to take more *Desferral*; this troubled him because both the blood transfusions and the *Desferral* were injected through needles. These treatments usually took anywhere from one hour to eight or even more hours. And in Taso’s mind, it was getting to be too difficult for him to stick needles into his flesh day after day, for eight hours at a time, especially when he observed the simple lifestyles of everyone around him. There are

people who wake in the morning, throw on their clothes, eat their cereal, brush their hats, so to speak, and go. And that was a life that Taso admired. Taso, though, was doomed to a much more complicated routine—treatment after painful treatment, day after day.

Taso was nineteen when he died. He may have lived longer, but Taso finally refused to treat himself with the *Desferral*. What he saw was the overall picture: he was going to die soon. And if not too soon, then in a few more years. Taso stopped giving himself the treatment because he was sick of all the pain he was going through—sticking a long needle inside of his body, leaving it there for hours, every day. He simply couldn’t take it any longer. But did he think about his family and friends who loved him deeply when he made his decision? I ponder this thought at times. Taso probably knew that this action would cause deep pain to everyone who loved him, yet he must have felt that neglecting his treatment would be best for himself and in the long run for everyone. They wouldn’t have to see him suffer like his friends at the hospital.

Because his days were limited, Taso started living life to its fullest and did all the things he wanted to do. For example, Taso had a chance to see various parts of the world, including China, when he was 17 years old. By visiting China, he was able to experience another culture, another way of life. Taso liked the lifestyle in Hong Kong. With his shower robe and matches bearing his initials, TB, and people lighting cigars that were in his mouth, he was treated like an adult. He loved the experience of Hong Kong so much that when he came back home, he said he wanted to go back there to live. He said that life in the States felt like a stuck record. But in Hong Kong people were treated with high respect. He was treated as a king by people who didn’t even know his personality or anything about him. In a three-week trip he experienced more than what many see in 50 years. He grew up fast, and he had to.

Taso also went to Greece a few months before he died. His family was already there for their first cousin's wedding. Due to his necessary monthly blood transfusions, Taso wasn't planning on going. But his father asked him, "Taso, why don't you go to Greece for a few weeks as a surprise to the bride and the whole family?" So Taso did go. He showed up at the wedding and made the bride and groom's big day even bigger by his presence. He loved putting big smiles on people's faces, especially those of his family, and especially his brother Tony, who really needed him there at that time because of his lonely and desperate need to see and talk to his brother Taso, who was also his best friend. Vacation pulled them apart in a way, but when Taso came to Greece, everything fell right into place. The two brothers went to the islands and had an unforgettable time: one of their last meaningful times together. It was like a fantasy realized for Tony, and for Taso it was a last chance with his loved ones in Greece.

Taso liked going out all the time; he loved driving and going to downtown Chicago. He liked going to all the restaurants and was always treating everyone. He liked being around people and doing special things for them. I remember being at his house one day, and he called up a radio station and dedicated a song to me. I was very young at the time and do not remember what the song was. What I do remember, however, is how I thought it was the sweetest thing someone could do, and I felt honored.

I started developing a crush on Taso when I was ten years old. My feelings are recorded in my diary:

12/18/88

Dear Diary,

I like Taso. He is Maria's brother. He is cute. I think he likes me.

6/16/89

Dear Diary,

I'm in love with Taso! Does he like me too?

I never let him or anyone know how I felt though. His good looks (black hair, welcoming face, waiting eyes) were not only what attracted me, however. What attracted him to me was his huge, warm, and caring heart. Perhaps this is all very sentimental, but I was inspired by him and wanted to be just like him. I wish he had told me—he kept his sickness a secret. I would have been supportive; I would have spent more time with him. Maybe I would have told him how I felt about him. But now it is too late.

Taso died on November 14, 1992, the saddest day of my life. The night before we received a phone call from his aunt. She said that Taso was unconscious in the hospital. I prayed to God all night asking him not to take Taso away. I prayed and cried until my body became so weak that I could cry no more. I wanted to go see him at the hospital, but my mother explained that the doctors wouldn't let visitors in, only the family. The next day we were informed about the devastating news; Taso was dead.

Why didn't God listen to my prayers? Taso was the perfect person! A role model to all! He needed to stay on earth to influence more people! My sadness turned into anger. I was feeling anger toward God. I felt that he had disappointed me because I had prayed for him to perform a miracle for Taso.

The wake was hard. The room was crammed with family and friends. I slowly squeezed by with a struggle to his open casket, but I didn't recognize him at first. His face seemed over-large, bloated. Sometimes that face still come to me, haunting the sadder thoughts of my mind. In life Taso was always smiling, but in death there was no smile. Tears blurred my vision, and I quickly did my cross and walked away. I then went to console the family; I hugged Maria, and we started talking about all the memories of Taso.

We remembered the first day I had been to her house, and I met her three brothers. I liked Taso

from the start. One day Maria's cousins came over, and we all went into the basement. The boys set up the basement to look like a casino, and they set up different games to play. But I didn't know how to play anything. Maria's cousins started making fun of my ignorance, but Taso stuck up for me. Taso taught me how to play, and he even would give me chips from his pile to play with when I ran out. He stayed by my side, and we instantly became friends. On New Year's Day their family had a party, and we were invited. I was a little hesitant to go at first, because I could tell that Maria's cousins did not like me. When I got there, not to any surprise, Taso informed me that the cousins were planning to play tricks on me, but he told me that I could sit with him and the guys. I was very grateful for that. I was very shy and did not know how to stick up for myself. He must have noticed this. He was always looking out for me, and I admired him and loved him for it. I still feel that he is in my presence, and is acting as my guardian angel.

On this coming up November 14, 1997, five years will have passed since Taso died. Taso has been in several of my dreams during these past five years. One dream that I vividly remember is that we reunite, and he tells me that he is not sick anymore. I tell him how much I have missed him, but I am glad that he is back. We go out to lunch, and as we are eating and talking, he suddenly vanishes! I start crying and calling for him, and then I wake up, my face burning from tears. The dream feels so real, and I have heard that a part of our waking (real) lives do creep into our sleeping, dreaming lives. I believe, then, that my dreams of Taso are more than dreams. I believe that we actually did reunite with God's help. After that dream, I prayed every night to God for me to see Taso in my dreams again. It was such a comforting experience that I needed it to happen again. God granted my wish, and after several months I was blessed with seeing Taso a few more times in dreams.

This past year Taso's brother Tony and I were looking through Taso's drawer to reminisce on memories, and we found photos of Taso taken for his photography class: pictures that I had never seen before, and I was very surprised by what I saw. Most of the photos contained Taso in cemeteries. He and his black top hat were looking down on tombstones with solemn expressions. In one photo we noticed a tall white pillar adjacent to Taso and a gravestone. It scares me to know now that at the actual cemetery where Taso is buried an almost identical tall white pillar is next to Taso's grave. Was Taso a kind of mystic prophet who could foresee the details of his burial place? I don't try to answer that question. And, anyway, maybe Taso was no prophet. Maybe he was just a sad boy who (underneath the easy smiles) usually considered one thing: the coming of death.

The death of Taso has touched my heart and moved me toward this tribute to him. There was only one Taso, but I believe that we should try to walk in his footsteps. He was here to teach those who knew him about the importance of appreciating what we have while we have it. We need to complain less. We need to carry on what he left behind: the ability to smile easily and often, even while staring into the void of premature death.

Taso's death has also caused me to reflect upon why the wonderful people so frequently die young. Maybe it's to astonish us with their presence, since there is no presence quite so powerful as a sudden, stunning absence. Then again, we may never know why good people often pass into and out of our lives too quickly; like many mysteries, that mystery may be left unanswered in this life-time, though I am now comfortable in my uncertainties. I am no longer angry with God for taking Taso away. I think now that my former resentment toward God was born from my noble love for Taso and my childish self-pity. We are all faced with obstacles, some larger than others, and God never selected me (or Taso) as a special victim.

I have learned that the grass lives and dies and lives again, year after year. But to be human is to be vulnerable, fragile, like Taso. Human lives on earth are here only for a short while; even a hundred years is but a short while. I will seek out and embrace all the Tasos I can, while I can, in the short time I have. I will teach my children to do the same. That way Taso's legacy will live forever: his soul will run through the living though his body will remain in the ground.

Evaluation: *In several one-on-one conferences, Denise and I worked on fine-tuning the structures of her sentences and adding more illustrative details.*

Denise's final revision is, as a result, a clear improvement upon her draft. The reader can now gain a fuller, more explicit picture of who Taso was and how Denise has matured from her experience of watching him live and die. I commend Denise's devoted willingness not only to write but also to rewrite. I especially commend her struggle to make sense of a powerful, painful event.

A Comparison of the *Tao Te Ching* and Black Elk

by Doug Koski

Course: Non-Western Philosophy
Instructor: Jerome A. Stone

Assignment:

*Compare and contrast two non-western
philosophical viewpoints and evaluate
them from your own viewpoint.*

When considering the subject matter of my term paper, it did not take me long to delve into an exploration of what has turned out to be my two favorite philosophies: Taoism and the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux. Each in its own right is entirely different, yet they share several similarities. This paper will compare and contrast a few major themes of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching: The Book of Meaning and Life* and Black Elk's *The Sacred Pipe The Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*. Comparisons of each philosophy's belief of "Oneness," "Humility," and "Humanity" will be explored. Also, a few of their major contrasts will be briefly covered. Finally, an evaluative response to my favorite philosophy will be covered. But first, I would like to briefly summarize the two philosophies, Taoism and the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux.

I. Brief Overview

Taoism, that ancient Chinese philosophy, can best be summed up as "both philosophical and mystical reflection...about the harmony and flow of life and the necessity for affinity with it" (Lao Tzu, page 56). The Natural Way of Lao Tzu is very appealing to me because of the emphasis on living naturally and happily, on enjoying life to the fullest, and being humble about oneself and one's achievements. Lao Tzu compiled his sinologue in a total of eighty-one reflections pondering desire, humanity, virtue, and weakness, among many others. This paper will only concentrate on a few of Lao Tzu's wondrous musings.

Black Elk, spokesman for the collection of Sioux Indians of Western America, revealed the secrets of the Sacred Pipe and its encompassing Seven Rites to Joseph Epes Brown in 1947-48. One day Wakan-Tanka, "the Great Spirit independent of manifestation, unqualified, [and] unlimited One" (Brown, p. 5), came to the Sioux and announced that they should perform these rites as a benefit to all people: "With this pipe the two-leggeds will increase, and there will come to them all that is good" (Brown, p. 8). In other words, if the Sioux adhere to the Seven Rites, Wakan-Tanka will bless them. The Seven

Rites include: keeping of the good souls, purification, vision quest, the sun dance, making relatives (humanity), preparation of womanhood, and the throwing of the ball. Like the many chapters of the *Tao Te Ching*, this paper will only concern itself with a few aspects of the Seven Rights.

Now, let's bring these two disparate philosophies together. The first similarity deals with the concept of "Oneness."

II. On Oneness

One theme that is similar to both philosophies is the concept of "Oneness," to be united with Wakan-Tanka or The Great Spirit, or "God" for the purposes of this paper. Chapter 22 of the *Tao Te Ching* is selected by Wing-Tsit Chan as an excellent example of Lao Tzu's belief of Oneness. Here is a brief part of that chapter to be analyzed:

To yield is to be preserved whole.
 To be bent is to become straight.
 To be empty is to be full.
 To be worn out is to be renewed.
 To have little is to possess...
 He who does not show himself;
 therefore he is luminous (Chan, 151).

Clearly, this seemingly self-contradictory passage is packed full of paradoxical insight. It is understandable why Chan singled this out as a lucid example of an individual's characteristics that make him close to God. But amazingly, half a world away, the Sioux Indian of Western America, a culture that had never smelled the breath of any ancient Taoist, had many similarities to Lao Tzu's concept of "Oneness."

Consider the line "To be empty is to be full." This fits nicely into the Sioux ritual of smoking the sacred pipe. Upon the filling of the pipe with various tobacco and sweet grass, the Sioux would offer the first puffs to the four directions (powers) of north, west, east, and south. Later, the ceremony of purification would be performed, thus uniting the individual with Wakan-Tanka: "In filling a pipe, all

space and all things are contracted within a single point, so that the pipe contains the universe" (Brown, 21). By smoking the pipe, the man "shatters the illusion of separateness" (ibid) and becomes One with God! It is striking to see the similarity between the Chinese and the Sioux in this passage.

Another similarity can be found in the line "To be worn out is to be renewed." During the arduous rite of the Sun Dance, the Sioux would dance all night long in honor of Wakan-Tanka. This dance required the piercing of human flesh with thongs and sticks. The dancers would move all night until they broke free their bonds, with great pain and damage to the body. In honor of their god, they would dance tirelessly. The conclusion of the Sun Dance would occur as the sun rose above the horizon. This was a sigh of rebirth and renewal. The painful experience of the Sun Dance was a way for the Sioux to ensure "liberation from our dark bodies" (Brown, 92) and "that they may increase [in numbers] in a sacred manner (Brown, 97). In this sense, the suffering experienced during the Sun Dance was a way to renew the strength of the Sioux people.

One final line in Chapter 22 of the *Tao Te Ching* that resembles one of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux is "He does not show himself; therefore he is luminous." This phrase can be directly incorporated with the Third Rite, the Vision Quest. In the Rite of Crying Out for a Vision, or Vision Quest, a Sioux would journey into the mountains and wait for a vision from Wakan-Tanka. Here, the man "does not show himself" by retreating in isolation to meditate. Once he receives this vision, he returns to the village. A holy man interprets his vision, thereby enlightening the man and the others around him. It is this wisdom through isolation that the Sioux Rite of Vision Quest resembles yet another ancient Chinese belief in the quest of enlightenment and Oneness with God as written in Chapter 22 of the *Tao Te Ching*.

III.i On Humility

There exist some interesting parallels between Taoist thought and Sioux ritual concerning “Humility.” Both philosophies held that humility was positive and required in order to be a good person and to get closer to Enlightenment. In order to attain wisdom, Lao Tzu stressed that humility, that is, the removal of the selfish ego and desire, was a necessity. Humility requires caring and compassion:

In the sixty-seventh chapter of the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao-tse named it as his “first treasure,” and then wrote, “From caring comes courage.” We might add that it also comes from wisdom. It’s rather significant that...those who have no compassion have no wisdom. Knowledge, yes; cleverness, maybe; wisdom, no (Hoff, 128).

Clearly, humility is integral to the attainment of wisdom.

Likewise, the Sioux placed a great emphasis on humility in order to attain Oneness with all. During the Vision Quest, otherwise known as the period of lamenting, an attainment of humility, or sense of smallness, was required to make oneself open to receive the vision of wisdom from Wakan-Tanka:

The most important reason for “lamenting” is that it helps us to realize our oneness with all things, to know that all things are our relatives; and then in behalf of all things we pray to Wakan-Tanka that He may give to us knowledge of Him who is the source of all things, yet greater than all things (Brown, 46).

The goal, of course, for all Sioux was to “get to know” Wakan-Tanka. Many elaborate rituals as well as specific behavioral characteristics were necessary to the establishment of Oneness with the Great Spirit. To feel small, or to possess humility, was absolutely necessary. Black Elk speaks of humility being possessed only by man: “of all the

created things or beings of the universe, it is the two-legged men alone who, if they purify and humiliate themselves, may become one with—or may know—Wakan Tanka,” (Brown, 138). It cannot be understated that mankind possesses a wonderful trait in humility. With it, we alone, can become One with God. This philosophy, as we have witnessed in Taoist thought, is not unique only to the Sioux.

IV.i On Humanity

A final similarity that Taoism and Sioux philosophy share is the concept of “Humanity.” It is very important to the Sioux and the Taoist to establish kind relations with all mankind, not just selective individuals or groups. Ideally, this should be a trait common to all cultures, but alas, it is not. Humanity is, however, essential to these two philosophies.

Lao Tzu was very successful in writing clear, understandable chapters of wisdom in the *Tao Te Ching*. In matters of humanity, he writes so concisely, yet so wisely, of what a good man is in Chapter eight:

The best man in his dwelling loves the earth.
In his heart, he loves what is profound.
In his associations, he loves humanity
(Chan, 143).

Another word for humanity in Chinese is the word *jen*. It is defined as “a particular virtue, benevolence, and also the basis of all goodness,” (Chan, 788). *Jen* is a cornerstone of Taoist thought. Likewise, humanity also plays an important role in Sioux philosophy.

For the Sioux, their Fifth Rite, the Making of Relatives, states their emphasis on possessing humanity for all. They believed that Peace starts first within the soul of the individual: “The first peace...comes within the souls of men when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe...and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us” (Brown, 115). After this

inner peace is established, the humanity branches out to another individual, the second peace. The third peace, that between nations, is the final goal—humanity (ibid).

Humanity is not just a goal or hopeful characteristic to the Taoist or Sioux; it is belief, a way of being never to be taken lightly or sacrificed for any reason.

V. Some Differences

I do not wish to dwell on the differences between the Seven Rites and Taoism. There are many. The point of this uniting of two philosophies is to learn the shared, sacred ground. There are, however, a few differences between the two that I would like to illustrate.

A major difference is the way that the philosophies are structured. Lao Tzu compiled his pondering in eighty-one poetic, if not oblique, chapters. There is much left open to interpretation, although some chapters are very lucid. Black Elk, on the other hand, expressed his people's philosophy in an informal interview. As opposed to the strict authority of the *Tao Te Ching*, the *Sacred Pipe* reads as if Black Elk is sitting there talking to you. Taoism can be very personal philosophy. The Seven Rites, however, require copious numbers of rituals and many situations that need many people to participate. Taoism is much more personal than the Seven Rites.

The rituals just mentioned are another major difference between the two philosophies. Taoism does not have any specific rituals, and, in fact, Taoists frown upon any overly structured form of worship. The Seven Rites, however, require a very rigid ceremony for just about anything, including the cutting down of a tree! There is a proper way to do *everything* in the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux.

A final difference is the way each philosophy addresses its God. So formal and respectful is the Taoist Way that Taoists don't speak too specifically about their God at all. In fact, most of the time, they just talk about Oneness, leaving God and Heaven out of the equation completely. The Sioux, however, have a name and ritual for all the Powers.

They speak of the Great Spirit, Wakan-Tanka, often and dramatically. It is very elaborate, obvious worship that the Sioux perform for their God.

VI.i Personal Evaluation Responsei

In my opinion, though I relish and respect the Natural Way of Lao Tzu, I am drawn magnetically to the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux. There are several interesting aspects of their philosophy that I cling to and respect. The first aspect is that the Sioux give thanks and worship to that which sustains them. I am speaking specifically about the buffalo. The Great Tatanka provides them with food, clothing, and shelter (in the form of hides). The Sioux do not forget this and gratefully acknowledge the buffalo into their every day rituals. This is an admirable way to acknowledge that which sustains life.

The Sioux even give thanks to the willow tree for providing the limbs to help build their purification lodge. What a wonderful way to approach life and living by giving thanks to the spirit of all items that an individual comes into contact with and uses.

The last aspect of the Seven Rites that I admire is the Fifth Rite, Hunkapi: the Making of Relatives. This important rite stresses that a group that has an enemy has an obligation to confront that enemy with a gift in order to strike a peace with them. This humanistic altruism is an excellent way to ensure peace and to establish brotherhood. Instead of waiting for your enemy to attack or pursue Hunkapi, you should take the initiative and give them a gift to inaugurate unification of all mankind.

Of course, there are many other admirable ways of the Oglala Sioux and the Taoists, but I just wanted to touch on a couple of beliefs that have interested and impressed me the most.

The philosophies of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* and Black Elk's *The Sacred Pipe* possess striking similarities despite being half a world away and separated by many, many passings of the "Moons of Fattening" (Brown, 67). I must stress the implied but obvious conclusion: In a time and culture in which moral and ethical responsibilities are dispers-

ing faster than the smoke of a peace pipe in a tornado, in addition to an environment being wantonly raped by its two-legged inhabitants, we are obligated—no, *required*—to embrace the wisdom of the Tao Te Ching and the reverence of The Sacred Pipe in order to keep Wakan-Tanka from sending the last, great Thunderbird from the West to sweep us once and forever from Mother Earth. The two-leggeds are turning upon themselves. We must change our ways; there may not be many Fat Moons left.

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Evaluation: *The assignment was to compare and contrast two non-Western world views and then to evaluate them. The analysis of the texts is perceptive and accurate, and the evaluation fair. The writing is clear and well-organized, with no distracting grammatical or spelling errors.*

Band-What?

by Christopher J. Kouzios

Course: English 101

Instructor: Peter Sherer

Assignment:

Teach a term about which your audience could stand to learn more. Introduce an identifiable speaker. Use a variety of definition patterns.

Remember when America On-Line (AOL) offered unlimited Internet access for only \$19.95 per month? Users were amazed! It sounded too good to be true. Thousands of users signed up with AOL. To the dismay of many users, the deal really was too good to be true. These unknowing web surfers soon found out that when they tried to dial up to AOL for Internet access, they couldn't connect. They also found that when they finally made it on-line, they were creeping along at a pace of an eighty-year-old man with a walker. Thousands of complaints poured in to the AOL help desk. AOL was finally forced by the government to refund the users about \$10 since AOL had misrepresented its service.

Why were the users not able to get on-line? Better yet, why were they served so slowly when they did get on-line? In one word, bandwidth. More specifically, the problem was a severe shortage of available bandwidth for the users logging in to the AOL system. So what is this "bandwidth" thing that caused so many users to have problems? Bandwidth is the measurement of the information flowing in bits per second (bps) over a data communications circuit.

Bandwidth is not a person, place, or thing. You can't touch bandwidth. You can't play with bandwidth. It is rather difficult to define the term using a dictionary definition. An easy way to describe bandwidth is by comparing it to the system of toilets in a building. There are toilets on every floor of a building. The purpose of these toilets is to carry waste to the sewer treatment center for the city. These toilets are connected to the sewer system of the building through sewer pipes. These sewer pipes are connected to the main sewer system for the city. When people need to use the bathroom, they go to the toilet and deposit their waste. They then flush the toilet which sends the waste through the building pipes down to the city sewer pipes and eventually to the sewer treatment center where it is processed.

Data communications works similarly. When users need to use the Internet, they go to their computers, use their modems and call their Internet provider. They become connected and send data over the phone lines. This data travels over the phone lines until it eventually reaches the host computer, where it is processed. In this comparison, the modem is like the toilet. Both the toilet and the modem take the input and send it down the pipes. The sewer pipes and the phone circuits both carry their “data” to the end point, where it is processed.

Bandwidth, in this analogy, is the amount of available space in the sewer pipe. If you have a 4” sewer pipe and you try to cram 4.5” of waste down the pipe, it will back up into the toilet. This will cause the toilet to hold extra waste until you can flush it down the sewer. Similarly, if you have a 28,800 bps phone line and you try to cram 33,600 bps down it, your modem will back up. The transmission will slow down until the modem has time to finish transmitting the data. Imagine if the pipe or circuit were to break! You wouldn’t be able to get the data or the waste to its destination at all. Then you would really be out of bandwidth.

In short, bandwidth is the measurement of the information flowing in bits per second (bps) over a data communications circuit. Bandwidth is not an item you can hold or touch, but real people use it everyday. Every time you make a call with your PC to the Internet, you’re using bandwidth. The next time you connect to the Internet and the front page of the web site is being sent line by agonizing line to your screen, remember that your sewer pipes are backing up!

Evaluation: *This essay uses analogy effectively to teach its audience about a hard-to-understand data communications term. Chris’s essay is indeed interesting and informative.*

Code Switching— Spontaneous Occurrence

by *Eva Kuznicki*

Course: Linguistics 205

Instructor: Kathi Holper

Assignment:

As a bilingual person, observe the conditions when code-switching occurs. Report your experiences, i.e., the occasions when you and family members or friends use one language as opposed to a second or third language.

Although the term “bilingual” is generously granted all individuals who can speak two languages, in fact, for most of them there is always one of those languages that they feel more comfortable using. The native language, the tongue of comfort, is the one that they grew up with and acquired during their childhood and adolescence.

While social situations demand that bilinguals choose a particular language in the presence of a person who is monolingual, often the absence of that foreigner does not necessarily signal a conversion to the native language between the bilingual speakers. Among bilingual individuals, code switching happens automatically, depending mainly on the speech circumstances and the topic of communication. The players of the scene remain the same, yet regardless of their ability to communicate in both languages, the bilingual speakers go back and forth from one tongue to another while conveying different messages.

These statements are very general and perhaps cannot be applied to all individuals who consider themselves bilingual. Code switching often depends on the extent of their command of the second language.

My observations are based on the behavior of a typical immigrant family, my own. Parents, that is, my husband and I, came to the United States with zero knowledge of English. Throughout various work and social experiences, we had slowly learned some “Pidgin English,” but more embarrassed by it than satisfied with that minimal progress, we took English classes. Unfortunately, we were both in our late twenties when we were first exposed to the second language, and even though English is the language that we speak exclusively during daily routines, Polish will always be the language we “feel.” That does not mean that we both automatically switch to Polish when we get home. It all depends on our emotional attachment to the topic. When my husband talks about his work, he speaks English when it is a report of his daily tasks. However, if there was a problem with a client or something unusual happened, he immediately switches to Polish. The same code switching occurs when after discussing a TV program that we saw, we begin talking about our family. We both automatically convert from English to Polish because we are emotionally attached to that topic, not for the lack of knowledge of English words.

There are some words that did not exist or we had never heard when we were acquiring our first language. For example, the entire computer-related vocabulary or expressions pertaining to the stock market, we learned in English first, and we always use this language whenever we talk about computers or our finances. In fact, even when the whole sentence is spoken in Polish, those words are said in English. The same expressions translated to Polish sound very strange, as if they were spoken in some foreign language. We had become used to the way we speak so much that we started to believe that those words are actually Polish. It took a great deal of explanations before my mother, a bookkeeper, who came for a visit, was able to convince us that there is

no such word in our native language as “transfer.” We simply had not used the Polish “przelew” very often, erased it from our memory and replaced it with the English equivalent “transfer” that we accepted as the “comfortable” one. Another example of mixing two languages in one conversation is a simple word “screen.” We use this word to talk about computers even when we speak Polish because we were first introduced to that topic in English. However the TV screen, in the same conversation, remains the Polish word “ekran” because we had known television before we came to the United States.

We want all our children to be bilingual. However, they were born while we were at different stages of learning English. When our oldest son was a child, Polish was the only language that he heard at home. Whenever he wanted to communicate with us, he had to speak Polish because we did not understand English. As a result, he is fluent in Polish, even though when we have a conversation now, it is in English only. There is an exception, however. When we want to enforce a rule that our oldest is not too thrilled about, we speak Polish. There are two reasons for such language conversion. Obviously, both my husband and I feel more comfortable using our native tongue in stressful situations. In addition, we are fully aware of the flaws in our pronunciation and English grammar. To maintain whatever authority we still possess, we have to sound knowledgeable. Unfortunately, no matter how wise the message is, the way we convey it in English, our accent and other imperfections, make us sound very ignorant. To avoid mistakes and have our son respect our opinions, we switch to Polish. Ultimately, my son jokes about the whole experience, saying: “I know I am in trouble just as soon as my mom starts talking Polish to me.”

