



the *Crimson* *Quill*  
5th edition



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Printed in the United States

ISBN: 9789970025428

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# EDITORS' NOTE

Welcome to the 5th edition of Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Crimson Quill. Our mission is to encourage undergraduate students from English 100, 101, 121, and 202 to find ownership and take pride in their contributions to the university community through their writing. In the past, CQ was carefully curated to display exceptional student work that was further polished by CQ editors; it has served as a journal for IUP's core undergraduate English courses. However, in this latest edition we have revamped our approach and design to better serve not only as a showcase for student writing, but also as a clearer pedagogical tool. Some of the changes in this edition, in brief, include:

- In previous editions student submissions have been carefully edited by Crimson Quill editors; in this edition, however, each piece appears exactly as it was submitted. This means that there will inevitably be some grammar and usage errors throughout the edition, however, rather than mistakes, we see these as opportunities. Including these minor errors, allows students to recognize common problems and opens up a conversation about the revision and editing processes.
- Additionally, to further facilitate this conversation, we have included extra space in the outside margins to be used for annotation. We feel that modelling editing and annotation skills in the classroom will allow students to practice the skills necessary in workshopping, peer editing, and reflecting on their own writing. We have included common editing marks on the back cover for quick reference towards the same end.
- Lastly, where possible, we have included genre introductions and assignment prompts. By placing each submission in a clearer context, it is our hope that students can better understand each writer's strategy and approach. These genre discussions and prompts can also be used by instructors to prompt writing or spark further ideas.

We hope that these changes will maintain the original vision and mission of the Crimson Quill, while adding pedagogical value for instructors and students alike.

# EDITORS' BIOS

**Tayseer Abu Odeh** is currently a PhD candidate at Indiana University of Pennsylvania majoring in Comparative and Postcolonial Literature. He has published many articles that center around English, World, and Arabic literature along with Postcolonial Studies. In 2014, he served as a Teaching Associate in the Department of English Literature and Criticism at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He also served as an instructor of English Literature at the University of Jordan (2009-2011). In 2015, he's taught Arabic language and Literature in Middlebury College (California), as a Faculty member. His research interests include Comparative Literature, Translation, Postcolonial Studies, Exile, and Arabic Literature.

He is also a recipient of several awards and fellowships including Indiana University of Pennsylvania Foundation Doctoral Fellowship award for excellence in teaching and research (2011), Sylff, The Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund Scholarship, Tokyo Foundation (2007-2009), Middle East Group Study Program (2008), Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange, The Japan Foundation, and Sylff Fellows Mobility Program grant, visiting scholar, University of California, San-Diego (2009).

**Dr. Maha Alawdat** finished her doctoral program in Composition and TESOL at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in May 2015. She has a Master degree in Foreign English Literature, as well as a degree in Management and Educational Leadership from Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. Her Bachelor's degree is in English Language and Literature from Bethlehem University.

During her studies at IUP, she won a number of awards including the 2015 Teaching Excellence Award, Exemplary Teaching of Literacy and Language Award for two years, and 2015 Graduate Women's Leadership Award in recognition of academic achievement, service to the campus community, and leadership skills.

Her interests include eLearning, composition, and creative writing. Writing poems is an area where she can express her thoughts and feelings and has published a number of poems. She is also interested in using ePortfolios to teach writing and published a number of articles and a book on this topic. Her dissertation focused on exploring the implementation of ePortfolios by writing teachers in PASSHE schools.

**Julia Grove** is an IUP Literature & Criticism doctoral candidate and instructor. She has previously taught Composition I, Composition II, and Humanities Literature at IUP, where she is currently teaching Basic Writing; she is also currently teaching Composition I at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. She is active in the campus community in various capacities. Most notably, she has served as the English Department Colloquium Series co-director; English Graduate Organization social co-coordinator and graphic designer for their conference publication, *Voices*; Online Pedagogy Teaching circle leader; and LSE Shared Syllabus Assessment Committee member. She was nominated for an Outstanding Teaching Award and won the English Graduate Organization's Outstanding Service Award. For her dissertation she is identifying and exploring a new genre of texts that utilize digital media strategies while simultaneously emphasizing their physical materiality, a genre she is calling Hyperprint.

**AJ Schmitz** is a PhD Candidate and Instructor in the English Department at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Research interests include Eighteenth-Century British Literature, Narratology, Ecocriticism and Place studies.

In addition to his work with the Crimson Quill, he has been of great service to the English Department, serving as co-coordinator of the Colloquium Series, a judge for the Undergraduate Writing Contest, and contributing editor for Livingston Online. He is also the co-creator of the English Graduate Dissertation Discussion Forum. His most important achievement has been his part in the development and growth, as well as his role as MC for the monthly Lit. Night at the Artist's Hand Gallery, bridging the gap between the college and the community at large through a mutual love of poetry, prose, and performance. His teaching has been recognized by the faculty at IUP as evidenced by his nomination for the Outstanding Teaching Award and his efforts in the department and community garnered a win for the Outstanding Service Award. His prose and poetry have been published in various print and digital mediums and he is committed to the growth of his students' writing abilities.

**Rachael Warmington** is a doctoral candidate and a former instructor in the Literature & Criticism Program at IUP. She earned her B.A. in English from Montclair State University, M.A. in English from Seton Hall University, and her MFA at City College of New York, City University of New York. Rachael was the recipient of the 2014 Graduate English Programs in Literature & Criticism for Outstanding Service & Citizenship Award. She has been published in *The Tower Journal*, *Poetry in Performance*, *Chavez* and *The Normal Review*. Being part of the success of students is very rewarding and this is why Rachael encourages all of her students to publish both their creative pieces and research projects. Rachael was also both a poetry and fiction judge for IUP English Department's Annual Undergraduate Writing Contest. She is a trustee in the New Jersey College English Association and the editor of their scholarly and creative publication, *The Watchung Review*. Rachael will be teaching at both Seton Hall University and Rutgers University starting in the fall of 2015.

**Rob Welch** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Literature and Criticism program at IUP. He is currently employed as an instructor in the English department at IUP and at Penn Highlands Community College. His keen interest in composition studies has been fueled by his ongoing involvement as a tutor at the Writing Center with graduate and undergraduate students from all fields. His research centers on teasing out an intersection between American literary naturalists and modern affect theory, and his forthcoming dissertation compares the critical projects of Lauren Berlant to the fiction produced by Frank Norris. Rob is a member of the Stephen Crane Society and the Frank Norris Society, and remains active in supporting the local community of IUP scholars through his continued work for our English Graduate Organization in numerous capacities.



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# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The Crimson Quill accepts submissions on a rolling basis during the academic year. If you are interested in submitting to the journal, please follow these guidelines.

- The submission must be a final draft of an “A” paper from either an English 100, 101, 202, or 121 course.
- Please include the assignment sheet or prompt for the submission—submissions will not be considered without the assignment sheet. (You may need to ask your instructor for a copy of the file.)
- Send your submission and assignment prompt as Word file (.doc) attachments in an e-mail addressed to **cq-submissions@iup.edu**
- This professionally drafted introductory e-mail should also include:
  1. Your name
  2. Your major
  3. The course number (100, 101, 202, 121)
  4. Your professor’s name

Additionally, the editing staff of the Crimson Quill recommend you have your final draft looked over by the Writing Center as a final revisionary step. You may send the tutoring session report to **cq-submissions@iup.edu**



Dr. Maha Alawdat

# HOTs

## HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILLS

**M**y ENGL 121: Humanities Literature course is based on reading poetry and short stories from different periods and cultures. The course is also based on using Higher Order Thinking skills (HOTs) and Reader-Response Theory which encourage students as active readers to respond critically to the literary texts they are reading throughout the course. As active readers, students will add real existence to the texts through their interpretation and how they view the literary texts as works of art that they recreate according to their experiences and nowadays understanding of literature.

The course is divided into two sections: Poetry and Short stories. The first half of the course till the midterm focuses on poetry while the second half till the end of the semester focuses on short stories. The aim of this division is to have a focused material and approaches for each type in order to apply what students learn from one literary text to another.

This course required students to have a taste of literary pieces as part of their undergraduate studies. The Hots is one approach that students used while reading and analyzing some poems and stories, besides Reader-Response Theory which enables students to connect literary pieces to their own experiences as well. During the semester, students used some of the HOTs and applied what they found suitable to their essays. Such HOTs are comparing and contrasting, explaining patters, inferring, distinguishing different perspectives, and uncovering motives. Such HOTs enabled students to make connection between texts, personal experiences, and the theory.

For the assignment for this category in CQ, students were asked to apply what they learned

during the semester and compare between any two literary pieces they learned in Eng 121. Students are also asked to refer to the Reader-Response theory they had been using while analyzing the assigned literary pieces for this course. Yet, the main focus of this assignment was to use any of the HOTs they learned while also using the literary theory to analyze and reflect on their work and the work of their classmates as well as adding their own personal experiences to their work. During writing this assignment, students were further encouraged to find similarities and differences between the selected pieces and to justify their choice of the two pieces or more, their literary analysis, and their experiences and personal reflection. The following section shows some examples of students' use of the HOTs as well as their own perspectives, experiences, and reading of the literary pieces they learned during English 121.

# Assignment Prompt for HOTs

**Instructor: Dr. Maha Alawdat**

**Course: 121**

For your final essay, you have two options:

- 1) Select a story and a poem and compare between them.
- 2) Select two stories and compare between them.

In your essay, make sure to provide the following items:

- Clear introduction where you introduce your topic, the purpose of writing this essay, how you intend to work with the poems, and what themes you will write about. You may compare between the themes, plots, characters, final message, etc.
- Define the concept of the (HOTs) you will be using and explain how it helps you to approach the poems.
- Support your main ideas from the selected literary pieces and explain how they are similar and/or different.
- Refer to the Reader Response Theory and mention when you use it. When you quote, cite correctly. You can write as an example (According to Reader Response Theory, ..... "quote the readings, paraphrase, support from the poem")
- Use the literary terms to emphasize the similarities and/or the differences between the selected literary pieces.
- Conclude your essay with a strong statement that refers back to your essay.

These points are very important to take into consideration when you write your essay. Make sure to include all of them and support your ideas very well.

The essay should be double-spaced in 12-point, Times New Roman font. Your paper should be well organized and well supported with evidence from the poems and the relevant readings.

Try to use your own ideas, assignments, and readings and avoid using your classmates' ideas. If you really want to quote a classmate, quote it correctly and provide name, date, etc. No need to cite the poems or the stories because they are part of your essay. But if you quote articles, you need to cite them.

*Since many students submitted more than one essay or a poem to the CQ, a number of essays are included in the Appendix.*

# A Simple Thank You Changed Me

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During my semester in English 121, I had read a poem called *Count That Day Lost* by George Eliot, which her real name was Mary Ann Evans. While reading the guidelines for the final, I immediately wanted to compare that poem to a short story called *Thank You, Ma'am* by Langston Hughes. I am going to compare these two pieces by using a theory to distinguish different perspectives while using HOTs. I can use this to discuss differences or similarities in the theme, mood, and tone.

HOTs to me is when the reader reads a story and infers it from another perspective other than their original thinking. Therefore, I am going to distinguish different perspectives from both the poem and short story to compare and differ them. I can use this to think that the theme to *Count That Day Lost* is if I can come to the end of the day and have no second thoughts about making someone else's day better, I can count that day well spent. Secondly, the theme of *Thank You Ma'am* is about love and trust, which I can intertwine with making someone's day better (*Count That Day Lost*) by cherishing them or thinking about them first. Finally, I can then get a different perspective of what love includes as well as kindness and good deeds.

In the poem, *Count That Day Lost*, to summarize the author, she starts off with the first stanza as a happy/enlightened one. In *Count That Day Lost*, Eliot wrote:

“That eased the heart of him who heard,  
One glance most kind,

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That fell like sunshine where it went-

Then you may count that day well spent.”

The point of that stanza is if I do something good for another person, I can count that day well spent and move on to tomorrow. In the second stanza of *Count That Day Lost* the stanza is a dreary and sad one. For example, Eliot wrote:

“That brought the sunshine to one face-

No act most small

That helped some soul and nothing cost-

Then count that day as worse than lost.”

Eliot is saying that if I do nothing for someone, or blow him or her off, the day should not even count as one. It would be a total waste.

The short story, *Thank You Ma’am*, starts off a little sketchy, but then comes to a heart-warming feeling. To summarize, Roger is a younger child, about fourteen or fifteen, who is on the street in a city the same time as Mrs. Jones. Roger then tries to steal her purse and run, but he fails and Mrs. Jones grabs him and yells at him. She takes him to her home, and she leaves the door open. Roger thought about taking off with the purse, but he doesn’t. He stays, which is the climax of the story. She takes him to her house because he appears to be dirty, so she washes him up a little bit and feeds him a meal. They have a heart felt conversation about how Mrs. Jones did some things that she is not proud of and Roger goes on about how he wants a pair of blue suede shoes. Mrs. Jones felt the impression that he is on his own basically, so she gives him ten dollars to go towards the pair of shoes he wants. At the end, he says thank you and leaves.

*Count That Day Lost* has a theme to not waste the day because if I do, I should count it as a day lost. When distinguishing what a day lost is, it has

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many different meanings. For example, I may think it is not getting out of bed until after my snooze alarm has gone off about five times. For others, a day lost might include not getting an A on an exam, or holding the door for someone. According to HOTS, I have interpreted the poem from another point of view. In *Count That Day Lost*, Eliot wrote:

“You’ve nothing done that you can trace  
That brought the sunshine to one face-“

When trying to define what she is saying, I think that holding the door for someone would make his or her day better because it would for me. Although, for my roommate, she would not consider that making someone’s day better because holding the door should be an everyday occurrence. To relate the poem to the short story, Eliot wrote:

“And, counting, find  
One self-denying deed, one word,  
That eased the heart of him who heard,”

That quote relates to the short story because Mrs. Jones was talking to Roger while in her house about the bad things she has done in her lifetime. Roger felt that she trusted him now that he didn’t try to run, and he didn’t want to be on her bad side again. Roger offered to run to the store for her, but Mrs. Jones did not need anything. Also, Mrs. Jones “eased the heart of him who heard” because she gave Roger ten dollars to go buy the blue suede shoes he was talking about. All together, Mrs. Jones can count that day well spent because she accomplished taking care of Roger and giving him something to go toward what he really wanted. The two themes of these two pieces are interchangeable because they both deal with the same ideas. To count a day well spent, I must show love and trust to make the person feel good about themselves. The themes depend on each other

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too. It is like a domino effect; to receive one effect, one of the same kind must happen.

The mood of the poem starts off untroubled and then turns into an unwelcoming feeling. I think the author started off this way interest the readers because the poem takes an unexpected turn in the second stanza, which wasn't expected. After reading the poem, I thought to myself what have I done to make my day well spent and I bet most of the people who read this would agree. The short story, starts off the opposite way, but still has the same mood, just in a different order. When Roger tries to steal Mrs. Jones purse, that sets the tone as an unwelcoming feeling, but then Mrs. Jones takes Roger back to her house and feeds him and talks to him, that is a nice welcoming feeling. The mood engages the audience and I think that makes them read between the lines better. When I say read between the lines, I mean discover different meanings from a different perspective. A simile I found in *Count That Day Lost* is as follows: "That fell like sunshine where it went-". The simile can relate to *Thank You, Ma'am* because Roger probably felt loved after dealing with Mrs. Jones. Mrs. Jones had the sense that Roger had no one at home, so she took him in for the day, which probably meant a lot to him even though he did not say. The simile could mean something different than what I think. It could mean Mrs. Jones felt good about herself because she did something nice for a change. So, it could mean that Roger felt good because he received attention, or Mrs. Jones felt good because she did something meaningful. When establishing a mood, I can think one mood is joyful, while another person can think it is only luck. HOTS helped me establish the mood because I had to consider what other people might think which made me dissect all of the lines and figure it out.

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Overall, both of the tones in *Count That Day Lost* and *Thank You, Ma'am*, I believe are serious. The main themes of the two are hand in hand with the tone. In *Count That Day Lost*, it deals with emotions and feelings, which is a serious matter. Then, in *Thank You, Ma'am*, it deals with life lessons and kindness. Once again, HOTS helped me establish tones because I kept inferring back to the poem and story to see what other possibilities could have been made when thinking about it. I am a true believer that the tones all together are serious. While nitpicking, *Count That Day Lost* has different tones within the general one. For example, Eliot wrote:

“That fell like sunshine where it went-  
Then you may count that day well spent.”

Those lines stand out to me because the tone is very cheerful and happy. But, in the second stanza Eliot also wrote, “You’ve cheered no heart, by yea or nay-“. She also wrote:

“You’ve done nothing that you can trace  
That brought the sunshine to one face-“.

These lines represent the complete opposite. The tone is so depressing and lifeless. The author hit it all in this poem by having a happy side, while also having a sad side. Some people might not even notice the different tones in the poem because they just focus on the overall one, which is a serious matter. When I read *Thank You, Ma'am*, the tone came off very serious at first because the story starts off with Roger trying to steal Mrs. Jones purse. Even though the tone is serious, just like the one in the poem, it also has some heartfelt moments in the story. In general, Mrs. Jones takes Roger back to her house to clean him up and feed him. The tones in the story get intertwined through-out because there are so many generous

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gestures that Mrs. Jones does. To prove my point even further, Mrs. Jones gives Roger ten dollars for the blue suede shoes he wanted, even though he was trying to steal her purse at the beginning of the story! Even though HOTS makes me think from different points of views, the tones are pretty straightforward in both these pieces and can be thought the same no matter whom you are.

When I read these two pieces weeks ago, I did not put two and two together that they would fit so nicely for the final. They are so similar in life lessons and point of views that anyone who reads this can figure that out. The pieces made me realize that I need to start thinking about other people and going out of my way to at least try to make their day better, so I can make mine better. It would be such an easy thing to do, but I just don't think about it. Also, reading this two pieces made me smile because it shows that the authors are thinking of ways to make their lives better, while making someone else's better at the same time too.

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Lauren Glinsky

# Crossroads

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In my essay, I will be focusing on the poem, "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost and relating it to the short story, "Thank You Ma'am" by Langston Hughes. I will be using multiple Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) like problem solving, inferring and comparing and contrasting. I will utilize these HOTS and the Reader Response Theory in order to support my explanation of how the two pieces of writing are similar. I will examine the thought process that went in to the decisions that were made in the poem and short story.

First, I will show how problem solving was demonstrated in both pieces. The HOT problem solving is defined as identifying a problem/dilemma and a solution, or identifying a problem and suggesting a solution of your own based on the available information. I will use this HOT to describe how in "The Road Not Taken," the speaker was unsure where to go in his life, but eventually he chose a path and it turned out for the better. I will relate this to "Thank You Ma'am" by showing how Roger had a problem and the way he chose to solve it was not very wise, but he ended up a changed boy because of it. Sometimes, it can be difficult to solve a problem, but regardless, we have to live with our choices we make.

Next, I will show how the HOT inferring played a role in both pieces. Inferring means reading between the lines to understand information that is not explicitly stated. Inferring can be found in "The Road Not Taken" because us, as the readers, have to infer that the character is not faced with a physical road, but yet it is a metaphor for two choices the character has.

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In “Thank You Ma’am,” we have to infer Roger’s reasoning for attempting to steal from Mrs. Jones. In both cases, these concepts were not written out, but we have to read between the lines to try and guess what the author is trying to infer from the context of the pieces.

Lastly, I will use the HOT comparing and contrasting to compare the characters of the pieces and evaluate how their problems and conflicts are similar, but different. Comparing means finding similarities between two or more things, whereas contrasting means, finding differences between two or more things. Then, the reader must form a conclusion based on the two. In “The Road Not Taken,” the character solves his own problem without any help, whereas, in “Thank You Ma’am,” Roger feels stealing from an innocent woman will solve his problems. Both stories have conflicts that must be resolved.

Next, I will discuss the plot lines of the short story and the poem by providing a brief summary. “The Road Not Taken” is written by Robert Frost and is about having to make choices. The speaker in the poem is faced with a dilemma of which path to take. I think the physical path is signifying a real life situation, and visualizing the paths helps us realize the options at hand. The speaker wishes he could try both paths out and see which one would turn out better. Also, the speaker knows each one of the paths are equally good options, so that is what makes the decision so difficult. However, he chooses one and it turns out to be a good pick.

“Thank You Ma’am” is written by Langston Hughes and is about a troubled young boy named Roger. The narrator of the story is omniscient because it is not Roger or Mrs. Jones, but it is someone who knows about the characters and tells the story like they are right there witnessing every action and word. Furthermore, in the story, Roger turns to stealing from an

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innocent woman named Mrs. Jones, in order to buy a new pair of shoes. Mrs. Jones notices that Roger is very dirty looking and seems hungry so she assumes he doesn't have a stable home-life. So, she takes him home with her that night to clean him up, feed him, and teach him some lessons. Once Roger leaves Mrs. Jones' house, he will never be the same boy again.

I chose "The Road Not Taken" and "Thank You Ma'am" to write about together very carefully. Both pieces have dilemmas, but ultimately get solved in the end. I also selected the HOTS I will use to explain and support my ideas very carefully. First, the main point on both pieces is the characters are stuck in a situation and need to figure a way out. By utilizing the HOT of problem solving, I am able to stress how important the problems were in both pieces. Also, both pieces have endings that leave the reader wanting to know more.

To demonstrate the HOT comparing, the poem and short story are similar because they take the reader through a journey of thoughts and emotions. In the poem, the journey is a decision of which path to take and the author vividly explains the thought process that went into making a decision. Throughout each stanza, the poem builds up anticipation and it has the reader on the edge of their seat wondering what the outcome will be. Utilizing the Reader Response Theory, I immediately connected myself to the poem, when I was deciding what major to choose at IUP. Both majors were equally good options, but the one was more risky because it was unusual and was "grassy and wanted wear" (Frost) in a sense like the path is Frost's poem.