There is a substantial age difference between our oldest son and our two younger children. They were born, respectively, twelve and fourteen years later. At that time both my husband and I spoke fairly good English. Even though Polish was the language of their early childhood, English became their first language as soon as they were introduced to the outside

world of neighborhood, playground, preschool, and television. Nowadays, when we talk to them, we instinctively speak English because that is the only language we know that they understand. Sometimes it is a challenging task, especially when I have to help my daughter with her homework. I know the problem, I know the solution, I can do it for her; however, to make her arrive at her own answer, I have to explain it in the same manner and use the same words as her teacher did. It is difficult enough to do it even in your own language. To explain a math problem in a second language is twice as hard, so I mix English and Polish words, hoping that she will somehow understand the idea. As a result, my daughter looks at me in disbelief when I tell her that I really know arithmetic and that it is my English deficiency that makes me sound uneducated in all areas.

In conclusion, there is one example that perhaps would validate the results of my observations. My upbringing was very traditional. Topics such as male and female body parts or their sexual functions were taboo in my parents’ home. These subjects are still embedded in my mind as something too embarrassing to talk about. Even when I am forced by circumstances to say anything pertaining to human sexual behavior, I cannot utter those words without a great deal of resistance and blushing. All this happens when I speak Polish. The same subject when I speak English does not make me blush at all. I do not feel embarrassed talking about sex in English because I do not “feel” the words or their consequences.

In my experience, code switching happens spontaneously, depending on the speakers’ unconscious reaction to a subject of their speech. There is always one language, the first one, that they sense; the second one is sort of reserved for official or indifferent topics.

Evaluation: Eva has captured the true spirit of code-switching and has written an outstanding analysis of the Kuznicki family’s experience with bilingualism within the context of the psychological and emotional needs of the language of comfort.

Lost Idealism

by Pam Laughland
Course: Literature 105
Instructor: Barbara Hickey

Assignment:
Write a critical analysis of a poem.

In the 1961 film *Splendor in the Grass*, Natalie Wood portrays a high school girl who suffers deep emotional trauma after her boyfriend breaks up with her. While trying to cope with her feelings, she is asked to stand up in class to recite a portion of a poem by Wordsworth:

Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower,
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;

When asked to explain what she thinks are meant by these lines of poetry, the character responds that “when we’re young we look at things very idealistically, and when we grow up we have to forget the ideals of youth.” It is precisely this theme that Wordsworth emphasizes throughout “Ode: Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood.” And, although somewhat saddened by this knowledge, in the end, the speaker embraces the maturity, along with the resulting deepened appreciation for life and the earth which accompanies it.

Within the first two stanzas of this rather lengthy poem, Wordsworth makes two separate references to lost idealism in “things which I have seen I now can see no more” (9) and “there hath passed away a glory from the earth” (18). Clearly, there is the awareness that, over time, a change is taking place. It seems that the voice of the poem is saddened by the loss of idealism while simultaneously attempting to come to terms with the fact that it is a necessary part of life, a step in the aging process. A “thought of grief” (22) is replaced by the belief that “I again am strong” (24).

Further on in the poem, in lines 55 and 56, the speaker poses the following questions:

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where it is now, the glory and the dream?

He is questioning what there might be in life without the endless possibilities which are fostered by idealism. The following stanza focuses on the evolution that takes place from birth through boyhood, youth, and finally, manhood, when at last the dream dies away and fades “into the light of common day” (75). This indicates the developing awareness of the inherent beauty of life itself, even without the idealism which was a part of youth. Indeed, near the end of the poem the speaker has been moved to exclamations of singing and feeling the “gladness of the May!” (174). Furthermore, Wordsworth expresses the concept of aging and the passage of time by making numerous references to May. These references to “the heart of May” (32) and “this sweet May-morning” (44) all serve to further illustrate the difference between “youthful” idealism in the May or spring of life, and the more mature attitude of “manhood.”

Finally, there is the awareness that with maturity comes a deeper appreciation of life and nature:

I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet.

These words illustrate an acceptance and even a sort of thankfulness that life does not remain the same. Surely, it is not always easy to come to grips with some of the harsher realities of life. But those who can recognize the benefits that come with maturity and embrace those benefits will ultimately be happier. Wordsworth is not suggesting that the loss of idealism simultaneously signifies the loss of dreams; rather, he is illustrating the positive aspects of accepting life for what it is, the fulfillment of attaining an ever-deepening understanding and enjoyment of life.

While idealism is certainly an easier view of the world, it is so fragile that it oftentimes cannot withstand the realities of life. The young woman in *Splendor in the Grass* was very troubled and had not yet learned that although age is inevitably accompanied by a loss of idealism, this is compensated for by a new-found appreciation of the true beauty in life, waiting to be discovered through more mature eyes. Wordsworth more than aptly conveys this idea throughout his wonderful poem, a poem abundant with a meaning that becomes ever clearer each time it is read.

Evaluation: *Pam's love of the written word inspires her evocative analysis. Like William Wordsworth's poem, her essay is "abundant with a meaning that becomes ever clearer each time it is read."*

The Letters

by Sanghui Lee

Course: English as a Second Language

Instructor: Ilona J. Sala

Assignment:

To write a narrative dealing with a painful, moving, embarrassing, or meaningful experience.

“Now boarding United Airlines’ Flight 431 from Chicago direct to Seoul,” a voice boomed over the loudspeakers. I watched the crew prepare the large Boeing 747 for its journey. “Thank you for choosing United Airlines. Your seat number is 42B,” the flight attendant pointed out. I took my seat and stared out of the window. I was so excited about meeting my father and mother in 14 hours. While the plane was leaving the ground, I felt dizzy. I closed my eyes and tried to sleep. Between dreams, I was traveling in my old memories.

It was a very hot day. The ugly sun was irritating me by pouring flames. I hesitated before pushing my door bell. My final report card must have been mailed that day. The front door was opened like the mouth of hell. “Mom. I’m home. Hello?” I shouted. My mother was sitting at the chair in the dim kitchen. “Mom, guess who I met today at Myngdong. Do you remember my old friend Jina?” I pretended I did not know anything about my report card.

“...”

“Mom? Did you hear me? Mom?”

“...”

I saw she had my report card in her hand. “I am very disappointed with you. How can you receive B in mathematics? Why?” she said quietly.

“I’m sorry mom, but that’s not that bad,” I muttered in my throat.

“When I was your age, I woke up at 4 o’clock. I had to work in the field before I went to school. You have many opportunities that I didn’t have. You are lucky. You need to set high goals in your life and look to the future. .i.” I felt as if something had wrung my neck.

“You are so annoying to me. It’s my life, not yours, not your business. Please, please, leave me alone. I’m sixteen, I’m not your puppet.” I shut the door of my room with bang. My mother did not say anything to me for the rest of the week. We ate dinner in silence and quietly went to each other’s room. On Sunday morning, I found a letter on my desk. It was from my mother.

“Dear daughter, it is my way that I love you. If you become a mother, you can understand what a mother’s love is. It doesn’t matter to me that you are sixteen. You are my baby forever.” I threw the letter into the garbage can indifferently.

One very cold day I was awakened by the telephone ring. There were thousands of innocent snow flowers on the branches of every tree out of the window.

“Hello. This is mom.”

“It’s your birthday; do you know that?”

“Are you crying? Baby? Are you O.K.?”

I couldn’t speak any words when I heard her voice. I felt a lump in my throat. It was my 21st birthday and I was in the U.S.. After I hung up the phone without saying anything, I took out pictures of my family from my drawer. They were smiling at me. My heart was filled with a stream of sorrow. I didn’t know why I was sobbing. I always desired to be free. I was eager to escape from my mother. At last, I had succeeded in escaping. Nobody scolds me about my messy room. I don’t have to worry about my report card. I asked myself, “Is this the freedom I always dreamed of?” Am I happy?” I could not answer my questions. There were some missing pieces. Finally, I wrote a letter to my mother.

“Dear, mom. Before I become a mother, I wanted to know what a mother’s love is. I had never known that I would miss your scolding. It doesn’t matter to me how old I am. I want to be your baby forever.”

When I opened my eyes, the sun was warming my heart. As soon as the plane broke the white cloud, the Korean peninsula came into view. “Welcome to Kimpo International Airport. *Hwanyoung - Hapnido*. Welcome to Korea,” the voice boomed. When I stepped off the plane, familiar sights and smells overwhelmed my senses.

“I am back at home,” I uttered while I was walking through airport terminal.

“Here! Sanghui. Here!! Mom, she’s there!” My older brother was jumping and waving at me like a little kid. No sooner did I turn my head than I met my mother’s puffy, red eyes. At that moment, I found the forgotten missing pieces.

Evaluation: *Sanghui relates a human experience which most adults recognize and relate to. She uses dialog which places the reader in the midst of the happenings. She does so well to bring the emotional response to the reader as she herself felt it as it happened.*

The Film's the Thing

by Mark McCullough
Course: Literature and Film
Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

For your final paper, compare a literary work to its film adaptation or compare two film versions adapted from the same literary work.

In your paper, discuss in full the film maker's tools, assessing how successfully he used those tools.

The play *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare has been around for nearly four-hundred years; during this time innumerable productions have been staged throughout the world. With the advent of the motion picture, *Hamlet* has also been adapted in various ways on the silver screen. Sir Laurence Olivier was the first to capture *Hamlet* on celluloid back in 1948. Kenneth Branagh's 1996 production is the most recent and is the first to use Shakespeare's text in its entirety. It is interesting to note that Olivier began his career as a film director with an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry V* in 1944 and Branagh debuted as a director in 1989 with his retelling of *Henry V*. Not only do Olivier and Branagh direct their respective versions of *Hamlet*, but they also play the lead role. The similarities end right there, though, as these two interpretations are very dissimilar. Olivier portrays Hamlet as a melancholy, morose, and indecisive individual. Olivier even starts out his film by telling us that this is a "tragedy about a man who could not make up his mind." Branagh paints Hamlet as a vibrant, violent and energetic prince who is merely waiting for the best moment to get his revenge. The photography, setting, mise-en-scene, and acting style all reinforce each actor-director's interpretation of Shakespeare's play. The famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy is an excellent example of how all of these elements are intertwined to create unique adaptations.

The photography is the most obvious difference in these films. Olivier shot his film in black and white, while Branagh opted to use color. The lighting in Olivier's film is very low key and dark. Olivier's film works much better on a symbolic level. The Olivier film seems to be saturated in incessant blackness. This is most appropriate because the characters are surrounded by evil, murder and treachery. Prince Hamlet is still in mourning from his father's death and is in the dark as to the true nature of the ghost; Ophelia is unsure of Hamlet's feelings toward her; Gertrude is ignorant of how her first husband passed away; and Claudius is unaware what Hamlet is up to. The

black and white film stock and dark lighting are extremely effective in conveying this sense of doom and mystery in the play. The use of color in Branagh's depiction is not as effective in capturing the atmosphere of the play. Branagh does use a color scheme that reiterates his interpretation of Hamlet as a vigorous character. Lots of reds, oranges, and yellows are used in his adaptation to visually reinforce the violence and fiery passion inherent in the play, but it is too warmly lit. Instead of suggesting danger, it feels more like a cozy fire. The audience more deeply feels the darkness that is in the play in the Olivier version.

The settings also help represent each of their interpretations. Olivier sets his version in a studio-built castle that looks very authentic and presumably the movie version takes place in the same year that the original play does. Branagh makes his biggest mistake by updating the play to England in the 1800's, while still retaining Shakespeare's dialogue. During an interview, Branagh mentioned that he wanted to update the setting so that it would be "close enough to us to seem exciting to watch, but also at a sufficient distance for us to accept that they speak in a heightened language." Well, Victorian English is a far cry from Elizabethan English. This updating taints the entire film. Branagh does stay true to the original text by setting his film in the winter, but the fake snow looks utterly ridiculous especially during a flashback scene in which we see the poison being poured into King Hamlet's ear. He is outside sleeping on a lawn chair in the snow. How many people sleep outside in the snow? Branagh filmed most of it inside Blenheim Palace, which had not even been constructed until *Hamlet* was 200 years old. The interiors are opulent and lavish, but ultimately they are just smoke and (literally) mirrors. They do not have any other function.

In Olivier's recounting, the setting, like the lighting, functions on a symbolic level. The castle has a labyrinthine quality to it. It is full of winding stairs, dark passageways, and is shrouded by darkness, clouds, and fog. The setting is a reflection of

Hamlet's thought processes. Like the locale, Hamlet is very temperamental and complex. He oscillates between depression, feigned insanity, and cruelty. The setting provocatively captures these ideas.

The movement and framing also fortify each director's adaptation. Both directors primarily use medium and long shots that are loosely framed, but the movement in those shots are considerably different. Olivier's Hamlet "has considerable freedom of movement, freedom to act. But he refuses to use his freedom, preferring to sulk in dark corners, paralyzed with indecision. When he does move, the motion is generally recorded from long distances, thus reinforcing the impotence of the protagonist in relationship to his environment" (Giannetti 97). Branagh's Hamlet also has the room to move around in the gigantic interiors of Blenheim palace and move around he does. Branagh's Hamlet is depicted as being spontaneous and impetuous. He seems to act before he thinks, or at least thinks on his feet. The loose framing and movement of the drama emphasizes this in a visual manner. Also, the camera follows Hamlet all over the place, furthering the idea of Hamlet as a vivacious individual.

The best way of understanding the differences in their interpretations is to examine a particular scene. The famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy is a great example. Olivier's version is a brilliant combination of music, camera movement, visual symbols, voice-over, and staging position. Hamlet has run up a flight of stairs to the top of the castle after arguing with Ophelia. The audience does not even see this action of his. The camera is following Hamlet, who is off screen and ahead of the camera. The camera spirals upward, which is a visual symbol of chaotic thoughts. There is furious and fast music playing which also represents his state of mind. After the camera reaches the top of the castle, the audience sees a shot of a cloudy sky. The sky is another visual symbol of his thoughts. Then we see a shot of the raging sea that surrounds the castle. This is a wonderful illustration of the "sea of troubles" which Hamlet will be speaking about. Finally,

Hamlet comes into the frame with his back to the camera. This is an extraordinary example of staging position. Hamlet will be delivering a soliloquy and he is truly alone; he doesn't even acknowledge the presence of the camera or audience.

Next, the camera dollies in to a close-up of his head and then goes to an extreme close-up. We are literally going inside Hamlet's head. The music stops and Hamlet starts the soliloquy, but it is done with voice-over narration. Instead of talking to himself as he would on a stage, we cinematically hear his thoughts. When we finally see Hamlet's face, there is a shot of the raging sea superimposed over it. Even though this lacks subtlety, it is a great visual symbol. After the first line, Hamlet does start to deliver the soliloquy out loud and the camera pulls back revealing his entire body precariously perched on a rock at the edge of the castle wall. Hamlet pulls out a small dagger and the soundtrack reverts to the voice-over. Hamlet's voice gets softer and slower as the camera again dollies in to an extreme close-up of his face. Hamlet is contemplating suicide and it really seems that he will "shuffle off this mortal coil." This is an amazing moment of suspense and it is purposefully drawn out. But wait, "there's the rub!" After Hamlet decides against committing suicide there is a brief burst of music as he and the camera jump backwards jarring the audience.

This scene is a splendid example of how literature can be transformed cinematically. In Branagh's film, Hamlet is in a hall of mirrors staring at his reflection while speaking out loud. This works on a symbolic level because Hamlet is doing some soul searching and reflecting on life. Hamlet does have his back to the audience, but since we can see his reflection staring back at us, it does not achieve the same psychological effect as Olivier's film. Also, Branagh's Hamlet is not suicidal. He pulls out a dagger, too, but there is no feeling that he will actually use it. Branagh makes one of his biggest mistakes in this scene. Ophelia is hiding in the background and hears everything Hamlet says, so this is really no longer a soliloquy. Even though Hamlet believes he is talking to himself, the fact

that we can see Ophelia makes it seem as though he is speaking to her. Branagh was trying to compose a cinematic equivalent of a soliloquy, but fails. Olivier brilliantly transforms a stage play into the medium of film.

One of the basic questions in the play is why Hamlet does not murder Claudius right away? Critics have come up with many different theories in trying to answer that question. The Freudian interpretation suggests that Hamlet suffers from an Oedipus complex. This theory "motivates Hamlet's delay by identifying him with Claudius, through whom he has vicariously accomplished the Oedipal feat of murdering his father and marrying his mother" (Levin 56). Olivier suggests in his film that this is a valid interpretation. His mother is played in prolonged kisses several times. Branagh does not show any sort of incestual passion between mother and son. Branagh's Hamlet is actually extremely contemptuous towards his mother. Curiously, Branagh should have played up the Oedipal complex because he looks remarkably like Claudius.

As was mentioned earlier, Olivier portrays Hamlet as a man of indecision, and Branagh depicts him as being impulsive. This is clearly shown in the scene where Hamlet kills Polonius. Olivier stabs him once and seems astonished that he was actually able to perform such an action. Branagh stabs Polonius repeatedly and relishes it. Also, this difference is clearly shown in the scene where Polonius questions Hamlet after having told the king and queen that he is mad because of his love for Ophelia. Hamlet feigns insanity and calls Polonius a "fishmonger." Olivier's Hamlet plays it well enough to fool Polonius, but the audience realizes he is playing a joke on him. Branagh goes completely over the top. He makes all sorts of faces, and one has to suspend disbelief that Polonius does not see through this. Branagh makes another mistake in this scene. During their conversation Hamlet is reading from a book and tells Polonius that in it a "satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards...and that they have a plentiful lack of wit...." Hamlet is actually poking fun at

Polonius in this encounter, but in the Branagh film Polonius has a brown beard. Branagh knows the text too well to let this go unnoticed. It really is an inexcusable mistake.

There are a couple of other blunders that Branagh commits in his film. He does not even show the death of Ophelia until after Gertrude's account of it. It loses the emotional impact it should have had. Branagh also actually shows Ophelia in a straitjacket and padded cell. Did all castles have their own padded cells back then? Kate Winslet, who plays Ophelia, is an amazing actress and could act out madness without the help of a straitjacket. He also shows a flashback scene of Hamlet and Ophelia having sex. Branagh must not believe in the power of imagination or subtlety. Olivier's film is by no means perfect. He cuts out the characters of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern entirely, but that is because of time constraints.

William Shakespeare was a genius and *Hamlet* is one of his most enigmatic and universal works. There is no correct way of adapting *Hamlet*, and this is one of the reasons it has been performed on stage and on film so many times. Neither Olivier's nor Branagh's portrayal of Prince Hamlet is inherently better, but Olivier makes a superior use of the cinematic elements available to him. By using Shakespeare's entire text, Branagh had a chance of making a definitive version of *Hamlet* but failed. The acting in his film is wonderful, but if you take away the ornate interiors you are essentially left with a filmed stage production. Olivier brilliantly combines cinema and theater for a truly rewarding experience.

Works Cited

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Evaluation: *Mark writes clearly and persuasively. I am impressed with his keen understanding of Shakespeare's Hamlet and his well-grounded knowledge of cinematic techniques.*

A Mile-High Gas

by Michael D. McMahon

Course: Chemistry 121
Instructor: Barbara Q. Weil

Assignment:
*Write a short essay demonstrating
how gas laws are related to your life.*

Dear Mrs. Weil:

When you first asked me to tell you about gases as they relate to my life, I was a little worried I wouldn't be able to make the connection. As I wracked my brain, I was able to recall a funny anecdote from when I was in the Army. I think you'll enjoy hearing how the effects of gases caused me "high" anxiety.

It was February 1993, and I was traveling to my new permanent duty station in Fort Carson, Colorado. I had done a lot of flying around the country for different military obligations, but this was the first time I had ever been to the "Rocky Mountain Post." I packed most of my personal possessions to take with me, knowing I would be staying there for my entire three-year tour.

My flight left Chicago O'Hare International without event on the morning of the ninth. After a smooth flight (I slept from take-off to landing), we landed in the scenically beautiful town of Colorado Springs, Elevation 6,237 ft. I took a shuttle bus from the airport to the reception station at Fort Carson five miles away. After going through the paper-work, I went to my assigned room to settle in a bit before checking out the local sights.

As I began to unpack, I noticed that all my clothes in one of my bags were covered in shampoo. Upon further examination, I saw that all of the bottles inside my shower/shave bag had leaked throughout my suitcase. I was understandably upset... I mean, I had enough to worry about as it was without adding careless airport employees to the list.

I immediately called the airport and began a tirade to the woman who answered the phone. She tried to be as polite as possible, but I was in no mood to act civil about the matter. I barked at her to get her manager, and continued my lashing on the supervisor who picked up an extension. I demanded compensation for all costs that would be necessary to replace my bag and clean my clothes. The manager said she would accommodate me, and

then asked that I bring the entire bag back to the airport to file a claim.

I would have to wait about an hour for the next shuttle back to the airport. I decided to take the time to lie down and relax before what promised to be a long day of filling out paperwork at the claims counter. Feeling thirsty, I reached inside another of my bags to open a bottle of water that I'd bought at a newstand in Chicago.

As I opened the bottle I heard a "pop" sound, and the water inside expanded. It was then that I realized just how stupid I had been! I went back to the bag which had been covered in shampoo, and noticed that all the bottles inside that had opened as a result of "careless bag-handlers" had flip-tops on them. "Oh no!"

An uneasy feeling came over me as I realized that the damage to my stuff came from a change in air pressure, not from an incompetent employee. I sunk my head into my shoulders in shame, and then grabbed my soiled gear and headed to the laundry room to tend to the cleaning myself.

Aside from teaching me a valuable lesson in humility, this experience has made me more aware of the forces of gases that surround us in everything we do — from filling an automobile tire with air, to using a plunger on a backed-up sink, to the change in pressure at different elevations. Certainly, gases are a force not to be forgotten.

Sincerely,

Michael D. McMahon

Michael D. McMahon

Evaluation: *Mike's paper was an excellent example of scientific writing related to everyday life. His entertaining personality is revealed as he integrated science, emotions, and critical thinking to a common experience.*

Surf's Up Dude

by Susan McManus
Course: English 101
Instructor: Peter Sherer

Assignment:

*Teach a term which refers to an important behavior.
Introduce an identifiable speaker.
Use a variety of definition patterns.*

If you are a child of the sixties or seventies, the mere mention of the word *surfing* conjures up memories of the Saturday matinee beach-blanket movies. Bikini-clad girls and hard-bodied boys spent endless hours waiting for the “ultimate” wave. “Surf’s up Dude” resounded across the white sandy beach, and six-foot waxed boards would then cascade across the crests of the ocean’s waves while the rider would *hang ten*.

But in the nineties, thanks to such people as Bill Gates, surfing has taken on a whole new meaning. The keyboard has replaced the surf board and the “surfer” no longer has to reside alongside a sun-drenched coast. All he needs is his handy computer equipped with modem, and the waves of information are his for the taking. Getting your feet wet is the first step in acquainting yourself with what lies before you. Before the birth of the Internet, we would reach for an encyclopedia to get information about a planet or president. Now we visit a website. Want to find a former classmate for an upcoming reunion? All you have to do is visit the Yellow Pages site and the chore becomes an easy task.

Access to these websites is made possible by an internet provider such as **EXCITE** or **WEB CRAWLER**. On-line providers such as **America On-Line** and **Prodigy** also entice the surfer to visit a variety of websites, which can help him check the status of his investments, plan a vacation, chat with an overseas friend, and send electronic mail (e-mail) – all by the click of a few keys.

Just like the surfer who maneuvers his board across the waves, the Internet surfer also has to learn the tricks of the trade. Patience and perseverance will payoff once he learns the ins and outs of his new domain. For example, a college student is given an assignment on B.F. Skinner in his psychology class. He dials into his internet provider by means of his modem. He types in “B.F. SKINNER” and within seconds he is shown the first ten items relating to his topic. He might be advised that there are 186840 more related websites that are available. He “scrolls” down to his first

document to see if this is the best possible place to start. This is what he will find:

77% Welcome to JEAB & JABA more like this...

Summary: The Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior is primarily for the original publication of experiments relevant to the behavior of individual organisms. The Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis is primarily for the original publication of experimental research involving applications of the experimental analysis of behavior to problems of social importance.

Now the "surfer" must decide if this is the "wave" he wants to ride with, and if it is, all he will do is place his cursor on this area and cruise to this site. Some of the information will be helpful, and some of it will not be. The vast amount of material that is available to him will amaze the novice surfer.

Good situations can also present pitfalls. Surfing the Net is no exception. Since access to the net is available to everyone with a computer and modem, pornographic material has made its way onto the information highway. Everything from distasteful pictures to questionable chat rooms (areas where dialogue is typed back and forth in a group fashion) can be found. These areas tend to prey on the naive and the young. Parents must watch out for the well being of their children just as if these youngsters were riding the killer waves off the coast of California for the very first time. Common sense and guidance are the keys to survival.

I consider myself to be an intermediate surfer. I started out several years ago "surfing" and was amazed at the amount of material readily available to me. I dove head first into the vast sea of information and ended up drowning. I was overwhelmed by what was accessible and confused as to what really was useful to me. Over time, I learned how to narrow my search and save time looking for beneficial information.

My hobby is rubber stamping. I was looking for a particular stamp to complete a project that I was working on. I resorted to the net to help me in my search. I typed in **rubber stamping** and was amazed at the number of sites that were accessible on this subject. After surfing over thirty of them, I realized I needed to narrow my search. I then

entered **D.O.T.S Rubber Stamps** and was able to find a distributor in my area eager to help me solve my dilemma. This little adventure brought a whole new meaning to the old saying, "Let your fingers do the walking."

The next time you want to explore the sights and sounds of New York City, send a birthday greeting to a co-worker, or just get a review of a current movie, you won't have to travel far. Pull up your chair, "hang ten" on the keyboard, and surf to the nearest website. If you put your ear up close to your computer, I'll bet you can even hear the ocean. "Surf's up DUDES!"

Evaluation: *Susan's essay presents a fun and fresh discussion of a term most of us know, but perhaps need to know better. The essay is well styled and an easy read.*

Hamlet and

The Piano Lesson:

A Comparison and Contrast
of Their Ghosts and the Roles
Evil and Sin Play in Their
Lives and Hauntings

by Deanna Mede
Course: English 102
Instructor: Julie Fleenor

Assignment:

Write a paper analyzing the function of the ghost
in *Hamlet* and *The Piano Lesson*.

What a unique time in history to contemplate humanity's belief in evil. The year 2000 is rapidly approaching, and to a small, yet vocal, contingent this will be the time of the "apocalypse." The time when as D.S. Russell states in her article "Apocalyptic Literature," "God's final redemption when all wrongs are to be righted and justice and peace are established forever" (36). Evil will be completely overcome by good, and sin will be no longer as God's kingdom comes to reign on earth. This very battle of good versus evil is the reason for both ghosts, Sutter of August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* and Hamlet I of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, to return to their earthly kingdoms.