Similarly, "Thank You Ma'am" also takes us on a journey and was one of my favorite short stories I've read. Langston Hughes had a way of writing the piece that also kept me on the edge of my seat and wanting to read

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more to find out what happens to Roger. By utilizing the Reader Response Theory, the first thought that popped into my mind while beginning to read the short story was that Roger was going to get turned into the police and that would be the end of him. I thought Mrs. Jones was going to drag Roger all the way to the police station and have him turned in. However, it was refreshing to read how harsh yet sympathetic Mrs. Jones was with him.

In “The Road Not Taken,” Frost wrote: “two roads diverged in a yellow road, and sorry I could not travel both.” The problem in this poem is which road to take, and the speaker regrets he could not try both roads out in order to see what the better option is. This poem shows that we can’t be afraid to take chances and in most situations, we won’t know what the outcome will be until we get there. The two roads symbolize two choices because it uses a concrete image, which is the road, to represent an abstract idea, which are the two choices.

In the short story, “Thank You Ma’am,” Roger is faced with a problem like the speaker in “The Road Not Taken.” Roger’s problem is that he wants a new pair of shoes, but he doesn’t have the money to pay for it. He solves his problem by attempting to steal from Mrs. Jones, but his plan backfires on him when he stumbles and isn’t able to quickly get away with her purse. Then Roger is faced with another problem – how to get away from Mrs. Jones and return home. Roger’s problem wasn’t life threatening, but at the time it was a big decision for him.

To utilize the HOTS contrasting, the poem and the short story are different in a sense because in “The Road Not Taken,” I don’t think Roger thought about his options as carefully as the speaker did in the short story. Roger came up with a solution to him wanting the shoes, but it wasn’t a smart one. Instead of wrongfully stealing from another person, he could have

worked hard and earned some money. Then, he would truly appreciate the value of a dollar. Since Roger was so young, he probably couldn't have a part time job, but maybe he could have did some chores around the house in order to earn some money.

Using the HOT inferring, I inferred from the story that Roger didn't have a great home life because he was dirty, hungry, and didn't have the best morals. It didn't seem like Roger's parents cared very deeply about him, since he was out past eleven at night, roaming the streets. Mrs. Jones also quickly judged Roger because she noticed he was dirty and immediately asked if he was hungry. She also says, "you ought to be my son I would teach you right from wrong" (Hughes). By her saying this, she is inferring that his parents aren't doing a good job of teaching his the right moral values. Roger and Mrs. Jones were complete strangers but end up learning a lot about each other in a short amount of time.

Another similarity between "The Road Not Taken" and "Thank You Ma'am" is the lasting effect it had on the reader with their last statements. Frost wrote, "I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." Frost built up the whole poem so it would end with these last two powerful lines. Throughout the poem, the speaker is weighing his options, and when he finally makes a decision, he is satisfied and it ends up changing his life. Frost ends the poem so that the reader is left to imagine what path the speaker took and how it changed their life. Similarly, in "Thank You Ma'am," I believe Mrs. Jones has changed Roger's life. Even though it was a tough situation to be in, she showed Roger more care and concern than anyone had given him.

Also, Roger was welcomed into her home, and was taught that stealing form someone is not the way to get what you want. In the end, Mrs.

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Jones gave him the money to buy the pair of shoes he so badly wanted. She makes sure to tell him, "I wish you would behave yourself son, from here on in" (Hughes). As Roger was leaving her house, he "wanted to say something other than Thank you Ma'am" (Hughes) because he knew that wouldn't be enough to tell her all she had really done for him. From that moment forward, Roger was a changed boy for the better because of Mrs. Jones. To add, Hughes ended the short story in a way that left the reader wanting to know more, such as what happened to Roger, and if he really did turn his life around. I know there definitely could have been a part three to the story, but Hughes wanted to leave the reader creating their own scenario to what happened after Roger and Mrs. Jones interacted.

While writing this essay, it made me reflect on myself as a reader and a writer. From reading the poem and the story, I was able to imagine how I could have written both differently, with different outcomes. Changing the plot line of both pieces could have still given the reader the same effect, but in a different way. By really reflecting on these two pieces of writing, it made me a better reader because I went back and read the pieces multiple times, and always caught something different. Writing this essay has helped me become a more informed reader and writer because I am more conscience of what I write and how I wish to get my point across. By utilizing the Higher Order Thinking skills, literary terms, and Reader Response Theory, I was able to give a solid interpretation and comparison to the poem and the short story. Moving forward, I will use all the literature tools I now have to be a better reader and writer.

In conclusion, the poem and short story I chose helped me understand the logic behind making decisions. I always tell people I am so indecisive, but I think it is because I am just aware of all my options and want to make

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sure I have all of the information in order to make an informed decision. “The Road Not Taken” helped me realize I am not the only one who comes across a fork in a road. Making choices is a big part of life and we have to be able to make a decision and be willing to live with the consequences of our actions. “Thank You Ma’am” has opened up my eyes and makes me realize some people are very desperate for materialistic objects and are willing to do whatever in order to obtain them. I am very fortunate to be brought up in a loving and safe home where I was taught good morals and beliefs. Not everyone is given an easy start and some people may go down the wrong path. The important thing is that we can learn from our mistakes and decisions and come out a new person from our experiences.

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Bryant Ludwiczak

# Solving Social Problem With The Power of Poetry

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For this assignment I chose to write about option two, making a connection between two of the poems we have read in this class. The two poems I chose to connect are “Count That Day Lost”, by George Eliot and “As I Grew” by Langston Hughes. I chose these poems, because they were easily my favorite poems we read so far. I also believe I could easily connect these two poems. I plan on comparing the structures of both poems as well identify the literary terms used in these poems. In my paper I plan on identifying all the similarities and differences between these poems, and showing how both authors used their poems to help solve problems that they faced while they were living.

The Higher Order of think I used to make a connection between these two poems is problem solving. Through the readers response theory I came to the conclusion that these poems share a common theme in problem solving. I believe both authors wrote their poems to help solve socials problems that they faced during their lives. Both authors felt it was there duty to try to solve these problems through their poetry.

To truly understand these poems I believe it is very important to learn some background information about the authors who wrote these poems. These authors came from very different backgrounds and time periods, but were both faced with similar issues that they had to face.

George Eliot and Langston Hughes are two very different people. The first big difference between these authors that many people probably didn't



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know is that George Eliot is actually a woman. George Eliot was just the pen name for Mary Ann Evans. She was a British writer who lived during the Victorian age. She had to use a Pen name because many people wouldn't have respected her writing if they knew the truth about her sex. Mary Ann Evans was very different from many of the women who lived during her time. During this time period women were thought of as second-class citizens and were not well respected. Mary Ann Evans had dreams of being more than just a housekeeper and wouldn't just sit back and watch people treat women unfairly. She refused to conform to the society she lived in. She was a very straightforward woman and she knew right from wrong.

After reading the poem *Count That Day Lost* and using the reader response theory it is my interpretation that the poem has a simple structure with a clear straight forward message. She starts off the Poem off with "If you sit down at set of sun" (Eliot 2013). It is a very simple line but very important, it starts the tempo for the poem. In the first line she directly addresses the reader. She does this throughout the poem by continually using the word you. I believe the author does this because she is a straightforward person with a clear message to get across to her readers. The poem has a simple rhyming scheme; I believe she used this simple scheme so the reader can focus more on theme of the poem. I believe the author is encouraging her readers to be virtuous people, who treat others well. In lines 4-8 of *Count That Day Lost* the author says "One self-denying deed, one word that fell, eased the heart of him who heard, one glance most kind that fell like sunshine where it went- then you may count that day well spent." (Eliot 2014) I believe the author is telling the readers that it isn't enough to just go through your day; you should try to bring joy to others everyday. I also feel the author uses sunshine as a metaphor for happiness. If you can

make those around you happy, it was a good day. In the second stanza she then proceeds to tell us how to have a bad or a “lost day”. In lines 10-15 she says “If through it all You’ve nothing done that can trace that brought the sunshine to one face- no act most small that helped some soul and nothing cost-then count that day as worse than lost.” (Eliot 2013) I believe the author is saying to her readers that no kind act is too small, and it should be a goal to make at least one other person happy during the day. I believe the author wrote about this topic because through her life she felt like her and many other women during her time were mistreated. By writing these poems she helped pave the way for other women who didn’t feel the need to be the typical Victorian women.

Another author that knows how it feels to be mistreated is Langston Hughes. Langston Hughes and Mary Ann Evans are two very different people from very different backgrounds, but both used poetry to protest the way certain types of people were getting treated.

Langston Hughes was a black author that lived during the early 19th century. He was born in the rural south, which was at the time a very racist place. Similar to women during the Victorian, blacks during this time were considered second-class citizen. Later on in his life he moved North to New York where he was part of a movement called the Harlem-Renaissance which promoted African- American culture. In his poetry he protested racism. “As I Grew Older” is a great example of his poetry that protests racism.

Similar to “Count The Day Lost”, “ As I Grew Older” is a poem with a clear theme. The theme of this poem is to show the negative effects of racism. The poem’s structure is very simple. But the poem has a slightly different structure than “Count The Day Lost”; the poem consists of only

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one stanza and doesn't rhyme. I believe the author did this so people would spend more time thinking about the theme of the poem. The poem starts off with speaker talking optimistically about the dream he had as a child. He compares his childhood dream to being bright like the sun. Sun light is something that both authors refer to in their poems. I believe they both use sunlight to represent happiness.

As the poem continues the tone and perspective of the story changes as well. This is very different from the poem "Count The Day Lost" which is told from just one perspective. In lines 7-11 the Author says "And then the wall rose, rose slowly, slowly, between me and my dream." (Hughes 2014) In these lines you can tell the poem has become more depressing and he is no longer telling the story as a child but as a man. He refers to a wall that is rising between him and his dream. I interpreted the wall to be a metaphor for racism. He also continually refers to the shadow the wall is casting over him. I believe it is a metaphor for the negative side effect of racism. In line 14 the authors reveals his race when he says, "I am black" (Hughes 2014). You can tell the speaker is very unhappy with the way he is treat and he is finally ready to do something about it. I can relate to being mistreated, and I would agree it's a terrible dark feeling. He talks about breaking through the wall to find the light and smash the darkness. He also asks for help to destroy the wall that is blocking him from the light. I believe the author trying to tell his readers that he we will only be able to stop racism with the help of others.

After reading these poems I have come to the conclusion that these poems were written with the purpose of solving social problems that both authors had to face. Both poems have pretty simple structures, which helps the reader focus more on the theme of the poems. I believe the authors

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did this specifically, because they had clear messages to get across in their writings. Both poems teach lessons that can be used in everyday life. These poems were written with the purpose to change things in society that the authors felt was unfair. Both authors come from worlds where they were not given the easy paths to success, but they still managed to make a huge impact on the world with their poetry. With the power of his writings Langston Hughes was able to help start the Harlem Renaissance that helped the black community in many ways, and ended many ugly and untrue stereotypes that many people believed about black people back then. Mary Ann Evans also had to overcome ugly and untrue stereotypes about women. She changed the way women were thought about during her time period and showed everyone that women were capable of being more than just housekeepers. Through these authors' poetry they were able to shine light on the issues they felt were important. Through poetry the authors were able to change the way society looked at people like them. After reading these poems I have come to the conclusion that poetry truly has the power to impact the real world and help solve real problems in society.

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Barry Smith

# Inferring, Or In Other Words, Connecting The Dots

Reading poems in general, can be such a confusing thing. On one hand you're trying to figure out what message the author is trying to convey within the poem and on the other hand you're also trying to make out what the poem does for you and how it makes you feel. Its all very challenging. One method that can make poem reading a tad bit easier though, is the HOTS of inferring and/or distinguishing different perspectives. One of the poems that will be used to analyze this method is "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost and the other poem that will be looked at is "As I Grew Older" by Langston Hughes. The main theme that is going to be discussed about these two poems is how can the reader understand and connect more to a poem by using inferring and and also distinguishing different perspectives. By using this particular method of HOTS, one can relate more to what the author is saying and can also interpret the message of the poem in an easier way.

Using the methods of HOTS can be such a useful thing, but understanding them is the first step. To use the Inferring HOTS, means to read between the lines to understand information that is not explicitly stated. For example, what a person is saying will give us a clue into whether or not he/she is angry, sad, happy, etc. without it actually being said. For distinguishing different perspectives it means identifying different points of view within the text and also identifying different points of view among the readers of the text. For example, when reading a text or poem, one will want to see how the characters change from beginning to end and

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how what they say and do changes also. Another example of this is if one identifies with another reader's take on the text or poem and compares and contrasts to see how they are alike and different. By using these HOTS to analyze the poems, it will make the poems more relatable and easier to comprehend. By inferring and distinguishing different perspectives, the poems will be shown in a new light and also the message that is in the poems itself will be much more clearer.

One of the poems that will be used as analysis is the poem "As I Grew Older" by Langston Hughes. Mainly, the poem is about racism, oppression and discrimination and the effects it has on an African American throughout his life from childhood to adulthood. This particular poem has a lot of depth and emotion behind the written words. It is so powerful, that the reader has no choice but to feel sadness, anger and at the end hopeful that poet is finally to break through the shadowy darkness that is oppression, and able to reach his dream inspite of the racism that was against him because of his black skin. The method of inferring can be used in this poem to understand the message that is within the poem. In the first line of the poem it says "It was a long time ago. I have almost forgotten my dream". We, as readers, can infer from this line that the poet is somewhere talking about his past. There is also a sad tone when the poet says this. We can also infer that at this point, the poet is also an adult thinking about the dream that he had as a young child. Another line in the poem that inferring can be used on is when the poet says "The wall. Shadow. I am black. I lie down in the shadow. No longer the light of my dream before me,". For this line, we can infer that something dark is blocking his way to reaching his dream and that is the shadow which is symbolic for the color of the poets skin. The color of the poets skin, which is black, is his wall thats stopping him

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from achieving his dreams because of the racism and discrimination that is against him and his skin color. Because of this discrimination, we can also infer that the poet is angry and sad about the injustice that is against him and equally, the people of the same race as him. At the end of the poem, the poet says “To break this shadow, Into a thousand lights of sun,

Into a thousand whirling dreams Of sun!”. What we as readers can infer from this line is that the poet is hopeful, that even though he is black, he will not let the color of his skin stop him from achieving his dream. The tone that can be felt from this line is a hopeful and excited one. From inferring we know that despite the hardships, the Author is very sure that he will find a way to come out victorious.

If we, as the readers, wanted to also use the method of distinguishing different perspectives, this poem is the perfect one to use it for. In this poem there are three different perspectives, one of the naive child in the beginning of the poem, one of the somber and defeated black man in the middle of the poem, and one of the hopeful, and enthusiastic man in the end. The beginning of the poem can be seen as the perspective of a child because of the innocence that is attached to what the speaker is saying. He says “But it was there then, In front of me, Bright like a sun My dream.” The child has not gone through the injustice of what it feels like to grow up black in a white mans world and still sees his dream as not only possible but a reality. The second perspective can be taken from the line that says “I lie down in the shadow. No longer the light of my dream before me.” From this, we see a defeated man, as he lies down and seemingly gives up and even embraces the injustice that is given unfairly to him because of his black skin. And finally, we see the third perspective at the end of the poem when the poet says “ Help me to shatter this darkness,To smash this

night, To break this shadow.” This now, shows the perspective of a man, that even though he was beaten down with oppression and racism, he is willing to fight back and achieve his dream.

The other poem that will be looked at is “The Road Not Taken” By Robert Frost. This poem is speaking about how everything in this life has a choice and consequence and its what you decide to do with the choice that you have taken that really makes the difference. In the poem, A man is at two forks in the road and has to choose between them, knowing that he can not take both roads. He finally chooses one and continues down his path of life. We, as readers, can infer from the first line that says “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both” that even from the beginning the speaker is the type of person that doesn’t make decisions easy. Confusion and indecisiveness can also definitely be inferred from this first line also. As, the poem goes on, the speaker says “Though as for that the passing there Had worn them really about the same”. From inferring, we can see that the speaker is comparing the two roads and doesn’t see anything different between the two which makes his decision of choosing one of them even harder. Finally, the speaker chooses what road to take by saying “I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.” By saying this line, we can use inferring to understand that the speaker feels content with the decision that he has made. Although he didn’t know what the other path led to, he knows that it is the choices you make during the path that truly matters. If he had chosen the other path and made the same decisions, he still would have ended up in the same place in the future.

Using the HOTS methods of inferring and distinguishing different perspectives has brought these two poems that have been analyzed



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into a new light. It made the two poems easier to understand and also gave us, as the readers, another way to connect to the poems. The message of the two poems was understood and by inferring and distinguishing different perspectives, it gave us the chance to delve even deeper into what the poet was trying to say.

Liza Parks

# Comparing & Contrasting the Lessons of Life

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The variety of incredibly valuable pieces of poetry we have studied all share extremely meaningful life lessons. By comparing and contrasting the important lessons that these authors have taught within these poems, I was able to find many similarities and differences in the themes, characters, conflicts, symbolism, beliefs and word-use. The famous authors producing the poetry I have studied are Billy Collins, Robert Frost, George Eliot and Langston Hughes. Each author told a story with their poem that portrayed crucial life lessons, either from personal experience, observation or simply their belief systems. The two poems I will be comparing and contrasting are “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost and “As I Grew Older” by Langston Hughes. Both authors wrote these poems based on personal experiences that ended positively and I sincerely enjoyed studying the content.

“The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost tells a story of a man presented with a decision that could affect the entire course of his life. The man seemed to cautiously analyze his options, by standing in front of the two paths and scoping out the scenery. He bravely decided to take the path that was not “worn,” or commonly taken by others. This symbolizes courage in going against the social norm. The third stanza of the poem reads, “And both that morning equally lay in leaves no step had trodden black. Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back” (Frost). This whole stanza sparked my interest because of its meaning. It represented the bold action of taking the

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path that wasn't normally taken by people. It represented the character's courage to be different in life, regardless of the potential riskiness of his decision. The last few lines of this stanza portray the character's thoughts on the future. He knows that "way leads onto way" in life and he "doubted he should ever come back," representing the idea of having no regrets with his choice of doing something out of the ordinary. The end of the poem is my all-time favorite conclusion in our entire English poetry collection. The character's role switches from the past-tense to the present in this stanza. He writes that now he is able to look back at the decision of taking the road less traveled-by and he is proud of it, because it made all the difference in his life. This poem is incredibly easy to relate too. The various themes in this poem include: everything in life happens for a reason, you must take risks to obtain success, and you must be courageous and be a leader instead of a follower. There are many similarities and differences in this poem and Langston Hughes' poem "As I Grew Older."

Langston Hughes writes his poem "As I Grew Older" about his personal experience of battling the struggles of racism as he grew into adolescence and then adulthood. In the beginning of the poem, he compares his childhood dreams to the sun, which symbolizes the invincibility of a child's dreams. Then the poem takes a turn for the worst when Hughes writes of a rapidly growing wall that serves as the biggest obstruction to his goals and dreams. After the presentation of the everlasting wall that blocks his dreams, the poem reads that the man recognizes that his African descent is the reason his dreams aren't coming true. The poem states, "I am black. I lie down in the shadow. No longer the light of my dream before me," (Hughes) which shows that the man was submissive to the discouraging aspects of racism. The poem ends with the character realizing

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that he's perfectly capable of overcoming the struggles of being black in that era. He turns his discouragement into positive energy to fuel his success. The poem exclaims, "My hands! My dark hands! Break through the wall! Find my dream!" These lines symbolize the character conquering racism and continuing the pursuit of his dreams. This poem's story serves as an encouragement to people to do whatever it takes to fulfill their dreams and pursue success. It discusses a very realistic situation in which a man is submissive and weak to racism, it is normal to be intimidated by such a thing. The contrasts and comparisons between the two poems "The Road Not Taken" and "As I Grew Older" are significant.

As a reader, I have found that it's all a matter of analyzing the poem down to each word. As a reader, you must make sense of the various line structure, grammar and word usage, plot, characters, and ultimately the theme of the poem. The reader-response theory is important to utilize when comparing and contrasting the qualities of each poem. Digging into the roots of a poem and connecting the background information usually allows a reader to obtain a better understanding of the "what, where, why and how" the poem was written. Although I've come to an understanding that each reader will interpret a poem's meaning differently based on their belief systems, I feel that the variety of criticism and interpretations would allow one to pick out the similarities and differences within the two poems much easier. So that is exactly what I've done!

Both Robert Frost and Langston Hughes seemed to share similar life experiences with the construction of their poetry. Frost's "The Road Not Taken" begins with a discouraged character that is faced with an important decision that will affect his future, just like Hughes' character in "As I Grew Older" is faced with a decision to be submissive to the racism, or conquer

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it. Both of the poems lines consisted of descriptive language, including many similes and metaphors and powerfully symbolic adjectives. Both of the characters in the poem seemed to be men who cautiously tip-toed through life but then chose to be courageous when it came to the same kind of life-changing decision they were presented with. With that said, both of the characters in these two poems displayed courage and the risk-taking required to pursue success. The characters both spoke of exactly how they ended up succeeding in life, which is a remarkable similarity within the story lines of these pieces of poetry. The concluding stanza of "The Road Not Taken" has the character in present-tense, saying that that single decision that he made in his past brought him to where he is right now. The concluding lines of "As I Grew Older" has the character exploding with joy and excitement because he realizes that he is able to rise above the discrimination of his color and do something great with himself. I also found that the two poems were comparable because both tell an encouraging story of persons who went against the current societal norms and came out on top, because of it. Contrasting the two poems was difficult; I was attracted to the significant similarities. Robert Frost writes vividly of an entirely different kind of setting than Langston Hughes uses in his poem. Frost is presented with a decision, but decides to boldly take on the "path not taken" whilst Hughes' character is very hesitant and submissive to the darkness of racism. Hughes' exclamatory language within his poem perfectly symbolized strength, joy, success, and overcoming negativity. Robert Frost did not have any exclamatory language in his poem, but rather told a success story displaying a message of peaceful victory in life. Therefore, the tones of the two poems were very different. Another blatant difference between the poems was that Langston

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Hughes had a very meaningful background story behind his poem, "As I Grew Older." This poem was very famous in the Harlem Renaissance era because it relayed a message of hope to fellow black people, encouraging them that they could conquer the racism that was present in those days. I feel as if Langston Hughes powerful experience, message, theme and use of words made his poem more complex and meaningful to a certain group of people, as Robert Frost's poem gave a very general message to any person. Overall, the comparing and contrasting of Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" and Langston Hughes' "As I Grew Older," was compelling. Both famous poems and these specific pieces of poetry told different stories in different ways, but shared meanings and language that could be beneficial to any reader.

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Rachael Warmington

# NARRATIVE WRITING

**N**arrative essays are a creative way for students to explore and support their opinions about issues that impact their lives. Since the narrative essays rely upon personal experience, students are able to think about and share their own stories. A narrative approach, however, is not simply the telling of a story; it is the telling of a story to make a larger point or to illustrate a bigger idea. This enables students to add their voices to a larger conversation. Connecting their experience to a larger conversation is also the first step towards synthesizing their ideas with ideas of others and helps to introduce and/or refine the skills they will need for college writing.

Narrative essays are generally told from the perspective of the author which means that the story is told from the author's point of view. The author can use elements of persuasion to convince the audience to see things from his or her point of view or provide details that will enable readers to understand the larger point or bigger idea that he or she is trying to make. Since narrative essays are telling a story, all the elements of plot also need to be present. The conflict needs to be introduced early in the narrative and there needs to be rising action leading up to the crisis moment. Writers also need to include, the falling action, the events and/or details that lead to the resolution of the conflict. Writers also have the option to begin their stories in *medias res* (the middle of things). Stories told in *medias res* often begin at the crisis moment or in the middle of the story. Then the necessary background information or backstory is told either through exposition, dialogue and/or flashbacks. Lastly, the larger point or bigger idea that the author is trying to articulate to readers is the theme of the story.

The following chapter includes examples of student narrative essays that were assigned in

multiple English 101 classes at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. These essays have been edited by the students themselves and not by the editorial staff. This will provide instructors with teachable moments related to both higher and lower level revision concerns that will assist students in developing writing and revision skills.

# Assignment Prompt for “The Ashes of a Pessimist”

**Instructor: Dr. Jason Long**

**Course: 101**

Paper #1: The Personal Narrative. Your first composition will adopt the form of a personal autobiography. In this essay, you'll be expected to write a story about yourself. But instead of listing a bunch of facts and figures, you will present yourself to your reader by telling a story that says something significant about yourself. The topic is free for you to choose, so you may write about any subject that you wish. For instance, you may want to tell me about your journey to IUP. Or you may want to tell me a story about your family back home. Or you may want to tell me about the happiest moment in your life. Regardless of the topic you choose, you should end your story by describing the significance of the event you are describing, and why it is important to you.

No matter what subject you decide to write about, make sure that you 1) put some time into your composition, and 2) express something about who you are and what you enjoy. Although you may decide to compose something other than an essay (e.g., a one-act play, a poem, a musical piece, or a work of art), your composition must be accompanied by a brief essay that shapes your work into a compelling tale that conveys the meaning and importance of the event, experience, or thing you are describing. There is no page length requirement for this assignment. However, in order to get a good grade on your composition, you should try to make your essay at least three pages (double-spaced) in length. This composition is worth 100 points, and it will be peer-reviewed and shared with other students in the class.



# The Ashes of a Pessimist



The environment of a person’s life results completely in their conjured mind state. My mentality of the perception of thought that I endured this summer was enlightening, but at the same time was inflamed with trial and personal battle. Throughout my composition, I will give phrases of my poem I wrote. Then, I will explain chronologically events that used to drive me to a negative mindset on basically everything, and how I was “reborn” into the mind state of more of an optimistic perception of life.

“My own blood,  
My brother bled,  
The crippling affliction began to take hold,  
Therefore my summer, began in the cold,”

Freshly out of high school, ignorant of opportunity, and driven by solely testosterone, I was ready to start anew. I was enjoying the festivities of my graduating class’s parties and completely suffocated by euphoria. Until one day the fragile pane of my life was shattered when my mother told me my brother was in the hospital. My brother has a disease called ulcerative colitis and one day he passed out from losing so much blood he had to go into the emergency room. In the hospital I watched my big brother disintegrate from 220 lbs. to 150lbs. I became thoroughly depressed as I felt somewhat my own mortality was being suppressed with him. At this time I seemed to decay as rotten soil when finally, I met a florist that was not afraid to plant a seed of hope that grew within me. Little did I know, the budding of her flower would further taint my soil seemingly past repair.

## Erick Meade • The Ashes of a Pessimist

“You came to pollinate my hurt-filled heart,  
You grasped me with a sting,  
Such accuracy,  
Like a bull’s-eye from a dart.”

Somewhere into the universe my despair must’ve been heard. Hermes must have been ordered by Cupid to relay a message to my reality by bringing Pamela and me together. I met Pamela literally when my brother was in the hospital and I thought that maybe she could be the bandage to constrict my seeping wounds. We developed a relationship that disembodied our everyday lives and being with her I seemed to create a hallucinogenic effect on escaping my reality. She was the morphine that numbed my aching mind, and my pain was relieved every single day we were together. Of course, just as the universe lifted me into its cradle, Hades had other plans.

“Instinct blurs reason,  
Only some will see,  
No ring,  
Adultery is no sin,  
Which is why,  
I am,  
Contrived to Oblivion,”

Pamela was so perfect for me and with college coming relatively close, (this was in late July), and I knew I was going to have to leave her. Instead of living out the rest of the dreamlike days of summer together, Pamela severed my needle too soon and the damage was done. I caught her cheating with my best friend John and the terrible effects of withdrawal set in. My mind state was of pure chaos. I couldn’t sleep and the betrayal I

## Erick Meade • The Ashes of a Pessimist

witnessed before me was none I thought I could bear. I clinged hopelessly to sanity as I awaited my next stop on this continuous train of life, college.

“Swept away by the winds of the past,  
Being saved causes such strife,  
In my mind,  
Day and night,  
During this time,  
Is the pity of life.”

When I first came to college I completely and utterly hated it. Sitting in my tiny dorm, the walls felt like mirrors reflecting my emotions and thoughts into my eyes and blinding me. I was writing terrible dark poetry, mainly pointed at Pamela and my friend for their wrongdoings. I truly did not want to feel happy. I was annoyed with my roommate and basically everything. The friends I had up here were trying to not see me as much because I would only bring them down. The only thing that eased this torture was partying. I partied way too much and in a way it made things so much worse. I lived like this for only about a month until I came home and I saw my brother. Seeing him and the way he acted happily, made me think about the first time my perception of life changed. He was completely happy and I just didn't understand how he was so positive after he was so damaged by his illness. Happiness that I seemed to cover in a thick fog of negativity dispersed and came back into the light. I came to the realization that I was so ignorantly consumed in what happened with Pamela that I completely forgot about my brother and the hardship he had that made me sad in the first place. At this point I honestly wanted to make an effort to feel happy and better about myself. So, I wrote the first piece of positive poetry in a long time.

## Erick Meade • The Ashes of a Pessimist

“True strength to pass this is what I seek,  
We all have hardships,  
But that’s just Satan’s seed.”

My recovery began and writing was my sanctuary. Philosophizing about my writing process, I wrote positively, and much of the best poetry I have written has come out of the tiny dorm that I used to hate.

“When the pen is to the paper,  
The mask is to the wind,”

I no longer had to hide from feelings of joy and happiness, nor did I have to disguise these thoughts with some sort of sympathetic costume. The little dorm was my safe haven and where I could really let my mind delve into creative places.

“Leave these humorous thoughts of yours behind,  
No man can bloom such sin or sign,  
It’s funny,  
That such a little room,  
Can bring out,  
A labyrinth in the mind.”

After first semester ended and Christmas break came I can truthfully say I was back to my old self. I really feel enlightened and more humble through this transformative experience. In a way I believe I grew more as a person and have a clearer mind state and a warmer hope for the future. I am human, and obviously I am not exuding positivity all the time, but I would declare myself as more of an optimist than what I used to be. This made me conjure up the idea of mind states about optimism and pessimism. As cliché as this observation sounds, I believe for somebody to be more positive about any situation that they must first go through some

## Erick Meade • The Ashes of a Pessimist

type of anguish or misery. For somebody to be more optimistic they must first be trialed by events that make them a pessimist. With the power of self-realization, a person can change perspective and mind state and become mentally stronger, as a person than they once were before the fire that enveloped them.

“From the ashes of a pessimist,

The phoenix took form,

Bonded by fire,

An optimist,

Reborn.”

# Assignment Prompt for “Personal Narrative,” “My Life: Four Pages,” and “Taking It Home”

Instructor: AJ Schmitz

Course: 101

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## Personal Narrative Assignment Sheet

A personal narrative is simply a story about YOU. For this assignment, I want you to transport the reader to a place that has some special meaning to you--Heinz Field--your local coffee shop--your freshman homeroom--the house you grew up in--somewhere that has meaning to you. Once you have the place, tell the reader a story about a time in that place when something significant happened--a first kiss, maybe, or hearing the news of a sick relative, or even the time you found out you got into college.

The story should have:

- A beginning middle and end, but these elements need not be in that order (think of Pulp Fiction);
- Some sort of resolution or realization about yourself and your place in this world (Basically a “Moral of the Story”);
- DETAILS--the narrative should be dripping with details that describe the place you are in and your place within said place;
- Drama--there should be something at stake, movement, action (discussion is just as active as a half-court game of basketball, if you write it that way), something that will keep the reader engaged;
- Your own voice--how you see things, interpret them, and how you sound when describing these things. I want to hear the events unfold in your voice, not someone else’s, and not in a cold, academic way. The voice that comes through should be more akin to you telling a story over coffee with friends than explaining the endoplasmic reticulum in a biology class.

This assignment is designed to introduce you to the writing process this course is built upon, as well as introduce me to both you and your writing. While this is a personal and more creative piece, there is still room for critical thinking, analysis, and the inclusion of information that we cover in Unit I. Grading will follow a strict rubric which will include the above elements [...].

If you get stuck on any part of this paper, talk to your classmates, call your friends at home, visit the Writing Center, or, as always, see me at office hours.

While many of you may not especially like writing, this assignment is an easy way to get you into good writing habits as well as start our course off with writing that is easier to conceive because we have lived it.

Alex Paul

# Personal Narrative

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I lifted my head off the wooden desk and smeared my sweaty palms against my eyes. I looked up at the clock and began gathering my books and my calculator. As I put my pencil into my pocket, the bell rang, but this time it was different. I ascended from my chair like I was waking up from a bad dream and shifted to the exit with the rest of the room. As I walked to my locker I saw mobs of people exchanging hugs and saying goodbyes to one another. Not me. I was leaving right now and nobody was going to stop me. I opened my locker and put what I needed into my bag for the last time and headed down towards the parking lot. It was the last day of high school and it couldn't have ended sooner.

It was scorching outside and the day was still young. The sunlight beamed against my skin as I waited next to the familiar dusty blue Mustang. The car beeped and the locks flipped open and I sat inside on the roasting passenger seat. It always surprised me that the inside of the car didn't reek of smoke. He opened the driver seat door and threw his sweatshirt in the backseat. After taking a brief moment to light a cigarette, he started the car. His name was Andrew and I met him playing Yu-Gi-Oh! cards in second grade.

He took the cigarette out of his mouth for a second, "You still coming tonight?"

"Yeah, sure," I responded.

Andrew was throwing a party at his house. He normally invited me, but I always said no. I'm not an extrovert, and watching people get wasted is

## Alex Paul • Personal Narrative

gross; but it was the last day of school. Whatever happened would easily be left behind when I left for school in the fall. I figured it wouldn't hurt to give it a try.

Andrew's house has always been a special place. Since I've known him for such a long time, his family saw a lot of me. If I ever ran into any trouble, I was always welcome. Often I would hang around just because I didn't have a reason to go home. Most weeks, I likely spent more time there than at even my own house. You'd think there were five maids working there from how clean everything was. The only noise in the house would be from his mother's vacuum cleaner and the thunder from the living room's flat screen television. My ears rang with anticipation when Andrew unlocked the door, but were met with silence. It wasn't the same without his parents home. The walls were stacked with mirrors and religious oil paintings. The wallpaper, the furniture, and even the floor seemed to reflect the glinting from the brass ornaments scattered around. The kitchen smelled like food, but there never was any unless the family was home. Its garlicky aroma left an insatiable desire that led me to peeking into the refrigerator.

Andrew walked into the kitchen, "There's no food in there."

"Yeah, I saw," I responded, "How many people are going to be here?"

He shrugged. I walked up the stairs towards Andrew's room. The carpet up the stairs was so clean you'd think it cleaned itself. I walked into his room, dimly lit by the sun struggling through the curtains. In the corner of the room was a humidifier to help Andrew breathe at night. Its silent hum left the air fresh and smelling like eucalyptus. In front of one of the windows was a lamp with a pirate ship wheel as a base. I sat down on the bed and pressed my head against the wall. On the shelves around the room were the Lego sets we built, collected, and traded together. On the



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walls were glossy Pokémon posters that were wrinkled at the corners. It reminded me of a simpler time.

I heard the doorbell ring downstairs and cracked my eyes open. The room was black except for the glow in the dark stars stuck to the ceiling. I lay there for a moment. Muffled bass coming from the floor below drowned the hum of the humidifier. I heard voices of people I didn't know. I reached my hand into my pocket for my phone. The light from the screen burnt my eyes. I had two missed calls and a text asking where I was. It was 9:03. I slid out of the bed and onto my feet. I leaned back against the bed as I tried to formulate a plan for how I was going to act. I decided it didn't matter and that I just needed to find Andrew. My pulse drummed through my ears as I crept toward the exit. With my shaking right hand, I turned the knob of the door connecting me to the outside. The door cracked open and the light from the hallway pierced my comfort zone. I dragged my feet onwards and pulled the knob behind me that sealed away my innocent memories.

I walked down the carpeted stairs, careful to avoid a patch of something liquid on the soft carpet steps. I saw a few people standing by the front door, but I ignored them and walked into the kitchen that felt like almost my own. The aroma from the invisible food was blocked by a sickly sweet odor. There was a rabble of people crowded around the island that I'd never seen before. I turned around and headed towards the front door when somebody tapped me on the shoulder.

"Hey, where were you?" It was Andrew.

"Oh, I fell asleep upstairs."

"Okay, well," He looked at the people in the kitchen and then back at me, "I need you to go out and get ice."

"Why?" I questioned my friend of nearly ten years.

## Alex Paul • Personal Narrative

“You’re the only one here who can right now,” he said as he handed me his keys.

I said alright and continued towards the foyer, which was only lit through the kitchen. I hung my head low, but I was startled when my eyes crossed a figure. She was positioned in a feral-like crouch against the wall adjacent to the door and wore dark makeup that was dimly illuminated by the screen of her phone. I avoided any contact and slipped through the exit. The sky outside was dark without any sight of a star. The air felt fresh, despite somebody smoking on the porch. He had a lip ring and tipped his cigarette at me. I drove the familiar blue Mustang to the local Turkey Hill. I had no idea how much was needed, so I bought two large bags.

I strolled back into the house with the two giant bags of ice; I was mentally numb and desperate for a reason to understand. I opened the door to see the boy who was smoking outside sitting with the girl that was in front of the door. I stepped into the kitchen that now contained two people that I recognized from the marching band. I looked up at the golden chandelier to see it entombed in a blanket of smoke. I scanned the living room where I saw Andrew blended with the group from earlier. A bubbler was surrounded on the table. There was a girl in the middle of telling a story for the glazed circle around her. I stood there with the two bags like an obelisk made of the ice itself as I waited for somebody to tell me what to do. After waiting for a few minutes, I lifted the bags up onto the island.

“Just tell Andrew he can pay me back later,” I said to anyone who was listening and left.

The air outside was warm and welcomed me to walk home. I paced through the grass to my backyard and sat on the wooden swing that creaked to remind me that I was alone. My phone vibrated with a text from Andrew

## Alex Paul • Personal Narrative

asking where I was and I immediately put it back into my pocket. I leaned back against the swing and looked up into the sky with no stars.

# My Life: Four pages



I feel like my head is going to explode, like I am going to lose my lunch. The first thing she is going to ask is to tell me a little bit about myself. It's always the first question and the most challenging. My hands are so clammy and sweaty that I did not want to shake the lady's hand, but I still sat with them clenched—waiting. Tell me a little about yourself is probably the hardest thing to do especially in an interview where all you want to do is impress the person sitting in front of you. I struggle with it because I don't know what they want to hear. I have been alive for 18 years though shouldn't I be able to tell people about myself?

Let me start before the 18 years though. My parents were high school sweethearts and my mother's parents were basically Romeo and Juliet, just without the dying part. When someone asks what love is, I see my parents and my grandparents. I look to them to understand how to love and how to treat people the way they should be treated in a relationship. Of course in high school I wanted to be like my parents. I thought I was going to marry the kid I was with, but then things went downhill when I came to college. You don't really see the real person in someone until you are living hours from them, until you don't see them every waking second of the day, until you are free to be whom you are and who you want to be. There is something to learn from every relationship you have been screwed over with from friends, to family, to boyfriends or girlfriends. Something that you can take and use in your next relationship. Like who to trust what you

should say and when you should say it. What you should or shouldn't do when it comes to certain situations.

My last relationship was with a boy by the name of Taylor. He was a farm boy, you know--boots and flannels. I had been friends with him since 9th grade. I even dated for him for two months when we met, but I broke up with him because my "friends" made fun of me. Those friends ended up stabbing me in the back my senior year of high school too, so I really shouldn't have listened to them. I tutored him in English too. I must say he was not a very smart kid, but he was cute and he fell for me. It was basically like my father was standing in front of me, but my age and, you know, actually attractive. After we broke up in ninth grade he was crushed--he even cried. Every single guy, except one, that I broke up with killed me inside because they looked me in the eyes and I could see their tears starting to well up. Then they would stream down their face and I felt like I was slowly ripping their heart out.

Fast forward to senior year. I was having a lot of trouble with Nick, my boyfriend of over a year. We weren't working. I knew that and he knew that. I was waiting for him to do something about it because if he were to be into the relationship we would have been fine. He was not though. He wasn't one to be a man about anything. Let me paint you a picture--Whenever we would get ready for something, this kid took longer than I did. He used to blow dry his hair so that it would stay in a little fohawk. He was almost always late and he never, ever picked me up--we would always meet. He was the girl in the relationship to make it short and sweet. So him being pathetic and scared, I had to break up with him. Once I got home I took a pillow to my face and suffocated myself until all the tears stopped. The struggle of not knowing what he wanted was over. I had been

## Danielle Siebert • My Life: Four Pages

with the kid for over a year and now that time was just gone. He wasted my time because he did not have enough guts to break up with me.

Maybe a week later Taylor texted me, not unusual--like I said we were friends. He was having troubles with his girlfriend. I told him about what happened with Nick and I and it was basically the same exact thing him and his girlfriend, Alayna, were going through. They broke up a few days later.

Two weeks go by and Taylor and I were talking almost every day. I started to really like him again and like before he fell for me only harder than he did in ninth grade. I fell for him too. This kid picked me up, paid, and walked me to my door. He did everything that a guy was supposed to do. Every date I went on with him felt like a movie, felt like I was in love--true love. This was the kid I thought I was going to be with for the rest of my life. I could imagine growing up and going through struggles with him by my side, holding my hand the whole way. Feeling like I could conquer anything that came in my path because he was there, right by my side.

Then I came to IUP and he flipped my world upside down. In college freedom strikes you. You can be out as late as you want to, you can hangout whenever you want to, you're allowed to have a lot more fun than before, and everything is in one area. I am a very social person, I get my happiness by making friends. I love hanging out with people and I don't necessarily like to be by myself a lot. I require people, just like a dog needs to chase after a ball to be happy. You can imagine how happy I was when people would talk to me then and I shared this happiness with Taylor. He wasn't happy. He especially wasn't happy when I told him I made friends with some guys. One time he asked who I was walking with, I told him it was my friend Jake. His tone dropped, he was angry now. He then asked why

I can't just walk by myself or walk with a girl. That there was no reason for me to walk or talk to a guy. His change in tone was so noticeable that even my roommate knew when he was upset. I cried a lot those first few months because I couldn't do anything right for this kid. If I did what made me happy, he would be slowly boiling inside. I was a bird in a cage now and he was the only one with the key. It didn't take long for him to boil over either.

Whenever he came up on the weekends I would want him to go out and meet my friends, but we never went out. He was always "too tired" or he "didn't feel like it." Looking back now though I realize he was trying to pull me away from my social life. When I came to college I was also trying to get in better shape because I knew that doing that was going to be the main thing to help with my eating disorder—that's another thing, but I won't get into that here. He was okay with it at first, but then he over thought it just like he over thought everything else I did. He began asking me who I was trying to look better for and of course I am going to say for him. Did he like that? No. Did he believe that? No. He started accusing me of trying to impress other guys and it didn't stop there. He continued to drag me behind him with my face in the dirt. He said I shouldn't wear makeup or dress nicely. He said that I shouldn't do these things because I was only doing them to get other boys. It was always he said, he said—never was it what I say, and I say has a lot to do with making me find my place at IUP. Being with him was basically leaving me hurt and angry. Really hurt. Really angry.