Sutter's ghost returns to prevent the completion of Berniece's family's emancipation from the evil of slavery. He haunts the piano bought for his grandmother, Ophelia, for the price of "one and a half niggers" (229), Berniece's great grandmother and grandfather, and paid for with Boy Charles's life. Sutter appears to believe, as Boy Charles did, that "as long as Sutter had [the piano]...he had us" (230). Sutter has come to reclaim what he believes is rightfully his. Hamlet I returns to exact revenge, through Hamlet, for the evil done to him and his kingdom by the "damned villain" (I, v, 106) Claudius. Hamlet, in his role as scourge, is to seek revenge for his father's "foul and most unnatural murder" (I, V, 26), and to end the marriage of "damned incest" (I, v, 84) between Claudius and Gertrude. The ghost in *Hamlet* is fighting to wrest control from the evil in his kingdom, while the ghost from *The Piano Lesson* is fighting to maintain control over the piano, the last remnant of his family's kingdom founded on the evil of slavery.

Our twentieth-century culture sees evil not as black but as myriad shades of grey. According to Patrick Crutwell in his article "The Morality of Hamlet," Elizabethan minds were "more theological than ours...keyed to an ultimate destiny of total black or white, damned or saved" (119). This mind set of life being black or white is reflected in the 1611 definition of evil from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Evil is "Not good, unsound, corrupt; diseased; unwholesome, A wrong-doing, crime"

(643). Our contemporary definition is, “wicked; causing or threatening harm or distress; a source of sorrow; sin” (643). A definite watering down of the meaning of evil has occurred over the centuries, but where both 1602 and 1996 language agrees is that murder is evil.

Though the definition of evil has changed, the definition of sin has remained constant. Sin, as defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is “A transgression of the divine law and an offense against God” (1897). According to the Rev. Ronald Bayne as quoted in *Shakespeare’s England*, “The modern world is to be distinguished from the medieval mainly by its attitude to religion” (48). The medieval world understood sin and evil as concepts decreed by God, thus unchanging. In our contemporary world, change is the only constant we have, and even our religions change to keep up with the times, instead of the times changing because of religion.

Robert Reed in his book *Crime and God’s Judgement in Shakespeare* explains that during Shakespeare’s era, “It is God’s power of vengeance that most occupied the Elizabethan” (54). The direct vengeance of God on humans for sinning is, according to Robert Reed, personal vengeance, as seen in the, “anglo saxon vendetta...in particular the principle of the next of kin as avenger” (44). Hamlet acts as his father’s avenger, participating in a vendetta where the sin of murdering the person who murdered a family member is considered justified, not evil. This does not imply that there was no moral order for the Elizabethan. For as Robert Finch in his book *Shakespeare: The Perspective of Value* explains, “there can be no tragedy without the belief in a objective moral order” (95). The morality of Elizabethan England allowed “justified revenge” but frowned on unjustified murder such as Hamlet’s murder of Polonius.

In 1996 Gertrude’s marriage to Claudius is not considered incestuous, but Claudius’s breaking of the 10th commandment, “Thou shalt not covet... thy neighbors wife” is still considered a grievous sin evident by its continuing success as a topic of

daytime talk shows. Of the two main sins in *Hamlet*, murder is the one our contemporary society holds in the greatest contempt.

Where *Hamlet* deals with the sins of the present, *The Piano Lesson* struggles with the continuing repercussions from the sins of the past. Clive Barnes in his article, “‘Piano Lesson’ Hits All the Right Keys,” comments on how “*The Piano Lesson* is first a confrontation of the heritage of the past and the promise for the future” (455). The ultimate evil of slavery was the stripping away of the slaves’ humanity. Even after the death of slavery, racism continues the evil of marginalizing African-Americans. Robert Brustein in, “The Lesson of *The Piano Lesson*,” notes how Wilson’s plays a... “attempt to demonstrate how the acid of racism has eaten away at black aspirations” (28). Boy Charles is killed for stealing the piano, but his murderers felt no legal repercussions for their crime. Because of the evils of slavery and racism, murder of African-Americans has been justified, theft of African-American labor and wages justified by the implementation of sharecropping, and the white-dominated legal system’s habit of looking the other way accepted. Boy Charles dies for stealing his own history from the home or his and his family’s oppressors. His theft is considered a crime and his murder justified by the white male law. Evil, as is beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. If a justification for the sin of murder can be found, then the crime is not considered evil by those committing it.

The ghost is concerned with the present sin and evil in his kingdom, primarily the broken commandments: “Thou shalt not murder and Thou shalt not covet...thy neighbor’s wife.” According to Robert Reed, the old testament was the basis for the ideal of “justified revenge” in the Renaissance mind. The evil that needs to be avenged is that which God holds in contempt and the punishment is death (44). So Hamlet I was acting as an agent of God while planning his vengeance upon Claudius. The audience Shakespeare wrote for viewed life in absolutes, right or wrong. According to Robert Reed, while quoting a religious doctrine from the

Elizabethan era, they believed in a moral order set by God and that

“God knows what is evill, He knows when that evill is done, and He knows how to punish...that evill.” This doctrine...finds repeated affirmation in Shakespeare’s...tragedies, especially upon violation of the 6th commandment: “Thou shalt not kill.” (54)

Shakespeare’s audience expected God to enact vengeance upon Claudius for the murder of Hamlet I, and they expected that vengeance to be lethal.

While it was the ghost’s right to exact vengeance for his murder as explained by Fredson Bowers in his article “Hamlet As Minister and Scourge,” “On the Elizabethan stage, blood demanded blood” (740). The ghost warns Hamlet against enacting vengeance upon his mother for her incestuous marriage. The ghost explicitly tells Hamlet to “Leave her to heaven and to those thorns that in her bosom lodge, to prick and sting her” (I, v, 87-89). Hamlet is told to leave Gertrude’s punishment to God. Fredson Bower states, “From the Elizabethan point of view, divine providence worked out the catastrophe with justice” (748). Shakespeare’s audience trusted that God would see to Gertrude. Hamlet I only had the right to demand blood vengeance for his blood, not for insults to his pride.

Sutter does demand vengeance for the damage done to his pride by the theft of the piano. He believes, as does the law, that the piano was legally purchased, by barter, for the cost of two pieces of Robert Sutter’s property. That the “property” was a woman and child isn’t deemed important by Sutter, since they were slaves with no more rights than any other piece of property the Sutters owned. Frank Rich, in his article “A Family Confronts Its History in August Wilson’s *Piano Lesson*,” believes all of Wilson’s characters, including the ghost, are cast in slavery’s shadow (13). The evil of slavery insinuates itself into the lives of all it touches. Evil if uncorrected only begets an escalation of evil, as evident in Boy Charles’s crime of theft against Sutter, and Sutter’s escalation of evil by murdering

Boy Charles in retaliation.

It isn’t until after Sutter’s death, supposedly by *The Ghosts of the Yellow Dog*, that Sutter finds the piano. This piano was stolen from Sutter because of Boy Charles’s obsession with it. Doaker explains how Boy Charles believed that as long as the piano was in Sutter’s possession, “[he] was still in slavery” (230). Boy Charles understood the unusual three-way relationship between the piano, his family, and Sutter’s family. Miss Ophelia, the original owner and Sutter’s grandmother, played happily upon the carved piano because she believed the carved portraits gave her ownership of “her piano and her niggers” (230). Sutter’s ghost haunts the piano, in a Miss Ophelia-like belief, that control of the piano will bring him control of his slaves, Berniece’s family, once again.

Even though slavery is long over, it left behind the evil of racism, which promotes the belief of one race’s superiority over another. In this case Sutter’s white race is superior to Boy Charles’s African-American race. W.P. Kenney, in his article on “August Wilson,” explains, “Wilson’s plays always involve the aspect of tension created by racism - racism result of and resulting from slavery — the past evils create today’s evils” (638). The “evil institution” of slavery created the basis for Sutter’s belief that Boy Charles was subhuman. Only someone who dehumanizes a person can “set a boxcar afire and [kill] everyone” (231). Sutter killed him because he had the power of the law behind him, and now he tries to control the ownership of the piano with the power of a ghost.

Hamlet I’s ghostly power is limited to being seen and speaking to Hamlet. Thusly limited, he places on Hamlet the duty to “Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder” (I, v, 26). Hamlet now has one purpose in life, to seek blood justice from Claudius for his father’s death. In Patrick Cruttwell’s article, “The Sweet Morality of Hamlet,” Joseph Bertram argues “that in a revenge play a nobleman was bound to kill Claudius, and...Shakespeare’s first audiences would have expected this in real life as well” (116). Claudius’s life was considered forfeit-

ed as soon as he murdered his brother. The Elizabethan audience expected to see justice done, and this required Claudius's blood. According to Fredson Bowers, Shakespeare's audiences held firm convictions that evil would be punished by God either internally, creating a crisis of conscience, or externally, through accidents or by using another person to exact God's punishment for sin (743). In *Hamlet*, Hamlet is used by God as an external source for vengeance on Claudius.

In contemporary America it is difficult to understand how God could use a "moral" person to commit a crime which breaks the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." But in the seventeenth century, God's use of men as ministers and scourges was a regular part of their beliefs. Hamlet, however, has the misfortune of not being chosen as minister, but its opposite, scourge. Fredson Bowers explains, "Any human agent used by God to visit wrath and to scourge evil by evil was already condemned" (744).

Shakespeare's audience would have considered Hamlet as a minister of God's vengeance until the moment of Polonius's death. Bowers continues, "an Elizabethan...would have known from the moment the rapier flashed through the arras that Hamlet was thereafter a doomed man" (740). While looking at Polonius's dead body Hamlet puts to voice his agony, "To punish me with this, and this with me, That I must be their scourge and minister" (III, iv, 183-85). With the thrust of his sword Hamlet realizes his role as God's scourge and his own doom because of it.

Hamlet accepts his role and proceeds to root out the evil in the court and dispatch it. By his hand, using either pen or sword, Hamlet cleanses the state of the evil influences of Polonius, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Laertes, and Claudius. With the death of Claudius, Hamlet's role as the ghost's champion and God's scourge is complete. According to Robert Reed, "In Shakespeare's plays the conscience as an instrument of God's vengeance...is second in importance only to the working of his vengeance through a human agent" (58). Hamlet, in

the role as scourge, kills to destroy the evil in the court, and in turn he is killed because of the sin he committed while becoming God's scourge.

Sutter's ghost doesn't care about God's vengeance, he cares about ownership of the piano. Robert King, in his article from *The Massachusetts Review*, explains "the piano is the key link in a chain of events including the death (perhaps murder) of ...Sutter" (107). Sutter dies suddenly after being pushed down his own well. Boy Willie insists, "The Ghosts of the Yellow Dog got Sutter" (207). Sutter's death is being attributed to the ghosts of Boy Charles and the four hoboos who were killed with him the day of the theft of the piano. Three days after his death Doaker sees Sutter's ghost, "sitting...at the piano" (238), and another time the ghost is heard playing the piano. But until Boy Willie shows up Sutter is content to remain another spirit connected to the piano.

Boy Willie's plan to sell the piano will break the final bond between Sutter's people and Boy Willie's people, and Sutter works to prevent this. Frank Rich notes, "all Wilson protagonists...must take a journey, at times a supernatural one, to the past if they are to seize the future" (C13). Boy Willie wants to use the artistry of his great grandfather to ensure his future. The future that will only be his due to the benevolent intervention of his ancestor's spirits. William Henry III, in his article "A Ghostly Past, in Ragtime," states Berniece, "denounces as sacrilege the idea of selling away a legacy her father died to obtain" (69). Sutter uses Berniece's emotions to his advantage by appearing on the top of the stairs just after her argument with Boy Willie. Berniece relates how, "he just stood there looking at me...calling Boy Willie's name" (213). Sutter times his entrance well and enhances Berniece's irritation with her brother by specifically calling Boy Willie's name. Boy Willie's name is the only words ever spoken by the ghost. Addell Anderson, in her article "August Wilson," contends that Wilson's characters take out their frustration with their history and continuing racism on each other (643). Sutter's ghost uses this increased tension to his

advantage by pointedly appearing at every critical juncture in the determination of the piano's future. Thus increasing the already high tension between Berniece and Boy Willie.

Sutter mistakenly believes that by keeping the piano with Berniece he can retain control of it. To this end, Sutter exerts himself to physically keep the piano where it is. While trying to lift it Lymon tells Boy Willie, "It's stuck. Something holding it" (252). But the confrontation between Berniece and Boy Willie, intensified by Sutter, doesn't end the way Sutter expects. Instead of Berniece allowing Sutter to vanquish Boy Willie she releases the spirits in the piano to protect him. She calls to her ancestors in a song, "intended as an exorcism and...dressing for battle" (266). Sutter's ghost is defeated by an army dressed in the armor of love. He's taken away by the Ghosts of the Yellow Dog, and his control of their lives, based on the premise of evil, is at an end.

Sutter's ghost is destroyed by love and Hamlet I's ghost is avenged by it. But the beloved son, Hamlet, is viewed as procrastinating where others would have immediately sought revenge. Sigmund Freud, in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, explains:

The loathing which should drive him on to revenge is replaced in him by self-reproaches, by scruples of conscience, which remind that he...is literally no better than the sinner who he is to punish (266).

Hamlet knew he was to kill Claudius to avenge his father's death, but he also was aware that Laertes has the same right of vengeance for Hamlet's murder of Polonius. Hamlet killed Polonius, so he now was no better than Claudius. Robert Fitch believes, "The very quality of this tragedy derives from the impact of the radical and irremediable wickedness of man" (45). Hamlet's wicked is equal to that of Claudius's. No longer can Hamlet view himself as the moral man sent to dispatch the immoral. In the end to preserve the good in the kingdom all the evil in the court is destroyed including Hamlet by Laertes' hand.

The evil in *The Piano Lesson* is also destroyed in the end, but the warriors are spiritual not physical. The physical beings, Berniece and Boy Willie, have to overcome their personal discord before they can unite. Frank Rich contends, "They cannot be reconciled with each other until they have had a reconciliation with the identity that is etched in their family tree, as in the piano..." (C13). In order for Berniece to reconcile with Boy Willie, she must first reconcile with her ancestors. Only with the combined strength of her will and her family's, past and present, love can she overcome that which keeps her distant from those she should be the closest to. Berniece drives away the ghost of Sutter using a song "from somewhere old" (266). She reaches across time to reconnect with her African and American ancestors. W.P. Kenney states, "the affirmation of the healing power of African-American folk culture, essential to the characters'...survival, is closely related to their willingness to accept that cultural tradition" (638). Sutter is defeated because Berniece's family is reconnected to the undying love of her ancestors. Berniece's song of battle is "a rustle of wind blowing across two continents" (266). Neither the evil institution of slavery nor Sutter's haunting of the piano could survive an army of spirits united to protect those they love.

The goodness of love will overcome evil. This is the hope of all humanity. As we close this century and move forward to the twenty-first century, we must still deal with our past complete with both good and evil. Hamlet I haunted his home to ensure a better future for his people. Sutter haunted the piano in an attempt to hold onto the past. Hamlet I was successful in driving out the evil influence in his kingdom, but Sutter was unsuccessful in holding onto the past that was drenched in the evil of slavery. Both ghosts saw evil defeated by good, but only Hamlet I was pleased.

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Evaluation: *An excellent contrast and comparison of two fine plays separated by centuries but joined by their analysis of evil.*

The Kingdom of Love

by Daina Miller

Course: Literature 105
Instructor: Barbara Hickey

Assignment:

Write a critical analysis of a poem.

The night is quiet and still. Two lovers are peacefully lying in their bed wrapped in each other's arms. Time is motionless until a beam of light boldly forces its way through a crack in the curtains and demands to be noticed. Slowly, the outside world, with late schoolboys, sour apprentices, and court huntsmen rushing about their busy schedules, is beginning to interfere with these two lovers. The lovers, however, are not controlled by this preposterous intruder. Disturbed by the audacity of the sun claiming to be boss, the young man retaliates in hopes of protecting his lovely mistress from this rude, unwelcome pest. He continues to duel with the sun by confidently making bets about distant lands while he remains in bed with his lover. Finally, the competition relaxes, and the man overthrows the rule of the sun and accepts its service to warm him and his lover while they wallow in their kingdom. From this depiction of the poem "The Sun Rising," John Donne clearly demonstrates the imaginative world in which two lovers are consumed. The sense of struggle and victory between the lover and the sun is effectively established through the poet's use of structure, language, and tone.

In the beginning of the poem, the sun trespasses into the lovers' otherwise perfect world. The first two lines are short and abrupt, signifying the speaker's disgust at the intrusion of the "unruly sun." The lovers' sanctuary, now crowded with the inclusion of the sun, is represented by the congestion of feet per line in the remaining ten lines—5, 5, 4, 4, 5, 5, 5, 5. The rhyme scheme *abba cdc d ee* has a slight musical quality to it and provides a subtle connection within each stanza. The selected rhyme scheme also emphasizes the speaker's on-going debate with the sun with the shifting rhyme patterns between the first and second quatrains. Then a sense of equality or balance is felt in the last couplet as justification for the arguments that are being made.

John Donne not only provides a powerful use of structure and rhyme in "The Sun Rising," but he also incorporates extremely witty and imaginative

language. Donne's use of hyperbole colors this poem with a sense of grandiosity. At the end of stanza 1, the speaker proclaims:

Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags
of time. (9-10)

Expressed here is the overstatement that love is not a servant to time. Love, in itself, is a beautiful being, and schedules and appointments are the rags that drape and smother it. Another creative use of overstatement in the speaker's language is displayed in line 13, "I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink," when he diminishes the authority of the sun by noting that all he has to do is close his eyes to strip it of its powers. Finally, the speaker creates a grand, euphoric atmosphere for lovers with the following hyperbole in the last stanza:

Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy center is, these walls thy sphere.
(29-30)

With this assertive statement, the speaker declares his bedroom the center of the universe and his full commitment to love. The sun, with the honorable duty of warming them, will in fact warm everybody because the world revolves around these two lovers.

In addition to providing the reader with an enjoyable style of language, Donne implements a strong tone. The speaker's attitude toward the sun's demanding beams of light is not timid and faltering, but fearless and bold. In the poem, the tone is established heroically through the speaker's expressions. In the opening line, "Busy old fool, unruly sun," the speaker is already spitting insults at the sun for waking him and his lover. He continues to demean the sun in line 5 by calling it a "saucy pedantic wretch," implying that the sun is old and inconsiderate. The speaker is disturbed by the sun, who thinks he is the boss. He then challenges the sun's assumed control in a geographical sense by referring to the "Indias." The speaker's argument at the end of the second stanza is that it is the sun who is running around to serve different people and lands, not the people and lands who are running

around to serve the sun.

Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st
yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, "All here in one bed lay."
(19-20)

The speaker suggests to the sun that he and his lover are a consolidation of all royalty. In his bed is where the sun will find them and patiently wait to serve them if they so desire. The mocking tone continues to persist throughout the poem, ending with the speaker declaring the rule over the sun and stating his bedroom as the center of everything.

John Donne's "The Sun Rising" deals with the fascinating illusions created by love. He pulls the reader into a battle between lovers who wish to remain in their isolated fantasies and the sun who intrudes on them and demands their obedience. Through a well-selected structure, imaginative language, and solid tone, Donne creates a whimsical scene of the struggle for power in the reader's mind. The poem suggests that love is powerful, more powerful than the universe. Individuals in love acquire the masterful roles of king and queen, rulers of their own castle, who are intolerant of any petty intrusion within their kingdom. In "The Sun Rising," Donne deals with lovers' feelings of exhilaration and invincibility in a fabulous manner.

Evaluation: From its dramatic opening to its strong conclusion, Daina's analysis of John Donne's poem is an imaginative world colored by vivid diction. Like the sun in Donne's poem, Daina's writing "demands to be noticed."

What Is a Feminist, Anyway?

by Jennifer Miller
Course: English 101
Instructor: Peter Sherer

Assignment:

*Define a term which refers to a person's role.
Introduce an identifiable speaker.
Use a variety of definition patterns.*

A feminist is an advocate of social, political, and economic rights for both men and women. A feminist is male or female, young or old, and of any race or ethnic origin. The fact that women can vote, that they can retain their own inheritance, and that they are no longer considered their father's or their husband's chattel by law resulted from the unrelenting efforts of feminists. These accomplishments occurred during the first wave of feminism, around the turn of the century. Following decades of dormancy, feminists again surfaced in the '60s to take on more current social, political, and economic inequalities. Recent history shows that feminists were considered radical in the '60s, progressive in the '70s, endangered in the '80s, and politically correct in the '90s.

I was an active participant in the '60s movement, although my time and energy were primarily spent supporting a child on extremely low wages. At the time the disparity of wage levels between genders was the result of a disappearing single-wage-earner model. The model stipulated that the man of the family was the breadwinner, and the woman a "supplementer" of the household income. There was no provision for women who filled both roles. My personal struggles continued to reinforce and validate my feminist beliefs; I easily translated my own experiences into the feminist rhetoric of the period.

Age may have softened my radical edges—yes, in my youth I would have burned my bras if I could have afforded the luxury—but time has not lessened the anger I feel when yet another example of victimization (JonBenet Ramsey), harassment (Anita Hill), or inequality (**real** wage levels) surfaces. Books and magazines written and published during the '60s and '70s by such noted feminists as Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Germaine Greer, Susan Brownmiller, and Gloria Steinem could be re-released today with facts and statistics needing very little updating.

Feminists today must battle both more sophisticated and more subversive conditions in the workplace, the legal system, and the society at large. It is

not an exception that when a woman brings charges against a man who is usually cast as a "pillar of the community," it is the victim (woman) who is subject to character assassination. This injustice is endlessly repeated when the charge is rape, whether of the random or "date" variety. And filing sexual harassment charges is a guaranteed career stopper for women.

It is usually a satirical definition of "feminist" that seems to pop into many minds today. Maybe it's the image of Rush Limbaugh's "femi-nazi," or the personification of his Truth #14: "Feminism was established so as to allow unattractive women easier access to the mainstream of society." Too frequently the term conjures up the exaggerated image of a woman in militant garb and stance with a butch haircut. Why, everyone knows that a feminist is a man-hating, castrating, foul-mouthed radical who is undoubtedly a lesbian or at least asexual, someone who destroys home and family, and probably even apple pie.

I'd like to offer a saner, smarter, fairer definition of the term. A feminist is a woman who works in a male-dominated profession and who establishes credibility within her organization by becoming a subject-matter expert in "non-traditional" fields. She participates in professional organizations, serves on various committees, and holds elected and appointed offices. She speaks and moderates at professional-development conferences. She coaches and advises younger professionals and serves as a resource to them in her areas of expertise.

This woman does not laugh at sexist, racist, or anti-Semitic jokes; nor will she humor sexist attitudes. She does not buy products manufactured or imported by companies who abuse their workers. Though she does not march, picket, or "sit in" anymore, she stays current on the issues that affect women. She contacts elected and appointed officials who are deciding on such issues. She uses intelligence, wit, and logic to overcome the abundant ignorance reflected in sexism.

It was through reading books written by the authors mentioned earlier that I was first introduced to feminism so many years ago. I revisit them periodically when I become complacent. And I am a grandmother now; this important life role strengthens my resolve. I remind myself that my granddaughter's future is at stake.

I suggest that the social, political, and economic changes still necessary to provide real equality for both genders require a continuous effort by all of us. Until we model the unbiased behavior that we preach to our children, until we challenge our school systems to do the same, until we enable girls and boys to accomplish comparable levels of proficiency in all disciplines, we are not equipping them to reach their best potentials.

What is a feminist? I am.

Evaluation: *Jennifer challenges old and current stereotypes attached to the term "feminist."*

This essay is interesting, informative, and up-to-date. The appropriately changed language reveals an honest, compelling speaker.

Träume — Dreams

by John T. Miller

Course: German 202

Instructor: Renate von Keudell

Assignment:

Write an original paper about an event that changed your life or from which you learned a valuable lesson about life. You may use prose or poetry to express your thoughts.

Träume

Träume waren gekommen und gingen weg
 nur noch ein gewöhnlicher Tag
 sitze allein heir
 mit dir in meinen Gedanken.

Ich weiß jetzt, was ich damals nicht wußte.
 Diese Träume werden nie enden.
 Ich jage ein Echo
 aus früherer Zeit.

Verletzt so schlecht, fühlte so viel,
 vermisse die Wärme deiner Berührung,
 ich will nur liegen und meine Augen schließen
 und träume meine Tränen von gestern weg.

Ich weiß jetzt, was es meint,
 endlich mit Liebe zu verlieren.

Dreams

Dreams were coming and going away
 just another usual day
 sitting along here
 with you in my thoughts.

I know now what I didn't know then.
 These dreams will never end.
 I'm chasing an echo
 from the past.

Hurt so bad, felt so much,
 missing the warmth of your touch,
 I only want to lie down and close my eyes
 and dream away my tears from yesterday.

I finally know what it means,
 to lose with love.

Evaluation: In his poem, John expresses how he suffered from lost love. He discusses his realization that he had to suffer the pain in order to understand and to finally accept his loss and proceed with his life.

MSN: Networking or Not Working?

by Amanda T. Offenbacher

Course: English 101

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

Through careful observation and/or interviewing in a community (you can belong to it or not), write a descriptive/evaluative essay that conveys a strong sense of that community to the reader. Include plenty of concrete details.

I wander into the family room. We don't actually use it as a family room; there is a pool table, some discarded chairs, and my computer, but technically, it's a family room.

Popping into the slightly comfortable polished oak chair at my desk, I switch on my machine and wait patiently for the thing to load up. I put my feet on the pull-out typewriter drawer and wonder if anyone still uses those things. It may sound like I'm lazy, but I have to do this. Otherwise, I'd fall out of the chair because my feet don't reach the floor.

The computer beeps a few times, and then proceeds to display Windows '95 in brilliant 16-bit color. It also finds it necessary to tell me I've lost four files that were exactly the same, which I purposely deleted three months ago. The Utopia Windows Start wave plays itself mercilessly. A wave is a sound, sometimes programmed to play when programs start or when files are deleted.

I bought this new computer a few months ago and was offered two free months of The Microsoft Network (MSN), an Internet provider. I signed on to try the thing everyone was talking about.

MSN was supposed to be a wonderful server that was informative and easy to use. It was supposed to be kinder, simpler, gentler than other servers. I'd

have a whole new world of communication at my fingertips, the pamphlet said. It was more economical, and it had many features that other servers didn't offer, like six different channels that couldn't be found on TV.

I popped in the CD, and a little interactive tutorial man in a yuppie blue suit showed up. "Hi," he said. "Why don't we get you started?" He looked a little too much like someone from Friends, with his wavy brown hair and expressive little eyebrows. He smiled, tossed his hair, waved his arms around, and smiled a little more, all the while boasting about this wondrous MSN. So far, all I knew was that there were chat rooms and free E-mail, and six original channels of information. Yet, I still had no idea what all of that meant.

My little tutorial man led me through picking a password and an E-mail address. Then he left me without explaining anything else.

So here I was, with the world-wide web at my fingertips, and I had no idea how to do a thing. Fortunately, MSN was incredibly user-friendly. Everything was self-explanatory. A few seconds after I signed on, a screen popped up with a list of choices. Topics like *find*, *communicate*, and *on-stage* appeared on the top of the screen. This was called a home-page, my little tutorial had told me.