Fast forward through a few months from hell and I was now home with red and orange leaves falling all around. Home was a place where he was less stressed because he could watch me and keep an eye on me. Home

## Danielle Siebert • My Life: Four Pages

was now where I felt even more caged than ever. It was like being locked in a psychiatric ward with him being the doctor who watches through the camera. I talked to my brother about it, my mom, my dad, anyone that would listen. I basically interrogated them like people do in crime shows. They all agreed. They agreed he was controlling me, that he wasn't being fair to me. But I kept trying because I thought he would get better. My heart felt like someone was twisting it, wringing it out of hope for the better. It was now wrung as tight as it could be when finally couldn't handle it anymore. I let it unravel with no hope left. It was a Monday and I had class until noon. I texted him meet me at the Butler movie theatre after school. I wasn't going to do this over text or through a phone call. I told him to bring my stuff and he told me that "I'll get there when I get there." So I leave at 12:30 so I can get there by 2pm. I sit waiting, if I pull my hands off the steering wheel you could see the sweat just sitting there. He pulls in around three. No words are exchanged. It was like a funeral, like someone died. I couldn't breathe, it was like my throat was beginning to close. After we finished exchanging items he turned to me, his eyes red and puffy. Everything in me started to feel bad for him. I could feel that part of me that wanted him taking over. I knew I could do this though, I knew I was capable of anything and that I am way stronger than I give myself credit for. Things were said, apologies were given, and tears were shed. We got back into our separate vehicles and I drove the 30 minutes it takes to get home. Everything was a blur, tears were pouring down my face and it became harder and harder to focus on the road that lay ahead of me. It seemed to go on forever. It was all twists and turns, but I knew I was getting closer to home. I was still bawling when I got into my house and I collapsed into my mom's arms, letting everything I felt leave. Letting all the pain subside.



Breaking up with Taylor didn't end there though. He texted me for "closure" so many times and I told him the same thing. I told him I was not about to change who I am or who I want to be because you want me to. I was tired of being a caged bird; I was ready to fly. Be independent from him and find someone who was more laid back. It just was not right of him to try to change me. I don't care who you are, people can only take being controlled for so long. I could only handle being trapped for 8 or 9 months. Even today he hasn't stopped. He still posts stuff on social media attacking me, just without using my name. One comment on Facebook said that he was going to the fair and buying a bunch of stuff for his truck. A few comments later he said that he was happy because he could finally spend money on something that was not going to leave. That something that left was me. That aggravated me and I was then reminded why I did not want to be with him. He then texted me at 12:01am on my birthday. This means he stayed up and watched the clock just so he could be the first to text me on my birthday. He texted me before anyone was able to wish me happy birthday, before my boyfriend wished me happy birthday. He still tried controlling me to that day, using the guilt factor every chance he had. It did not work though, I was out of that cage and I was not about to fly right back into his trap.

I look up from the table I was sitting at and saw the manager approaching me. I unclenched my hands and quickly wiped my hand on my leg, trying to get rid of anything that hints that I was nervous and not confident. Names were exchanged and the natural question of "how are you?" There was a pause, then it came. "So, tell me a little bit about yourself Danielle."

Haley Kutscher

# Taking It Home



As the time ticked down to zero, the buzzer rang and the crowd went wild. The girls on the court ran towards each other to celebrate their victory. The final score was 42-36, Thomas Jefferson Jaguars. The rest of the team and I jumped with excitement. We won our first game of the season. The players bolted to the locker room while I quietly followed behind. I have played basketball for twelve years. That is twelve years of elbows to the throat, bruises which covered my body, swollen knees and rolled ankles. Twelve years of eight A.M. practices and games that lasted until nine at night. I have made basketball my life for the last twelve years, and I didn't even start the first game of my senior year.

As a freshman and a sophomore at Thomas Jefferson, my coach was like a drill sergeant. We ran three miles a day and spent most of our practices in the weight room "building muscle," as he called it. I called it a waste of my time because I would rather be on the court dribbling, passing, and shooting. Each and every day I had to prove myself. I had to show Coach that I was better than the girl to the left and right of me. However, seniority won over those two years and I didn't start. My junior year was restructuring when we were assigned a different coach. This coach loved the game, but did not teach us anything. We never ran drills or scrimmaged which led us to a losing record that year. Then senior year happened. This year I had the seniority. I was supposed to be one of the five stars on the court leading our team to victory. However, this year's coach was not impressed. We started

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conditioning four months before the season began. I worked hard trying to claim my number one spot. I lead the drills, was the first one done with the running; I even worked hard outside of practice. I ran and lifted weights on my own time. I worked so hard for many years trying to prove that I was a good player to several people. This year was going to be different. I felt confident. Our first game was in a week and I knew exactly where my place was.

Game day. The music filled the gymnasium and we ran out to our side of the court. We started doing our warm-ups, trying to get in the right state of mind. As a team, we had to prove ourselves from the year before. We may have had a losing record in the past, but we wanted to show people we were more than that now. We worked hard this year. We came together as a team. The clock buzzed and we went into a huddle. Coach named the starting five and my head suddenly became cloudy. My vision became blurry and my hearing was faint. I thought, "Two freshman were starting over me? Two freshman were starting over a senior." I was in disbelief. I worked so hard up to this point. All the reps, the laps, and the sweat--none of it paid off. I had been waiting for this day since I was a freshman. I tried to stay positive. I had to find a way to claim that starting position.

I was improving each day. I ran faster and I became stronger. As we were scrimmaging in practice, it hit me how much I love this game. I looked around the gymnasium. I loved how the lights were like spotlights and the court was my stage; I was the main character when the ball was in my hands, with all eyes on me. I felt most important when I was dribbling the basketball down the court. I loved the squeaky sound that my shoes made. I felt that putting on that black and gold jersey gave me a purpose; basketball was my place in life. I looked forward to those eight A.M. practices and

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I lost hours of sleep on the night of game days due to excitement. Since I was a little girl, I had been best friends with that basketball. I looked over at the bleachers and could almost hear the crowd cheering for me, for my team. Courtney then passed me the ball and I started dribbling towards the opposite basket. With sweat dripping off me, I pushed myself down the court. I worked so hard until I couldn't breathe anymore. I bolted down the court to get back on defense. I kept my feet light but my heart heavy. I focused on my man. My breathing became slow. I could hear the ball slowly pounding on the court as if it matched my heartbeat. It felt like the ball and I were the only ones on the court. I tapped the ball with my right hand and dribbled to the net with my left. Then I was back to reality. I ran back on defense with the same motive: to give it all I got. I didn't stop until my legs shook like an earthquake and I was unable to stand. These last four years were built out of sweat and tears. I wanted my hard work to pay off. That's when I knew that I would give anything to play the game I love, and I think I finally proved myself to Coach that day.

It was game day once again. We played Elizabeth Forward who had not lost a section game in three years. As we were waiting in the hallway to enter the gymnasium, each player looked at one another with fiery eyes which only meant one thing: let's kill them. Suddenly, the gymnasium filled with music. It was "Black and Yellow," by Wiz Khalifa. Wiz Khalifa is from Pittsburgh, and I am as well. However, this song was more meaningful than just the place where my team and I were from. Black and yellow were our colors. We ran out to our side of the court. The beat of the music made me eager to start the game. We began our warm-ups which started off with layups and I was making every layup, every shot I took. I felt good about this game, but I wish Coach could have seen how I felt. The clock buzzed

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as the time reached zero and we ran to our bench. We huddled around Coach who reminded us how important this game was. If we won this game, we would have a spot in the playoffs. The Thomas Jefferson Girls Basketball Team had not been in the playoffs in three years, but I felt it was time to change that. Coach named the starting five: Alexis, Courtney, Paige, Lex, and Haley. I thought, "Did he really just say my name?" My ears rang. It was too good to be true. The huddle separated and the players walked onto the court with me following close behind. My heart was beating like a drum. I had butterflies in my stomach. We each stepped in our assigned spot, and then the whistle sang. The referee threw the ball in the Center Circle and the game began. Lex hit the tip-off to me, and I passed it up court to Alexis who made a layup. We slapped hands as we ran to the opposite side of the court for defense. The black jerseys were running towards us. They passed left, then right, then left again. The girl dribbled the ball to my side of the court. As soon as both hands touched the ball, I made my move. She passed it to the girl I was guarding and I grabbed the ball from the air. I dribbled down the court and made a layup of my own. Many shots were taken and fouls were called. Moments later, the clock rang indicating it was half time. The score was 26-20, Thomas Jefferson. In the locker room, Coach ranted about how well we were playing and encouraged us to finish the game strong. His gaze went over to me. His head slightly nodded with a barely noticeable smile. My heart felt warm because I knew my goal was achieved.

Going into the third quarter, I was anxious to start the game. We battled for the ball, and many points were scored. Once Courtney hit a three-pointer, we set up our press. They tried to inbound the ball, but it ended up in my hands. I shot the ball towards the basket and the ball

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went in; nothing but net. It happened so fast it was like lightning struck. The black jerseys tried to inbound the ball again. Alexis stole the ball and made another layup. Back on defense, the girl I was defending growled in frustration. They were down by ten with only minutes left in the game. We ran back and forth, down and up the court. It sounded like a herd of horses running in a field. My feet felt heavy, as if I were carrying the weight of an elephant. The clock hit one minute, and the game slowed down. It was almost as if we were running in slow motion. The clocked buzzed as it approached zero, bringing me back to reality. The crowd cheered and my team ran towards each other in awe. I was overwhelmed with excitement. We were more than just a team; we were a family. The final score was 52-36, Thomas Jefferson Jaguars.

# Coming of Age Narrative

When someone hears the words “coming of age,” most people would infer that those words involve something along the lines of growing up. When I first heard those words, I inferred—like most people—that they dealt with puberty and growing up. Unlike most people, my “coming of age” story has been quite different than most. My story is similar to the short story “Good Country People,” by Flannery O’Connor. This story influenced the way I saw what “coming of age” meant to me. My “coming of age” story deals with me realizing what the definition of love truly means to me. The story takes place over the course of several weeks at college. My story has several parts to it, and each part has its own way of describing my coming of age. Those important parts truly describe my thoughts and feelings about a girl.

The story is about me as a freshman in college who in his own way has “come of age.” I was introduced to a girl who will be named Rosie throughout the story. Her birth name is not Rosie, and there is significance behind why she will be called that—but more on that later. The definition of the word “cliché” is, “a phrase or opinion that is overused or betrays a lack of original thought.” And it may seem as though there are many clichés throughout the paper. I never intended on making my story sound un-original, but that is how things turned out with Rosie and myself. I was introduced to Rosie by another girl at the beginning of the school year; what I would not find out until later is that Rosie would change my life for the better or the worse. At this point as I write this, Rosie and I have been

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talking for several weeks. However there will be no firm ending to this story because by the time I finish it, Rosie and I will still be talking or sorting things out.

In what seemed like a full minute, only seconds had gone by after I hit the tennis ball back over the net to the other side of the court. Her hips swayed side to side as she shuffled to approach the ball to hit it back to me. Next thing I knew, the ball was casually bouncing on my side of the court next to the fence. Occasionally, she would surprise me with a powerful and fast return. I had only just met this girl, yet it seemed as though I had known her in the past. I already had been fantasizing over her slim in-shape body figure as I watched her walk off the court. Little did I know at the time, she and I would have a very confusing, odd and stressful relationship. The three of us left the tennis court laughing: Rosie, Rosie's friend (who introduced us to each other) and me. We made our way back to the dorms and I parted ways from them so I could shower and get some homework done. We planned on seeing each other again later that day for dinner. I entered the door to my dorm and all was quiet. Rosie's friend had informed me before meeting Rosie that she was seeing another guy. She said, "Don't be discouraged if things don't work out between you two; you see, she is still seeing someone from back home." Those words ricocheted and echoed off the walls in my skull. Could I really get with this girl who seemed too perfect for me? That question was answered for me when she asked me for my number later that day. I was fairly confident in myself at this point. We got food together and we talked about life. She told me that she was majoring in nutrition and her hometown is in New York. She also told me that she was going to a party that weekend with her roommate. As we talked, my eyes were glued to hers. I could tell there was a story full of



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interesting events behind those eyes, and soon, I would know everything there was to know about her like the back of my hand.

That weekend, I was texting her on the morning of Saturday. I asked her about Friday night—the night she went out with her roommate. She told me it was a long story and that she would explain it in person. We met up later that day and she told me about what happened that Friday night. She explained to me that a guy tried to take advantage of her, but luckily she got out of the situation unharmed. I was so stunned with the news that I told her I would make an effort to stay close to her the next weekend we hung out. The whole week leading up to the first night we would hangout, I could tell things were going strong. Every so often, she would refer to the guy back home, which I knew at this point was her ex-boyfriend. She broke up with him several days before coming to college. No matter how much she talked about him, I managed to have confident thoughts about her. Unfortunately there were so many negative factors that were against me. Those did not matter; they only influenced me to try harder to be with this girl. What made this girl unique compared to those I had come across was her thinking. With most girls, the more I talked with them and understood them, the more I am able to read their minds, like a book. But Rosie was different and it did not matter how much I hung out with her, because she was like a Rubik's Cube. I was able to understand who she was on the outside, but her thinking was impossible to grasp. It was as if her thoughts were closed behind the little colorful blocks on the Rubik's Cube. There was no way I was going to read her mind, unless I was able to solve that Rubik's Cube.

The week went by slowly. I could not get my mind off of her. Class through class, I was always worried about how things would go that

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weekend with her. When that weekend came, we met up, and went to a party together. This time we would stay together. I was watchful of her, and we laughed and we talked the whole night. Once making it back to her dorm, we laid down and relaxed in her bed. Anyone reading this can probably infer what will happen next—two drunk, opposite sex college students, who like each other, in a room alone together. What happened next, however, was something I was not expecting at all. From that point on, our night would take a complete wrong turn—a turn for the worst. We leaned in close to each other and we started kissing. After several seconds, it seemed to me that she was hesitant. Only seconds later she pulled away from me. The way she backed off was not necessarily bad. I could tell that she did not mind us making out, but there was definitely something wrong. The pulling away from me was more gradual and slow. Our lips unlocked and she turned over to her side, facing away from me. My first thought was that she was tired. Just when I was about to tip her back over and ask if she needed to sleep, I could hear her sob. She was not crying her eyes out creating a river, just little sobs followed by tears. Then, words would come out of her mouth that would create a dark, cold, rain cloud hovering over my head. She quietly spoke out as if something was lodged in her throat: “I’m sorry I can’t do this. I still have feelings for him.” I could feel my stomach churn, like when you get punched in the gut. All I could think was that this was going to be harder than I expected. This would be a battle between David (me in this situation) vs. Goliath (her ex-boyfriend).

Despite what happened that night, Rosie and I continued to see each other. Over the course of another week, I helped her with her homework. And we talked about our feelings, and we got to know a little more about each other. Day by day, the bond between us started to grow strong again.

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The dark rain cloud that lurked over my head began to vanish. And slowly but surely, I began to gain the confidence back that I had a week ago. The situation was still a very delicate one. I didn't want to make any sudden movements with her, because for all I knew, she still liked her ex-boyfriend. One night in particular, we were texting but things were a little tense and stressful between us. I wanted to see her that night, but in a way, I felt as though she was resisting the urge to hangout with me. I took a break and left my dorm room to take a walk. It was a nice cool night, a little colder than what I think is ideal. My stress levels decreased after several cigarettes and some walking around. As I puffed away at the cigarette in my hand, I noticed a cute bunny rabbit in the yard of a stranger's house. I crept up to the rabbit, only to be stopped by a long brown wooden fence. The rabbit was only several feet behind the fence. And it seemed so tamed as it sat in grass looking at me. However much I wanted to go pet the rabbit, I knew as soon as I hopped over the fence, the rabbit would run off. I looked back at my experiences with Rosie. Rosie was the rabbit, in a way. And the fence was a barrier or force that was stopping me from being with her. All I could do with Rosie was stare at her. I could not make any moves with her, like I couldn't with the rabbit. I knew as soon as I crossed the fence with Rosie, she would run off. I would lose all forward progress I had with her. That night we came upon an agreement where we would stop seeing each other. Things were putting her under a great amount of stress, and I was not helping. So taking me out of the picture for a little while was the right decision. We stopped talking, but occasionally saw each other around campus. The no contact between us only lasted a few days before I got call from her. When I answered I could hear her sobbing again—except this time it was about one of her classes. I helped her come up with a

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solution and she could not have been happier with me. My phone vibrated violently with text messages from her. I glanced down at the phone and suddenly emotions started to flood my brain. I felt something that I had never felt before. My hands began to tremble and tears were spawning around the rims of my eyelids. I was not upset. Instead this was the happiest I had ever been after first meeting her. Was this what love felt like? How was it possible that just a single text message could affect me so greatly, that it made me cry? We broke the agreement we made earlier that week and decided to start seeing each other again. I still find it unbelievable how redundant and clichéd this story seems. But this was no fairy tale; this was reality. Finally I was able to see her deep blue, sea-like eyes and bright white smile that I missed so much. The dark cloud that hovered over my head vanished completely. Light shined wherever we went together. And having her accompany me, kept me in check. For the first time, we were able to passionately kiss without her sobbing or thinking twice about being with me. Everything was going so well until one Thursday morning. I received a text message that would leave me facedown on the floor in my dorm. And this time, a stronger, darker, more powerful rain cloud hovered back over my head. The true battle between David and Goliath would start here.

The text message read, “Hey I just wanted to let you know that I’m back together with my ex.” Within seconds, my heart shattered into thousands of little pieces. As if it were a glass bowl that fell of a counter and broke on the floor and all the little shards fell into my stomach, giving me butterflies. Each little piece of glass cut the inner linings of my stomach as they made their way down to my intestines. I know lay on the floor wishing that I asked her out while I had the chance. I texted her constantly, trying to

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get her to rethink the decision she made. Nothing seemed to work. If I was going to get anywhere in this situation, I would have to see her in person. We made arrangements to meet that night, and all I thought about the whole day was what I was going to say to her to attempt to change her mind. Idea after idea I came up with. I rejected thinking I could say something more meaningful and convincing. My ideas were scrambled and confusing. The dark cloud made it nearly impossible to come up with any positive thoughts. I was not making any progress towards coming up with a solution. Goliath was winning this battle, and he was about to knock me out of the picture completely. The only chance I had was if I dumped all my thoughts, emotions and feelings on her. And hopefully, that would be enough to make her subject to change. That night we met up in her dorm. And I gave it all I had to try and change her. I received positive feedback in that she still liked me and wanted to hang out with me. There was still a little bit of light in the relationship between us. This little bit of light was nothing close to the brightness of a torch in a cave, but rather a barely lit little candle. And even though it was not much, it was just enough for me to stay strong and fight back. It has now been two weeks since this last event took place. Rosie and I continue to see each other. We spend lots of time laughing together. We even stay over at each other's dorm rooms some nights. At times she talks to me about how her boyfriend is bothering her. He doesn't bother her enough to the point where they will break up though. The battle between Goliath and me will continue. And time is neither on my side, or his.

My long and unforgiving story sadly ends here. There is no ending to this story, because this one continues to build each and everyday I spend at college. One single girl has influenced me more than anyone I have

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ever met—so much in fact that I constantly think about her on a day-to-day basis. You now may be wondering why I have been calling this girl Rosie? Well oddly enough, I am relating this girl to the strong independent woman who showed her face on many posters during World War 2. That strong independent woman would be Rosie the Riveter: she was an American icon that led women to take the jobs of men while they were at war overseas. Rosie the Riveter was a symbol to show that women can be just as strong and independent as men. And who better to relate that American icon to than the Rosie I have met at college.

# ANALYTIC FILM REVIEW

College Writing courses are designed by their institutions to prepare students to not only write at a higher level, but to think at a higher level. One of the most effective tools in an instructor's kit is assigning reviews for their students to write. No other genre includes more opportunities to display higher-order thinking skills. First there is summary: what is going on in the primary text? What is important to include in this portion of the write-up and what can be omitted are hallmarks of effective editing and selection on the part of the writer. Then there is the next skill: Analysis. What is it that the film or the book or the episode discussing really and how does the director or author communicate this information? Is it straight forward or symbolic? Is it part of the characterization or the depiction of places? Why is this mode of information dissemination important to the piece as a whole? Student-authors are then forced to use examples from the text to back up their claims, adding to their critical analysis and selection skills and allowing them to really develop and authoritative voice while entering into a critical discussion.

The following three selections are terrific examples of review writing. Riley Smith begins her discussion of M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* by noting the symbolism the director uses to communicate meaning as well as establish mood and push the narrative further. Malecia Souvenir highlights her connection to *Love and Basketball* by relating personal stories from her life that parallel with the film. Her attention to other filmic aspects, including the soundtrack, add multiple levels of analysis to her review. And Katie Swauger's paper, while not specifically a film review, tackles issues in contemporary society by analyzing *Fifty Shades of Grey* along with a slew of other examples from

film and television to illustrate America's on-going obsession with money, the way it operates, and the influence it has. We hope these papers work as models of how effective reviews can demonstrate skills we teach in College Writing courses.

# Assignment Prompt for “The Sixth Sense”

**Instructor: AJ Schmitz**

**Course: 101**

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## Review Writing

Often we listen to the advice of others when it comes to planning an outing or watching a film or reading a book. Sometimes these are friends or peers, but in the information age, many times this advice comes from complete strangers from remote places with no insight other than personal bias.

This assignment entails writing an informed film review on A FILM OF YOUR OWN CHOOSING. You will be REQUIRED to critically assess the film, including plot/narrative structure, filmic conventions (lighting, soundtrack, cinematography, acting, and directing), as well as provide an analysis of the film. What is the film trying to say? Yes, it may be a comedy, but what is the over-arching message of the film? This is your chance to delve into a text (yes, a film is a text) and really analyze it. I do not want to know simply that you liked or disliked the film. I am concerned as to whether the film is made well, executed well, and worth all of the time and effort to see it.

TIP--Choose a movie you hate, or have tried to watch but was never able to finish. This will allow you to get through the film, as well as exercise your critical skills, articulating why you dislike something and force yourself to locate SOMETHING positive about the film

Do not be intimidated by these tasks. I know this is not a film class, but if the film is dimly lit the whole time, why do you think the director made this choice? If men are prominently framed, but the women are always depicted as smaller, what would be the reason for this? Have fun with this and watch the film the way you would read a book--by taking notes, noticing patterns/themes, and making aesthetic judgments

Do remember to implement all of the lessons you have learned to this point. Remember the importance of ethos, pathos, and logos when being persuasive; remember the Dos and Don'ts of review writing; remember the best way to present and communicate information to a specific audience; remember the templates on entering in a conversation and mingling your voice with the voices of others from They Say/I Say; and figure out YOUR VOICE.

- Review should be NO LESS than three-full pages, no more than five;
- Review should include some summary, but not be a synopsis of the entire film;
- Review should demonstrate analytical and persuasive writing, as well as indicate the development of your own voice;
- We will be workshoping, so be prepared with stapled rough drafts on Mon., 27 Oct. and a stapled final draft on Fri., 31 Oct. Digital copies, as always, are required via e-mail BEFORE CLASS on these dates.

\*\*This assignment may get intimidating, so do speak with me for guidance. Discuss with your classmates; or, if need be, take your ideas along with this assignment sheet, to the Writing Center and they can help you, too\*\*



# The Sixth Sense

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Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have a special ability unlike any other? Not just the typical super powers like flight, speed, or telekinesis; but rather a unique one of your very own. What if this power was darker than you imagined, almost as if it were a curse. In the film *The Sixth Sense* written and directed by M. Night Shyamalan, the main character Cole Sear has just that. Cole, played by Haley Joel Osment, has the ability to see, as well as speak to the dead. As interesting as that might sound, Cole is a very young boy that comes from a broken family. No one believes that he has this strange power, and he feels trapped within it. A child psychologist, Dr. Malcolm Crowe, played by Bruce Willis, befriends the boy in order to help him control and understand what he is going through. By the end of this film Cole has changed his opinion of his gift, and began using it to help the spirits, rather than let them hurt him. The film ends with a blind-siding plot twist that you have to see to believe!

This film has a variety of hidden meanings and filmic conventions pushing forward the captivating story line. One of my favorite hidden symbols in the film was the use of the color red. Through out the film, red is depicted in objects, including a red tent, a red sweater, a red box, and a red doorknob. The significance of the color red is to signal that there is a ghost, or supernatural presence nearby. When each of these items is on screen, Cole would get a visit from the dead. In one particular instance Cole is attending one of his classmates birthday parties. While he was there a ghost trapped him inside a tiny closet. At that time Cole was wearing a

## Riley Smith • The Sixth Sense

red sweater, signifying that it was in actuality a spirit keeping him there, not his friends playing a joke on him. I loved the use of this color because it is something only the audience can figure out and notice. Neither Cole, nor Dr. Malcolm knows what the color provides. It is simply a secret and special message for the audience. I thought that this was a very creative tactic used by Shyamalan to communicate with his audience and provide greater insight and foreshadowing.

Another of my favorite hidden image of mine would be seen in the pictures of Cole. Every picture of Cole ever taken has a streak of white near or around his head. This is to represent him always being connected to the spirits. Though his mother, played by Toni Collette, and Crowe obviously cannot see the ghosts in real life, the use of the camera and photographs captures the energy given off. I thought that this was a nice addition to the movie to represent how much and how long the ghosts have been in Cole's life. Rather than just telling us that Cole has the connection with spirits, the director uses small details that seem almost insignificant to get this point across to the viewers, making them actually see and feel what is going on, as opposed to just taking the actors words for it.

Due to the dark nature of this film, the soundtrack and music used in the movie helped provide the fear that the audience needed. Rather than just having ghosts as well as the color red to anticipate a frightening scene about to occur, the music helps get the viewers hearts pumping and heads rushing with thoughts of what is yet to come. What I found to be even more impressive was the moments when the music stopped, and everything was dead silent. This put me on the edge of my seat, waiting to see what was about to happen next. The silence was so numbing that I could almost hear my heart beating through my chest.

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Not only does Cole encounter the dead on a daily basis, but he also has to deal with the loss of a parent. Within this movie a large social issue is prevalent in Cole's life. His mother not only mourns the loss of her husband through negative actions, she also sometimes almost neglects her son. Cole's mother loves him very much. There is no doubt about that. With Cole having such a strange ability, and no one to relate to he only wishes that his mother would understand. She instead seeks the help of a child psychiatrist because she does not believe Cole, and thinks that he is going mad instead of having his gift. Rather than trying to understand and communicate with Cole, she almost shuns him. Though this changes by the end of the film, through out the movie Cole's mother is too focused on the loss of her husband to see that her son needs her more than she thinks. At times she turns to alcohol, to drown her sorrows in the bottle as opposed to seeking help for herself, as well as her son.

The movie *The Sixth Sense* is an older horror movie that came out in 1999. I personally do not like scary movies, and I usually avoid them all together. It took me a while to watch this film to completion because not only is this a scarier movie, but also it does not contain silly fantasy elements like vampires or the boogiemán. Instead it contains feelings, and images that can maybe quite real to some. My mother and other family members love this film, due to the interesting plot line and amazing plot twist, as well as the hidden messages within it. It has had great reviews, and it is an all time favorite for some. USA Today said that, "The filmmaker keeps upping the ante with surprises until the plot-twist beaut that concludes the picture - a shocker that, upon reflection, is probably the one ending that wouldn't have fallen a little flat." Though it is not the scariest movie in the world (I will admit), I would have to say that parts of this movie

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made me jump, and hide my face due to some thematic elements that I did not expect. On top of just enjoying this movie myself, it received three nominations from the People's Choice Awards and won all of them. This movie was received very well.

I would highly recommend this film to anyone who doesn't mind a little bit of fear in their hearts, but also loves the challenge and satisfaction of breaking this film apart. The big picture here is that like Cole, we should all be able to take the bad and try to find the good within it. If Cole had continued to let the ghosts in, without communicating to them he would end up hurting. Instead he fought his fears and began to accept and take hold of his ability. I am not saying that we all see dead people, because this is a fictional film, but I am saying that we can learn from Cole and overcome even the most frightening of experiences.

# Assignment Prompt for “*Love and Basketball* Film Review”

**Instructor: Rachael Warmington**

**Course: 101**

## **Book, Film, Product or Restaurant Review**

Whether you are reviewing a book, movie, restaurant or product, you will be evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of your subject, sharing what you liked and disliked about it and deciding whether or not you would recommend it to your audience. While each type of review varies in structure, there are criteria that each has in common. For example, you should state the name, title, and/or destination of whatever you are reviewing and describe it in detail. It is also required that you include the name of the manufacturer, writer, artist, chef, director etc...

This assignment is designed to get you thinking about audience, genre, and style and how they relate to one another. In addition, by a writing review, you will develop your critical skills as a reader and researcher, and you will be mastering evaluative writing, which you may find useful in many situations beyond the assignment itself. For example, this assignment will give you some experience writing and thinking rhetorically in non-academic contexts.

**Format:** 2 – 4 pages double-spaced with standard 1 inch margins and Times New Roman 12-point font. Citation Format- MLA or APA

## **Film Review**

### **Writing the Film Review**

Although there is not a set formula to follow when writing a film review, the genre does have certain common elements that most film reviews include.

1. **Introduction:** In the opening of your review, provide some basic information about the film. You may include film’s name, year, director, screenwriter, and major actors. Your introduction, which may be longer than one paragraph, should also begin to evaluate the film, and it should allude to the central concept of the review. A film review does not have to contain a thesis or main claim, but it should focus on a central analysis and assessment.
2. **Plot Summary:** Remember that many readers of film reviews have not yet seen the film. While you want to provide some plot summary, keep this brief and avoid specific details that would spoil the viewing for others.
3. **Description:** While the plot summary will give the reader a general sense of what the film is about, also include a more detailed description of your particular cinematic experience watching the film. This may include your personal impression of what the film looks, feels, and sounds like. In other words, what stands out in your mind when you think about this particular film?
4. **Analysis:** In order to explain your impression of the film, consider how well the film utilizes formal techniques and thematic content. How do the film’s formal techniques such as, cinematography (camerawork), editing, lighting, sound, genre, or narrative affect the way the film looks, feels, and sounds to you? How does the thematic content (such as history, race, gender, sexuality, class, or the environment) affect your experience and interpretation? Also, do the formal techniques work to forward the thematic content?
5. **Conclusion/Evaluation:** The closing of your film review should remind the reader of your general thoughts and impressions of the film. You may also implicitly or explicitly state whether or not you recommend the film. Make sure to remind the reader of why the film is or is not worth seeing.

# *Love and Basketball* Film Review

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Love and Basketball has been loved and adored by many people of all ethnicities, old and young, since it made its first appearance fifteen years ago. Still to this day, this classic love story will never get old. This film was written and directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood. 40 Aces, and Mule film works produced Love and Basketball in the year 2000. The major actors who starred in this film are Sanaa Lathan, and Omar Epps. Their performance throughout the whole movie were simply impeccable. It is a love story that any person growing up can relate to. The storyline was great and very much believable, almost like you forgot you were watching a film

In chronological order this film shows the first day a preteen girl named Monica Wright played by Sanaa Lathan and her family moving to their new home in a Los Angeles, California neighborhood in 1981. Her family is quickly acquainted with her neighbor Quincy McCall and his family; Quincy is played by Omar Epps. The two quickly develop a love hate relationship from the day they first meet. Monica and Quincy's relationship goes through the motions like anyone else throughout the years. Quincy and Monica both shared a passionate love for basketball in high school keeping them focusing on one thing, going to college and hopefully ending up playing pro-Ball one day. Growing up they attend the same middle school and high school. One night after prom in their senior year in high school their romance blossoms. The two stay together for a while and attend the same college but they separate while in college when Quincy

## Malecia Souvenir • *Love and Basketball* Film Review

goes through a difficult time with his father. Monica and Quincy break up and years later a tragedy brings them together once again. Although Quincy has moved on and is in a new relationship, Monica still feels the same for him and is destined to fight for his love.

When I first watched the movie *Love and Basketball* I was a young girl around the age of thirteen and I was immediately drawn to the love story. Although, I didn't see it in theater because I was young, way too young when it came out in the year 2000, I watched it years later. To me watching it in the comfort of my own home was just as good as watching it in the movie theater. This just goes to show that even though it's an old movie the quality of the film was still great and it doesn't look like it was produced many years ago. This film is often played on television networks such as BET. The dialect used in the movie has always been understandable and relatable. Now that I'm older and can more grasp the concept of the whole film I can more understand some scenes that I probably didn't understand when I was younger. Since I'm older and more mature I can see how difficult it may be to be with someone you want to be with but can't because of various reasons. I also understand the fighting for what you want and the concept of the quote "If you love something let it go and if it comes back then you know". I think that quote basically fits the moral of the film. When I think about this film I just automatically think about love and how much one can love another person, it shows me that true love never dies.

This classic love story just has the perfect old school touch. The sound track in this film went perfectly with each scene. Just listening to it simply takes people back to those times in the 1990's even watching it today and who doesn't love a good flashback? It just seems like the director couldn't

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have chosen better songs to fit each scene. Most of the actors in the film were African American. Race did play a big role in the film because it contributed to the culture and concept of the movie. The music, the clothes, hairstyles, and the language for example, slang and old terms that were used in those times were common in the African American community. In the movie through gender, the film showed that not only men could be successful in sports even in a male dominated field.

Everything about this movie was well put together. The actors did an amazing job, the whole script just came natural to them not just Sanaa Lathan and Omar Epps but all the other actors as well. Every scene was nicely depicted with appropriate songs, not to mention this movie had one of the best sound tracks I've ever heard in a movie. The ending was suspenseful and surprising. This film didn't have one dull moment from start to finish; it is a must see and I would recommend this film to any one any day.



# Assignment Prompt for “Money Talks in American Society”

**Instructor: Adam Wassel**

**Course: 101**

This essay should demonstrate your ability to engage in the style of narrative and/or analytical writing, as modeled by our readings. Develop the essay (either the events of your narrative and/or the reasoning for your critical analysis) under a controlling thesis statement, with appropriate supporting details. Express your ideas fully, with vivid vocabulary and strong supporting details. Minimum requirements: In order to earn a passing grade your essay must:

- Be four pages (minimum) in length
- Be written in Times new Roman 12 point font, double-spaced with one inch margins
- Have no extra spaces between paragraphs
- This is a formal assignment, so formal writing is expected (no profanity or slang). The only exception to such formality is if you are quoting from another text, like song lyrics or a television show.

**Narrative:** In “The Illusion of Literacy,” Chris Hedges writes, “We flock hungrily to the glamorous crumbs that fall to us from glossy magazines, talk and entertainment shows, and reality television. We fashion our lives as closely to these lives of gratuitous consumption as we can. Only a life with status, physical attributes, and affluence is worth pursuing” (70). According to Hedges, these values are illusory; they are lies that distort the way we perceive the world around us. David Foster Wallace, however, reminds us that “You get to consciously decide what has meaning and what doesn’t. You get to decide what to worship” (42). Drawing from the texts we’ve read – each of which analyzes certain aspects of contemporary American culture – compose a narrative essay that explores your relationship to the culture you live in. How has contemporary culture worked to shape your identity? Do you define yourself in accordance with the pressures our culture places upon us? No one lives outside of culture; in what ways, then, do the cultural tendencies we’ve read about and discussed (celebrity culture, social media, entertainment media, consumerism, etc.) affect your daily life, self-perception, and/or perception of others?

A narrative means that you couch your ideas in the form of a story. Look to our readings for guides and examples. Chris Hedges, for instance, begins his lengthy piece with a narrative of a wrestling match. Joanne Cavanaugh Simpson begins “Multitasking State of Mind” with a narrative about an absent-minded student. Both writers then use these small narratives to illustrate and explore wider-reaching cultural concerns.

**Analytical:** Throughout “The Illusion of Literacy,” Chris Hedges uses various popular culture texts (*Survivor*, *WWE Wrestling*, *Big Brother*) to illustrate his critique of American culture. Choose any text you’re familiar with (songs, novels, TV shows, movies) and critically analyze it, exploring its relationship to larger cultural trends and tendencies. No texts are off limits here; recall that Hedges even manages to tease significance from a text as goofy as *The Jerry Springer Show*. Consider your favorite movie or TV show. What message(s) does it convey? What values does it embody, celebrate, mock, or satirize?

An analytical essay does not necessarily close off the possibility of telling a story. Also, feel free to draw from Hedges’ points about the texts he analyzes as you analyze your own. Can you think of any texts that would strengthen his argument, but are not discussed in his essay? Consider his brief discussion of war movies on 64-65, for instance. Can you add any examples to it? Another example might be his references to “dystopian” literature (*Fahrenheit 451*, *1984*, *Brave New World*). What are some newer, more current instances of dystopian literature, and what do they suggest about the world we live in?

# Money Talks in American Society

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Americans live in a society where wealth is idolized, fame and fortune are synonymous, and big money represents a person who has a big opinion and the entitlement to do whatever he or she wants. This idea that extreme wealth is the only key to real success is an American ideal that is gaining popularity with each and every passing day. All throughout the media, those who possess wealth and riches are idolized. It is not relevant what a celebrity is rich from; all that is important is that he or she has enough money to purchase expensive luxuries, and that ordinary Americans can watch as these celebrities lead their glamorous lives that are unattainable to regular people. Even in fiction television shows and movies, the characters are no longer popular with audiences unless they are the heir to an extensive fortune, or even more favorable if they make the American dream happen and somehow create their own wealth. Bonus points are rewarded to the director or producer of this entertainment if the character had a troubled childhood plagued with tragedy, and has somehow managed to overcome this misfortune that way a “rags to riches” transformation occurs. That is ideal entertainment in society these days. Think of what is most prominent in culture right now, shows like *Gossip Girl*, *The Bachelor*, and *Suits* are all popular. In the film industry, movies that depict wealth and scandal are the ones that have seen success in the box office. *The Wolf of Wall Street*, *American Hustle*, and even the newest movie that everyone seems to know about, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, all revolve around one central idea: money.

## **Katie Swauger • Money Talks in American Society**

Money has a way of talking in American society, but the message it delivers is not a wholesome one. For those who acquire extensive wealth, quite anything seems possible, and perhaps even scarier is that any action is deemed as acceptable. Big business in America is associated with scandal.

Take for example the recent trend sweeping across the nation, a three book trilogy is a New York Times bestseller, known as Fifty Shades of Grey. Author of *The Dumbest Generation*, Mark Bauerlein, discusses how Americans, particularly the youth, are reading less now than ever before. When Americans are picking up a book to read, it is mindless literature like *Fifty Shades of Grey* that they are reaching for. The first book in the trilogy has sold over 16 million copies in the United States alone according to *Business Insider*. Universal Studios even paid five million dollars for film rights. The movie's release has been anticipated by many for over a year. So, when it finally hit theaters Valentine's Day weekend, shows were selling out despite the multitude of negative ratings the film received, including a measly 27% on Rotten Tomatoes. So, how did this movie manage to bring in a whopping 85 million dollars during its opening weekend (which surpasses the launch of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*) if reviews were so bad across the board? Presumably, the storyline.

The story of both the books and the movie revolves around a 26 year old entrepreneur, Christian Grey, who has created a fortune for himself. Of course, the other major part of the plot is that Mr. Grey is a sadistic man on a domineering pursuit to gain control over a young college graduate, but that is not really important. What is important in the story is the money; it is all about the money. Some might argue that sex sells and the success of both the books and the film could be attributed to this fact, but consider this: imagine that Christian Grey is an average looking, middle-aged

plumber rather than a striking 26 year old billionaire businessman fulfilling the American dream. It is doubtful that masses of women would be flocking to the theaters or secretly reading the trilogy on their Kindles to hear about an average man. If Christian Grey were a normal man who made an annual salary of \$30,000, his abusive behaviors and twisted desires would be grounds for arrest to most women. He would be considered a repulsive criminal, not a handsome, but slightly troubled man. Women would no longer be amused and curious; they would be disgusted and horrified. Whenever the character is a billionaire all of his behaviors, no matter how twisted, are acceptable. His sick attributes are considered attractive. The massive success of this man makes society say that his lifestyle is not only acceptable, but even desirable, so desirable in fact, that it should become the average woman's fantasy. The story is neither about love nor about sex; it is about money. Christian Grey can do whatever sadistic things he desires to his love interest and it is all okay, because he can buy her an Audi and take her on a ride in his personal helicopter to help make up for her misery.

Though *Fifty Shades of Grey* seems like the timeliest example, it is certainly not the only one. The way Americans' every move revolves around wealth can be seen throughout all different types of media outlets. Other movies such as *The Wolf of Wall Street* portray the scandal involved in big business in America. Media is always quick to depict those in finance or accounting as crooks who "fudge the numbers" to their own benefit, because an honest ethical working professional obviously is no type of storyline. There are entire television series revolving around heirs to fortunes. *Gossip Girl*, for example, follows a group of young adults who are the children of New York City's richest businessmen and socialites. Most of the people who watch these shows can in no way relate to the story.

They will never know what it is like to experience vast wealth like these characters possess, but since society portrays wealth as the single most important thing, so there is no reason to watch a show that does not give a glimpse into life as a millionaire. Celebrity culture is no different. These days, someone is not a celebrity because they have a special talent or can offer something unique to the world; they are celebrities because they have enough wealth that the public eye follows them around simply to watch them attend award shows, go on dates, and spend their money.

Children are taught that when they grow up, they can be whatever they want in life. If they want to become a school teacher, an astronaut, or even president, they have the power to do so. They are told these dreams are attainable as long as they work hard. However, this could not be farther from the truth. As kids grow older and enter middle school, and then high school, the notorious question emerges: “what are you going to do with the rest of your life?” Suddenly the future of being a school teacher as their parents suggested is no longer good enough. Even today’s youth are pressured into pursuing a life of worth. Not moral worth or internal worth, but money, material belongings, and nice expensive things. Today’s youth can no longer choose what they want to pursue in their higher education, but are pressured into engineering, computer science, or anything that will help them “make a lot of money” instead of something that will lead them to enjoy fulfilling lives. The most important thing about an occupation nowadays is salary. It is a fantasy to believe that anyone can grow up to become the president as well, because in order to become the president of the United States, the unspoken requirement is wealth; because in American society, wealth is equivalent to power. The truth is those lucky enough to be born into a family that is worth millions can do whatever they

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want when they “grow up”, but the rest of Americans must do everything they can to try and make more money, or be labeled as failures.

The pressures in American society to become rich and fulfill the American dream are unrealistic. Wealth is idolized to such an extent in America that without it, a person is nothing. In *The Illusion of Literacy*, author Chris Hedges sums it up entirely by writing, “Almost none of us will ever attain these lives of wealth and power...We are left, when we cannot adopt these impossible lifestyles as our own, with feelings of inferiority and worthlessness.” Money has become such a source of power and sense of worth that without millions of dollars, normal Americans feel irrelevant. The American dream is no longer to have a steady job, a family, and a house with a white picket fence. The new American dream is to have a massive empire of money. This is because society now suggests that only a life of riches is worth pursuing. The only way to be accepted is to have wealth, and gross masses of it. The irony is that big business in America is so negatively viewed that those who do earn fortunes have some other fatal flaw. Whether they be a sadist like Christian Grey or a fraudulent accountant, these individuals’ flaws will be justifiable because of their wealth. Money inarguably has a voice in all societies, but the problem is that in America money talks too loud. Money’s voice is loud enough to drown out the voices of ordinary people, making them and their opinions irrelevant while simultaneously keeping those who accumulate wealth on a pedestal to be envied and admired.

# PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS

The art of rhetoric is the art of persuasion, and for this reason, we set aside a particular genre that is dedicated to demonstrating this function in writing. No matter how factually based research is, it must shift from observational objectivity, at some point, to a subjective interpretation of the meaning and implications of the data. To justify the process of engaging in with the research, the writer must always move to persuade the reader of the significance of these interpretations. Since this appeal has the power to shape the course of further research, we value it as highly today as Aristotle did when he pondered the ways to shape powerful persuasive techniques, two millennia ago. The value of the skill is easily demonstrable to students by reminding them of the future career that depends on the introductory letters that they will write explaining why they are the best possible candidate.

Hanna Weiss presents us with an excellent example of a primarily persuasive essay with “The Purpose of Education: Grades vs. Learning.” While Weiss supports her contentions where necessary (alluding to various sources for facts), these facts are filtered through an overt narrative voice, one that addresses the reader in a direct, personal way. Weiss begins: “You are the pilot of a plane.” This opening engages the reader in multiple valences at once. From the first, the reader is not allowed to passively consume the text, but finds him/herself under the gaze and command of the writer’s persona. More, the command given by Weiss is for the reader to extend the imagination out in a particular direction without immediately defining the stakes of this exercise. The suddenness of this interaction coupled with the evocation of a sense of precariousness cannot help but act on the reader, mainly through emotion. This becomes

clearest in the conclusion where Weiss returns to the framing premise. Here, she resorts again to direct, imperative appeal, demanding of the reader: “Think critically, think creatively, work collaboratively, and communicate effectively.” The subject and Weiss’ take on it ask for a degree of meta-cognition on the part of the reader, and this request is holistically supported by the framing device which breaks the reader out of the expectations for reviewing a school assignment. The topic may be said to be: what, in fact, is a school assignment.