Once clicked on, these items produced pop-up menus of the features they were talking about. Under *find*, it showed a list of all the search engines that could be used to surf the net. *Communicate* showed how to get to E-mail and chat rooms. It also displayed the bulletin boards where users could post notices about anything. The section titled *essentials* gave a listing of all the wonderful things that could be done at home from your PC. A long list spread out: shopping, travel, autos, entertainment, and the illustrious people-finder. Bright slogans and advertising danced across the middle of the screen. Bold fonts scrolled across, saying "Come visit the Underwire! Click here!"

The Internet amazed me. The information super-highway! Everything thinkable, available right at my fingertips. I immediately began my tour.

First stop, the chat rooms. I entered a room called The Hissing Pit. It was a different world from anything I'd seen before. Five to ten people were in a conversation, into which I was immediately included.

I was talking back and forth to people about music and movies. It wasn't like having a normal conversation, for the fact that I couldn't see any of the people. I had a hard time remembering the names. I do recall one, however.

I was having a pleasant conversation with a young woman from New York when a new person entered the room. He went by "Rebel 69." When asked where he was from, he said North Carolina.

I typed in something, asking him whether his name came from the Civil War, and he started insulting everyone in the room, especially me. He made insinuating remarks about people and their cyber-sex life, used profane language to talk about body parts he'd like to see, and just made a big ruckus.

I was under the impression that MSN was supposed to prevent these things from happening, but they didn't help us out. We basically all ganged up on our harasser and kicked him out. A few minutes later, I got a message asking me if I wanted to go into a private chat with Rebel69. Naturally, I declined.

I went back a few more times, but I never found too much of interest in the chat rooms. At first, I thought that being able to talk to anyone in the world through my home computer was quite neat. After a few days of this, I realized I wasn't interested in talking to people on-line.

I sent E-mail messages to my friends and family and looked up people on the people-finder. The people-finder is a great feature. Any listed number in the world is available, and it's fairly simple to find E-mail addresses and business locations. Simply type in the city, state, and the last name of the person you're looking for, and bingo! A listing of all the people with the name pops into view, with the addresses and E-mail locations. The format was very simple and resembled personal return-address stickers.

Using the search engine was also easy. Type in a word, and it shows all the categories of related websites in bright colors. Just point, click, and there you are. For the first few weeks, I looked at sites con-

cerning my favorite music groups. I loved looking at the pictures and reading all the information.

I found out that the channels MSN boasted so proudly about were general web sites in a magazine format. The health issues site explained the causes and prevention of breast cancer, and gave advice on personal workouts. The news section turned out to be MSNBC, related to the NBC news on TV. Articles concerning today's hot stories were posted. Arts and Entertainment kept up to date with all the theater shows and concerts in America, as well as museum exhibits.

My free membership ran out, and I decided to keep the service. I enjoyed web pages and believed that anything imaginable could be found somewhere on the web. It was great for finding college information.

Today, things are different. I point my mouse on the MSN icon, and click. I type in my password, and wait for it to connect. After a few minutes, it connects me, and goes on to tell me I have an invalid command line. I'm connected to MSN, but I can't get the home page, which really isn't a big loss, but I am paying twenty dollars a month for a service and all it does is tell me that something is wrong.

I have to go back and click the MSN icon again. A window box pops up: Would you like to disconnect? Yes or no. I hit no and wait a few more minutes while my computer makes some pretty strange buzzing noises. Finally, I get the home page. My connection is slow, and it takes another three to four minutes before I can use any of the features.

I check my E-mail. I do this constantly because MSN tends to eat it. For almost two months, I wasn't getting any E-mail. I thought this was strange because a friend of mine was working on making a web page of his own, and he was sending his ideas on to me to see what I thought. Another friend likes sending strange files he's seen, such as alien contact and abduction stories.

Purely by accident, I came across something disguised as a text file, and found over thirteen E-mail messages from January tenth to March first that I had never seen before. They were stored in a temporary file that I didn't make.

I decided to post a message about my E-mail problem on the MSN bulletin board to see if anyone could help me. I found over seventy-five messages concerning the same problem. I also found over sixty ads from people who thought that MSN was a rotten server. Most of the ads talked about the same problems I'd been having, not being able to get the home page without a lot of trouble and generally not being able to do anything at all.

I happened across an ad posted by an ex-host. A host is someone who watches over the chat rooms. The host explained how MSN was using people. MSN didn't care if the service was being abused, and they rarely solved any problems people had. MSN was just trying to beat out America On-Line (AOL).

I thought this was interesting. If MSN was this bad, why were there so many users? I talked to Nick, a long-standing friend of mine. He looked every bit the computer junkie. His brown hair had grown a little long, and he dressed sloppily in clothes that looked like the same ones he'd worn in high school.

He sat there, with a strange look on his face. "I don't want to go to AOL," he said, rubbing his unshaven face, "But I do want something mainstream...I don't use the home pages anyway." He thought about it for a minute. "Actually, I don't *know* why."

I jumped into a chat room, the Hot Chat Pick-Up room. I attacked the first person who said hello to me, Mary. "Mary," I typed, "what do you think of MSN?"

"IT SUCKS," she typed back. Mike, a guy in the room, was sending sound waves. Unfortunately, Windows '95 comes with a wave called the Microsoft Sound Wave. It is the most obnoxious noise in the world, and Mike likes to play it continuously because everyone with Windows '95 will hear it. There's no way to delete that file from your computer, so people will be stuck hearing it forever. It can drive a person crazy.

"MIKE, STOP IT," at least ten people in the room typed.

"If you hate MSN so much, why are you still with them?" I asked her.

I clicked right on her name and went to profile. Profile is where people can enter information about themselves so they can find someone with similar interests to talk to. Mary's profile said she was thirty-eight and lived in Wisconsin. She liked to read horror stories and check out web sites.

"Friends," she typed. "I've been using MSN for a couple of years; don't want to start over."

"Was it always this bad?" I was sitting cross-legged in my chair, taking notes on the conversation.

"Lol, nope...Classic MSN was great," Mary said. ("Lol" means "laugh out loud." There is a whole new lingo to learn when entering a chat room.)

"What's classic?" I asked.

"Classic was the first form they came up with, but they changed it to the new MSN."

"Anybody know why?" I asked.

"Cause they suck," Mark typed.

Almost everyone had the same opinion on the matter, so I said my goodbyes and left the chat room.

MSN is an interactive community when you can get it to work. The server brings more problems than you're paying for and won't fix the problems that are found. MSN took almost eight months to do anything about the E-mail malfunction. They spend huge quantities of time trying to update the program and don't bother to work the bugs out of the last program. There have been three upgrade disks sent to me in the mail since I signed on.

Overall, the ratings are going down for MSN. Although it hardly seems possible, AOL may be beating them out. I gathered from others that MSN didn't start its big advertising campaign until after AOL was in some hot water with their customers. It was all downhill from there. MSN began changing things, expanding for more people and more money. The great goals MSN had in the beginning suddenly weren't so good anymore when the income rose. Yet, I don't cancel. No one else cancels either.

Evaluation: *This essay has an energetic, personable voice, and the finished product reflects Amanda's considerable skill in finding and organizing the details of experience.*

A Good Mother

by Hyeon Ju Palmer
Course: English 101
Instructor: Hanley E. Kanar

Assignment:

In a short essay (approximately 3 pages), discuss some aspects of lessons that you learned about or from observing your parents and tell why those lessons had an impact on who you are today.

As a twenty-eight-year-old married woman, I often think about being a mother, a good mother. Even though my husband patiently waited for four years for me to sign my name on a written certificate of marriage, now he is impatient for our baby. But I am not ready to give birth yet. Actually, I am not sure that I can do this lofty duty, although many people encourage me. They say, “When you were born as a woman, you were already given a natural ability to be a mother,” but I have never agreed with this easy explanation of motherhood. I strongly object to their urgings because I know what it is like to have a mutilated childhood. My own mother never had this “natural” ability.

“Why should I think I’ll have luck with you? I’ve already been abandoned by your father. You and that bastard ruined my life,” was what my mother always said while hitting me with a plastic hose. Even though I was too young to bear that fat hose flapping and sticking to my back, I was more hurt by those dreadful words. I gradually came to believe that my father was a bastard and I was ruining her life because I was from that bastard’s “seed.” But I often wondered what made her that angry. Was it my ordinary misdoings or my original sin? She said it was punishment, but I dimly felt it was revenge against my father, that “bastard,” or maybe it was a misplaced protest against her miserable life, or maybe it was to eradicate her heavy burden, me.

In Korea in the early 1970s, everybody was poor. The country was still laid to waste after the war, and people, including my mother, were looking for jobs. After a hard time, she finally found a job as a charwoman near construction sites, but this job separated us because it required that she follow the changes of the work places. She left me with her parents. She promised me that she would come to see me if I was “a good girl.” It was not easy, but I really tried hard. I asked everybody, “Was I good enough today?” They always answered, “Almost.” I still remember those days, crying and begging my grandma to tell a lie to my mother that I was a really good girl. And I was not hesitant to make any

promise or sacrifice to pay for that lie, such as never asking for a new doll, shoes, or clothes. Finally I said I would even give up every pleasure that I was rarely given. It was only after many years and much deprivation that I realized that my mother's sudden visits depended on her day off, not on me or anything I did.

"That bastard" was the only way I understood my father, although I had never spoken to him in person. The only thing I knew about "that bastard" was that he left a white envelope inside the mailbox on occasion. One day I could see a man's back as he awkwardly stood near the mailbox, and I instinctively knew he was my father. I nimbly hid behind the refuse heap and stayed there until he was gone. Then I took out and opened the envelope. There was money. I was startled by so much money. I had never seen that much before, so I put it back in the same place and looked around. I was nervous, worrying that he was hiding and watching me. I was almost crying in fear of hearing that hose splitting the air. I was afraid of them both.

Actually, though, I think I missed my father. I wanted to know about him, to talk to him and to call him "Father" at least once. But I lost the chance. That is the reason why I cannot forgive my mother. Maybe I could forgive that plastic hose and those damning words, but I cannot forget that she deprived me of the right to know about my own father. I still don't know who my father is. I can recall only those scenes—the black mailbox, his huge spying back, that deep white envelope, and even myself behind the refuse heap.

After I saw my father that day, I became aware that there was no way to be "a good girl" for my mother, so I stopped asking her to live with me. When she had a steady place to live with her new husband, I was beaten less, I found smiles on her face frequently, and then she even asked me to live with her. This time, I refused. Those smiles I couldn't accept. She asked me why. I answered in my heart, "Mother, I gave up trying to be your good girl."

Since my marriage, she frets about our baby like a loan shark, even though she once concluded my husband was an ignorant Yankee and I was his whore. She has changed her mind about this now. She often emphasizes that I should always feel thankful to her for raising me in fine physical health. Then she tries to confide in me that what I need to do to make her happy is to give her a grandchild. But I am not worried about making her happy. What I am worried about is whether I can be a good mother. How can I explain my anxiety about being a good mother to her? How can I explain that I am afraid that I will be the same terrible mother to my child that she was to me? I cannot tell her that I learned only how to abuse, but never to encourage. Indeed, I cannot tell her that all my concern is due to my own troubled childhood. So I just tell her we are not ready now. She asks me, "When?" again. When? Maybe one day, when my hatred and dismal memories fade, I will write a long letter to my mother with a message of forgiveness and peace and tell her that I will become a mother, a good mother.

Evaluation: This essay is at once painful, self-reflective, and hopeful. With remarkable brevity, she traverses the terrain of her earliest and most formative relationship, the one with her mother, en route to considering forging a mother-daughter bond with a child of her own someday. Her forceful closure leaves room for her readers to speculate about her and themselves.

Identity in the Short Stories of Joyce Carol Oates

by Sara Porras

Course: English 102

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

Write a research paper incorporating analysis of one or more short stories by the same author and seven or more critical sources about the author's work.

Joyce Carol Oates transforms the emotions and experiences of life into shockingly realistic novels and short stories. The characters she creates are disturbingly real, as if they were actual people from off the streets. Some of her characters are victims. They are victims of society, another person, or fate. In some of Oates' short stories, her teenaged female characters are victims possessing a lack of identity or a vague identity. Their identities are affected by the alienation they experience, their relationships with their parents, and/or their entrapment.

Alienation has been known to affect a person's identity. If a person does not feel that he/she belongs, he/she is bound to have trouble defining himself/herself and creating his/her identity. In "Stalking," the alienation of Gretchen, a thirteen year old girl, is emphasized through the description and images presented in the story. Gretchen, "dressed for the hunt," "plods along," (147) visible

and unhurried, stalking the brisk, light-footed Invisible Adversary (an imaginary figure of Gretchen's mind). It is a "cold, gritty" (147) Saturday afternoon in a suburb, newly evolving, but somewhat vacant. Because "there is no sidewalk" (147), she treks through fields "of mud and thistles and debris" (148) to arrive at a mall where she filters in and out of stores, stealing some items from one, and vandalizing in a couple.

It is at the mall where descriptions of Gretchen's alienation are most apparent. At the mall, she is confronted with images that confirm the conflict with her self-identity. Gretchen witnesses the figure of the cosmetics counter girl with "shimmering blond hair" (149) and penciled eyes, along with the nicely dressed sales girls at Dodi's Boutique who "giggle with one another and nod their heads in time to the music amplified throughout the store" (151). Gretchen does not possess the appearance of the typical teenaged girl. She dresses like a boy, wearing "old blue jeans," "a dark-green corduroy jacket that is worn out at the elbows and rear," and she has "big, square, strong feet jammed into white leather boots...filthy with mud" (147). Her face is even described as having "a stern, staring look, like an adult man" (152). She is also violent. When she participates in gym class at school, "she runs heavily" and "bumps into other girls, hurting them" (148). When she is at the mall and is pushed by a boy into a trash can, her face expresses "a cold, swift anger" (151), and she pushes over the trash can onto the sidewalk. One critic has observed that it is at the shopping mall where "gender requirements are garishly evident" (Wesley 17). Since Gretchen does not contain characteristics of her specific gender, she experiences a lack of belonging. At some points in the story, it appears as if she is trying to connect herself to femininity by stealing lipstick and by attempting to try on dresses. Her effort, however, fails, and she is left with her "blank, neutral, withdrawn" (152) face and no definition for herself.

Alienation also occurs in Oates' story, "How I Contemplated the World From the Detroit House

of Correction and Began My Life Over Again.” The story is reported through the essay notes of an unnamed sixteen year old girl, recounting the past year’s events (Johnson, *Understanding...* 109, 110). The narrator refers to herself as “the girl” (179). She has the appearance of the average suburban teenager, with brown hair worn “loose and long and straight,” and her “green eyes smudged with pencil, dark brown.” She questions herself as to whether she is, “A pretty girl? An ugly girl?” (181). Although her looks concern her, the girl is not alienated through her appearance as Gretchen is in “Stalking.” She is, however, estranged from the materialism in the suburban world of Bloomfield Hills.

Toward the beginning of the story, the girl describes Sioux Drive and its inhabitants, her family being one of them. As she begins reporting about the people who live on her street, she recounts characteristics of the person’s house along with the person. When she arrives at describing “Ramsey, Michael D.” at “250 Sioux,” she soon begins listing off his possessions without commas in between each item—“Colonial. Big living room, thirty by twenty-five, fireplaces in living room, library, recreation room, paneled walls wet bar five bathrooms five bedrooms two lavatories central air-conditioning automatic sprinkler...” (183-184). It is as though she is expressing these assets as one, and she emphasizes the suburbs’ focus on material objects. Another point the girl makes with the lists of her neighbor’s possessions is that she also includes the wife and children of the person among the objects. This is because the people of Bloomfield Hills seem to lack “human qualities,” and they become “possessions, adornments, or attachments” themselves (Broer 1062). The girl is so indifferent to the “plasticized environment” she grew up in (1062) that she ventures outside the realms of Bloomfield Hills to find a place to belong, the city of Detroit.

When the girl one afternoon takes a bus to Detroit to find a sense of belonging, she does not realize that she will discover, once again, a feeling of indifference. In Detroit, she meets a prostitute named Clarita and soon becomes intimately

involved with her thirty-five year old lover, Simon. She does anything he asks of her, which includes prostitution and giving him “injection[s] with that needle she knows is filthy” (190). Simon gives the girl a false sense of belonging. After some time, she is reported to the police by, she believes, Simon. She is sent to the Detroit House of Correction, refusing to go home, until one night she is severely beaten by two other inmates. She comes home to the environment she was once alienated from and embraces the house saying, “*I will never leave home... I am in love with everything here...*” (195). She had not found a greater definition of her self-identity in Detroit, so when she came back to Bloomfield Hills she was “trying to hold on to her [vague] identity through linking herself with material objects” such as the “clean polished gleaming toaster and faucets that run both hot and cold water” (Park 221). When she says that she “will never leave home again,” there is a falseness in the words and it is known that she has not found her place or her self-identity.

In another story, “Four Summers,” there is the alienation of Sissie. The story is relayed in four parts, each taking place at the same tavern during four stages in Sissie’s life. In the first part, she is a small child, and she observes her parents and their friends drinking, while her older brothers nag their father for a boat ride on the nearby lake. She is about ten years old in the second part; her father rows her and her brother to a small island on the lake. At the end of this section, they catch their father throwing up from great physical exertion after drinking beer. In the third section, Sissie is fourteen; being somewhat rebellious, she tries to leave the tavern but does not succeed after she meets an older man who seduces her, gripping her shoulders tightly and kissing her with his beer breath. In the last part, she is nineteen years old, married to a man named Jesse, and pregnant. After seeing the man that had seduced her five years earlier, she tries to assure herself that she is happy with her life.

The basis for the indifference Sissie experiences in “Four Summers” is the ugly world of her parents

and their friends. In the first section of the story, the unattractiveness of her parents' lives is demonstrated through their behavior and their friends. At one point during their drunkenness, they push Sissie to try some beer, just for fun. Sissie at this time in her life doesn't realize her estrangement, but when she is fourteen years old it begins to be apparent to her. She begins to see the ugliness in her parents' lives. She believes there is something inside her that hates them. She notices, "How loud they are, my parents! My mother spilled something on the front of her dress, but does she notice?" (207). She also recalls a photograph of her mother when she was younger and believes "that maybe she isn't my mother after all, and she isn't that pretty girl in the photograph" (208). At the tavern, the music is even ugly to her "because it belongs to them" (209). The tavern is a part of her parents' world, and she does not belong in their ugliness. When she is nineteen and returns to the tavern with her husband, she "can almost hear [her] mother's shrill laughter coming from outside, and some drawling remark of [her] father's—lifting for a moment above the music. Those little explosions of laughter, the slap of someone's hand on the damp table in anger, the clink of bottles accidentally touching—and there, there, my drunken aunt's voice, what is she saying?" (214-215). Her parents' way of life is the reason for her alienation. Her identity is lost in the grotesqueness of a world of which she wants no part. But it is not just the world of her parents that causes her to lack identity; her relationship with her parents and their lack of love must also be taken into consideration.

In many of Oates' stories, she writes about love, whether it is between a man and a woman or a parent and a child (Kazin 81). While growing up, the love of a parent is essential to a child. When a child is without love, he or she possesses no self worth and is unable to form an identity. Sissie's parents in "Four Summers" do not seem to care for her, and it is shown through their actions. In the first section of the story, Sissie's brothers want to take a ride in a boat, and they ask their father many times if they

can. Their father brushes them off each time, saying they will go later. He eventually says that they will "do it next week" (202) because he wants to play cards with his friends. Their mother tells them to "go and play by yourselves, stop bothering us" (202). This episode demonstrates their selfishness and their coldness towards their kids. In another part of the story, when Sissie is fourteen, she explains a time when she overheard her mother yelling at her baby sister. She recalls her mother saying, "Well, nobody wanted you, kid," and that she "was furious, standing in the kitchen where she was washing the floor, screaming: 'Nobody wanted you, it was a goddamn accident! An accident'" (207). This scene shows a reason for the lack of love Sissie must be feeling and it would contribute to Sissie feeling unwanted (Cushman 140). Her parents are uncaring and unloving. They are too preoccupied with their lives of unhappiness to raise Sissie with warmth and love.

Gretchen, of "Stalking," also has an unloving relationship with parents. Although they are rarely mentioned in the story, it is apparent that they do affect Gretchen's identity. When Gretchen wanders into a department store, "she catches sight of her mother on an escalator going up. Her mother doesn't notice her" (152). Her own mother does not even acknowledge her presence. In most parent-daughter relationships, there would have at least been eye contact between them. When she is at her house, she observes that "nobody seems to be home. Her mother is probably still shopping, her father is out of town for the weekend" (153). Gretchen's parents do not appear to participate in her life. Her father is busy making the money and her mother spends it. They are too wrapped up in their own lives and could care less what is going on in their daughter's life. They are distant, cold, and uncaring.

In "How I Contemplated..." the girl's parents also do not appear to care for her. They are also wealthy, like Gretchen's parents in "Stalking." Her parents belong to many clubs including "the Detroit Athletic Club. Also the Detroit Golf Club. Also the Bloomfield Hills Country Club. The

Village Women's Club at which lectures are given..." (181). Her mother "is in perpetual motion, this lady, hair like blown-up gold and finer than gold, hair and fingers and body of inestimable grace" (181). Her father is a doctor "of the slightly sick" and "a player of squash and golf" (182). Throughout the story, the girl's parents do not provide her with the love she desperately needs (Park 221), and through stealing, she attempts to receive attention from her parents (Flibbert 741). When she eventually gets caught, her parents convince the store owner to drop the charges and "try to buy her compliance to behavior less embarrassing to them" (Flibbert 741). Her mother pesters the girl, asking, "If you wanted gloves, why didn't you say so? Why didn't you ask for them?" (180). Her question demonstrates the mother's indication that she wants her daughter to behave well. Her father is never around when the girl gets into trouble. In her notes, she writes that he was "at a medical convention... on the edge of the North American continent..." (187) when she was caught stealing. She also questions his concern while she was in Detroit: "And was he home worrying about me, gone for two weeks solid, when they carried me off...?" (188). This question suggests that she feels her parents do not love her. They want no part in her life. It appears that their main focus is their materialism. They project their energy onto objects, rather than into love for their daughter. Since the girl receives no love from her parents, she feels emotionally trapped in their materialism.

Many characters experience entrapment in Oates's fiction. This may not necessarily mean physical entrapment, but it most often means emotional entrapment. Entrapment constricts the characters' identities within the "walls" of their trap. In "How I Contemplated..." the girl experiences an emotional trap. The girl is imprisoned in a materialistic world where emotions are not accepted. She feels as though she cannot breathe in the atmosphere of Bloomfield Hills (Broer 1062). In order for her to experience a world where people interact with their feelings, rather than with objects, she escapes to Detroit. Detroit, however, proves to be

an unacceptable place for her because of the violence she experiences. She encounters the ugly emotions, rather than the positive feelings, such as love and happiness. After being severely beaten by two girls in the Detroit House of Correction, she is brought back to the suffocating world of materialism. Although she does connect herself to objects when she arrives home, she is lying to herself. She will soon discover that the possessions will not fill any void she is feeling. Hopefully, she will cease searching for herself in materialism, realizing it is causing her emotional entrapment.

Another example of entrapment is presented throughout "Four Summers." Sissie is trapped by her environment and her parents' influence on her life. Her entrapment is obvious in the first section of the story when Sissie observes at the shore of the lake that "a blackbird is caught in the scum, by one of the boats. It can't fly up... (203). The bird's wings keep fluttering but it can't get out. If it could get free it would fly and be safe, but the scum holds it down." This scene foreshadows Sissie's life. She "is viewing an emblem of her own unconscious sense of entrapment, her inability to exert her will or envision her own identity..." (Johnson, *Joyce Carol Oates: A Study of...* 54). Throughout the story she tries to escape the tavern. When she is about ten years old and her father has rowed her and her brother to a nearby island, she and her brother feel that they can escape the tavern on the island. They, nonetheless, discover it is not any different, "neither improvement nor escape" (Cushman 144). They "look back at the boathouse and wish [they] were there" (206) when they catch their father throwing up into the lake. In section three of the story, Sissie nearly escapes the tavern, but the man who tries to seduce her causes her to "run back to the tavern" (211). By the end of the story, Sissie has realized her own entrapment. She has become her mother, a girl who is "pretty like everyone else is" (212); her husband is just like her father. She observes, "My father would have liked him, I think; when he laughs, Jesse reminds me of him." She also thinks of her father when she holds Jesse at night. After trying to escape all her life, she

has trapped herself in a continuous cycle. She tries to convince herself that she is different from her mother, although she knows she is the same. When she looks at Jesse and “the outline of what he will be is already in his face,” (214) she sees the truth. She understands that “their lives are like hands dealt out to them in their innumerable card games. You pick up the sticky cards, and there it is: there it is. Can’t change anything...” (214) Sissie has become the bird trapped in the scum.

These characters—Gretchen, “the girl” of “How I Contemplated...,” and Sissie—are unable to create healthy identities for themselves. Oates has shown through the characters that alienation, parental relationships, and entrapment are reasons for lacking in self-definition. By the end of each story, it is hard to tell whether the main characters will succeed in finding a true identity. Hopefully, they will find themselves after realizing the reasons for their setbacks. Perhaps they will one day encounter a sense of belonging and develop loving relationships, having escaped from their entrapment, but it is hard to say. They are the players that must walk away from the card games and create their own game.

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Evaluation: *Sara skillfully weaves story details, her own insights, and carefully selected critical commentary into a satisfying analysis of a major thread running through this author's work. Writing with such smooth synthesis is a pleasure to read.*

Louie's Magic Tires

by Louie Ritche Saliendra

Course: Chemistry 121

Instructor: Barbara Q. Weil

Assignment:

*Write a short essay demonstrating
how gas laws are related to your life.*

Situation

During the first winter that I started driving, I was beginning to believe that I was losing my mind. I believed this because each time before I got into my car to start the engine, I noticed that my tires always seemed to look deflated. Naturally, I inspected the tires to check if the air seal was loose or if there was any evidence of a puncture. After discovering that there was nothing wrong with the seal or the tires, my instinct was to drive to the nearest gas station and refill my tires with air. Much to my surprise though, by the time I reached the gas station, my tires looked perfectly fine. So I began to wonder...*WHAT'S GOING ON???*

Explanation

Thanks to my Chemistry 121 class, I now realize that there is a perfectly logical explanation for my confusion about my tires: CHARLES' LAW!

Jacques Charles, a French scientist, performed an experiment many years ago, where he confined gases in such a way that they could be heated or cooled. His findings showed that gases expand in volume when heated and contract (compress) in volume when cooled. The deflation of my car's tires exemplifies Charles' law since the cold temperature during the winter causes the gas (air) in the tires to compress and decrease in volume, which results in underinflation. By the time I reach the gas station, my tires look perfectly fine because as I drive the car, the tires rub against the surface of the road, creating friction. Friction causes molecules to move faster, which therefore increases temperature. When this happens, the gas inside my tires expand, and the volume of the tires increase back to the normal size.

Lesson

Through Charles' Law, I have learned that the deflation of my tires during winter is directly related to the temperature outside. In addition, this also explains why mylar balloons deflate outside during the winter, and go back to their normal shape when indoors. Through Charles' law, there is no longer any reason for me to panic (or think that I'm losing my mind) when I notice that my tires are deflated during winter. Instead, I can rely on good old CHARLES' LAW...well, until I reach the gas station and notice that my tires are STILL deflated!!!

Evaluation: *Louie's essay was creative, well written, and entertaining. He discusses an example of Charles' Law which the reader can easily relate to and understand.*

Unconditional Love in Eudora Welty's “A Worn Path”

by Wendy Roberts
Course: English 102
Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:
Write a literary research paper.

Outline

Thesis: While many critics have implored the Christian symbolism of the story, others have focused on the comparative traces of an Old Norse tale published in the *Elson-Gray Basic Readers, Book Two*. I believe that the writer's intent of the story was to show how “the deep-grained habit of love” allows one to pursue a journey no matter what sacrifices have to be made to complete the journey (Welty, *Grandson* 161). Therefore, without ignoring yet not getting lost in the subtle symbolism, the underlying theme of the story is that unconditional love is the spirit of the life of Phoenix Jackson.

- I. Critics have developed varying themes based upon their explications of “A Worn Path.”
 - A. Marilyn Keys believes in a religious interpretation of the story.
 - B. Jeanne Nostrandt finds it to be a reflection of an old Norse tale.
 - C. Nancy K. Butterworth interprets it as a story dealing with the issue of racism.
- II. Eudora Welty, the author of the story, was inspired by her vision of an elderly woman walking purposefully through a wintery landscape.
- III. Bird imagery is used throughout the story.
 - A. Phoenix is the mythological bird.
 - B. Phoenix is the red-headed woodpecker of the Old Norse tale.
 - C. Phoenix walks and sounds like a bird (cane tapping).
- IV. The dangers of the path hinder her journey.
 - A. Her age is against her.
 - B. The natural world requires endurance.
- V. Her vision and her dreams help her along the path.
 - A. Phoenix dreams of a boy serving her cake.
 - B. She lives for the women under a spell.
 - C. She reaches out for help as she lies in the ditch.
 - D. She rejoices at the sight of the plaque on the wall of the doctor's office.
- VI. Her purpose is selfless and sacrificial unlike those of others she encounters.
 - A. The hunter hunts for and takes care of himself.
 - B. The nurses provide care based on instructions.
- VII. Phoenix is not prideful.
 - A. Her kindness is reflected in the woman who ties her shoes.
 - B. She takes the nickels from the hunter and the doctor's assistant.
- VIII. Her forgetfulness is a function of age and exhaustion.
- IX. Her unconditional love gives her a reason to live.
 - A. Phoenix has a purpose.
 1. Her grandson's health is dependent upon medicine.
 2. He is special.
 3. She wants to get him a gift.
 - B. Phoenix extracts humor and pleasure from her purpose.
 1. She talks happily to the landscape.
 2. She dances with the scarecrow.
- X. Phoenix's unconditional love for her grandson parallels Christ's unconditional love for his children.
 - A. Association with Christ is apparent as Phoenix faces the hill and meets the bush.
 - B. Her journey suggests analogues to Passion Week.

"Is Phoenix Jackson's grandson really dead?" This is the question most often asked by the readers of Eudora Welty's delightful story "A Worn Path." Unfortunately, this issue was brought to my attention after I completed my reading of the story. Had I not been oblivious to this controversy, I may have also found a need to have this question answered. However, as I read the story, I found my thoughts focusing specifically on the purpose of Phoenix Jackson's journey. "What is the motivating factor causing this old woman to endure such treacherous travel through a wintery landscape?" I thought to myself. A woman of her age must have a life-threatening need to put herself in this situation. "Could she be escaping danger? Was she lost?" I wondered. However, I could not accept the desire for her to fulfill a selfish need. Her thoughts and actions appeared sacrificial in nature. By the time I completed the story, I understood her purpose. Phoenix Jackson traveled this worn path because of her unconditional love for another human being.

While many critics have explored the Christian symbolism of the story, others have focused on the comparative traces of an Old Norse tale published in the *Elson-Gray Basic Readers, Book Two* (Nostrandt). I believe that the writer's intent of the story was to show how "the deep-grained habit of love" allows one to pursue a journey no matter what sacrifices have to be made to complete the journey (Welty, *Grandson* 161). Therefore, without ignoring yet not getting lost in the subtle symbolism, the underlying theme of the story is that unconditional love is the spirit of the life of Phoenix Jackson.

"A Worn Path" was first published in 1941 as the last story in Eudora Welty's collection of stories *A Curtain of Green*. Since its publication, many critics have interpreted the subtle explications of the story. Several such critics, Neil D. Isaacs, Marilyn Keys, and Sara Trefman, believe in a religious interpretation of the story, one which strongly parallels the Stations of the Cross (Keys 354-6; Trefman). Another critic, Jeanne R. Nostrandt, finds the story to be a mirror image of the Old Norse tale where a

woman turns into a woodpecker. Yet, one more critic, Nancy K. Butterworth, interprets "A Worn Path" to be a story reflecting the issue of racism (165-72).

Eudora Welty comments that "A Worn Path" was inspired by an elderly woman she saw one day who was walking purposefully through a wintery landscape. Ms. Welty used this vision to write a story about a similar old woman; however, in "A Worn Path," she creates an errand for this woman as the driving force of the journey she is undertaking. This woman, Phoenix Jackson, is determined to face the perils of nature to get the medicine desperately needed for her unhealthy grandson. Her mission is based entirely on a selfless act of love for another human being.

Many critics, including Eudora Welty herself, have equated the name of Phoenix Jackson with the mythic Arabian bird who rose from its own ashes every 500 years (Fall 979). The Phoenix bird symbolizes the periodic journey that the old woman faithfully endures to sustain her grandson's life. Likewise, bird imagery is identified throughout the story. For example, in the beginning of the story, the "old Negro woman with her head tied in a rag, [is] coming along a path through the pinewoods" (Welty, "Worn" 380). According to Jeanne Nostrandt, she is like the red-headed woodpecker of the Old Norse tale. She walks "slowly in the dark pine shadows, moving a little from side to side in her steps" (380). This creates a vision of a bird tottering along an uneven path on its own two frail legs. Then, Phoenix taps her cane on the frozen earth and makes a "meditative [noise] like the chirping of a solitary little bird" (380). At the end of her journey, Phoenix describes her own grandson "like a little bird" (385). Just as birds go to great lengths to nurture and protect their young, Phoenix's unconditional love for her grandson is illustrated through the technique of bird imagery.

The dangers of the worn path place all odds against the old woman's journey to help her little grandson. In addition, her age instills an immediate disadvantage in her effort to tackle the trip. As she

makes her way through the thicket, the path begins to run up a hill. “‘Seem like there is chains about my feet, time I get this far [Phoenix argues with herself].... Something always take a hold of me on this hill—pleads I should stay’” (380). After Phoenix surmounts the top, she makes her way down the hill but not without her dress getting tangled in a bush. “‘I in the thorny bush,’ she said... ‘Old eyes thinks you was a pretty little *green* bush’” (380). Later, she encounters a scarecrow which she mistakenly thinks is a ghost. “‘My senses is gone. I too old,’” Phoenix explains (381). All of these passages clearly show how her age makes this journey virtually impossible for her to complete. Again, we can see how her errand in the name of love is the driving force which carries her beyond her agedness.

Endurance in the natural world allows Phoenix to overcome the creatures of the trail and to meet the battle of time. As Phoenix combs through the thicket of the pinewoods, “she fears delays caused by wild animals getting in her way: foxes, owls, beetles, jack rabbits, and raccoons” (Heller 2713). Her unconditional love, suggested by Suzanne Marrs, is as enduring as the daily and seasonal cycles of the natural world:

She tells time by turning to nature. As Phoenix sets out on her December trip to Natchez, she knows that it is “not too late” for the mourning dove. As she travels on, she measures her progress by the sun: “‘Sun so high!’ she cried... ‘The time getting all gone here.’” Later, as she crosses a field, she is “Glad this not the season for the bulls” and that “the good Lord made his snakes curl up and sleep in the winter.” (288)

Although “Phoenix Jackson lives within nature’s cycles,” she does not allow time and the creatures of the natural world to remove her innate love for her grandson (Kreyling, *Critical Essays* 28).

The visions of dreams of Phoenix Jackson are an inspiration to her journey. When Phoenix reaches the foot of the hill in her journey, she needs to cross a log to get to the other side of the creek. Her faith carries her across the log, but she is exhausted.

While Phoenix takes time to sit down and rest, she has a vision of a little boy. The boy offers her a “slice of marble-cake... ‘That would be acceptable,’ she said” (Welty, “Worn” 381). It appears that she is dreaming of her grandson offering a piece of cake to her. Even though the journey is rough, she dreams of the child she holds so dear. Phoenix continues to follow “the track...past cabins silver from weather, with the doors and windows boarded shut, all like old women under a spell sitting there. ‘I walking in their sleep,’ she said” (382). Realizing that these old women are stifled at rest, Phoenix is inspired by her life and her reason to live. Further down the path, a black dog comes at Phoenix, and she falls over into a ditch. As she lies helplessly in the ditch, “her senses [drift] away. A dream [visits] her, and she [reaches] her hand up, but nothing [reaches] down and [to give] her a pull” (382). Phoenix seems to be raising her hand in faith with the hope that she will somehow be helped out of her position and able to complete her journey. Fortunately, a young white hunter rescues her. Then, upon entering the doctor’s office, Phoenix sees “nailed up on the wall the document that had been stamped with the gold seal and framed in the gold frame, which matched the dream that was hung up in her head” (384). It is her dream to complete her errand, i.e., reach the doctor’s office. When Phoenix sees the document, “she knows she has reached her destination” and her dream has been fulfilled (Bartel 289). Even though her dreams and visions provide relief to the arduous journey she undertakes, these dreams and visions would not be possible without her unconditional love for her grandchild: it is the backbone that keeps her going.

Terry Heller describes “the central motive of Phoenix’s quest [as] true charity, the ‘deep-grained habit of love’ for her grandson” (2714). Furthermore, “love...accounts for Phoenix’s courage, making it natural and unconscious, simply necessary rather than extraordinary” (2714). In contrast with the motives of the young hunter and the clinical employees, it is apparent that courage and true charity are derived from Phoenix’s “deep-

grained habit of love" (Welty, *Grandson* 161). When Phoenix encounters the hunter, the latter scoffs at her for "going to town to see Santa Claus" (Welty, "Worn" 382). He tells her that his purpose is worthwhile, because he gets "something [a bob-white] for his trouble" (382). The young hunter is selfishly hunting for his own satisfaction, whereas Phoenix is performing a sacrificial mission based on her love for another person. Thus, the "hunter fails to comprehend the dire necessity of her mission, [by] mistakenly believing that she is merely going to see Santa Claus" (Butterworth 171). After chasing the dog away, the hunter boasts of himself and belittles Phoenix by pointing his gun at her (Heller 2714). However, as Louise Westling notes, Phoenix "refuses to be intimidated by his questions or the gun he aims at her" (63). It is apparent to Terry Heller that Phoenix is the one with the true heart of courage. Her courage comes directly from her love for the child, while the hunter's courage is reclaimed through "his instruments and youthful folly" (Heller 2715). Later, the clinic employees remind Phoenix twice that she is a charity case, and Terry Heller notes that they expect gratitude for what they give. Phoenix, in contrast, "dreams of and delights in bringing her grandson comfort and joy.... [Her true motive is] love rather than self-praise" (2715).

Phoenix Jackson is not prideful with respect to her unconditional love for her grandson. As she enters the "paved city" of Natchez, she realizes that her untied shoelaces are not fit for the "urban decorum" (Hall 980). Phoenix observes the pedestrians passing by and asks a lady who is carrying presents and emitting a strong scent of perfume to stop to tie her shoes. The lady diligently ties Phoenix's shoes for her, and Phoenix thanks the lady for her kindness. Earlier in the story, when Phoenix meets the hunter, a nickel falls from his pocket. As the hunter moves away to scare off the dog that was bothering her, Phoenix bends over and picks up the nickel. She experiences some guilt as a bird flies over her head but seems to have a reason to keep the money. Later, as she is about to leave the doctor's office, the

attendant offers her some pennies for Christmas. Phoenix suggests a nickel and tells the attendant that she is going to buy a paper windmill for her grandson (980). Although poverty stricken but not bitter with her position, Phoenix puts her pride aside to appear proper in public and take charitable and abandoned money to purchase a gift for her beloved grandson, for he is set apart "from all the others in creation" (Welty, "Worn" 385).

At the end of the story, when Phoenix Jackson reaches the doctor's office, she appears to have forgotten her reason for coming to the clinic. The nurse urges Phoenix to respond to her questions. When the nurse suggests the possible death of the boy, Phoenix regains her memory and justifies her forgetfulness: "I'm an old woman without an education. It was my memory fail me. My little grandson, he is just the same, and I forgot it in the coming" (384). Some critics argue that this is a clue that the child is dead. However, Eudora Welty explains in her interview on February 21, 1994, that Phoenix Jackson's forgetfulness is a function of her age and exhaustion. She states that "forgetfulness is normal when the task preceding the state of forgetfulness is rough." Furthermore, "when the journey is completed, Phoenix is dazed and the climax is over." Her journey takes all the energy she has left within her (Heller 2714). The old woman fuels her exhausting trip with the enduring love she has for the body. Upon reaching her destination, she simply needs time to get her bearing straight and her mind clear. Eudora Welty further clarifies Phoenix's forgetfulness in her essay "Is Phoenix Jackson's Grandson Really Dead?": "The habit of love cuts through confusion and stumbles or contrives its way out of difficulty, it remembers the way even when it forgets, for a dumb-founded moment, its reason for being" (*Grandson* 161-2).

Phoenix Jackson's "unreserved love for her grandson and her hope for his future" give her a reason to live (Butterworth 171). As Michael Kreyling sees it, "Phoenix is centered in and directed toward the value of life, the path worn by the habit of hope. She possesses that vitality without

which, [Joseph Wood] Krutch says, faith would not be possible" (*Modernism* 24). Therefore, it is her purpose in life to travel routinely the worn path to the doctor's office in the city because of her hope and her love for her grandchild. As recalled by the nurse in the clinic, Phoenix's grandson swallowed lye in January about two or three years ago. To keep the child alive, Phoenix must travel periodically to get soothing medicine for the young boy's throat. Her unconditional love for the child as seen through her actions and described by her words allows her to transcend the dangers of the significant journey. At the clinic, Phoenix tells the nurse how special her grandson is; in fact, "I [Phoenix] could tell him from all others in creation" (Welty, "Worn" 385). Likewise, she explains that she wants to buy her child a pinwheel, because she knows it would bring him great joy. And, seeing his joy would bring great joy to Phoenix as well.

"Despite the difficulty of her trip, she [Phoenix] clearly enjoys her adventure" (Heller 2713). Phoenix extracts humor and pleasure from her purpose. As she travels along, "she talks happily to the landscape" (2713). "Keep from under these feet, little bob-whites," Phoenix warns the animals to protect them from harm (Welty, "Worn" 380). Later, when her dress gets caught in a thorn bush, she talks to the bush as if it could understand her. All along the path she is communicating with her surroundings, almost as if she were chatting with others at a tea party. When Phoenix comes upon a scarecrow, she mistakes it for a ghost, but soon realizes that it is just a scarecrow that looks like "a man dancing in the field" (381). Phoenix appears to be enjoying her journey even though it is a challenge for her to endure. What, other than the purpose for her trip, her unconditional love for the boy, could induce such joy in the midst of the arduous trek?

As stated earlier, several critics have used the Christian symbolism imbedded within "A Worn Path" to interpret the meaning of the story. Sara Trefman identifies throughout the story many associations with Christ. Although William Jones com-

pares the old woman's "journey of love" to help her little grandson with the "legendary bird of Egyptian folklore" that causes its own rejuvenation at the end of its life, greater significance may be discerned with the symbol of Christ in Phoenix's ability to resurrect herself. Furthermore, "[t]he painstaking, often agonizing journey of ancient woman...seems constantly to take on symbolic dimensions as it [the story] recalls the earlier journey of Christ up the hill of Calvary" (Trefman). When Phoenix Jackson drags herself up the hill near the start of her journey, she comments about the feeling of chains around her feet. Later she encounters a bush and gets tangled in the "thorns that do their 'appointed work'" (Trefman). It appears that Eudora Welty purposely uses the Christian symbolism to draw a close connection between Christ's unconditional love for us and Phoenix's love for her grandson. Similarly, Neil D. Isaacs sees the journey of Phoenix Jackson as a "religious pilgrimage" (Keys 354). Marilynn Keys notes: "Phoenix's journey parallels not just life but parts of a particular life, and her entire journey suggests analogues to Passion Week, including several of the very familiar exercises of Christian piety, the Stations of the Cross" (354). Again as Phoenix climbs the hill, "the reminder of the third temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4: 8-10) and of the prayer in the Mount of Olives, 'let this cup pass' (26:39), become one as the suffering Servant considers the path he must trod" (Keys 355). When she meets what she had thought was "'a pretty green bush,'...it is probably the holly. In Christian art the holly, like all plants with thorns, is symbolic of the Passion and...suggests eternity" (355). The third Station of the Cross is evident when Phoenix falls down, and a stranger, the hunter, picks her up, just as Jesus falls and a stranger helps him with his cross. "At the 4th Station Jesus meets his mother, and at the 6th Station his face is wiped by Veronica. Like Jesus, Phoenix encounters a woman who [ties her shoes] does more than she is asked to do and does it with kindness" (355). Without a doubt Marilynn Keys' interpretation using the symbolism

of the Stations of the Cross supports the theme of the story. Because of Christ's unconditional love for us, he performed "the ultimate 'saving' action" (355). Just as Phoenix Jackson loved her grandson, she sacrificed her safety, her life, to save another.

Although many critics use the symbolism in the story to express and support each of their interpretations, the true meaning of the story is only realized when the purpose for Phoenix's action is identified. As demonstrated by her "quintessence of selfless devotion and human endurance," Phoenix's unconditional love for her grandson exerts the will that enables her to face the perils of the worn path (Evans 50). Michael Kreyling captures the meaning of the story in a nutshell: "the fully realized character, Phoenix Jackson, is a match for the mythological and Christian imagery of which she is the human, life-giving heart" (*Achievement* 12). She is a sacrificial savior. Still, some readers may need to know whether the child is really alive or dead. Unfortunately, this issue will never be resolved. We must remember, however, that it is the act that is important here, and the act is driven by unconditional love which is the spirit of the life of Phoenix Jackson.

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Evaluation: *I love the way Wendy puts readers' and critics' often-asked question, "Is Phoenix Jackson's grandson really dead?" in its proper perspective. As her insightful analysis suggests, ultimately the answer to this question does not matter.*

Analysis of Yukio Mishima's "Swaddling Clothes"

by *Randi Roesslein*
Course: English 102
Instructor: Julie Fleenor

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper which combines a careful reading of primary and secondary sources.

Outline

Thesis: In "Swaddling Clothes," Toshiko's observations exhibit the emptiness of her marriage and her despair over the devaluing of human life.

- I. Yukio Mishima, the author of "Swaddling Clothes," exhibits the barren geography of an alienated human's life through the eyes of a Japanese housewife (Toshiko).
 - A. We are given a brief story summary.
- II. Mishima uses Toshiko and her husband as representing the old and new ways of Japan, respectively.
 - A. Toshiko imagines the future life of the illegitimate baby boy.
 1. Toshiko's encounter with the man in the park is tied in with the illegitimate child.
 2. The story's symbolism is shown in how social and economic demographics tie in with the characters.
 - B. The story expresses Japan as being a patriarchy.
 1. Toshiko suffers from silence and emotional agony.
 2. Her husband is both emotionally and physically abusive.
- III. Mishima's inner beliefs and values are expressed in his writings. This story is a perfect example of that.

Yukio Mishima is regarded by many as perhaps the most influential Japanese writer in the post World War II era. In the book *Modern Japanese Writers*, Makoto Ueda describes him "as less a novelist than a thinker, who expressed himself not only through his writing, but also through his entire way of life" (219). Mishima peers into the darker aspects of society and explores with disdain the diminishing values of Japanese culture: "Perhaps better than any other contemporary Japanese author, Mishima was able to articulate the conflicts of his people in their transition from the old culture to the Western mode of living" (Walsten 286). "Swaddling Clothes" (1953) is an impassioned example of this mode of thinking, a cold, dark tale which articulates the lack of compassion and overemphasis of economic and social status in Japanese society. "Swaddling Clothes" explores the barren geography of an alienated human being through the eyes and mind of a Japanese housewife. Her observations exhibit the emptiness of her marriage and her despair over the devaluing of young life.

The central character is Toshiko, a Japanese housewife who is married to a movie actor. While having dinner in a night club with some friends, her husband recounts with amusement how their nurse gave birth to a bastard child in their nursery. Her husband portrays a vicious contempt and a lack of compassion towards the entire incident. Even more surprisingly, the doctor (who traditionally symbolizes a caretaker) also has a spiteful and derogatory attitude towards both nurse and child. To Toshiko's horror, the doctor has the infant boy dishonorably wrapped in newspaper. Toshiko imagines the future of the infant child as compared to her own pampered child. The story closes with Toshiko's encounter with a man covered in newspapers lying on a park bench. This encounter symbolizes the bastard child's destiny as well as her ultimate demise.

Toshiko and her husband are depicted as opposites. The marriage, in and of itself, is meaningless and void of anything resembling what should be a union of two people who care deeply for one another.

He is both emotionally and physically abusive. She, on the other hand, is the quiet, dutiful housewife who views the tragic birth and its aftermath from afar. She suffers in silence, and her guilt seems to gnaw at her very soul: "The protagonist, suffering in silence, devalued and disregarded, falls prey to preoccupations, obsessive fantasies, and a powerful pull to self-destruction" (Crane 4122).

The social, political, and economical demographics are also indicative of the world in which the characters reside: "The doctor, the supposed epitome of compassion and caring, disdains an innocent life, degrades it, and dishonors it" (Crane 4122).

Japanese society, through her haunted eyes, is characterized as disrespectful and lacking with regard to human dignity. The story implies that society is filled with too many egos, with overwhelming prejudice, and with people with both hidden and selfish agendas. Japan, a massive patriarchy, is a male-dominated society where the female views or opinions are not treated with importance or respect. This treatment is not so by accident: "The educational system of Japan is a major support of chauvinistic nationalism" (Latourette 196). This fact definitely has an effect on Toshiko, whose tragic character feels the brunt of the story's guilt and emotion. The structure and hierarchy of the environment that she lives in leaves her timid, weak, and powerless to take any meaningful action or stand defending her convictions.

Mishima goes into specific detail about the cold-hearted atmosphere in which the nurse gives birth. The most disturbing part of the tale lies in the mind of Toshiko following the unpleasant course of events. The image of the baby lying helpless on the floor wrapped in newspaper as a piece of garbage might be wrapped provokes her fears for the future. The prospect of her own beloved son encountering the monster which the bastard child will become haunts her thoughts. Mishima successfully places her character in this vulnerable situation. Using Toshiko's character and the unique situation she is in as a catalyst, Mishima illuminates her world: "Mishima's work is an intense novelty about the

human spirit, and in particular about the moment of sudden illumination that comes to us when, with our emotional responsiveness keyed up by an unfamiliar situation, we have a sheer vision of the world, and over our own circumstances generate differences” (Wain 315).

Toshiko and her husband operate with two different philosophies and value systems. Mishima’s writing exploits the division of the East (old) versus West (new) mentality: “Mishima wrote in many styles, and his materials allowed him to develop the fundamental differences between eastern and western values” (Keene 487). Toshiko is demoralized by her marriage and psychologically tormented by the horrible scene she has witnessed in her nursery. Toshiko is a throw-back to the cultural values of what Japan used to symbolize. Her encounter with the man wrapped in newspaper in the park ties in with her witnessing of the baby wrapped in newspaper. The cherry blossoms under which she walks on the way to the ill-fated encounter emphasizes the contrast between old traditional ways and modern western influence: “The blossoms evoke ancient traditions of Japan...the newspapers suggest the blaring emptiness of the modern Western lifestyles of conspicuous consumption” (Crane 4123). Her husband is consumed with himself and his status and displays indifference for those he does not consider to be his equal. This attitude is articulately portrayed in his response to the illegitimate birth. Ultimately, his main concern is that the nurse not get their rug filthy and that the mess be kept to an absolute minimum.

Mishima uses the power behind the thoughts of his central character to demonstrate his sensitivity toward the issues at hand in the story. His characterization of the chauvinistic personality of Toshiko’s husband is in contrast to his own behavior as a husband. To the contrary, he signified compassion and understanding when it came to his own life: “Mishima treated his own wife, Yoko, with a consideration that far exceeds the kindness shown to the wives by most Japanese husbands of his generation” (Scott-Stokes 173). Mishima’s writings are

motivated by the social, economical, and political injustices he observed in westernized Japan. These aspects of life were used as tools with which he built on a story’s theme: “He would let his theme which he has grasped so firmly at the first stage, slip out of his mind and wander where it would, like rain water, until it was lost in the ground” (Ueda 238).

Mishima was able to incorporate his sensitivity and compassion into his work, which made him revered among his peers: “He keeps the elements of his classically constructed stories under perfect control to secure the maximum effect” (Yukio Mishima, taped interview). His beliefs and convictions were very strong, so strong in fact, that it led to an attempted coupe, which ended with him taking his own life, at the time when his work had become internationally famous: “Long before his suicide, he had established himself as the first Japanese writer whose fame had become worldwide” (Keene 287).

One can seek Yukio’s beliefs and values in his fiction. The bitterness and hopelessness expressed in “Swaddling Clothes” is an example of Mishima’s disturbing portrait of a westernized Japan. Mishima once said, “Brutality is something we have stylized into a sense of beauty. It comes from our subconscious” (Oka 1). This statement allows us to understand the brutality of characters such as Toshiko’s husband and the doctor. They are part of a society which makes it acceptable for them to behave the way they do and lets them get away with it. Toshiko is their powerless counterpart and represents Mishima’s sympathetic consciousness in the story.

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Evaluation: *Randi's paper demonstrates her grasp of the many subtleties and ironies of Mishima's fiction as well as of his mind.*

Sight versus Insight

by Jennifer Royal

Course: English 102

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper.

According to Mark Twain, “Eyes are the windows to the soul.”* However, in Raymond Carver’s short story “Cathedral” and in Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*, eyes act as mere organs of physical sight. There is a deeper, more hindering blindness than the loss of the eyes. This deeper, mental blindness is displayed by the protagonists of “Cathedral” and *Oedipus the King*. In Carver’s story, the narrator is “blinded” by his own prejudice and his general sense of apathy. It is not until after he is introduced to his wife’s blind friend that he begins to question his own internal blindness. Oedipus, too, is “blind.” He unwittingly kills his father and marries his mother in a vain attempt to escape an oracle’s prophecy. Only a blind prophet “sees” the truth of the situation, and when Oedipus finally gains sight of this truth, he stabs out his own eyes in a fit of passion. Both these literary works explore the concept of physical blindness contrasted with a much more serious mental blindness equated with ignorance.