Look over the topic sentences Weiss uses to introduce each supporting paragraph. Note that each engages in the viewpoint that she wishes to further, so that the end result is not an accumulation of information, but of Weiss’ opinion. Consider how this paper might be re-written with different generic expectations, perhaps as an informative piece, or a narrative of personal discovery. What segments might remain as they are, and how would other pieces need to shift to fit the new needs for this essay?

# Assignment Prompt for “Grades vs. Learning”

**Instructor: Rachael Warmington**

**Course: 101**

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## Persuasive Argument Essay

A persuasive argument essay is written for the purpose of convincing an audience to adopt a certain point of view. You will make a claim—an assertion with which your audience might disagree—and then support that assertion with evidence (we will brainstorm a list of acceptable topics in class).

Your persuasive argument essay will require you to conduct effective research to qualify appropriate evidence for purposeful integration in your work. Your research will include the analysis and critical integration of different types of sources – first-hand experience, mass media, organizational, and/or governmental. It will be important that you read through your evidence critically in order to qualify appropriate sources, as the relevance and credibility of these sources are critical in supporting your thesis argument. And, since any issue almost always has more than just two sides, you will learn how to consider multiple positions on a single issue and how to refute these opposing viewpoints. You will synthesize your information and thinking into an argumentative essay wherein you take a distinct position on your topic.

### Critical Elements

In your argument paper you will:

1. Identify a clear thesis that articulates a logical argument about your chosen topic
2. Demonstrate an informed, logical counter-argument with sufficient detail that support the claim
3. Use supporting sources that are credible and effective in supporting thesis argument demonstrating the quality of your research process
4. Purposefully integrate sources within one’s own work at appropriate points in structure of argument (Synthesis)
5. Apply clear pattern of organization around the thesis argument
6. Apply relevant rules of grammar and Apply correct syntax in developing sentence structure

### Format

6– 8 pages double-spaced with standard 1 inch margins and Times New Roman 12-point font. Your paper should adhere to all APA or MLA standards of formatting. The paper should use a **minimum of three resources**.

### Exclusions

Abortion, Gun Control, Global Warming, Cloning, Steroid/Sport Enhancement Drugs, The Death Penalty, Gay Marriage, Drinking Age, Legalizing Marijuana, Animal Testing, Violence in Video Games



# The purpose of education Grades vs. Learning

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You are the pilot of a plane. You are going to Germany for a month. The color of the seats in the airplane is blue, the flight attendants are wearing yellow ascots. The meal that is served is chicken with chocolate pudding for dessert. The plane holds 200 people and there is free Wi-Fi. What is the pilot wearing? Did you figure it out? Are you confused? Did you realize that you are the pilot? If you couldn't figure it out, are you just reading this to get through the reading? You may not be learning anything from what I just said. If you did remember what I said in the beginning, you may just have a good memory and memorized what was mentioned. However, what did you learn from this? Did you learn that memorizing is "helpful"? To tell you the truth, it's not. Many college students today are just attending class to get the grade, to get their degree, and get out. But did we learn anything from the classes we sat in? Or did we just memorize to pass? I propose that "Many students are only attending college because they think it will help them get ahead in life if they have a degree". Students today are not taking what they learned and analyzing and applying it to real life. I argue that the majority of students are attending college just for the grade because they are putting forth minimal effort, several are not applying what they have taken in, and their goal may not be to really further education.

Grades first became a standard in 1783 at Yale University. The levels of grading were as follows: 1) optima, 2) second optima, 3) inferiors, 4) perjures. Yale initially thought that these 'grades' would help determine if the student had learned all the criteria in order to move on to the next

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level. They were not only tested on information, but also evaluated in the classroom setting. The teacher would grade on a scale as such, 1) first in their class, orderly and attentive and have made the most flattering improvement, 2) orderly, correct and attentive and their improvement has been respectable, 3) they have made very little improvement and as we apprehend from want of diligence, 4) they have learnt little or nothing and we believe on account of escapade and idleness (Smallwood.p44, Milton, O., Pollio, H. R., & Eison, J. A. (1986). *Making sense of college grades*. Jossey-Bass Inc.).

Many high schools have not trained students properly for the real world and college; they only focus on their students passing standardized tests. A choice is given in class whether to write a ten-page paper or do a structured activity. Some would agree that most students would do the activity. Why, though? Because it's the easy way out. Students know that they will have to put forth minimal effort in order to receive the A that they want. They don't apply creativity, collaborate with others, and don't think critically. (Mezeske, R. J., & Mezeske, B. A. (2007). *Beyond Test and Quizzes: creative Assessments in the college classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.). Students have conditioned themselves to go for the easy way to be done faster. Several high school curriculums do not focus on teaching students different learning strategies. Cognitive learning, known as the higher level learning strategy, is rehearsal, elaboration, and mental organization. Then there is Meta cognitive, which has planning, setting goals, and self-monitoring (Mezeske, R. J., & Mezeske, B. A. (2007). *Beyond Test and Quizzes: creative Assessments in the college classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.). Students are taught to care more about their GPA than their learning. This is because high schools want their students to get

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into college. They spend less time on teaching them and more time on making sure students know the skills they need in order to pass. College is supposed to be about learning, but now people spend more time on just passing instead of absorbing the knowledge. It goes to show that our society is becoming complacent in not testing each student properly and just letting him/her pass ( Kohn, A. (1999, March). From Degrading to De-grading.).

The educational system has become “score” driven, relying upon scores that don’t necessarily measure critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Alfie Kohn poses the question, do schools exist for competition or learning? People hear about competition in sports but there is an even higher competition for grades. The reason most kids want to perform well is to compare themselves to others and be the winner. High school students only care about their GPA in order to get into a good college. Several future college students try to get as many scholarships as possible to put towards their “higher” education. Since pre-k, students are taught to care most about their GPA (Kohn, A. (1999, March). From Degrading to De-grading.). If they do not exceed a certain limit, they must retake the class again or even retake the grade. They have more pressure on them to pass instead of being on academic probation. Students are not trained to learn, they are trained to pass. There are millions of books out there to help a student pass the class, yet hardly any on how to learn what is being taught in class. That comes from the curriculum that is being presented. The best way to know if students have learned something is for them to fully explain it instead of just regurgitating what they have memorized. We don’t take the time to fully learn what is important. After each generation has passed through school, one thing remains the same. Students enjoy

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having a person in the room teaching them. Now with online learning and classrooms, students don't get the full classroom experience. Having a teacher in the presence of the student helps the student gain knowledge from the teacher telling of past experiences and providing information for the student to know what not to do or do what they have done. They give feedback right away and monitor their skill at hand. With online classes, students can't receive that feedback, making them more likely just to memorize the material and move on to get their grade. I took a survey of professors at IUP asking them what they thought was the most important part of their education and what has education changed to today. One professor admits that he learned nothing in his college classes except for everything about the one teacher he had. The professor got an A in the course but remembers nothing to this day about that topic, only the stories his teacher would tell. That also says something about learning capability. Students will likely zone out in a class unless something exciting happens. If they aren't intrigued by the topic at hand, they won't listen. Another professor told me that today's students are the technology generation. When someone doesn't understand something, they go straight to the Internet. Students would rather quickly learn the skill and just apply it, whereas classroom teachers explain the skill, the background information, the reason it is used, etc. Students don't understand the concept of knowing where something came from. They just want to do it, be done, receive the grade and get out. Grades are important, I admit, but according to college standards, colleges just want the students to do well in order to obtain grants from the government.

When it's time for a student to step outside of the college classroom into the real world, things will be different. As they go for an interview, the

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boss is not going to look at their grades and say, “Oh, he received an A in math, so I’ll hire him for that.” Future employers will look for skill sets and creativity, something people are not taught at a young age. Instead humans are put into a strict order of rules to follow. Imagination isn’t in use to take flight. People are not graded at their jobs, so they will not know if they are living up to their potential. This is the real world, and one mistake could cost you, something else that isn’t applied in schools. If you fail an exam, you may be lucky to do an extra credit assignment. But, that’s not what life is like. We’ve all heard the saying, we learn from our mistakes. If applied in the classroom setting, all that means is memorize more, not learn it fully. It is said that a person who can fully understand and communicate in another language will have higher grades. This goes to show that when people learn a new language, they can’t just get by with memorizing. In order to hold a conversation, they need to be able to hear the word, process it in their own natural language, then respond using the different language. If a person just memorizes parts and sayings and then tries to use his/her skills, natives are going to make fun of that person because s/he doesn’t actually know how to speak their language.

Grades do consume our life, and they are important in some ways. As a matter of fact, I am writing this to receive a good grade. Without grades, how would one measure how a classroom setting is going? My father works for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, I’m not exactly sure what he does, but I know that he monitors standardized testing, and he tells me lots of stories about his job; stories such as, in order for the state to know as a whole how students are doing, they must measure students with standardized tests. These test show to not only the school but also the state how well students are learning and how the educational

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system is going. At this point, someone might think, why does it matter how our educational system is going? Without education, where would the world be today? In order to succeed in life, we must know the basis of education. Furthering our education helps make new advances to our lives. My father agrees with me saying that a test can't describe a student's ability. However, we need to test people to see in what areas there can be improvement. Standardized tests help everyone in seeing the different ability levels and how improvement can help. Grades are a big part about furthering your education as well (Rubino, J. (2013, January 22). Grades vs. Learning. Retrieved April 17, 2015, from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jen-rubino/grades-vs-learning\\_b\\_2525903.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jen-rubino/grades-vs-learning_b_2525903.html)). If a student doesn't have the best of grades, his/her chances of getting into a "good" school are slimmer. I've had it happen to me. I'm not the best test taker out there, but when it comes to projects, I do my best because I know that's where I can succeed. Honors programs have turned down students just because of grades. But grades don't fully measure one's intelligence. You can ask any teacher. Teachers get to see every side of students, on their good and bad days. However, colleges do not and tend to base their admissions on our ability to take tests. We should not be judged on our ability to take tests. We rely so much on grades because if we fail, it sends a message to us saying that we aren't smart, and we won't get far in life.

So what was that pilot wearing? Do you remember? Did you figure out why I used that to grab your attention? It wasn't just something different. It goes to show that people today are just touching the surface of things, where they can actually reach further down and use their minds to think. I believe that students are attending college just for the grade. They put forth minimal effort, they don't apply their skills, and they aren't applying

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their knowledge to the right reasons. Students aren't taking time to actually learn; they have just become really good at memorizing. When it comes to studying, most students just memorize what is on the page, but when it comes to applying that, they can't because they don't understand what it means to do that task. College is what you make of it. People can spend their money and come out with nothing, or they can learn the skills needed to succeed in life. Humans have this amazing thing in their head called a brain. Not only does it help with everyday life, but it also has some pretty cool skills. People just need to find a way to use it correctly. Think critically, think creatively, work collaboratively, and communicate effectively. These skills will help someone actually learn and become a person of the world. There once was a man who would tell me to think. Because when we use our minds and take a step at a time, we can do anything that we want to do. Do you know who said that? Think about it.

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# Blurred Lines in Today's Culture

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For generations, media has been either minimized or blamed as the source of a “troubled” culture. In the 1984 movie *Footloose*, the town of Beaumont bans rock music and dancing because they believe those factors are directly responsible for creating a rebellious and provocative atmosphere for children. As the film’s antagonist suggests, they promote an attitude that contradicts the way God would want children to act. Although the 2000’s are not quite like the 80’s, most moral values are the same.

A quick fifteen minute drive outside of the city of Pittsburgh is Mt. Lebanon, a small suburban town, home to the elite and wealthy. Commonly referred to as “The Bubble,” Mt. Lebanon is known for its quality education and providing its residents with a sheltered lifestyle, distorting reality. Late fall is a time of high stress due to upcoming midterm exams and the homecoming dance. Daydreams of extravagant dresses and six-inch heels dance through the heads of the girls while the pressure on the guys to come up with the most heartfelt, original, and theatrical proposal to the fall dance becomes exponentially greater. As more “Will you go to the dance with me?” banners are hung and “HOMECOMING?” cakes are made, “originality” becomes far too unrealistic. The ask needs to be a grand gesture. The dress needs to be perfect. It all must to be the best; it all needs to be Instagram worthy.

The dimly lit gym, unable to mask the poorly covered walls of last minute, hand-made décor, is filled with raging hormones of the teens while



the DJ yells into the microphone the existential question of our generation: "Turn down for what?" Unfazed by such a question, they dance on, continuing to grind, grope, and feel while the stench of alcohol lingers on their lips. Sometime between The Wanted's *Glad You Came* and a remix of hometown hero Wiz Khalifa's *Work Hard, Play Hard*, a small group of naive freshman saw enough. At that moment, they were the townspeople of Beaumont.

The Mt. Lebanon grinding ban is the modern spin-off of the mid-80's classic. This back-to-front dancing, as one student admitted, "is the only way [they] know how to dance." After the ban was announced, stairwells were littered with strips of papers reading "dance grind or die" and tweets ended with the hashtag "#dgod." The majority of the students were in full rebellion against the new rule. This dance style simply felt normal to them. From the 1970's to the present day, the young people's culture has transitioned from sex, drugs, and rock and roll to sex, drugs, and pop music. Parents were concerned then, and parents are still concerned now. Both generations blame the songs being played and what is being showed on television. However, many would argue that the difference between then and now is the severity of this lifestyle. During the Mt. Lebanon ban, some parents faulted the school for being unable to handle the hormones of the teens, while others directed their blame toward teen idols who market sex to their children. The anger focused toward the celebrities in the aftermath of the grinding debacle helped reignite debate over a timeless subject. Has the influence of modern culture created an overly sexualized and stimulated society, as many have suggested, or has this influence been drastically overstated?

With the popularity of personal computers starting in the 1980's and

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smartphones in the 2000s, access to the trifecta of the teenage dream has become easier than ever and open to anyone with internet connection. We now have the ability to receive minute-by-minute updates on breaking news, play-by-play on latest political issues, and tweet-by-Instagram post on what Miley Cyrus is or is not wearing. Keeping up with the Kardashians – and any other celebrity from rapper Lil B to President Barack Obama – can be as simple as opting to receive notifications the instant they compose a tweet. Priorities have strayed from real-world realities to TV realities such as MTV's *The Real World*. Social media has given us a false sense of reality by letting each person play God. The Holy Trinity of our culture is as follows: the user, the phone, and social media. With the internet as the church and social norms as our bible, we decide what we see. Smartphones are the all-encompassing, all-seeing, all-doing entity that we worship before. When following-to-follower ratios matter more to a person than current issues, this worshipping begins to morph into a dependency. We are an addictive culture, where our drug of choice is social media and the high we seek is fame and glory. Sites such as Facebook and Instagram give the user the title of playwright. By being in charge of choreographing the grand performance of the ideal life, the mayhem of one's true reality can stay backstage. The constant bombardment of the celebrity lifestyle plants the seed in the mind of our culture that this is the ideal life we seek. Despite knowing that the life portrayed via social media is fabricated, we find comfort in the lies.

Unless we are have constant stimulation from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Tumblr, ours mind wander elsewhere, typically focused on when we can get our next hit. The internet provides us with a lifetime supply of our drug, offering us our next high with split-second downloads, one right after another. The nature of Twitter feeds into this as well. Restricting

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users to posts of only 140 characters—fewer if accompanied by a picture—leads to the dumbing down of potentially already dumb thoughts.

Information can be obtained with a simple search: “Siri, what is a convergence culture?” Because of its availability, the internet has caused cultures to crash together. It has become home to all ages and ultimately blurring the lines between generations; blurred boundaries between what is intended for each age group. We are seeing the same thing while using the same device. We live in a “monkey see, monkey do” culture. Originality is dead because we are all trying to be each other. In Mt. Lebanon, the convergence culture is alive and well. The underclassmen followed the upperclassmen and the upperclassmen followed those in college, where each subgroup of Generation Y tries to mimic the lifestyle of those above them. There is a trickledown effect where, by the transitive property, the underclassmen—freshman and sophomores—are acting like college students. The constant stimulation and exposure to mature content through entertainment and social media has resulted in the hyper-sexual culture we have today. As convicted sex offender R. Kelly sings, there is “nothin’ wrong with a little bump and grind,” however there is something wrong when there are 12 and 13 year-olds dressing and acting like 21 year-olds. Pop music, with its subtle and not-so-subtle references to and glorification of drug use and sexual activity, is targeted to teens. We are naturally sexual beings and there is no harm in properly expressing it, but there is a time and place for doing so. A high school dance, for instance, is not among the list.

Rob Welch

# RESEARCH WRITING

Research writing may be considered the skill most associated with the collegiate experience. Nearly every discipline requires students to express themselves in this genre, so that within the academy, the research paper has the fullest possibility of truly extending across all curriculums. Whether it is a quantitative study on the populations of local bats in biology, a prospectus on useful service facilities for hospitality management, or a compilation of interviews with a local poet, students situate collected data against a pre-established context and draw new conclusions. In doing so, they demonstrate their potential to engage in the same forum of research that has produced the professors who lead the classes. At the same time, the students provide the most critical evidence of their engagement with a given topic: they show how they can synthesize information, orienting it around their unique perspective.

Typically, positive results for the research paper depend on how well students achieve this synthesis, coupled with how diligently they document their research trail. Frequently, this latter is a matter of interpretation. Is adherence to the letter of the law laid down by the Modern Language Association or the American Psychological Association the only possible standard? In "Effects of Media Messages," the citation of Devon Kinter does not precisely duplicate either standard. However, Devon regularly provides seamless, unambiguous introductions for the research he includes. The information he provides may not be precisely that which the eye trained for a particular style of citation looks, but it provides clear documentation that serves just as well. Is this more important than showing an ability to mimic a style guide? It is possible to approach the citation provided in the

essays by Devon Kinter and Richard Napotnik as examples in need of correction. However, it is useful to stress how each author remains doggedly faithful to crediting his sources in a remarkably consistent style.

Style in each of these examples also extends to the way the papers are organized. Western academia expects that the introductory paragraph will narrow to an identifiable thesis, and that, subsequently, each paragraph will develop a point in support of this thesis. Look at the way Napotnik's essay remains vigilantly focused on defending his front-loaded view on net neutrality. This is the format that we foster as conducive to a "strong" stance. It is worthwhile to note, however, that this system of organization is tied to our cultural expectations, our development of a particular variation of rhetoric. It is, by no means, the "natural" way to write. Other cultures sometimes find this "strong" stance indicative of arrogance, a display of sureness which has no place in participation in a thoughtful, reflective, academic community. Consider exercises that reorganize our sample essays, working inductively, building up to a conclusion, and see what merits this kind of presentation might offer. As much as with citation, the structure of a research essay is typically prescribed by those intended as its consumer, but it is important for the writer to push against these strictures, rather than to fall, unquestioningly into pattern.

# Assignment Prompt for “Effects of Media Messages”

**Instructor: Rachael Warmington**

**Course: 202**

**Persuasive Research Paper:** In this assignment, you will write a research paper. Research writing is commonly required in college courses for well-established reasons. It helps you develop specific skills and abilities that are essential in college, the workplace, and life. Regardless of your major and the career you choose, you will need to be able to demonstrate the critical thinking that research writing requires. Why are critical thinking skills so important? They are what allow us to comprehend difficult concepts and to engage with complex ideas, including ideas with which we may disagree. Writing research papers helps us develop critical thinking skills because we have to use critical thinking throughout each step of the writing process. We use critical thinking when we determine how to find information, when we comprehend information new to us, analyze information, evaluate sources, reach conclusions, make rational decisions, and solve problems.

Moreover, we usually engage in research writing with the goal of persuading, and the ability to persuade effectively is also essential in life. Much of what we do in school, the workplace, and even our personal lives depends on the ability to persuade. You will need to know how to write research papers for your college courses, but research writing is not restricted to the academic setting. In both personal and professional contexts the development of your research paper is a concrete demonstration of your mastery of the topic, enhancing your credibility and deepening your own understanding.

You will select a topic that considers your interest, your career, and/or previous knowledge and experience. You will identify a research question based upon this topic. Your research paper should allow you to explore some aspect of your interest from an objective perspective. Be wary of choosing topics that you know absolutely nothing about. For example, if you choose a topic in the health sciences, you need to be prepared to read health sciences research material, which can be quite intimidating to someone who is not familiar with the language of the discipline. You will complete multiple drafts. These drafts will allow you to incorporate feedback into your writing, making necessary changes.

## **Critical Elements**

In your Research Paper:

1. Identify a clear thesis that articulates a logical argument about your chosen topic
2. Select a coherent research question that purposefully explores an interest, your career, or knowledge
3. Demonstrate an informed, logical counter-argument with sufficient detail that support the claim
4. Use supporting sources that are credible and effective in supporting thesis argument demonstrating the quality of your research process
5. Purposefully integrate sources within one’s own work at appropriate points in structure of argument (Synthesis)
6. Apply clear pattern of organization around the thesis argument
7. Apply relevant rules of grammar
8. Apply correct syntax in developing sentence structure

**Format:** 8–10 pages, double-spaced (excluding reference page) with standard margins and Times New Roman 12-point font. The paper should adhere to all APA or MLA standards of formatting. The paper should use a minimum of six resources. Adapted From: ENG 123 Southern New Hampshire University

# Effects of Media Messages: How Society Shapes Commercials

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In modern times, there is no uncertainty that society today lives in a world controlled by media. Radio, billboards, and internet ads are being consumed at large quantities and is almost impossible to avoid. One of the most common and effective uses of media are television commercials, which according to randomhistory.com, “more than \$500 billion a year is spent on advertising worldwide.” Think about it. Think about certain commercials that stand out above all the rest. A question one could ask is how one commercial can be more noticeable than all the other commercials or what makes society in general engaged in the commercial to make it successful or unsuccessful? This leads to the thought of can commercials shape society itself or are commercials shaped by society. In order to prove that commercials are shaped by society, three different supporting factors must be addressed such as previous results of commercials, new social trends, and growing markets.