The narrator of the short story “Cathedral” is typical of many of Raymond Carver’s characters, living a “marginal” existence “filled with failure, deterioration, disenchantment, and despair” (Meyer 21). He seems to feel “isolated” and “lonely,” alienated from the world around him (21). However, “Cathedral” differs from many of Carver’s earlier works, marking a movement in his stories “away from threatening ambiguity, a working towards hope rather than horror” and “the development of human potential in his characters” (Meyer 124). According to Adam Meyer, Carver’s “Cathedral” is “one of his greatest achievements” (145). This is mainly due to the fact that the narrator is a “transcending individual, one who is able to turn an unexpected event into a positive element in his life” (Meyer 144). In the story,

Carver presents a character drifting towards inertia who is drawn back into life through an encounter with another person, in this case a blind man named Robert who is an old friend of the narrator’s wife. (145)

*Source for Twain quote unknown.

At the beginning of "Cathedral," the narrator leads an apathetic life clouded by "a lack of insight into his own condition...which leads him to trivialize human feelings and needs" (Facknitz 293). In addition to his lack of self-awareness, he is blind to many other aspects of his life; he experiences a blindness as a result of prejudice, an emotional blindness, and a spiritual blindness. Towards the end of the story, the narrator experiences an epiphany when "the blind man gives him a faculty of sight that he is not even aware he lacks" (293).

The most obvious way in which the narrator is blinded, ironically, is by his prejudice directed at his wife's blind friend, Robert. At the start of the story "the narrator is mean spirited, asocial, and governed by questionable assumptions about the blind" (Campbell 63). This bigotry leads the narrator to judge Robert superficially based on his physical nature as a blind man, rather than on the nature of his personality. The narrator finds himself unable to "see" beneath the surface reality of Robert's disability. "The experience of being around a blind person is entirely new for the narrator, and he is not sure how to respond" (Meyer 145). Many of the narrator's preconceived ideas about blindness come from something he "read somewhere" or from movies, and have no bearing in real life (Carver 102). The narrator himself admits:

My idea of blindness came from the movies. In the movies, the blind moved slowly and never laughed. Sometimes they were led by seeing eye dogs. A blind man in my house was not something I looked forward to. (Carver 98)

"As soon as Robert arrives at the narrator's house...he begins to dispel all of the narrator's assumptions about blind people" (Meyer 145). The narrator is astonished when Robert fails to comply to his stereotypical views about how the conventional blind person acts. For example, Robert has a sense of humor and is able to make his wife smile (Carver 101). The narrator resents the fact that Robert fails to conform to his assumptions about the blind:

But he didn't use a cane and he didn't wear dark glasses. I'd always thought dark glasses were a must for the blind. Fact was, I wished he had a pair. (102)

In contrast to the narrator's shortsightedness, Robert is able to "see" the true, inner nature of an individual. He exhibits a deeper insight and understanding into the narrator's character than the narrator does himself. When Robert meets the narrator for the first time he booms, "I feel like we've already met," because prior to the time of the story proper, he had developed an insight about the narrator based on his years-long, in-depth communications with the narrator's wife (Carver 101). The narrator responds, "Likewise," not because he has made an effort to learn about a friend important to his wife, but only because he "didn't know what else to say" (101). In a way, Robert's blindness is oddly freeing since he never has the opportunity to develop convictions based on appearance.

The narrator, a "selfish and callous" individual, is also blind to his emotional needs and the emotional needs of others (Facknitz 293). The relationship that exists between the narrator and his wife seems loveless, or at least barren of compassion and physical contact. The lack of intimacy in the relationship is demonstrated by the fact that the narrator and his wife "hardly ever went to bed at the same time" (Carver 105). In contrast, Robert is able to experience a much more close, meaningful relationship with the narrator's wife. While describing her past with Robert, the narrator's wife relates an incident of close physical intimacy:

On her last day in the office, the blind man asked if he could touch her face. She agreed to this. She told me he touched his fingers to every part of her face, her nose—even her neck! She never forgot it. She even tried to write a poem about it. (Carver 99)

"Clearly...[the narrator] is jealous, and emphasizes the eroticism of the blind man's touch," an eroticism that he, himself, is unable to achieve (Facknitz 293). He is also envious of the level of communication Robert and his wife share through their practice of

sending audio tapes back and forth over the years. However, when he is given the opportunity to share in the communication by listening to one of the tapes, he seems disinterested and glad of interruption:

But we were interrupted, a knock at the door, something, and we didn't ever get back to the tape. Maybe it was just as well. (Carver 100).

Again, then, the narrator is "blind" to the sphere of emotion, and even his own affective needs are generally unsatisfied. He is "numb and isolated, a modern man for whom integration with the human race would be so difficult that it is futile" (Facknitz 294). During a conversation that he has with his wife, she remarks to him, "You don't have any friends" (Carver 100). Because there is nothing in the narrator's life for him to look forward to each day, no deep emotional or physical ties to another human being, a sense of general apathy prevails. "He hides by failing to try, anesthetizes himself with booze, and explains the world away with sarcasm" (Facknitz 294). On the opposite end of the spectrum, Robert is a regular "blind jack-of-all-trades," living his life to its fullest despite his disability (Carver 103). He is a well-liked man and, consequently, has friends all over the world, in "Guam, in the Philippines, in Alaska, and even in Tahiti" (Carver 103).

Finally, the narrator of "Cathedral" is blind to the possibility of a spiritual plane of existence. When he sits down to dinner with his wife and Robert, he flippantly makes light of the religious convention of saying grace before a meal by praying that "the phone won't ring and the food doesn't get cold" (Carver 102). Robert is more respectful toward religion; he "lowered his head" after the narrator asks for a moment of prayer (102). In response to Robert's question about religion, the narrator replies, "I guess I don't believe in it...in anything" (107). The narrator's inability to adequately describe a cathedral, man's attempt "to be close to God," probably stems from his lack of religious conviction, and/or the fact that he is, at

this point of the story, spiritually bankrupt (107).

At the very end of the story, "Carver redeems the narrator by releasing him from the figurative blindness" that clouds every aspect of his life (Facknitz 293). He and Robert are watching a television program about cathedrals. It suddenly occurs to the narrator that the blind man cannot possibly understand the grandeur that is a cathedral. When the narrator discovers that he lacks the words to adequately express what he sees, Robert suggests that they "draw one together" (Carver 107). While they are drawing, the blind man tells the narrator to close his eyes. It is during this moment, eyes closed, the blind man's hand over his, that the narrator experiences an epiphany, learning "to see through eyes other than that insufficient set that keeps him a friendless drunk and meager husband" (Facknitz 295). Prejudice at least momentarily forgotten, he realizes "conventional vision is not the way to see things and that the eyes are not the only organs with which one can view the world" (Campbell 65). This feeling is entirely new to the narrator. He admits that "it was like nothing else in my life up to now" (Carver 108). Even when Robert tells the narrator that he can open his eyes, he decides not to:

But I had my eyes closed. I thought I'd keep them that way for a little longer. I thought it was something I ought to do. (Carver 108)

He refuses because he finally begins to understand "what he has long been incapable of perceiving"; "he learns to feel empathy" (Facknitz 295).

It is only through physical contact with another human being that the narrator experiences his moment of insight and transcendence. When he is hand in hand with the blind man, he experiences a kind of grace, a "moment of human, almost sacred communion...collapsing the distinctions between time and space" (Meyer 146). Carver seems to imply that "grace...is bestowed upon us by other mortals, and it comes suddenly, arising in circumstances as mundane as a visit to the barber shop" (Facknitz 296). Thus, through the blind man's

touch, the narrator gains, at least temporarily, his sight.

Similarly, the main character of Sophocles' play *Oedipus the King* is initially obstructed by blindness which he is only able to transcend with the help of a physically blind individual. This play is the epitome of Greek tragedy, which, to paraphrase Aristotle, is defined as "the dramatic form of an action that is serious and complete, with incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith it effects a catharsis of such emotions" (Perrine 1010). Oedipus, the tragic hero, is "a man of noble stature" and begins the play as the king of Thebes (1010). His kingship is "the symbol rather than the cause of his greatness" (1011). Because of his elevated stature and his position of power, when Oedipus's eventual fall from fortune comes, it is all the greater since it is "a fall from height" (1011). His fall results from a complex combination of fate and a "tragic flaw" which "Aristotle calls 'harmartia'" (1010-11). Oedipus's rashness and stubbornness lead to his eventual downfall, but, paradoxically these quantities are what make him a great leader and hero. In other circumstances, rashness and stubbornness could be considered to be the positive attributes boldness and steadfastness. However, when these characteristics are paired with Oedipus's ignorance or "blindness" to his situation, the results are devastating. "Yet, the tragic fall is not pure loss," and, although it leads to Oedipus's self-afflicted loss of physical sight and banishment from Thebes, it also leads to "a change from ignorance to knowledge" (1012).

Oedipus the King is "the play in which the metaphor of blindness is used to the most devastating effect in order to explore the limits of human insight" (Buxton 107). Oedipus is "blind" during much of the play because he lives in ignorance. When he puts out his eyes, he is physically blind, yet he can finally "see" the truth. At the beginning of the play, Oedipus rules over the plague-stricken Thebes ignorant to the fact that he killed his father, Laius, and married his mother, Jocasta. From his brother-in-law, Creon, whom he sent to the Oracle

of Delphi, Oedipus learns that a presence of "corruption" in the land, in the form of the unpunished murderer(s) of Thebes' former king, Laius, is responsible for the "plague-storm on the city" (Sophocles 1123). Here Sophocles employs a sense of dramatic irony because, unlike the play's audience, Oedipus is completely unaware that he is the lone cause of the plague. Ironically, by cursing the murderer he dooms himself:

Whoever he is, a lone man unknown in his crime or one among many, let that man drag out his life in agony, step by painful step—I curse myself as well...if by any chance he proves to be an intimate of our house...may the curse I just called down on him strike me! (1127)

The murderer is "a lone man unknown in his crime," unknown even to himself (1127). While Oedipus endeavors to "root...[the corruption] out," he inadvertently discovers his true situation and his curse comes to pass (1123).

Tiresias, a blind prophet who "sees with the eyes of Lord Apollo," is the first to expose Oedipus's dreadful secrets (Sophocles 1128). In this play, Apollo, god of light and prophecy, comes to symbolize the light of knowledge. Tiresias and the oracle of Delphi both serve Apollo. By refusing to accept the words of Tiresias, Oedipus chooses to live in the darkness of ignorance.

Tiresias only relates the terrible truth ("you are the murderer you hunt"), after Oedipus, enraged, insults him (Sophocles 1130). Oedipus, deluded into believing that the prophet played a part in the murder, states, "Now I see it all," although, he really sees nothing (1130). In another statement rich with irony, Oedipus mocks Tiresias as "stone-blind, stone deaf—senses, eyes blind as stone!" (1130). However the blind prophet is the only one who *can* see the light of the truth and he tells Oedipus:

You with your precious eyes, you're blind to the corruption of your life....All unknowing you are the scourge for your own flesh and blood....the double lash of

your mother and your father's curse will whip you from the land one day, their foot-fall treading you down in terror, darkness shrouding your eyes that can now see the light. (1131)

Although he is blind, Tiresias "has insight greater than that of a man" (Buxton 107). In contrast, "Oedipus is sighted as men are; yet he lacks insight into the truth about himself and the world, as all mortals are liable to lack such insight" (107).

However, in one case, Oedipus's knowledge or insight proves to be superior to that of Tiresias; Oedipus alone was able to solve the riddle of the Sphinx. In these lines, he jeers Tiresias:

There was a riddle, not for some passer-by to solve—it cried out for a prophet....Did you rise to the crisis? Not a word....No, but I came by, Oedipus the ignorant, I stopped the Sphinx! (Sophocles 1131)

Tiresias could not solve the riddle because he "knows about man only in his relation to the gods" (Benardette 114). Therefore, in a way Tiresias is blind to the trappings of humanity. On the other hand, Oedipus, "unsupported by any extra human knowledge...solves it because he is the paradigm of man" (114). However, Oedipus is unable to solve the more substantial riddle of his own identity.

On his voyage of self-discovery, Oedipus is blind to many small signs along the way. The most conspicuous of these signs is as clear as his name. The name, Oedipus, refers to his crippled feet, a defect he "had from the cradle" (Sophocles 1147). This "old affliction" is due to the fact that his "ankles were pinned together" when he was a baby (1147). As soon as the messenger brings this new information to light, Oedipus realizes that Polybus and his wife were not his true parents and quickly learns his real heritage. On a more symbolic level, in literature, outer deformity usually represents some sort of inner deficiency, and "Oedipus's name, a then...[is] a sign of his defect" (Benardette 111).

The plague that strikes the city of Thebes is itself a sign of Oedipus's true circumstance. One of the symptoms of the plague is that "women die in

labor, children stillborn" (Sophocles 1121). "Thebes has been struck by a plague that exactly fits Oedipus's crimes, the defective offspring is supposed to be the consequence of incest" (Benardette 107). This is another sign that Oedipus ignores or is too blind to see. He "neither understands the meaning of the plague nor sees in the delegation anything defective" (107).

At the end of the play, Oedipus undergoes an epiphany after the shepherd confirms his deepest fears, freeing him from his ignorance:

O god—all come true, all burst to light! O light—now let me look my last on you! I stand revealed at last—cursed in my birth, cursed in marriage, cursed in the lives I cut down with these hands! (Sophocles 1152)

In the instant, the facade that Oedipus built for himself finally comes crashing down and he is left unmasked and unblinded for the first time. Devastated, he takes two pins and "rakes them down his eyes," reducing them to a mess of blood and gore, effectively blinding himself. Once Oedipus sees the truth, he makes no attempt to avoid it, even though it is painful. Instead, he looks "straight up into the points" of its consequences, unflinching (1154).

Oedipus's act of self-mutilation is "emphatically not that of a deranged man" (Buxton 109). Some critics tend to believe that Oedipus put out his own eyes as a "symbolic castration," an appropriate punishment for incest (Buxton 108). However, I side with the critics who interpret Oedipus's self-blinding as a way of shutting himself off from the outside world and rejecting the sense (sight) that has betrayed him throughout his life. R.G.A Buxton eloquently states:

The ideal for him would be to be deprived of all perception of the external world, a world which can only remind him of the pain which his relationships with others have produced. (109)

Lastly, Oedipus's blinding "forms the culmination of the image-pattern of sight and blindness" (110).

Oedipus the King and "Cathedral" share many

similar characteristics aside from the overriding theme of sight versus insight. Both these works have a very similar story structure in which “the protagonist discovers a profound truth that is necessary in order to take one’s place in...society” (Campbell 63). From the touch of a blind man, the narrator of “Cathedral” finds self-awareness, emotional awareness, and spiritual awareness. Oedipus uncovers his true heritage and the fact that he is guilty of patricide and incest. Unlike Oedipus, Carver’s narrator “discovers a life-affirming truth without the pain” (63). Oedipus is doomed to live the rest of his wretched life, wandering in a world of darkness, banished from his home. In the future, Oedipus will never lose sight of the truth because it has scarred him forever. In contrast, the future for the narrator looks relatively bright, but the notion that he will retain his newfound “sight” is more dubious. With his gain in insight, he opens the possibility of leading an emotionally rich, fulfilling existence. Unfortunately, since he did not have to endure a hardship to achieve the gift of truth, he is more likely to lose it.

Serving as catalysts in both stories, blind men show Oedipus and Carver’s narrator the path to enlightenment, Tiresias leading Oedipus and Robert leading the narrator. Both Tiresias and Robert are “grudgingly received” (Campbell 63). Before his transformation, Carver’s narrator bears a pity-besmeared repulsion for the blind and makes many derisive statements based on prejudice. “One need only recall Oedipus’s taunt to Tiresias in order to compare the contempt shared by the two protagonists” (64). Robert helps the narrator see, in a much more compassionate manner than Tiresias instructs Oedipus, because the narrator is more receptive to his teachings. Oedipus belittles Tiresias’ warnings as “filth” and “absurdities” (Sophocles 1132). However, once started on the road to truth, Oedipus moves towards it inevitably with self-perpetuating momentum.

Finally, and most importantly, “Cathedral” by Raymond Carver and *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles emphasize the necessity of insight, the

importance of self-awareness, and the relative insignificance of physical sight. To rephrase Mark Twain, eyes *aren’t* the windows to the soul.

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Evaluation: *This paper is outstanding, and it’s a pleasure to read. Drawing from a wealth of first-rate critical sources, Jennifer proves that Sophocles’ classic theme—a healthy set of eyes can get a person only so far if that person fails to “see” beyond what lies on the surface—is alive and well in contemporary American fiction. Jennifer should be proud of her ability to entwine ancient and modern literature so adeptly.*

Lifelong Companion

by Deborah Ryan
Course: Speech 101
Instructor: Louise Perry

Assignment:

A eulogy is commonly thought of as an oration delivered in conjunction with a funeral service, but this "speech of praise" surfaces in many other life situations. For this assignment, students were asked to eulogize an individual, an institution, a concept, a place, an activity, or some other entity. Deborah Ryan chose to praise the piano.

I remember the day she came into my life; it was a day that I will never forget. She came through the door like a barreling beast. Such a simple task it was, to just hoist her up and push her, but the groans of strength and weakness played upon my ears as her form came over the threshold.

Like the child I was, I watched in awe and admiration at the new body that occupied the front room. Her form was sleek and smooth, her sides thick and strong, holding in the magic that still makes me wonder about these beasts.

I remember looking at the stand that topped her cabinet: the winding scroll gave her two eyes and a smile was a constant. Never did she yell, or cry. I only had to touch her for her to speak to my soul. Never did I ever imagine to be so driven by the instrument that rolled through the door that summer day of my sixth year.

Her body, a mere four-and-a-half feet tall, was cool and smooth to the touch. Her strings, run vertically, were golden and strong. The sound that poured from her golden hair-like strands was comparable to angels' sighs. I remember climbing onto her cool, comforting lap as a child, and now I no longer have to climb.

As a child, she was huge. She towered over me and protected me from the concerns of my home. She made me laugh and relax, and in fact, she taught me to concentrate on the meaning of sound instead of the sounds themselves. Like a river, her keys spread out before me, just waiting to be touched and played, just waiting to speak the music.

As time has passed I am no longer a child, but I still find her strangely beautiful. As I run my hands over the art of her music stand, the intricate designs laid into her lovely form give her a face and soul to gaze upon. The stout but powerful legs give me an understanding of the tenacity of this instrument, an understanding of musical radiance.

Learning was an experience I loved, and love. She taught me that each key has its own tone, its own song to sing, in fact, a personality. What a wonderful experience I had, learning that each of my fingers could possess a new tone! She amazed me

endlessly! When I discovered that sounds create a whole different world, it was as though she enfolded me in her loving embrace and took me away. I wonder sometimes: if I had never had her, how would I have discovered who I was? But fate is a strength too powerful to question.

The hours I spent upon her lap feel like minutes, and the years of practice feel like days. I grew from a small, interested child, into a woman whose life would be incomplete without the sonatas of Beethoven and sweet fantasies of Mozart. The emotions I learned to feel through her keys have taught me about the masters of past times and opened the door to their lives and feelings. How could anyone not want to feel so much?

Now, as I sit here and look back, it was only minutes ago when I first played her, and now, as I approach my sophomore year of college, I approach my first concert recital. Excitement bubbles inside me as I realize how far I have come. I believe I am lucky, only because my mother saved her hard-earned money to give me the magic of music. My lifelong friend would probably be proud of me if she could see what she has taught me.

This piano has seen me through my awe as a child. She has guided me and in fact has led me through life as a constant companion. Her long golden strands of strings have been tightened to their tense point, and her soundboard is cracked and damaged now. The keys after years have become yellow in some places from the dirty childhood fingers, from hours of use. The pristine whites no longer gleam, but instead have faded to an ivory tone. Nonetheless, this makes her personalized. The keys have been broken in by years of use and love.

Unlike most pianos whose keys are hard to play, hers sing out at hardly a tap. Her voice sings to me like angels and memories. This beckoning creature with its simple stature and reliable tune is one instrument I have grown to love. It calls to people outside when the windows are open in the summer, and sits in wait each day for a pair of hands to care for her.

A beautiful gift given to the home has become my companion in music; without it, life would be expressionless and sad. My example of utter beauty, my instrument which responds with radiant sounds at my touch, is my piano. My reliable upright, my lifelong companion throughout the best years I've had, was the first to teach me music and expression and will always be loved for doing so.

Evaluation: Deborah Ryan has expressed through the written form of communication her joy and love for music, utilizing expressive, descriptive language tools (imagery, parallelism, repetition) to enhance the impact of her feelings and ideas to the audience. She surely makes the piano come alive!

Secrets

by Lori A. Thompson

Course: English 101

Instructor: Joseph Sternberg

Assignment:

Remember an experience which helped shape you.

The breeze tugged gently at my disheveled blond hair. Rivers traced down my cheeks, leaving etched tributaries in the dirt smears left from digging unsuccessfully with my mother's spade. Why was it so hard to find a secure resting place among the ancient tree roots? The unforgiving earth contained a maze of cartilage and bone-like tubers. Moving further away from the base, I compromised by laying Sofia to rest under the strongest arm of the great tree. A makeshift cross would head the small mound, reminding me that sometimes letting go of what *once* was is the best hedge against the reality that *is*.

Now that my husband and I are in the midst of raising two teenage girls, I understand that preadolescence under normal family conditions is a difficult harmony to orchestrate between parent and child. Consequently, having a parental perspective, I think I understand now more fully the helplessness my mother must have felt in the season of 1973 when I combined all those preadolescent churnings with a child's perspective of reality and divorce. When I recall the tumult of emotions that passed between my mother and me and the mulberry tree, I marvel that my eleventh year ever became the twelfth for me.

Looking back in time, I remember how different Buffalo Grove was, on the *west* side of Arlington Heights Road. I can easily imagine that the burly brown buffalo did graze on the tall grasses. Willow stalks of green, trees, and prairie flowers splatter the expanse of land bordering the gravel road that leads to my special place. On the *east* side, directly facing this beckoning land of secrets are the well-manicured lawns, gas lamps and concrete patios of what is now considered Old Strathmore.

My mind wanders back to a blue house, with black shutters, and a wide dormant plum tree outside my bedroom window. I was a newly transplanted resident in that neatly ordered subdivision stuck on the *east* side of the road. Imagining and examining *what once was*, was a frequent pastime of mine then.

My mom had married again. We lived in her husband's house and I had been forced to transfer to a new school for my last half of seventh grade. I saw my real dad four times a month. To ease my loneliness, my mom had allowed me to pick out a little fluff of comfort I named Sofia: after Sophia Loren. She was an elegant Persian guinea pig with long silky patches of sienna, black and white hair. She had a little pink nose, little pink paws, and black button eyes. I kept her cedar-lined cage in my closet so Duchess, my step father's dog, wouldn't eat her when I wasn't home.

When the weather was wet and cold I would make up mazes of pillows and books and set rabbit pellets at every corner to coax Sofia to run a race. The new friends I had made in my new school all thought she was the prettiest pig they had ever seen. I spent a lot of time in my room playing with her. It was easier than dealing with the gamut of emotional mazes outside my room.

"I bought a new chew stick for Sofia today," my mom said through the door.

"Thanks. Just leave it by her food."

"Can I come in?" she queried.

"Sure, it's your house," I countered.

My mom's most poignant memory of that time in our lives was that she felt helpless to get through the shell I had erected after her remarriage. She remembers the silence that replaced the one-on-one dinner fiestas of macaroni and cheese and eleven-year-old laughter; and she remembers the "one more drink of water" late night discussions that had seemed to her to sort through my confusion over the divorce. But in spite of her efforts, with her announcement to marry HIM, the door between mother and daughter began to close. Her little girl seemed to slowly fade and was replaced by an uncommunicative stranger.

My mind recalls the plum tree, now donning compact buds just beyond my window...spring was finally here. Digging my purple Huffy out of the garage, I catapulted my bike down the driveway

to the end of the street where I turned my handlebars to the right along Bernard Drive. I looked both ways and crossed Arlington Heights Road to the wilderness on the *west* side of the street, where just as the terrain changed, Bernard Drive became Nichols Road—and my world became mine again.

After pedaling like one pursued for about 500 feet down the gravel road, I finally slowed down and stopped at the knurled old Mulberry tree. I quickly stashed my bike in the weeds before climbing to the thickest branch where I could peer out, watch and think.

The foliage was thickening rapidly in response to the season. Most of the time I was alone with the birds and the daddy long legs (who were learning to tolerate), but occasionally I would see a group of kids sneaking to the quarry just up the road and over. Nichols Road boasted all kinds of secrets.

My mother warned me against the dangers of swimming in the quarry, but I sometimes went there anyway. She claimed that there were whirlpools, bugs and even snakes in the water. I didn't believe her. I was invincible. Nothing would harm me. And if it did, I didn't care. Besides, I figured she probably wished I wasn't born anyway; then she would still be married to my dad. I was the cause of the divorce.

I recall an argument in the apartment between my mom and dad when they thought I was asleep. My parents started their conversation low, but ended up shouting.

My mom was crying. *"I'm sorry, she sobbed. I can't do this! Can't you take her?"*

"You should have thought of that before," he exploded, "I've got enough to deal with right now. I'll call you."

The apartment shook when he left... or was it just me.

My mind drifts back to the peace on the *west* side of the road in Buffalo Grove. Jumping off the side ledges of the quarry into the clear cool water was a head rush I will never forget. But it was only a diversion. I would always end up back under the mulberry tree, baking in the sun. It was there that I

found my sanctuary.

I have no doubt it was because of the many hours of quiet fuming, contemplating, and soul searching in and around that tree that I chose that spot to bury both my beautiful Sofia and my secret hope that my parents would one day get back together.

The purple plum tree's blossoms sent a sweet fragrance through my window screen as spring turned into summer. I met more kids my age from the neighborhood. I made friends with Duchess, my step-father's dog, and even took her for a walk once in a while. And eventually I opened my bedroom door and introduced Duchess to Sofia. The keeshond's sixty pound salt-and-pepper frame would snap taut and the dog would just stare daggers from the hallway when Sofia was out of her cage. However, when Duchess was finally invited inside my room, her maternal instincts seemed to take over. With a mother's thoroughness she would touch noses, gently sniff, and run her tongue from front to back. My precious pig's fur would be soaking. Sofia didn't seem to mind as she would stay still when Duchess did it. After their "bonding sessions," Sofia would come close and try to burrow into the keeshond's thick coat. The two made strange bedfellows.

Now, thinking back on the two together, I wonder how I ever thought that Duchess would eat my guinea pig. Then again, I wonder how my mom ever had the patience to continue to reach out to me. I was so angry.

To my frustrated outbursts of, "*I hate you,*" my mother would respond, "*I will always love you.*"

I thought, "*Yeah, right,*" until one early fall afternoon.

The plum tree's blossoms were beginning to shed on my outside sill. I closed my window and donned a sweatshirt against the slight chill. I turned my music low and stroked Sofia absently. She nestled in the crook of my arm against my pillow. I gave my beautiful pig a chew stick treat and placed her back in her cage. She waddled immediately to her little cardboard house and once the house stopped jostling and she settled, I went out.

The next morning I changed her water and retrieved the greens I'd saved from dinner the night before. When I filled her food bowl she didn't come scurrying. I tapped on the box and she didn't poke her pink nose out. I lifted up the box and she didn't move. I remember I poked her gently, hoping she slept. I picked her up. She was as stiff and beady-eyed as the stuffed animals on my self. Sofia was dead.