Before the process of a commercial is taken place, most commercials that obtain success look through previous results of effective commercials and determine what strategies are best to use in certain situations. Research is essential to people wanting to make popular commercials for society. However, some individuals will argue that commercials have an objective to focus on the viewpoints of today’s society and it is unnecessary to research commercials from the past in order to make commercials for today. Even though commercials change overtime due to altered cultures,

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it is essential to remember that the whole reason for companies making commercials is to gain profits and the more effective or relatable the commercial is, the better chance it has to gaining profits. Simply, in order for the advertisements to be effective, companies have to research what strategies were used back in the day and ask the question are changes needed to meet the demands to successfully appeal to the audience. Most of the time the answer is yes, and sometimes it is no. For example, a recent 2014 Dodge commercial demonstrates the practice of previous results for use in their recent car commercial advertising the Dodge Challenger. The commercial shows the scene of the two Dodge brothers at a party and the spot ends with a shot of the new 2015 Dodge Challenger beside two 1915 Dodge Touring cars. Detroit News wrote that the commercial “imagines the brothers’ elaborate lifestyles and how they would be proud of the 2015 Dodge muscle cars” (Wayland Web). The article talks about the progression of Dodge and how the founders would be proud of the success it obtained throughout the years. However, Dodge is doing more than just showing a commercial about a car, which puts them on the competitive edge. Wayland again writes “Dodge is mixing legend with history...” (Wayland Web). But why would Dodge want to advertise the history of the company? The company advertises it because it communicates to the audience that Dodge has been in the business for so long, which is reason to why they are successful, growing, and most importantly the better product for the company. Michael Wayland also informs that “Chrysler Chief Marketing Officer Oliver Francois said the campaign is meant to pay homage to the brothers that led the brand to what it is today” (Wayland Web). By mixing history, or previous results, such as showing the brothers and the older 1915 model cars, it gives the audience multiple reasons to at least acknowledge

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the commercial such as the ability for the company to adapt to change, while still obtaining the history and gives the audience a perspective of the lifestyle from back in the day. It also gives the audience something to relate to. For example, the one object that stands out in the commercial is the 2015 Dodge Challenger. It immediately stands out from all the old styles of clothing, culture, and cars; which is actually done on purpose. It gives the audience something to relate to in their own culture, while showing the progression of the Dodge Company and why it has been successful for so many years. Even if other companies do not use previous results for television ads, it is arguable that they research and study the previous results, or the history, of the commercials to decide what processes can they use or not use in their future commercials.

Advertisements also need to research what new social trends are accepted in today's society and make careful decisions on how to use those trends in their favor to gain attention of the audience. For instance, one major social trend in the 1950's was tobacco smoking. It had been advertised in television shows, movies, and even children's cartoons. Fig. 1 shows the children's cartoon of The Flintstones where Fred and Barney both are smoking and promoting Winston's cigarettes.



(Fig 1. Depicts the Fred Flintstone smoking Winston's cigarettes with Barney in the cartoon.)



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Commercials even depicted doctors, physicians, nurses, and even throat specialists to recommend certain cigarettes over other tobacco companies. Yeah, that's right, throat specialists recommended certain tobacco products for use. Compared to today's general view on smoking, the message is actually quite different. For example, three different commercials on television recently from 2012-2014 makes a conscious effort to get society to quit smoking. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration or the FDA, recently made a commercial showing a girl tearing off her skin on her face to pay for the pack of cigarettes. It shows the impact cigarettes can make on a person's health and what price you actually have to pay when you smoke cigarettes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the CDC, also created different commercials showing the results of people in society who smoked or even the effects of second hand smoke. It follows the struggle of their daily lives caused by the devastating effects of smoking. Finally, Truth organization published a commercial called "Finishers", which depicts the movement to end teen smoking. The truth organization states "Only 9% of teens smoke. That's down from 23% in 2000" (Web). Different organizations are doing more than spreading the message about ending smoking for good, but some businesses are even taking the next step by eliminating the selling of cigarettes in their own stores. One store taking this action is a nationwide drugstore, called CVS health. They publicly stated that "CVS/pharmacy will stop selling cigarettes and all tobacco products at its more than 7,600 stores nationwide by October 1, 2014. Ending the sale of cigarettes and tobacco products at CVS/pharmacy is simply the right thing to do for the good of our customers and our company. The sale of tobacco products is inconsistent with our purpose – helping people on their path to better health" (Web). So why

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this sudden change to end smoking? It reformed because of culture and what society generally knows how bad smoking actually is for people. Another reason cigarette advertising stopped is because of legislation laws. According to History.com:

Public health officials and consumers wanted stronger warning labels on tobacco products and their advertisements banned from television and radio, where they could easily reach impressionable children. (Tobacco companies were the single largest product advertisers on television in 1969.) Cigarette makers defended their industry with attempts to negate the growing evidence that nicotine was addictive and that cigarette smoking caused cancer. Though they continued to bombard unregulated print media with ads for cigarettes, tobacco companies lost the regulatory battle over television and radio. The last televised cigarette ad ran at 11:50 p.m. during The Johnny Carson Show on January 1, 1971. (Web)

Many different changes in laws, regulations, and cultures altered the viewpoints and social trends from the past and paved a way to new ideas, movements, or cultures that were different from before. Another example for advertising research on social trends, is a modern insurance commercial released in 2014. One such commercial depicts three elderly women in a common living room area looking at different photos hung up on a wall. The woman in the commercial says that it saved her a bunch of time “posting” the photos to her wall, which is similar to how Facebook is structured by posting photos online to the user’s Facebook wall. The lady begins to say how it is just as fast as her car insurance which saved her “15% in just 15 minutes”, in which the other lady argues that she “saved more than that in half the time”. It even references Facebook when the lady says “I un-

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friend you”, where the other lady says “that’s not how this works. That’s not how any of this works” (Esurance Web). What this commercial did was introduce a new way of looking at what they offer and why they are the better company for the product. They even referenced the famous Geico quote in which “15 minutes can save you 15% or more on car insurance” and refute against it by saying that someone can save more in less time. It may have not been the exact quote, but the audience will still understand what the message is directed towards. It tells the audience that other car insurance companies are not in the modern world anymore, and that esurance is the new modern way to handling car insurance. The company researched the social trends in society, addressed the social trends on the commercial, and relate it to their own product. The old woman is not in today’s culture because posting photos on an actual wall instead of on a social media site such as Facebook, is not the norm or the social trend. The esurance commercial addresses that and states how they are in the modern society and how they are the better company out of all other car insurance companies. These examples show how research on social trends in today’s society can make the best results for the commercial, and thus adjust the commercial to how the audience can relate to it. A common argument against this point would be that commercials will sometimes go outside of the norm in social trends in order to attract the attention of the audience. It is true that some commercials can go outside the norm of social trends, however in order to be effective, it still has to somehow be related to what an audience can actually grasp on in today’s society. Furthermore, as this point relates to the examples of social trends, it also verifies the final point about growing markets, which is that companies need to observe the results of the advertisement.

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Once commercials are produced and shown, companies will look at the results and statistics for the commercials in order to possibly situate themselves in a growing market. It is important to take into consideration that this key point of reviewing the results and statistics for the advertisements shown is different from previous results because the companies look at the individual results of the one commercial instead of researching many previous commercials. For instance, A Cheerio cereal commercial was shown in the year 2013, however it caused a lot of conversations amongst society and brought out mostly negative comments unfortunately about the interracial family. Even though it stirred negative comments, it still was successful among the majority. According to Jim Edwards from Business Insider, “It turns out that the ad has achieved exactly what General Mills hoped it would. According to data from Ace Metrix, the ad is the No.2 best liked cereal ad of 2013 and the 6th best cereal ad of 50 it has analyzed over the last 12 months. Ace Metrix continuously surveys a large online audience for feedback on ad effectiveness.” Below are two charts showing the results and statistics of the Cheerio ad. The first chart, conferring to the data by Ace Metrix, depicts the popularity of the commercial on a majority scale. As it portrays, the numbers are relatively higher with the colored triangles representing norms in component scores.

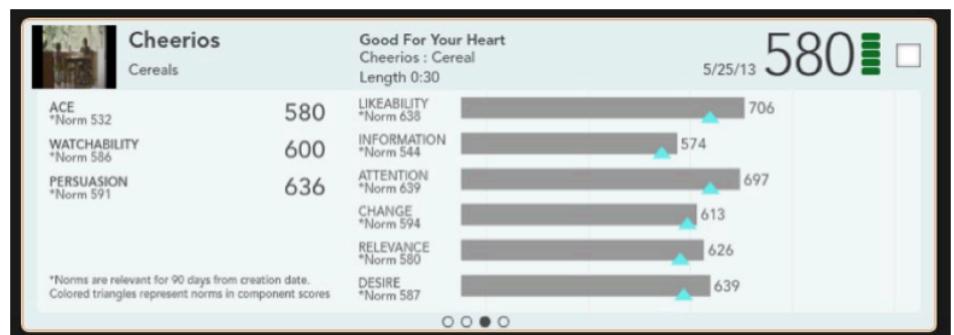


Fig. 1. Chart which shows the popularity of the Cheerio’s ad “Good For Your Heart” among the majority of people on social media (Edwards Web).

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The second chart reveals the diversity of audiences who watched the commercial in the year 2013, which was the year it was released. Edwards continues to write that “There was one negative aspect to the ad, Ace Metrix noted. White people and men over 50 liked the ad least of all the demographic groups. Ace Metrix says older men generally dislike ads with kids in them, and that African-Americans generally score ads higher than Caucasians” (Edwards Web).

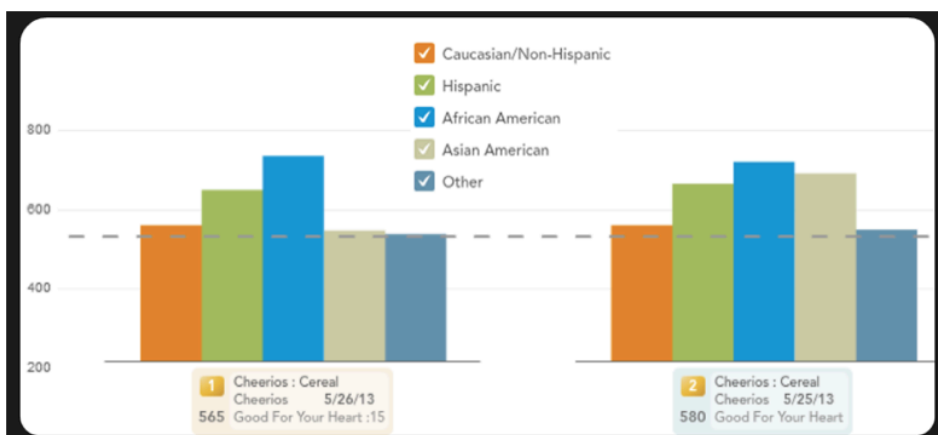


Fig. 2. A chart that depicts the diversity of the audiences who viewed the Cheerio’s ad “Good For Your Heart” (Edwards Web).

This article also takes into consideration what audiences or subgroups are affected, which could be caused from many different reasons such as upbringing, lifestyle, family, culture, etc.

Commercials go through a strategic plan or formula rather than creating commercials on the spot. With innovated, new technology, society might bring commercials to a higher demand, which may change certain aspects of how commercials could be made in the future. However, it will still always have a plan to appeal to society, which is important to obtain profits and attract audiences. One could argue that media influences society, so it means commercials shape society. Even though media does influence society, it is based on the social trends at the time. By effectively showing

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the process of making commercials, useful examples, and detailed graphs and charts, it proves the thesis statement, which is commercials are shaped by society.

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# Assignment Prompt for “Protected Net Neutrality v. the Capitalist Monopoly Model”

Instructor: AJ Schmitz

Course: 101

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## Research & Writing

A good writer utilizes her voice in concert with the voices of others that have spoken about the same subject in the past. This assignment will focus on two skills: the finding and selection of information and the integration of this information into our own writing. This six (6) page paper (a work cited page will make it seven) will be concerned with an issue in contemporary society of your choosing, and it is your job to take a position on the subject and research the spectrum of voices in the discussion to develop a proper thesis which you will reinforce with the information you uncovered during the research process. These processes will incorporate all of the techniques (personalization, information dissemination, critical thinking, analysis, and proper summary) we have covered over the course of the semester. The limit of six pages must be adhered to in order to receive full credit.

- Assignment must include no fewer than five (5) and no more than seven (7) reputable sources;
- You must include at least 5 transitional phrases and 3 “They Say/I Say” templates (see course text book) which must be bolded in both rough and final drafts
- There must be a clearly defined thesis which must be bolded. Thesis must be something argumentative/open to debate which your research and writing can support.
- You must take a position in this paper. You may understand or recognize that there are multiple sides to this issue, but you are required to take a side and argue for that side, which in turn requires you to insert yourself in the writing.
- Your topic must be developed beyond a mere pro/con argument. You must think creatively and analytically to find an aspect of your topic that is interesting, nuanced, and beyond the everyday.

TIP: We will discuss research techniques and thesis development in class, but the best way to hit the assignment guidelines is to discuss your work with me as well as with each other. Come to office hours and tell me what you are looking into; Correspond with me via e-mail; set up a time to discuss with two or three of your colleagues your topic and the sources you have found. Two brains are better than one, and when developing, researching, and drafting a paper like this, there is no substitute for talk.



Richard M. Napotnik Jr.

# Protected Net Neutrality v. the Capitalist Monopoly Model

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In recent years there has been an ever growing debate over the current makeup of the internet which is based on the concept of net neutrality. A simple explanation this concept was actually given by political satirist John Oliver on his HBO show, "Last Week Tonight", where he states: "Essentially it means that all data has to be treated equally no matter who created it. It's why the internet is a weirdly on a level playing field" (June 1, 2014). In other words, net neutrality is what keeps internet service providers (ISPs) from transforming the internet into a capitalistic monopoly.

It goes without saying that in the past there have been some ideas on how to protect the internet from the interests of ISPs. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2005 established four guiding principles to encourage and protect an open internet: Users are allowed to access whatever lawful content that they wish; users are allowed to run services and other types of applications of their own choice; users are allowed to connect with devices of their own choice; and ISPs must compete against one another to insure a level playing field. Then, in 2009, Julius Genachowski who was chairman of the FCC from 2009 to 2013 issued another proposal in which it said the FCC should make sure that internet providers could not discriminate against any kind of internet content. Secondly it would require providers to disclose their practices in management (Genachowski, 4). The FCC has made some progress on the issue but perhaps something else can be done to completely solve it.

Currently, the internet is one of the greatest pieces of technology of our

time and I am of the opinion that it should be freely used by everyone, and not controlled by massive corporations that have only one thing on their mind: the gaining of wealth. This issue can be solved simply by allowing a network neutrality law to be developed and subsequently put into action. This law would follow several of the guidelines that the FCC follow today with some other, newer guidelines attached to it. Under this law, ISPs would not be allowed to impede Internet traffic in any way possible. The open internet law would protect innovation and entrepreneurship, the spread of new ideas, the freedom of expression, the use of all legal services that the internet provides without any additional costs, and finally regulation could also help broadband corporations (another term for ISPs) in developing a better way to handle the steadily rising increase in internet use.

Capitalism has had a history of not effectively working under monopolies, and should these said monopolies take over the internet, massive corporations such as Comcast and Time Warner Cable will charge people a proverbial “arm and a leg” for content that is not related to their ISP. In effect, this would harm many companies such as Netflix, Facebook, Skype, or even Google who are not tied to any ISP. Many companies today are connected to the internet in some way or form. This could be companies providing a service such as Hulu or Yahoo, or they could be companies dependent on the internet for profit with examples like Amazon or EBay. However, it seems that recently ISPs are of the mind that as the “middleman” they are not getting their due for transferring data from place to place without an additional charge or even input on what is being transferred. It is in the ISPs interests to treat data not from their own company differently and charge you more depending on what you use day to day.

## Richard M. Napotnik Jr. • Protected Net Neutrality v. the Capitalist Monopoly Model

If there was a net neutrality law put into place this could not happen. Critics against this type of regulation would most likely say that this regulation would only deter investments and start-up companies. However this concern is unfounded as explained in the Journal of Internet Law. “The FCC required AT&T to operate a neutral, non-discriminatory network for a period of two years. The result? Despite the net neutrality restrictions imposed on AT&T, gross capital investment actually increased, both immediately after imposition of the merger condition and in the following quarters” (John Edward Sharp, page 10). What this means is that with even minimal regulation put in place, assets increased rapidly. Why did this happen you may ask? To put it simply, those investors felt more secure because there was a sense of secured net neutrality and that their businesses would continue to grow without large ISP’s looking over their shoulder and deciding what data they could or couldn’t produce. The guidelines proposed in this paper would potentially increase internet investment security and help the creation of new and innovative businesses.

If a net neutrality law were put into place, there would be a safety cushion for the spread of new ideas and concepts. According to Engineering and Technology, “the Internet is a vital tool for freedom of expression and even that there should be a fundamental right to access an ‘open Internet’” (Collins, 61). What Collins is saying here is that it is imperative that a democratic society such as ours should protect and allow a free internet to flourish. Through the creation of Twitter and YouTube we can now see new media tools being used by movements throughout the globe (Genachowski, 2). During the Arab Spring the Middle East saw an upheaval of several repressive governmental regimes such as those in Egypt and Libya. What most people do not know is that the Arab Spring was

actually organized through Twitter. Should the ISPs gain more control over the customer's data usage, this would be an infringement not only upon the person's privacy, but in many ways an infringement on the freedom of speech in the United States and in the world.

The FCC has already seen a case in which an unnamed ISP had stopped their users from accessing content based on politics. "We have even seen at least one service provider deny users access to political content" (Genachowski, 3). To put it another way, if an ISP can stop an individual from looking at something related to politics, than what is to stop them from blocking sites such as Twitter or YouTube? In truth, the only thing that could stop them would be meaningful legislation that addresses this issue and insures that ISPs would not be allowed to block content.

Along with the points made above is the fact that many incoming immigrants need governmental services to become American citizens. "More prosaically, as government services move online, unfettered Internet access becomes vital to full citizenship (Collins, 62)." Should someone want to gain full citizenship they will need governmental web pages in order to get the information that they need. Hypothetically ISPs could block those governmental web sites and make someone pay a premium to use the government's web page. The person would then be "strong armed" into paying the ISP for a required governmental service. Theoretically the ISP could charge a premium on citizenship aiding governmental websites and they would be forced to pay for it in order to become a citizen.

Another benefit would be the assurance that users of the internet would be allowed access to any currently free websites without additional costs from their ISP. Currently, internet users are allowed to use services such as YouTube, Google, and Twitter free of charge. However, this may change

as there seems to be growing interest from ISPs to stop this from occurring. Consider a recent case, for example in which Comcast forced Netflix into agreeing to a deal in which Netflix would pay a premium to the ISP to make sure that their data would go through to the consumer. How could they do this you may ask? For five years Comcast throttled Netflix data coming through to the consumer and “strong armed” the company’s cooperation as they were losing members of their service. Netflix’s breaking point was when Comcast managed to reduce the quality of service to “near VHS quality” (Mick). Comcast basically conducted a “mafia shakedown” in order to get Netflix to abide by their seemingly unregulated rules.

It is understandable that there are those who are against legislation for net neutrality. After all, government regulation for everything isn’t always a good thing nor has it produced positive results historically. On such argument is provided in Forbes Magazine by contributor Joshua Steimle. Steimle states; “I see any increase in regulation, however well intentioned, however beneficial to me today, as leading up to less freedom for me in the long term (Steimle, 1).” While I agree with Mr. Steimle in that governmental regulation is not always beneficial in the long run, I respectfully disagree with his assessment of net neutrality legislation. This legislation would not be targeted towards limiting what people can and cannot use on the internet, but instead it protects people from the interests of multimillion dollar corporations.

With a net neutrality law there would be numerous benefits to the internet and its users. Some of these benefits would include the promotion and protection of the following: emerging online based businesses, the freedom of speech, the spread of new and interesting ideas or concepts, the use of internet services that currently have no additional cost, and just

as important, it would aid ISPs in preparing for inevitable increased internet usage. The last statement actually goes hand in hand with my next point which is that this regulation would also help the ISPs. Currently ISPs are having trouble with so many people using the internet which is why even our “high-speed internet” is sluggish compared to that we see in Europe or even some parts of Asia. With a net neutrality law the ISPs would be required to upgrade whatever equipment they need to so they can sustain their service.

A very basic outline or a general idea for what the law would look like is something like this. The law would first protect one of the most important ideas that the United States stands for which is freedom of speech. Without a law in place this freedom is in grave danger from ISP interference. Secondly, this law would protect entrepreneurship and emerging businesses. The law would help provide a safety cushion for new businesses and ensure future competition. Thirdly, there would be protection for Internet users so they can continue to surf the web without having to pay additional costs for services such as YouTube and Amazon. Finally, this law would also require ISPs to upgrade current equipment to prepare for more internet users that are sure to come over the years. It should also be said that the FCC will also be the enforcers and defenders of this proposed law as this would fall under their jurisdiction and area of expertise.

In short, in a perfect world there would be no need for government regulation on something so “free” and quite frankly awe inspiring as the internet. It is highly doubtful that in the process of making the internet the creators would foresee this as an issue. However, because of the interests of ISPs there is now a need for governmental help for the internet and its users.

## Richard M. Napotnik Jr. • Protected Net Neutrality v. the Capitalist Monopoly Model

The concept of net neutrality doesn't mean that ISPs are bad and should just go away; instead it realizes what an ISP is and that is a simply profit driven business like almost any other. A net neutrality law simply would preserve and protect the internet's roots and ideals which are freedom, market competition, and finally and most importantly, as an open resource that as a society we can all enjoy and use.