Desperately, I called for my mother. She came and she cradled me, sensing I wasn't ready to talk rationally. I cried, and I berated myself; and I cried and I vented my anger at my beautiful pig for leaving me. It seemed like a long time before she got up and gently suggested we needed to get some things together.

She rummaged through her sewing basket and helped me to find a soft piece of cloth to wrap Sofia in. I emptied the box for my best shoes for her coffin.

Into my knapsack I crammed: plastic flowers, a staple gun, a hammer, a black felt tip, and a garden spade. I rubber-banded Sofia's shoe box to my book rack on the back of my bike and headed toward the Mulberry tree, being careful not to ride on the bumpy parts.

Safe on the west side of Arlington Heights Road, I made a cross out of forgotten molding I found in the field to mark Sofia's tomb. The resting place now prepared, I said my good-byes to Sofia amid an audience of chirping birds and skittish spiders. "Beloved Sofia—1973," I wrote with magic marker.

I stayed perched on my branch in the mulberry tree until dusk. With a heavy heart, I packed my knapsack and headed home. My mom was waiting for me in the living room.

"I was just about ready to come look for you."

"I'm sorry. I lost track of time. Here's your little shovel," I said quietly.

"You know," she said, *"things don't always work out*

"But Mom, it hurts."

"What hurts?"

"Everything. Sofia. Moving away from my friends. I was so mad at you. I was mad at Dad. I tried to be good. I'm sorry I was so much to take care of. Why couldn't you and dad get back together again. I've been trying to figure it out. I just can't think anymore."

"Oh honey." She pulled me close. "Some things just aren't meant to be. The divorce didn't have anything to do with you. Just like Sofia didn't plan to die and hurt you, I didn't plan for your father and I to grow apart."

I recall that after that conversation my mom and I started taking Duchess for walks together. The first time we walked out of the front door and down the driveway, I led my mom up Bernard to Nichols Road. We crossed to the *west* side together.

Standing next to the mulberry tree, I remember that the reddish, black berries were no longer thick and sweet. The wind rustled the now-changing foliage and the birds were busy harvesting any left-over berries to fortify for the coming winter. Duchess sniffed at the wooden cross and my mom and I shared a moment of silence.

Knowing what I know now as a parent, I can see the change in attitude that my mother saw in me that day. I could see that I had buried more than my beautiful Sofia in the season of 1973. I had in effect worked through the tubers of childhood gone and would now look forward to a fresh start having come out from behind the foliage of my mulberry tree. I would now be free to explore not only the future secrets of Nichols Road—but life, and all its realities.

Evaluation: Ms. Thompson weaves strands of memories and vivid images into an evocative recollection.

Rosasharn's Diary

by Olga Turley

Course: Literature 115

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

*Rewrite a scene or some scenes from Steinbeck's
The Grapes of Wrath;
speak in the voice of one of the characters.*

Our first assignment is to take a character from John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and rewrite a scene the way we think it should be. I've chosen the character Rose of Sharon and instead of writing one scene, I will present excerpts from her diary of their journey. In my view, Rose of Sharon's character is depicted as a young, fairly attractive, somewhat sensuous, naive, self-centered dreamer who happens to be pregnant. Her first entry starts the day the family packs up to leave Sallisaw.

Entry 1.

I want to write about our journey for my baby. I'm gonna have a nice baby and he's gonna know things. We have to leave our home in Sallisaw cause of the draught. Can't grow nothin in this here land. Got no money, got no home cause they come an take it. The fambly decided to pack up and leave today. All of a sudden. Said there weren't no sense in puttin it off any longer. I wish we didn't have to go. I hope this ain't goin to hurt the baby inside me.

Everybody knows I have to be careful. They packin that truck with so much I don't see how Connie and me can fit. We want this baby born in nice surroundings. Oh, my brother Tom is back from that place. Nobody even knew he was comin. I hope he don't spoil things. Ma tol him about my condition. He thinks I'm fat but he's wrong. Connie says I look beautiful and he knows. I sure wish we didn't have to go.

Entry 2.

I hate travelin like this. I don't feel good. I'm tar'd. I wish Connie would help me more. Can't he see I need help? Our dog got hit by a car today. It was terrible. I felt somethin funny inside; I hope it don't hurt the baby. How come ma don't help me like she used to? She tol me to forget the baby, that it will take care of itself. I know she's wrong. I hope Connie can be like Tom. He's so smart and everybody looks up to him.

Entry 3.

We've been travelin for days. I'm so tar'd. Connie tells me when we get to California he's gonna study at night and we gonna have a nice house for the baby to be born in. I hope we hurry and get there. Grampa's been real strange since we left. He don't say much and when he does it don't make sense. I don't think he wanted to come either.

Entry 4.

My insides are all jumpy. I just know this ain't gonna be a nice baby. We met these nice people today and grampa died. He died right in their tent. Now they're comin to California with us. I ain't never seen nobody die before and I don't think it can be good for this baby. They buried him in the ground and Connie made me look at him in the ground, said it ain't decent not to. I wish ma would make me feel better but she just spends her time with that lady and Tom. Gramma don't look right; maybe she's missin grampa. That man Tom brought with him sure talks a lot. He does make everybody feel better. But what about me, who a gonna make sure me and my baby are feelin better?

Entry 5.

I didn't know California was so far. We meet lots of people everyday. They's all goin to California too. Everywhere you look you see famblies in cars. I guess it could be worse. Me and Connie just know when we get to California we gonna have a nice house for this baby to be born in. Connie's real smart. He's going to study at night and get a good job. He even said maybe I could have this baby in a hospiddle. He's gonna have his own store and fix radios. He says the baby will have nice things. But if we don't get to California soon, I'm gonna be sick. We've been in this car so long. I keep tryin to hol real still so the baby don't get bumped too much. I have to protect this here baby if I want it to be right. I tol ma me an Connie's plans but she don't want us to leave the fambly. You got to have dreams, don't you?

Entry 6.

I just don't believe it. Ever since we lef home, ma's been all funny. Tom's always been ma's favorit. When he lef for that place, she went on an on about what a good boy he was and it weren't his fault. Now he's back and she just forgets everybody else. We never got in no trouble, not even Al! And ma still likes Tom best, maybe cause he's furst born. The Wilson's car broke down and Tom wanted to stay behind an fix it. I don't see no reason why the whole fambly has to stay behind if only one car is broke. Besides, it's the Wilson's car; let them stay behind. We needed to get to California. But ma wouldn't hear of it. She down right had a fit and told pa she'd whup him if he tried to make the fambly leave Tom behind. I thought pa would whup her but he didn't. I never seen ma that way before. We all just looked at her. She took control of the fambly cause I guess she just had to. Maybe she was right.

Entry 7.

We been travelin so long. We finally get to sleep in a camp with other people. Connie and me ain't had no time by ourselves. It sure would be nice to sleep under the stars. I think I'll tell Connie. He thinks we shouldn't have come. Said it's too hard. Maybe if we get a good night sleep he won't feel that way no more. Tom and that preacher caught up to us during the night but they wouldn't let them in the camp. They wanted them to pay and Tom said no. I think he's just plain stubborn like ma.

Entry 8.

We're camped out by a river. Things keep gettin worser the closer we get to California. Gramma ain't been right since grampa passed on. She talks real crazy and she don't eat like she's s'posed to. I'm scared this baby won't be right cause this has been such a long trip and nothin's gone right. We thought these here holiness people kinda hepped gramma's spirit a bit but then she got worse. She smells awful bad. Ma says she's dyin. Oh please don't let gramma die before I have this here baby. There is just so much happenin. Connie's been talkin crazy bout not stayin with the fambly. But what am I posed to do? I tol him he just needs to wait. He'll get a good job in California and we can get a house. But he won't listen. Thinks this was a mistake and he shouldn't of come. Said he'd do better by hisself then come find me. We got in a terrible fight cause I tol him he was backin out and he weren't no man. I tol him to go on an go if he felt that way, but he knew I was just mad and didn't mean it. I don't think this baby can take no more. Ma got real mad at this sheriff who said real mean things to her. I thought she was gonna hit him with the skillet for what he said but she didn't. Ma never lost her temper fore we lef home. It's as if I don't know her no more. An now she always seems so worried about Tom and she don't look after me no more. It won't be my fault if somethin happens to this here baby cause I shouldn't have to suffer like this.

Entry 9.

We's packin up again. Noah tol Tom he wasn't comin to California with us. He said he was gonna go down river and catch fish. It's funny, but nobody took it too hard that he was gone. But this baby knows cuz I feel it. The Wilsons are staying too. Mr. Wilson says Mrs. Wilson is real sick. They sure were nice people. Gramma is getting worse. Me and Connie ain't mad no more. I think it's cause we ain't been by ourselves in a long time. We get crazy when we look at each other and get too close. Connie says he's gonna study an be makin money by Christmas. Maybe when everybody goes to sleep me and Connie can....

Entry 10.

We finally in California. It's prettier than anyone could dream. The fambly's so tar'd. We ain't got much food lef. Ma was actin so strange I thought she was sick or somethin. But then she tol us. I thought fo sure this baby was goin to drop right here. All the time we was ridin gramma was dead. She been dead since we went through that patrol. I think I'm getting sick. Just think, she died when Connie and me.... Anyway, we had to bury her a pauper cause we didn't have no money to bury her right. I guess gramma never got over grampa dying and all. Ma never said a word and laid next to gramma all night even though she knew she was dead. I don't think ma is ma anymore.

Entry 11.

We pulled into another camp. We all still thinkin about gramma. I feel so sick. I just don't know what to do. The people are real strange. I don't like it. The baby's gettin bigger and I just stop thinkin about if it's goin be right or not. We didn't stay long at this place because Tom got in trouble again. I think he's just bad but I can't tell ma. He even got that preacher in trouble. And Uncle John. He's nuthin but a coward and a drunk. The whole trip he done nothin to help the fambly. He should have gone away with Noah. An Connie, he just don't understand what I'm goin through. He says he

wouldn't of come if he'd knowed it was goin to be so hard. He doesn't know what hard is! He's just weak and he just don't think about nobody but hisself. Now he says he ain't goin to study. He's got to get on his feet furst and make money then he's gonna study. How can we get a house if he don't study and get a good job? He knows I know what he's up to and now he's really scared and lef. I don't think he's comin back this time. I wanna tell ma but I don't want her thinkin bad of him. Besides, all she seems cares about is Tom. Connie please come back.

Entry 12.

California ain't been nothin like we thought. Connie still ain't come back. I miss him so. Ma says I have to be strong. Why do I have to be strong when the men of my fambly ain't? I thought the men were posed to be strong and take care of their women. Since we lef Oklahoma ma's been the one to carry this fambly. Well I ain't ready to be strong. Besides when Connie comes back he's gonna have a job and we gonna buy a house and this baby's gonna have nice things. I don't feel so pretty no more either. I'm tar'd all the time and I'm getting so big. At least we're in this government camp and it's got hot and cold runnin water and toilets that flush. They got water that sprays on you and you get under it. It sure is nice here cept that lady that tol me these people are bad and I'm gonna lose my baby and I think she knows cause I felt the burnin when she tol me. I don't like her. Ma stood up to her real good and tol her to leave me alone or she was gonna hit her. I wish I could be strong like ma. It's too bad we have to leave here cause the men couldn't find no jobs an we didn't have no money and no food. But at least we got to go to one of those Saturday night dances they have here. It was real nice until some guy tried to start a fight but they stopped him. Oh, yeah, I got pierced.

Entry 13.

We found a camp where they let us pick peaches. Even Ruthie and Winfield got to help. We still ain't got nothing. I'm gettin bigger every day. I need milk and I'm tar'd. Connie still ain't come back. I don't know if I want this baby without him.

Entry 14.

Tom's in trouble again and this time it's real bad. He gone and killed somebody else. I knew he didn't change. All he's done is worry ma. We had to hide him in the mattresses and leave in the middle of the night. He never cared about nobody but himself. I got real mad at him cause it just seemed he was just bringin more trouble on this fambly and we just had more than our share. But I guess deep down inside I knew Tom would never of kilt that man unless he had to. I wished we never came to California. Connie would have never lef and we would of had a nice house for the baby if we were still home. The fambly keeps fallin apart. First grampa, then Noah, grandma and Connie. Now Tom. He can't stay with those men lookin for him. And that preacher man got killed. This baby ain't got no chance to be right. The next place we stop better be nice. I ain't far from my time.

Entry 15.

The fambly found work pickin cotton. We eatin regular now. We in a nice place with nice people. Al wants to leave with that girl. Maybe he will. I don't know what's goin to happen if he does. Feel bad bein so far into my time I can't help the fambly. Maybe I should try an help.

Entry 16.

The baby's comin, the baby's comin. I don't know what to do. Somethin's wrong, I can feel it but I won't tell ma. I didn't know the pain would hurt so much.

Entry 17.

It's been rainin so hard that everything is flooded. I lost the baby. Ma didn't want to tell me but I knew. It's better this way. We can't take care of ourselves. Uncle John took it out and buried it...I didn't even see it or know if it was a boy or girl. I hate this place. Ma said she made Tom leave. We all have to leave cause of the flood. We have no food. The truck won't run and Al won't leave without Aggie. We got to go where it's dry. Without Tom, Ma has no one to lean on. I think I know why now. She's head of the fambly and she'll know what to do.

Entry 18.

We found a dry barn with a young boy and a dying man. I'm so tired and wet but they were kind enough to give me their blanket. Ma helped me get my wet clothes off and wrapped the blanket around me. I guess this is it. We have no money, food or way to get around. Who will take care of the fambly now? I felt so empty. Why did ma want nie to help that dying man? It wasn't so bad; I just pretended he way my baby. I never even held my baby. I miss Connie.

Evaluation: Clearly, Olga possesses an acute comprehension of the contradictory (both hard and soft) nature of Steinbeck's Rose of Sharon. What impresses me most is Olga's ability to speak through Rose of Sharon's voice without resorting to hyper-drama or excessive sentimentality. Steinbeck, I think, would approve.

I Stopped Running: Looking at Depression in the Nineties

by Pamela Widder
Course: English 102
Instructor: Joanne Koch

Assignment:
Write a research paper.

When I was in the middle of my junior year in high school, my parents moved. I was not new to the scene of moving from town to town, state to state, but this time I didn't want to go. I had just begun to fit in for once. I was beginning to feel comfortable for once in my life and it was all taken away from me. I hated my parents for making me leave. I hated the cold Wisconsin town we moved to. I hated the cold Wisconsin people in my new school. My hate consumed me and ruined the relationship I once had with my parents. One night, a month after I had turned eighteen, I walked out: I ran.

"So I thought I could conquer the world. It never even occurred to me I couldn't. The top of the world was *my* place. It was where I belonged and I was going there for sure.

"I stubbed my toe. I looked down. Curiosity grabbed me by the shoulders and wouldn't let go. I turned my head. I looked back. I was shocked to find I hadn't moved from where I started.

"All I want to do now is crumble and die. Why can't I be perfect? 'Well... because,' you say. WHY?!? I want to scream, shout, cry out, until my voice fades to nothing. I want to cry. I want someone to hold me and tell me it's okay. That this is all an illusion anyway. 'Cause, damn it, happiness is the *only* important thing in the end.

"I'm taking my chains off. As soon as I find that wonderful mindset, though, I look down and damn it there the stupid things are again! Chains that are too tight, cutting my wrists, holding me down. Stifling me. Stifling the *real* me. I've gone again into hiding. And all it takes is one little tiny moment of reflection. I don't want to be miserable anymore. I want to live and breathe LIFE... It's me who is so messed up in the head. Let go and live. Simple words. Probably one of the hardest things to do. I want to run away. I want to be able to smile all the time like I did yesterday. I want to laugh freely. I want to stop crying, whining, moaning, worrying, stressing, freaking, tearing my hair out. I want to be in control of me." (Excerpt from my journal.)

I ran. I ran because I didn't know what else to do. All I knew was that I wanted a way out, an escape from what was going on inside my head. Somehow it seemed like the only way to get away from it was to run, so I did. Unfortunately, I eventually reached the conclusion that everyone eventually has to come to: you cannot outrun your own mind. It was a long walk back.

Depression is not just the blues people get when their boss yells at them or when they receive a bad grade on a test; depression is a serious debilitating illness. The symptoms of depression are hard to set in stone because of the vast differences in individuals afflicted with it. Solomon Snyder describes some of the symptoms as follows:

The presenting complaint of most depressed patients relates to feelings of hopelessness, desperation, and general misery.... Upon probing, an interviewer can usually detect a genuine dejection of mood. Patients typically also have a negative self-image, describing themselves as worthless, no good, wicked, deserving to die. At the same time they derive no pleasure from activities which formerly brought enjoyment. Eating, sex, work, and recreational activities are now devoid of gratification. Not surprisingly, depressed individuals lose their sense of humor; nothing seems funny or even mildly amusing any longer. Not only activities but also other people bring no satisfaction so that depressed persons no longer care about others.... Patients tabulate their past and present wrongdoings or inadequacies and consistently judge themselves deficient.... Depressed patients are notoriously indecisive.... Depressives appear as devoid of motivation for pursuing any of life's activities as they are devoid of pleasure.... Difficulty in sleeping is also a hallmark of depression. (7-9)

The problem with depression is that it has no blood test, no X-rays, no easily recognizable universal symptom that makes it easy to diagnose.

How were my parents to know that I was deep in the trenches of one of my depressive episodes? Where is the line between "normal" teenage rebellion and depression? And depression doesn't just affect teenagers; in fact it is more common in the elderly. Within the last few decades, however, that is becoming less and less true. "Those born after 1955 are 3 times as likely as their grandparents' generation to suffer from depression. In fact, of Americans born after 1905, only one percent had experienced a depressive episode by age seventy-five, while of those born after 1955, six [percent] were already depressed by age 24....the increased incidence of depression could be partly explained by a greater openness about the topic, but these statistics are so alarming that experts think candor is not much of a factor" (Wurtzel 298-299).

Another problem with understanding more about depression is the stigma that has always been associated with its symptoms. It wasn't until this century, when depression became recognized as a treatable illness, that the practice of institutionalizing patients became a rare occurrence. Patients were often misdiagnosed as schizophrenic, the illness most readily associated with the word madness, and placed in institutions where they were locked away from the rest of the outside world.

Yet even with our better understanding of the disease and how it works, we still have yet to scratch the surface of escaping the throes of depression or finding a true cure. This is understandable when we consistently reduce the disease to a mere misfiring of transmitters in the brain or lack of serotonin, one of the brain's primary chemical transmitters. When we delve into the personal mind, we explore a place that is as vast as the universe and as mysterious as the question of life itself. What is the mind? I do not want to attempt to answer this deeply philosophical question, yet the point of the question tells us that the mind is so much more than electrical impulses that take place in the brain and, conversely, it is more than just words and images that float in our individual perceptions. Yet it is in the mind that depression occurs.

Even so, it is in the brain, not the mind, that many doctors search for a cure. The majority of psychologists will use medications to ease a sufferer from depression. There are many different types of drugs that are used. The following is a short list of some of the more commonly used drugs.

Lithium is the most commonly used drug to treat mood disorders. It is said to be especially effective in manic depression because it works on both ends of the equilibrium, curbing both the highs of mania and the lows of depression. Scientists are uncertain of how the drug works, although there are theories about its effect inside the nerve cells in the brain. Levels of lithium are watched closely because of the serious risk of a deadly overdose. Side effects include increased thirst, frequent urination, hand tremors, acne, stomach cramps, weight gain and fuzzy thinking (which includes poor concentration, confusion, slowness, and temporary loss of memory). Another less common side effect is hypothyroidism, with symptoms of fatigue, puffiness, dry skin, muscle aches, and hair loss.

Antidepressants work in the brain by boosting levels of the neurotransmitters norepinephrine and serotonin, which depression sufferers are said to be deficient in. There are three groups of antidepressants: *monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)*, *tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs)*, and the *second generation drugs*.

MAOIs work by keeping the brain from destroying its own norepinephrine and serotonin and thereby increasing the levels. Their main side effect is an extremely restricted diet, keeping the patient from eating cheese that is aged or unpasteurized, yeast extract, smoked herring, salami, bananas, most alcoholic beverages, caffeinated coffee, chocolate, and colas. It also interacts negatively with common over-the-counter drugs.

Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) were developed mainly because of the restricting side effects of MAOIs. The drugs have their own family of side effects including dry mouth, blurred vision, high blood pressure, rapid breathing, constipation, urination difficulty, dizziness, low blood pressure, sedation, fatigue, tremors, sweating, weight gain,

and sexual dysfunction. These drugs are also fatal if an overdose is taken, so these drugs are not commonly used for possibly suicidal patients.

The *second generation drugs* are drugs such as Prozac that were made by researchers in hopes of lessening the side effects of the other antidepressants. These drugs act mainly with the serotonin in the brain and produce mild and/or less frequent side effects. These can include upset stomach, nausea, vomiting, cramps, diarrhea, insomnia, anxiety, weight loss, and restlessness. Prozac has been linked with six patients who developed self-destructive ideas while on the drug, and so has a shroud of uncertainty around it, while others call it the wonder drug for depression (Berger 95-114).

The danger of using drugs is that the patient usually doesn't know that they should question their doctors about the drugs they are taking, not only for side effects (short and long term), why the doctor has chosen this particular drug, and what happens if the patient misses or goes off the medication, but also for how long the drug has been approved, and what it was approved for. "Once a drug has the government's stamp, doctors can prescribe it for anything. This is common among psychiatric drugs, particularly when a remedy approved for treating one kind of mood disorder can help manage another" (Berger 95). Another common misconception is that the drugs can cure the disease when in reality they are used only to relieve the *symptoms* of the disease. Excluding those on lithium, patients on drugs have a 61 percent chance to suffer a relapse (those on lithium report a 25 percent recurrence rate) (Berger 95).

The use of drugs in our society to cure everything from allergies to depression to obesity borders on a social drug addiction. Patients look to the doctors and researchers to come up with a drug for whatever their malady. And so the doctors have responded. If one goes to the doctor, one expects to walk out of the office with a prescription in hand. Pharmaceutical companies are getting in there now too, advertising their newest "wonder" drug on the television.

I recently went to the doctor's office wanting to know why I couldn't kick the fever, cough and fatigue that had hung around for a couple of weeks. They took a blood test and told me that nothing was wrong with me. Then, for the first time in my life, I was given some real help from a doctor. She suggested that I try some sort of meditation three times a week to rid myself of the stress that was probably weakening my body. A doctor that doesn't jump to the prescription pad has my respect. I am more willing to trust a doctor's judgment if she is willing to try more unconventional types of treatment (at least in this country) than the many doctors I have seen over the years that pull out their prescription pads within a few minutes of looking at your symptoms, be it a cold or depression. In all my moving around, I cannot remember a doctor who has ever spent over 10 minutes with me before making a diagnosis and then writing out a prescription that was supposed to cure my ailments, but often never did. "In a 1993 study, researchers at the Rand Corporation found that more than half of the physicians surveyed got out their prescription pads after discussing depression with a patient for less than three minutes" (Wurtzel 300). This happened to me when I received a prescription for Prozac. I spent less than 5 minutes with the doctor, 3 of which were spent discussing how I was to get a refill.

The next most common treatment for depressed patients is psychotherapy. In fact it is often coupled with the use of drugs. Therapy of this sort takes years to develop into something of substantial help. A relationship not unlike a friendship needs to develop so that patients can trust the doctor with the true feelings going on in their minds. Many times, the patient is placed on drugs before this trust develops, thereby handicapping the doctor and the patient. On the therapists' side, they do not get to become familiar with the patients' particular triggers for depression. They also fail to get a full understanding of the patient as a depressed person. This is important to know and understand in the event of a relapse even with the drugs. The patient

becomes handicapped in that if a relapse does occur the patient is likely to associate it as a *complete* failure on the part of the therapist as well as the drugs because of the almost simultaneous introduction times. If a relationship of complete trust is developed before the use of drugs, then the therapist can be divorced from the drugs and in the event of a relapse still be seen in the patient's mind as helpful.

The major problem with therapy is finding the right therapist. There are a host of different types of therapists as well as a large variation in the type of therapy given. For those new to the mental health profession it is a troubling and discouraging task to try to find a therapist who is a good fit. After narrowing the search down by using referrals, looking for a doctor with experience in dealing with clinical depression, and one who stays current on research and new findings, one has no choice but to go "shopping" for a therapist. The first few sessions should be used as a screening test not only for the therapist but also for the patient. Therapists become like close friends, and like finding a best friend, it is not easy to find one who fits with one's individual personality.

The Chinese have used the herbal root of ginseng for centuries to help depression. In India, the root that has been used for centuries is Gotu Kola. Both of these cultures have also used medication as a remedy for depression as well as a wealth of other ailments. Meditation's mental healing abilities have been used for so long that its use is almost a stereotype for both of these societies. Although not a remedy for everyone, it is an avenue worth exploring when the mental health profession fails.

Meditation is not necessarily sitting in the lotus position and making humming noises for hours at a time. Mainly it is the emptiness, the letting go of all that occupies the mind, that does the greatest amount of healing. This can be done in a vast amount of ways, from sitting in one position for a long time to exercises to drawing to anything a person can do with total concentration so that the mind no longer has room for thoughts on anything other than the task at hand. Meditation is best

learned from a teacher of some sort and then developed as a personal exercise.

Another helpful treatment can be cognitive therapy. Cognitive therapy works by training a person to correct his or her illogical thinking. This therapy generally starts with a therapist but can be used without one. It uses the idea that depressed persons stay depressed because of thinking errors. "The exact thinking errors that lead to specific emotional problems are spelled out. This leads to direct ways you can correct your emotional problems" (Emery 42-43). The mind is taught to pick out illogical or irrational thinking as it occurs and correct it. An example of this might be "The world hates me," corrected to, "I think the world hates me."

It is distressing to me that our society continues this headlong race into chemical dependency while our government spends millions of dollars trying to keep kids off drugs. They tell kids to "Say No To Drugs" as they simultaneously celebrate Prozac. It is like parents telling kids to do as they say, not as they do, and ending up bewildered when the kids end up doing as they do. Our society tends to have a look of confusion when asked, "What is happening to our kids?" and yet it seems to be forgotten that we can ask the kids and they will probably have something to say. I think that this is one of the direct reasons that there is an increase in depression at an increasingly younger age. What choice does a child—left at the day care, left at home with only the television for company, left as a secondary priority in the minds of the parents—have but to believe that he or she is worthless, no good, wicked, and deserving of death? The fallout of the society is going to get worse. I can already see that as we become more and more of an individual-based society as opposed to a family-based society, there is more room for depression to creep into people's lives. The isolation is going to have its repercussions and they aren't going to be easy to fix.

Today I am still walking back to the starting point. Honestly I don't think I will ever get back all that I ran away from before. The consequences of my walking out are beyond my reach now. They fade into the past but they will always be there. My parents will never quite trust me the same way again; my siblings treat me as an outsider. They all seem to want me to be medicated so that they don't have to deal with the symptoms of my depression. Every now and again, I forget why I stopped running away in the first place and I have to start all over again.

I try. I really do, but sometimes the shroud of depression covers and smothers me and somehow I lack the energy or willpower to crawl out from underneath.

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Evaluation: Pamela Widder combines excerpts from her journal, personal comments on going through a depression, and research to provide a moving and informative portrait of this increasingly common emotional disorder.

Achieving “I” to “We”: Consciousness in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*

by Danielle Zemola
Course: English 102
Instructor: Nancy Davis

Assignment:
Write a literary research paper.

John Steinbeck’s novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, has been studied for over fifty years as one of the most controversial allegories of the twentieth century. Steinbeck picked the title from a phrase from Julia Ward Howe’s “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” He figured everybody would know this to be familiar. In the end, it turned out to be a wonderful title for the book. Curiously, many critics have reviewed it as either being “a must novel” or not one of Steinbeck’s best writings. As it is a wonderful example of allegory, there is need for discussion of almost every element in the book. By studying some Biblical references and the actions and dialogue of the characters, we are able to understand Steinbeck’s true reason for writing this novel.

John Steinbeck knew who his audience was at this time. He knew what the conditions were and all the hardships people were facing. He also knew how to work off people’s emotions. Writing a novel like *The Grapes of Wrath* during the Depression, about the Depression, would do exactly what Steinbeck wanted. Each element that he wrote about would make the audience think; they would think about the symbolism of everything involved. Then they would notice the characters and their importance to the theme of the story. Realizing that the Joads could be them, the audience would feel compassion for the family. This would possibly make them understand the importance of staying together. In the words of Britch and Lewis, “there is strength in a will united” (105).

In order to be able to convey this message truthfully, Steinbeck, in 1936, went to visit migrant farmers’ camps in California to get firsthand knowledge. In *A Study Guide to Steinbeck: A Handbook to his Major Works*, Peter Lisca writes,

...these expeditions led, by June, 1938, to a sixty-thousand-word novel called “L’Affaire Lettuceberg,” which Steinbeck told his publishers was a bad book that he would not submit to them. As the title suggests, the book was satirical; and Steinbeck complained in a letter, “My whole work drive has been aimed at making people understand each other and then I deliberately write this book, the aim of which

is to cause hatred through partial understanding."
(qtd. in French, "Steinbeck's" 30)

After a considerable amount of deliberation, Steinbeck used the information gathered from these journeys to create a more realistic novel. Although it is now fifty years later, the migrant farmers could still represent most of the minorities, not to mention the migrant workers, of today. As the story of the Joads evolves, we realize that they are not just acting as themselves; they represent all the small farm owners forced to become migrant workers at the time of the Depression. It is a story of survival, a story of a family staying together through rough times of drought, famine, violence, and death. It is a story of how this family, with a few exceptions, gives to others when they don't have enough for themselves. Most importantly, it is a story of hope, hope that through unity, the people could all make it to a better life.

Although the Joads are just one family in the novel, we can use the term "Joads" to define any of the masses of people who set out west during the Dust Bowl. The Joads were not like some of the farmers in the novel though. They were offspring of the American farmers who made the land what it was at that time. They had been forced by the drought to become migrants (French, *Companion* 95). Late in the novel, Steinbeck uses the term "Okies" to describe those farmers, not only from Oklahoma, but also those from Texas and Kansas. Warren French defines "Okies" as "any epithet applied to a minority group whose struggle for survival threatens the complacency of the majority" ("Steinbeck's" 30). Though "Okies" appeared over fifty years ago, the characters in the novel still represent universal values and hopes. Similarly, they had a dream of finding a better life, not too different from many people today. Even as people read the novel today, they can empathize with the Joad family and their company. Although we may not be in the middle of a depression, families continue to struggle, learning how to cooperate and stay together. The Joads put family unity into perspective for many who read *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Although there are several members of the Joad family, and even more characters that they meet on their journey, there are four specific characters who, throughout the book, help develop the central theme. Each character mentioned in the novel plays a part in getting the point across, but the actions of these four are the basis of the "I" to "we" theory. Their roles in the family are the most significant in terms of growth and family togetherness.

Jim Casy is a preacher who has lost the faith. Though he is not a "Joad" in the family name sense, he is introduced to us early on in the novel. He joins the Joad family on their journey out west. In the words of Harold Bloom, "he espouses a love forehumanity rather than a spiritual longing for God" (25). Sometime during his profession as a preacher, he came to the conclusion that his real goal in life is to keep the people together. He knows the true value of a family working not only for their own survival but for that of everybody else's. While on this great expedition, Casy remarks, "There was the hills, an' there was me, an' we wasn't separate no more. We was one thing. An' that one thing was holy" (qtd. in Kennedy 533). This is an unmistakable professing of Casy's true beliefs now. He knew that when he started working for the people, he was "one" with everything around him.

Casy has often been linked to some philosophers and religious symbols. Frederic I. Carpenter made the following observation:

like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Casy came to the conviction that holiness, or goodness, results from this feeling of unity: "I got to thinkin' how we was holy when we was one thing, an' mankin' was holy when it was one thing." But the corollary of this mystical philosophy is that any man's self-seeking destroys the unity of "holiness" of nature: "An' it [this one thing] on'y got unholy when one mis'able little fella got the bit in his teeth, an' run off his own way...Fella like that bust the holiness." ("Casy" 31)

There have been many instances of linking Jim Casy with Jesus Christ. Martin Shockley has brought attention to the most obvious example:

"Jim Casy is by the same initials identified with Jesus Christ. Like Jesus, Jim has rejected an old religion and is in the process of replacing it with a new gospel" (368). One of Casy's most influential pieces of dialogue speaks of his new-found religion: "Maybe, I figgered, Maybe it's all men and women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit—the human sperit—the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of. Now I sat there thinking it, an' all of a sudden—I knew it. I knew it so deep down that it was true and I still know it" (qtd. in Shockley 368).

Casy no longer wants to follow the traditional religion. He "expresses not a hope of 'pie in the sky,' but outrage at 'man's inhumanity to man'" (French, "Steinbeck's" 37). Casy turns out to be a great friend to the Joad family, mainly due to his revelation. When Tom Joad meets up with Casy later in the novel, "Jim Casy tells Tom how he has realized that his mission is to organize the workers against the wage gouging of the owners" (Fortescue 20). Casy knows what it is like to be a poor migrant farmer in search of "the pot of gold," and he wants the others to have a fair try. Emerson once phrased this dedication in his essay "Nature": "The World lacks unity because man is disunited with himself....Love is its demand" (qtd. in Carpenter, "Philosophical" 9). So Jim Casy preaches the religion of love. During the last scene when Tom and Casy meet, Casy is clubbed to death, leaving Tom to take his place as the leader of the people.

Tom Joad is the strength of the family. Though he has been in prison for four years, as soon as he is reunited with his family things start to fall back into place. A lot has changed, but he accepts challenges head on. "It is turtlelike willpower and determination to survive that brings Tom back to the family, but it is his ability to change and adapt to a reality even tougher than prison that enables him to view the means by which the Okies will survive" (Britch and Lewis 104). Tom's character needs to be discussed following Casy, because Tom takes over Casy's role as leader of the people. Tom changes from a man who just wanted to enjoy life to "a figure

expansive enough to represent the essence of the American spirit, what Steinbeck later described as the 'national character'" (Britch and Lewis 104). Joseph Fontenrose makes the statement, "In colloquial language Casy and Tom express the book's doctrine: that not only is each social unit—family, corporation, union, state—a single organism, but so is mankind as a whole, embracing all the rest," to emphasize the most important lesson these two men learn (373-374). Through the many hardships they faced, these two men look out for each other and everyone around them. Inadvertently, Casy takes Tom under his wing. From beginning to end, Tom learns from Casy's speeches and actions. "Because he has been an individualist, but through the influence of Casy and of his group idea has become more than himself, Tom becomes 'a leader of the people.' But his strength derives from his increased sense of participation in the group" (Carpenter, "Philosophical" 11).e

Now, as Tom leaves his family to become the leader of the people, we must trust his good intentions to work for the people, the oppressed. "He and the others of his lot must work together to drive back the oppressors who would break their spirit" (Britch and Lewis 106). Tom knows what he has to do; he had an excellent teacher. He knows the importance of group unity. He knows how much more a group can accomplish than a single person. Frederic Carpenter quotes a final thought from Tom Joad during his fight for cooperation and unity: "I know now, a fella ain't no good alone" ("Philosophical" 11).

While Tom may be the strength behind the family, Ma Joad is the backbone. She is the person who has kept the faith with the family. Throughout the novel, Ma and Tom share a special bond. Their relationship grows stronger as they try to run the family. Both of these people realize the importance of cooperation to survive. Jonathan Fortescue says of Ma, "Although Ma has fought to keep the family together, she realizes they can't help Tom anymore" (21-22). In most of the situations at the time of the Depression, the men were the ones with all the strength and power. In the Joad family, these roles

are reversed. Ma is level-headed but tough; she wants to keep the family together under any circumstances. Even after the deaths of some of her family and friends, Ma remains calm. She keeps thinking of the next thing that has to be taken care of, the next person to be fed.

We see early on Ma's doubt that a place like California really exists. Not wanting to disappoint the family, she goes along. She risks the chance of an "uncertain future." Tom recognizes his mother's facial expression as identical to that she had when he was in prison (Fortescue 14). It is amazing to think that even though she does not necessarily agree with the decision to go on this journey, she is the one who takes control. Late in the novel, the Joad men realize what life in California is really like; Ma was right. The men start to fall apart. Ma "tells the men to pull together as a family. A feminine interest in the survival of the community overwhelms the interest of the men" (Fortescue 18). Howard Levant notes Ma's position in the novel: "Its development is centralized in Ma Joad's intense focus on the family's desire to remain a unit; her recognition of the group is the dramatic resolution" (21).

The last character we will be considering is Rose of Sharon, the oldest daughter. She is pregnant with her husband Connie's baby. Harold Bloom makes the observation that "The course of her pregnancy throughout the novel traces the symbolic decline of the Joad family" (24-25). Rose of Sharon is the last member of the family to realize a sense of unity; working together is the only way to achieve the goals desired. Throughout the novel, Rose of Sharon has learned from watching Ma Joad and following her examples. Ma has pushed her to follow in her footsteps. Howard Levant makes a very insightful statement concerning Rose of Sharon's development:

There is no preparation for Rose of Sharon's transformation and no literary justification except a merely formal symmetry that makes it desirable, in spite of credibility, to devise a repetition. Tom, like Ma, undergoes a long process of education; Rose of Sharon is characterized in detail throughout the novel as a protected, rather thoughtless, whining girl. Possibly her miscarriage produces an unmentioned, certainly mystical change in character. More likely, the reader will notice the hand of the author, forcing Rose of Sharon into an unprepared and formalistic role. (40)

It is true that there are many examples of Casy, Tom, and Ma's change in attitude from that of just allowing the self and family members to survive to that of taking care of everyone around. There seems to be one significant situation for Rose of Sharon's character. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck writes an ending that has stirred much discussion. Rose of Sharon has just given birth to a stillborn child. The family has moved to drier land and found a barn. Upon entering the barn, they find a boy and a starving man, too hungry to eat the stolen food:

Suddenly the boy cried, "He's dyin', I tell you! He's starvin' to death, I tell you."

"Hush," said Ma. She looked at Pa and Uncle John standing helplessly gazing at the sick man. She looked at Rose of Sharon huddled in the comfort. Ma's eyes passed Rose of Sharon's eyes, and then came back to them. And the two women looked deep into each other. The girl's breath came short and gasping.

She said "Yes."

Ma smiled. "I knowed you would. I knowed!" She looked down at her hands, tight-locked in her lap.

* * * *

For a minute Rose of Sharon sat still in the whispering barn. Then she hoisted her tired body up and drew the comfort around her. She moved slowly to the corner and stood looking down at the wasted face, into the wide, frightened eyes. Then slowly she lay down beside him. He shook his head slowly from side to

side. Rose of Sharon loosened one side of the blanket and bared her breast. "You got to," she said. She squirmed closer and pulled his head close. "There!" she said. "There." Her hand moved behind his head and supported it. Her fingers moved gently in his hair. She looked up and across the barn, and her lips came together and smiled mysteriously. (580-81; ch. 30)

Donald Pizer says of the final scene, "Encouraged by May, she can now—in a climactic gesture of conversion—move outward to the 'we' of the starving man. She is freed from those 'I' roles when she gives birth to the stillborn" (93-94). In the words of Joseph Fontenrose about this final act:

it is an oracular image, forecasting in a moment of defeat and despair the final triumph of the people—a contingent forecast, for only if the people nourish and sustain one another will they achieve their ends. More than that, the episode represents the novel's most comprehensive thesis, that all life is one and holy, and that every man, in Casy's words, 'jus' got a little piece of a great big soul.' The Joads' intense feelings of family loyalty have been transcended; they have expanded to embrace all men. (372)

"Finding self-worth through sharing and cooperating with kin and outsiders is what keeps the Joads from falling apart as a family and failing as migrants" (Britch and Lewis 103). Donald Pizer made an excellent comment on the central theme of this novel:

*The experiences of these characters illustrates Steinbeck's faith in the ability of man to move from what he calls an "I" to a "we" consciousness. The "conversion" of Tom, Ma, Casy [and Rose of Sharon] to a "we" state of mind is both the theme and the form of *The Grapes of Wrath*; it is also Steinbeck's contribution both to the naturalistic theme of the humanity of all sorts and conditions of men and to the naturalistic tragic novel of the 1930's. (88)*

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Evaluation: *I am impressed with Danielle's focus and the thoroughness with which she develops her ideas. Her research is admirable, and her paper is tightly unified — no easy feat given the scope of the novel about which she chose to write.*

What Is Good Writing? The Anthology Judges Give Their Standards

Nancy L. Davis

Good writing is like a finely tuned guitar: tautly strung, it sings in perfect pitch; it is played for and to an audience. In the most capable of hands, it speaks with an honesty and a clarity that resonates beyond the performance.

Jack Dodds

Whenever I read I look for details, details, details appropriate to the writer's purpose or the occasion: descriptive details, fresh facts or figures, supporting instances, insightful observation or explanation. Good writing is dense with information. Good writing is also alive with voices: the writer's voice (persona), dialogue, quotation, and allusion. Good writing always talks to me.

Julie Fleenor

I want to hear the writer's voice. I like vivid writing which convinces me that beneath syntax, semicolons, and transitions beats a heart and that this heart is connected to a brain which thinks. I want to see the writer wrestling with thinking and writing. I want to see discovery. Can every writer do this? Yes. Will every writer do this? Maybe. But when good writing does occur, it is an incarnation wonderful to behold.

Barbara Hickey

In Mark Twain's words, "Eschew surplusage."

Kris Piepenburg

All writing begins with reading—whether reading of physical or mental reality or another text. Good writers “have their feelers out” before and as they write, to soak up the details and depth of experience, whether lived or read. For whatever world a writer recreates and brings me to—whether involving technical concepts, a topical issue, a historic moment, a state of mind, a literary work, or a meaningful memory—I want to hear about that world through a focused, frank, unaffected, and unpretentious voice, and I want to get a full sense of that world, to be able to move around in it as in a “virtual reality.” When a writer has strong sensitivity to actual reality and brings meaningful detail from it into his or her writing, the virtual reality becomes as rich and deep as the actual.

Peter Sherer

Writing that focuses and boldly goes where it promises to go alerts and engages me. I like writing that is intelligent, consistent in its logic, and concrete in its detail. I like examples and I want to hear an honest voice which speaks to me in sentences which are fresh, crafted, varied, economical, and musical.

Joseph Sternberg

I like writing shaped for a specific audience and powered by a well-delineated persona. I like economical writing. I like writing infused with fresh, vivid words and graceful sentences. I like details and clear purpose.

Andrew Wilson

A piece of writing might describe a chair. A piece of good writing might have a man in that chair. A piece of super writing might show that man fidgeting—sitting, standing, sitting again; speaking, laughing, crying, moaning, babbling incoherently, drooling, or all of these. Super writing would tell the reader how that man’s shirt clashed with the fabric of that chair, and how that fabric *shooshed* as the scratchy wool of the man’s shirtsleeve brushed across it, bringing cigarette to mouth. Super writing would describe not only a chair and not only a man, but also the state of that man’s hair, and how he smelled, and the peculiar timbre of his voice. In other words, in my view, super writing features illustrative details—not exactly to the point of saturation or exhaustion, but I’d eat an overcooked chicken before I’d eat a raw one.

Harper Students on Writing

Joann Alicea

Writing can be a method for expression or a daunting task. It can be used to release joy or fear, humor or knowledge, love or rage, and so much more; however, writing is most often a tool for education. It forces me to think and to learn. Sometimes I realize that I know more than I ever believed I did; sometimes I see that I was wrong. None of this means that I rejoice at the news of a term paper or that I am thrilled to see three essay questions on my exam, but I cannot argue with the fact that my writing represents me fairly, for better or worse. I also must confess that when I stumble across an old paper and read through it, writing lets me feel—hopefully proud.

When I am writing on my own and there is no assignment due, that is when writing means the most. There are things that can be said in a poem or a story that cannot simply flow from my mouth. How could I explain my heart without writing? Writing, even if it does not measure up to the classics and even if it is criticized endlessly, lets me say things I never knew I felt, but none of this truly explains why I write. Sometimes I write to clear my head or to make sure I am alive. I write because it is mine; I write for me.

Akiko Ishihara

Writing is a pleasure to me because I like to express myself. I enjoy recording how I feel and what I think in words and then reading them later. I feel relaxed when I am writing.

Jennifer Jenkins

When my class was assigned to write a collage on racism, the idea of piecing together so many writings seemed tedious. Still, I wrote the pieces. In the end, I found that all the segments, though separate, fit.

Lisa Katsenios

As far back as I can remember, I always liked writing my thoughts on paper. Being back in school after twenty years and coming from a foreign background makes writing even more important to me now. I can be more honest on paper, and I don't have to worry about my accent or my age. Writing makes me feel less vulnerable and gives me more confidence to express myself.

I feel fortunate to have had Mrs. Barbara Hickey and Mrs. Christine Poziemski, very understanding teachers, helping me. Also, Mrs. Barbara Hickey in the Writing Center at Harper College made a big difference in helping me with the grammar in my papers for classes.

Pam Laughland

I have always loved to read short stories, novels, and particularly poetry. Perhaps it is the love of the written word that helps me to express my own feelings and views when given a writing assignment. As a future teacher, I can only hope to be able to pass on this love and appreciation to my students in hopes that they too will learn to express themselves as a result of reading a wide variety of literature.

Amanda T. Offenbacher

Writing has always been an outlet for me. I started in grade school with short stories for classes. During junior high and high school, I went through a poetry phase. Now, I write articles for the school paper, and attempt to finish novels. I enjoy putting words together, trying to make sense of situations.

Hyeonju Palmer

To convey my message to the readers, my words must be perfectly matched with my voice whether it is my conviction, rapture, happiness, anger or languor. Because many words have their own shades of difference in meaning, it is very unfortunate that there isn't any teacher or textbook to explain about the feeling of a word, its melody and

its echo. As a non-native speaker, I often feel frustrated whenever I hear, "Kim, I understand what you're saying, but it doesn't make any sense."

Sara Porras

Communication is the key motivator for my writing. It allows me to convey ideas to others, providing them with an alternate perspective. Through my ideas, I hope to provide a greater understanding and awareness.

Deborah Ryan

Writing is a tool I use to pour out the activity inside my mind. Writing helps me to visually sort out my goals and intents. When the days seem to collide into each other, the refuge in a pencil and paper is limitless. I don't believe I have "standards" for good writing, except that I feel that it is imperative to write with your heart, and strive to relay a fantastic reverie. Writing opens us up to the opportunity of "going within," whether it be within ourselves or a perfect stranger. Writing is a means of understanding ourselves and others.

Lori Thompson

Laughter. Pain. Compassion. Understanding. These are all gifts I have experienced through the written word. Whether through the words of others or my own musings in ink, writing has always helped me crystalize my thoughts. Knowledge gained in the heart or for the mind is the result of good writing.

Pamela Widder

Writing—to me—is a vain attempt at putting in black and white the wide expanse of images, emotions, and countless other things that make up the stuff that floats 'round my mind (more commonly called thoughts). It is a release, a focus, a challenge crammed tightly together bound by paper and pen. Lastly, it is, as M.C. Escher put it, a way to "awaken wonder in the minds of my viewers."

Writing with the Sun and the Moon

by J. Harley Chapman

When I am asked to say what writing is, I tend to come up with something like this: Writing is the process of transformation of the consciousness of writer and reader through illumination and delight by means of words on a page. Definition, however, is one thing; characterization, another. Here I say this: Writing falls along a continuum, expressing variously solar and lunar modes of awareness, energies, and styles of expression. At one end, there is writing that demonstrates mastery, even domination; pure agency and vitality; volcanic directness; and the burning heat of the sun. At the other, there is writing that evinces a sensitivity to mystery, receptivity to the odd, and cool reflection; shadowy indirection; and the gentle benediction of the moon. Consciousness is established and guarded by the two great luminaries; writing is shaped and energized by their qualified light.

+ + +

Lunar

Suspended between the sun and the moon, I wake with the dawn and slowly come to consciousness. The moon's whisper I struggle to hear and then to record. A dream, subtle and puzzling. It asks for pen and paper, wanting to shape itself on the page. Bits of it I get; for the connections I have to wait. The child-

hood swing, Grandpa, the blooming peonies. The page gives them early morning substance. Musing, doodling, I act as its agent and assist the dream slowly to find its voice:

I am four or five years of age, all a-jangle, legs pumping, arms pulling on the chains—up, up higher the backyard swing. Harder and harder I pump and pull. Once I even swing high enough to see over the peak of the roof. Unnoticing and wordless, Grandpa stands at the bush of the blooming peonies. Looking appreciatively at the flowering plant, he puts his palms together as if he is praying to it, slightly bowing his head...

A strange scene. I do not know what, or how, it means. Forget the all-too-wise and dogmatic interpretation of the dream books: A child vigorously swinging shows a desire to escape from personal circumstances (uncaring parents) or cosmic limitations (gravity), or both. Yet the dream haunts me, inviting my reactions, which I write out. Juxtaposing word and image, I look for the unexpected connection. Writing is a search for the sense of the scenes of the night.

Solar

The day having been launched, I return to my writing desk. As the ever-mounting sun defines each tree, flower, roof, and street, my mind becomes increasingly one-pointed. I think, I plan, I write. Words link up with words, pressing their connections on me. Convictions announce themselves, and I search for telling evidence and compelling reasons. All morning there is a sharpening of mind and art. I argue. I am clear and effective. Arguments chain themselves together. The meaning shouts.

With noon, my prose is bright and spare, yet commanding. Energy, passion, focus. My writing is goal-oriented, economical. A sense of authority pervades. Spirited, the essay shines. I am pleased. Writing

trumpets the intensity and clarity of the day.

Here I share a fragment of my morning's work, a piece I am writing for incoming college students:

...Dogmas are proposals for belief to be accepted on the basis of some authority. Theories, however, are totally different. They are ideas or sets of ideas put forth to explain data, that is, to illumine the facts, to make them shine with new clarity. A good theory makes otherwise obscure data jump out at you and grab your attention. As explanatory tools, theories are to be understood and appreciated, then to be applied and tested. In time, theories may prove to be unworkable and then, after serious testing, should be discarded. Theories are inexpungeable aspects of our intellectual life; you cannot just have facts, as some have mistakenly believed. Every explanation and every theory goes beyond the facts, just as the future always goes beyond the past (facts are statements about the past, about what has happened). Get rid of theories and the mind congeals and all research is stymied. It is a moral necessity of the intellectual life that students learn to recognize theories, to appreciate them for what they are and can do, to test them, and then to discard when they are no longer needed. It is further a moral necessity of the intellectual life that one learn to live committed but loose, which is what theories call for...

Later I watch the dance of light and shade as the sun moves across the summer sky. Shadows from the maples, first on the right, now on the left, lengthen with the day. Silently, they chronicle the movement of the sun and the relaxing of the tautness of the day. Stirred by the dance of light and shade, I look for the contrasts, the harmonies, the juxtapositions. I revise. Pare here and add there. The writing should not be all bright, certainly not overwhelmingly so; it needs more *chiaroscuro*, or "light-dark."

Lunar

The evening is cool and quiet. I sit alone, in reverie, transfixed by the soft-focused light. The moon glides across the page. I write a letter to a friend. Soul talk. Allusions, jokes, insights, feelings, playful turns of phrase, and nonsense all find their place. The verbal energy waxes and wanes; expression flows now this way, now that.

Here are some fragments of it:

Dear J.,

....Why did we ever start down that path? We sat on the back porch that summer night and discussed our options. And chose—foolishly, it seems. Did the moon come “nearer the earth than she was wont/And make us mad”—yes, mad? Or was it that those who gave their encouragement were indeed demonic, tempting us with what is not doable. Things sometimes develop in strange, unforeseen ways, and I still do not know to what dark fate they should be attributed.

Always a bit puzzled by the camel in the Gospels trying to go through the eye of a needle. Well, compare the joke the kids are telling: “How do you keep an elephant from falling through the eye of a needle?” “Tie a knot in the end of its tail.” Taken as a text, this would make for homiletic liveliness, don't you think?

You know my penchant for Sufi teaching stories. I just came across one from that lovable scamp Nasruddin, here as an enfant terrible:

Little Nasruddin was listening to his teacher reading a passage from the Koran: “God gave brilliance to the sun and radiance to the moon.”

“Which is the more useful, the sun or the moon?” asked the teacher.

“The moon,” replied Nasruddin without a moment’s hesitation. “Because the sun only comes out when it’s daylight. But the moon lights up the world when it’s dark.”

The old teacher sighed and deemed it wiser to return to the rules of grammar.

I close with something I found from the Taos Pueblo:

*My brother the star, my mother the earth,
My father the sun, my sister the moon,
to my life give beauty, to my body give
strength,
to my corn give goodness, to my house,
give peace,
to my spirit give truth, to my elders
give wisdom.*

*We must pray for strength.
We must pray to come together,
Pray to the weeping earth,
pray to the trembling waters
and to the wandering rain.
We must pray to the tip-toeing stars
and to the hollering sun.*

Isn’t that lovely?

*Yours,
H.*

Writing tells the soul’s story, its loves and its wanderings.



If I were beginning again my life as writer, what would I do? I would write with the sun, following its course, letting it instruct and challenge me. I would feel its warmth, its burning intensity, and then I would write. I would study its brilliance and clarity, its capacity to search out and sear, its power to illuminate; and then I would write. So instructed, I would express myself clearly, passionately, economically, and persuasively. Of that I have no doubt. Further, I would write with the moon, letting its cooler light play across my consciousness, evoking reverie and dream. I would jot and sketch, doodle and joke. I would observe the changes of the moon and let the writing energies ebb and flow as they wished. I would accept the gift of shadow and relish the darkness where no light shines, and then I would write. So taught, I would write with subtle feeling, with intuition and imagination. Of that I have no—well, with the moon things do change.

Two great luminaries, one writing life.

The source for the Taos Pueblo excerpt is *Parabola: Myth and the Quest for Meaning* 8.4 (1983): 32.
The source for the Nasruddin excerpt is *Parabola: Myth and the Quest for Meaning* 8.4 (1983): 36.

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