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# Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in the United States Military

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War has remained an impactful constant throughout millennia of human civilization. The creation of ideological movements, the spread of different cultures, and the rapid growth of technology can all be accredited to the persistence of conflict. Modern society is, somewhat disturbingly, built and dependent on the advancements directly and indirectly achieved through bloodshed. Of course, the horrors of battle cannot be simply masked by its accomplishments. Methods of killing and destruction have progressed to the point where towns and cities can be obliterated in an instant. Soldiers and civilians alike can be torn apart beyond recognition through the use of automatic and explosive weaponry. Children too young to comprehend the evil of men are consumed in the crossfire. Blood and innards of fallen comrades and enemies litter the battlefield after an intense firefight.

Soldiers of the United States military, both former and current, are not unfamiliar with these terrors. And yet, despite being surrounded by the flames of mankind's reenactment of hell, they are expected to return home without the slightest burn on their psyche. Memories and nightmares of these events are to be simply shrugged off in the transition from the role of a soldier to that of a civilian. This might be possible if war were some action movie that soldiers watched the night before in the comfort of their homes. Obviously, this is not the case. Witnessing and participating in the terrifying events that occur during war can leave a lasting and unhealthy



effect on the mind. From this, other symptoms may arise that put the individual in further mental instability. This phenomenon is referred to as posttraumatic stress disorder.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to the research article "PTSD Prevalence, Associated Exposures, and Functional Health Outcomes in a Large, Population-Based Military Cohort" is "a psychiatric condition resulting from experiencing or witnessing traumatic events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, serious accidents, death, violent assault, or other physical, sexual, or emotional abuse" (Smith et al. 91). While any array of traumatic events has the potential to create posttraumatic stress disorder in its victims, PTSD is perhaps best known as a mental disorder resulting from the witness or involvement in traumatizing combat during wartime. Although the disorder can affect anyone, some are more at risk than others. According to the survey conducted by the "PTSD Prevalence" study, "Those reporting [PTSD diagnosis and/or symptoms]...were significantly more likely to be women, less educated, and report current smoking and problem drinking behaviors" (Smith et al. 94). The study also found that those with PTSD and PTSD symptoms were more likely to have had previous exposures to chemical or biological warfare agents.

Symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, while varying in severity from case to case, are similar in each patient. Perhaps the most recognizable and famous symptom of PTSD is the re-living of the traumatic event. This can occur in the form of a nightmare or in a flashback. Flashbacks are more vivid and frightening in comparison to nightmares, as they create a more realistic representation of the event within the victim's mind. These flashbacks may be triggered by anything in the environment that is similar

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in sight, sound, taste, or feeling to something within the environment of the traumatic event. For example, the sound of a firework exploding overhead may trigger a flashback to the traumatic event, which may have involved some type of explosive weapon. Other common symptoms include depression and suicidal thoughts, a state of increased arousal and alertness, anxiety, and a decrease in control of emotions such as anger and guilt.

According to the Research and Development (RAND) corporation's study on the prevalence of PTSD in veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, "18 percent of the Army sample met criteria for PTSD upon returning from Iraq...among marines, 20 percent met criteria for PTSD" (Tanielien and Jaycox. 45). The same study further explains that "50 percent of post-deployed service members with mental health conditions received any treatment" (179). Of the fifty percent that receive treatment, "just over half received a minimally adequate treatment" (xxii). It should be noted that the study does not define "adequate treatment" as synonymous with effective. Effective treatment is presumed to be given to an even smaller percentage of veterans. The statistics gathered by this study show that not only is posttraumatic stress disorder a thriving issue within the military, but that few receive the treatment necessary to make a full recovery. Only an approximate twenty-five percent of veterans surveyed in the RAND study received adequate treatment, which may have been ineffective. This leaves seventy-five percent of veterans with PTSD without any form of treatment whatsoever.

Despite these alarming statistics, the public compassion for veterans suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder remains low. As a society, we fail to comprehend that a pat on the back and a quick "thank you for your service" does little to lift the morale of a soldier suffering from posttraumatic

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stress disorder. Mental illnesses have only begun to receive respect by the general public. Sadly, this respect has yet to systematically change the military into a force able to make a widespread improvement in the way it handles mental illnesses. While treatment of PTSD within the United States has improved over more recent years, much more improvement is necessary in order to control the disease. Throughout the history of the United States military, posttraumatic stress disorder has remained a health risk to both active soldier and veterans, and needs to be addressed in a systematic effort if it is to be controlled.

The death of one Private Bruce Miller is a perfect representation of how the United States military fails to fully comprehend mental illnesses within its ranks. Brian Turner, a military veteran and poet, wrote the poem “Eulogy” about his former comrade. Turner writes,

“And it happens like this, on a blue day of sun, / when Private Miller pulls the trigger / to take brass and fire into his mouth; / the sound lifts the birds up off the water, / a mongoose pauses under the trees, / and nothing can stop it now.....and Private Miller has found what low hush there is / down in the eucalyptus shade, there by the river” (Turner 20). Turner, instead of illustrating the suicide of Private Miller as a terrible, tragic event, described it as a moment of peace for Miller. The “hush” that Miller found was the escape from the mental anguish and stress left in his mind from war. His suicide, accompanied by the calm setting of nature, was the peace of mind Miller could not obtain during his life. Death was the only way to silence the trauma he had endured as a soldier.

Although Miller’s suicide demonstrates the danger posed by posttraumatic stress disorder, the military’s reaction to his death was of annoyance rather than alarm. At a Voices in Wartime conference, Turner

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describes the reaction to Private Miller's suicide. "The Colonel came down...and he walked over... and here's what he said. He said, 'what are three things we can do to alleviate the situation'" ("Voices in Wartime"). If Private Miller had been slain in the heat of battle, he would most likely be referred to as a hero, or possibly a patriot. However, because he instead lost the battle within his mind, Private Miller became "a situation." Rather than a tragedy, Miller was a thorn in the side of the Colonel and the military. To "alleviate" this situation was to simply dismiss the death of Private Miller as the weakness of one soldier instead of the failure of the institution to protect its personnel from all threats, including posttraumatic stress disorder.

Many within the military were quick to forget the "situation" that was Private Miller. Brian Turner, at the same conference, says, "When we came back, our brigade was put out on a parade field...the Colonel came up and gave a speech...he listed the names of those who didn't come back with us. But as he completed that list, I noticed that he hadn't said the name of Private Miller" ("Voices in Wartime"). Of course, the absence of Miller's name may have been a mistake. If omitted purposely, however, it represents a much larger problem. PTSD and other mental illnesses stemming from military combat cannot be controlled if the military refuses to acknowledge those affected. Unfortunately, there are many cases similar to that of Private Miller that remain forgotten. This is most likely due to the absence of suicide cases in the total count of casualties during a conflict. By rejecting suicides as casualties, the military is ignoring PTSD and other mental illnesses as serious threats. However, as evidenced by the RAND study, posttraumatic stress disorder is certainly a formidable foe. In fact, "The number of suicide deaths in the U.S. military surged to a record 349 [in 2012] — more than the 295 Americans who died fighting in Afghanistan in

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2012" ("Military's Suicide Rate Surpassed Combat Deaths"). This article, published by National Public Radio, suggests that mental illness has not only become a serious threat to the United States military, but that these illnesses are now the primary threat. The sooner the military accepts this inconvenient truth, the sooner cases similar to Private Miller's can be prevented.

While diagnoses and recognition of posttraumatic stress disorder have only recently begun to climb, symptoms of the disease can be traced back through previous United States military conflicts. This presence of posttraumatic stress disorder throughout U.S. military history is outlined in James Gandolfini's documentary *Wartorn: 1861-1910*. By gathering documentation recording the struggles of past veterans throughout previous wars, Gandolfini bridges the gap between veterans suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. *Wartorn* begins with the examination of letters written by Civil War veteran Angelo Crapsey. At first, the letters are patriotic and full of energy. Crapsey is eager to fight for the Union and his country, and views deserting soldiers as cowards and traitors. However, as the letters continue, it is clear that Crapsey's mindset has begun to change. More and more of his friends and comrades begin to fall in front of his eyes, and he can no longer dismiss the sights as a simple product of war. By the second year of his service, it is clear that Crapsey is mentally scarred. He begins to write of the horrors that have claimed his comrades and scarred his mind. "No one except...a soldier can imagine what a fighting man has to endure," he writes. "How many young men are ruined by this war?" (*Wartorn*). His letters stop after his eventual discharge, but the film continues to document Crapsey's struggle with depression, anxiety, and paranoia, all symptoms of PTSD. The film notes that, at the time, PTSD

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was referred to as melancholia and even insanity. Finally, while hunting with friends in 1864, Crapsey committed suicide via gunshot. As his family describes (in writing) Angelo's behavior leading up to his death, it becomes clear that he suffered from many symptoms synonymous with posttraumatic stress disorder.

Gandolfini further examines posttraumatic stress disorder throughout the military's history as the documentary shifts to World War II. A group of elderly gentlemen are being interviewed about their experiences with PTSD during their service. One anonymous veteran recalls the culture around PTSD, which was then referred to as war fatigue. "Lack of intestinal fortitude [is] what they would put in your record," he said about PTSD, "and nobody would want that" (Wartorn). The military more or less described those with posttraumatic stress disorder as gutless. After all, the military prides itself on masculinity and toughness. Physical injuries were honored, and would prove your manhood and bravery. Mental injuries would only show your cowardice and failure as a soldier. This was the mindset of many during a time when posttraumatic stress disorder and other mental illnesses were untouched areas of discussion.

Michael Shields, another World War Two veteran, is an example of the negative effects of such a culture. Michael says, "I felt like I was the only one in the whole world that came out of the war with something wrong with my head. I never even talked to my own wife about the war....I thought every bartender in Brooklyn was my psychiatrist" (Wartorn). Military - and American culture as a whole - discouraged personnel from talking about anything that might reflect badly upon the war and the military itself. They could not even confess to their own comrades and family that they suffered from war fatigue because it would not be a manly thing to do. Veterans

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found no comfort back home, since they, like Mike Shields, returned to family that could not begin to understand the harsh realities and trauma of war. Because of this, veterans like Mike required self-treatment, which more often than not meant reaching the bottom of the nearest bottle of liquor.

These clips from Wartorn establish two key points in relation to the development of posttraumatic stress disorder in the military. The first point is that PTSD is not a new problem. Both Crapsey's letters and the words of the World War II veterans indicate that posttraumatic stress disorder was existent during their respective time periods. Not only that, but the symptoms of depression, isolation and anxiety experienced by the veterans are the same as those experienced by current veterans suffering from PTSD. While the war and situation may have changed, the disease never did. Both Crapsey and Private Miller felt isolation and eventually succumbed to their disorder. Likewise, both Crapsey and the interviewed veterans experienced nightmares and flashbacks of the traumatic events. However, the second point shown by these testimonies is that progress has been made in the diagnoses and treatment of posttraumatic stress order. If the statistics from the RAND study are to be believed, twenty-five percent of veterans with PTSD today receive some sort of official treatment, in comparison with zero percent from the Civil War and World War Eras. While still a sensitive subject, soldiers are now less afraid to speak about the struggles they face as a result of posttraumatic stress disorder.

The issue with the diagnosis and treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder is not that it lacks progress. Rather, the issue is that it lacks systematic progress. While the United States military is not filled with personnel completely ignorant of the existence of mental illnesses

throughout its ranks, it is certainly not filled with progressive thinkers on the matter. This creates a situation where any progress in the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder is met with resistance within the system. This resistance is evident in Gandolfini's interview with General Peter Chiarelli, a general within the United States military working for better recognition and treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder. "You're fighting a culture that really doesn't believe in injuries you can't see, which can be as serious as those injuries which you can see," General Chiarelli states. "The science of how we treat [posttraumatic stress disorder] is just not as mature as it is for some of the other wounds of war" (Wartorn). Chiarelli's statement is a perfect summarization of the attitude some hold towards posttraumatic stress disorder. Many see PTSD as an inferior injury in comparison to physical injuries. Though it may be less direct, this mentality is nearly identical to the mentality towards war fatigue during World War II. Because it lacks blood, loss of limbs, or any other characteristic of a "hero's" injury, posttraumatic stress disorder must be a cry for attention or escape from the war, rather than a legitimate illness. The fact that this train of thought still persists within the military is an indicator that the approach towards posttraumatic stress disorder is still in an early stage.

While the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder is not satisfactory, the progress made throughout our military's short history cannot be ignored. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs offers disability claims to veterans suffering with PTSD. These claims help veterans earn a livable wage as they adjust back to life in the United States. The Veterans Affairs website not only describes the process of filing a claim, but also discusses the definition, symptoms, and treatment options for posttraumatic stress disorder. These elements could possibly help diagnose a veteran with



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PTSD and make it easier for the veteran to receive treatment immediately. A Veteran's Emergency Call Line has been established in order to prevent veterans with severe PTSD and depression from fatally harming themselves. Although not widespread, the military has begun to honorably discharge soldiers who they feel are suffering from PTSD. Veterans Affairs hospitals and institutions also offer care for veterans with mental illnesses. New medications, such as Lexapro and Prozac, are being used to treat the posttraumatic stress disorder and resulting anxiety and depression.

Despite the numerous advances in treatment and coping options for current soldiers and veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder, there remains one large problem: in most cases, veterans were forced to seek diagnosis and discover treatment options themselves. If a soldier were to lose a limb or suffer a burn, the military would not only cover the treatment of the injury but would also orchestrate rehabilitation for the injured. No such systematic protocol exists for the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder. In reality, nothing is done to help those suffering from PTSD until it is too late. At the Voices in Wartime conference, Brian Turner stated that "...suddenly all these...psychiatrists came out of the woodwork like rates when you turn the lights on" ("Voices in Wartime"). As evidenced by this quote, the military employs a response method to the treatment of PTSD rather than a preventive method. When dealing with a disorder that could permanently scar the mind and ultimately claim the life of its victim, a response method of action is practically useless. In order to curb the rise of posttraumatic stress disorder and other mental illnesses throughout its combat personnel, the United States military must be willing to both recognize these disorders as serious threats and establish measures that will prevent them and provide acceptable treatment.



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# POETRY

Learning to write is a difficult task. One might think to themselves: “I write all the time--on Facebook, twitter, in my history and science classes...I already know how to write!” This is true. Over the last decade or so, students have become *hypertextual* in that they are all over the web, commenting on songs and status updates; they text their friends and e-mail mom and dad. In school, they have been taught to write in all of their classes. Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) has allowed students to practice writing skills while learning biology, chemistry, history, and math. What WAC offers is a tremendous opportunity to hone expository writing skills, to describe, explain, compare and contrast, sequence events, show cause and effect, or problem solve. This is a remarkable skill to obtain and as students have been exposed to this mode of writing, through the implementation of state and federally mandated Core Curriculum for most (if not all) of their pre-college classes, they arrive at college prepared--to prepared--to write in this style.

A major draw-back to regimented and ingrained modes of writing like this is that students are trained to look for key terms and phrases. They have been trained to pin-point cue words like *for example, first- second-third, on the other hand, therefore, and as a result*. The ability to scan a passage and pull out these cue words is imperative to digesting vast amounts of information and decoding a text and this is, I believe, due in large part to across the board reliance on standardized testing. With President Barak Obama’s recent pledge at both the State of the Union Address<sup>1</sup> and the annual White House Science Fair<sup>2</sup> to expand funding and opportunities for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education, I praise the ability of WAC and Core Curriculum to prepare

our students for training in these fields, but I am inclined to ask: “What about Literature?”

In their article, “The Novice As Expert: Writing the Freshman Year”, Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz note: “To learn to write in college is to learn to see farther, wider, and deeper in order to develop one’s own lenses through which to see the world<sup>3</sup>.” One way to develop these lenses is through the reading of literature, specifically poetry. Poetry can seem like a complex and abstract and it has, in all honesty, fallen out of favor with students<sup>4</sup>. It presents itself as an archaic *code*, somewhat of a road block for students. But so is the periodic table of elements or the equations for sine, cosine, and tangent. While these other codes are important for the identifying the building blocks of the air or how triangles work, the codes found in poetry allow us to articulate emotion, deal with social ills, address God, and figure out why we exist. Poetic language aids in both our creative and critical thinking by allowing us to interact with topics and events we may feel a certain way about while sharing a common ground with humanity<sup>5</sup>. Exposure to poetry is beneficial; but mimicking it--being able to play with the original poet’s meter, rhyme scheme, themes, and form, students are able to *apply* their learning to the page, allowing us as instructors to assess their critical thinking, interaction with the text, development of voice, and understanding of both the assignment and the concepts it presents.

This section includes submissions from several students from Introductory Literature courses. Their assignment was to choose one of the poems they encountered in class and use the poetic model to reflect on their own lives. Students responded in a variety of ways, allowing the original work to guide their writing, to help them identify issues they face and provide them with a means of coping with their life-choices. One student writes: “Life is a

challenging race/And I'm going at my own pace," illustrating their own hardships coming to terms with the difficult nature of transitioning into adulthood, and realizes that "Now I am strong". Another student looks out the window of a bus and realized how judgmental humanity can be and concludes their poem by giving hard-learned advice: "don't be too quick to judge/Because you also could end up in sludge". Even existential crosses are tackled wherein a student questions their own position in the world: "Who am I to say which road is wrong and which is right?/Everyone choses [sic] their path while dealing with a different plight". Issues such as these are difficult to address at any age, let alone at 18 or 20, and poetry allows a student to face these issues and feel these emotions. Using poetry to learn how to write is an integral part of breaking down emotional and intellectual walls through learning another coded language and using it to unlock their own personal narratives. The student work in this section celebrates this approach to writing and offers other students models from which to develop their own poetic voice as well as hone their editing and reader response skills.

### Notes

- 1 From President Obama's State Of The Union Address, 20 Jan., 2015
- 2 From the press briefing during the 3rd Annual White House Science Fair on 22 Apr., 2015
- 3 "The Novice As Expert: Writing the Freshman Year" *College Composition and Communication*. 56.1, pp. 147.
- 4 From the preface to Dana Gioia collection of essays, *Can Poetry Matter*, xvii-xviii
- 5 From Missy James and Alan P. Merickel (eds.) *Reading Literature and Writing Argument, fifth edition*, pp. 7

# Assignment Prompt for “As Time Passes By,” “Poverty is all around us,” “Every path in life,” “Monsters,” and “Decisions”

**Instructor: Dr. Maha Alawdat**

**Course: 121**

Humanities literature students were asked to write a poem that is similar to the one they learned and at the same time that reflects an experience from their life. Each of these poems was connected to one they learned in the class such as “Introduction to Poetry,” “The Road Not Taken,” “Count That Day Lost,” and “As I Grew Older.”

Students were asked to either respond to the original poem and answer some of the poets’ inquiries or dilemmas, or write their own poem that focuses on the same theme as the original poem. The second option enables students to reflect on their personal problems and struggles that are similar of the ones in the poem, but a different place and a time. This proves that writing poetry as well as writing about poems is timeless and placeless and students could connect poems to their own life and experiences.

### **Examples of the required assignments for this task are:**

1. Write a poem of your own about the theme of the original poem about decision making. Make use of Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken”  
Use symbolism and metaphors.
2. Your poem could be reply to George Eliot’s “Count That Day Lost”, or about poverty, homelessness, immigration, wars around the world, or any other issue of your choice.
3. Your poem should express the differences between the way you viewed the world as a child and your perspective today as a young adult. Refer to “As I Grew Older” to write your poem.

# As Time Passes By

Life is a challenging race  
And I'm going at my own pace  
Figuring out my way  
When I was young and shy  
But dreaming to the sky  
I would enjoy each day  
And as I got older  
I became bolder

I didn't know much  
But used my parents as my crutch  
I became more curious about life  
Deep thoughts kept me up at night  
I tried to look for a light  
But my thoughts cut through like a knife  
I was confused and afraid  
But made sure every night I prayed

Now I am strong  
No move I make can be wrong  
I have to follow my dreams  
Because I finally feel free  
And I know it's okay to be me

Life isn't as hard as it seems  
I've come a long way  
And look forward to each new day

# Poverty is all around us

.....

Poverty is all around us,  
You can even see it from being on the bus.  
Some might say that they are lazy  
But those people are a little crazy.  
Wars can cause it for many,  
All they could have is a penny,  
so don't be too quick to judge,  
Because you also could end up in sludge.  
Each day you can help someone,  
It also might be a little fun.  
They could even pay it forward,  
with the person on the corner.  
When you go to sleep tonight,  
I hope you shed a little light,  
to do something helpful each day,  
even in a little way.

Bryant Ludwiczak

# Every path in life



Every path in life  
Has some good  
and has some bad  
The path you take  
Is up to you and only you  
Don't base your choice on other  
they don't see thing  
like you do  
Stick to the path  
and never look back  
let your insecurities  
and just go with the flow



# Monsters

.....

Born into a world where I thought everyone was the same  
Where everyone was honest and no shame  
Where I knew everyone and everyone knew me  
Until I figured out that this just couldn't be.

It was no longer Barbie dolls and soccer at night  
It was a guy who lied and parents who fight  
Relying on myself was all I grew to know  
Because no one could stay in my life they all just wanted to go.

Thinking everyone was just like me  
Because I am honest and that is how everyone should be  
I do not understand what changed between now and then  
Nothing really changed, yet everything is different.

I am hanging on to things that I can't let go  
I guess it was because I was taught to think alone  
No one ever tells you that the real monsters are people.

But now success is right around the bend  
I won't give up and I will be a good friend  
A good honest sister, daughter, and person  
We can never let others make our heart frozen.

# Decisions



Decisions to make,  
Making your future unfold before your eyes.  
Which turn to take?  
Fall in with everyone else,  
or to put everything at stake.

The decision is made,  
You've made your choice!  
To live your dream, and try for fame.  
Many will hear your voice,  
But will it make you a household name?

In your old age you sit in solitary and think,  
"Was it worth it? I was famous...  
But now I sit alone here.  
This may be what I desired, but now  
I went and threw it all away."

"Sometimes I ponder,  
What would it be like to be normal?  
To go back in time and set things asunder.  
To go to school and be formal.  
What I'd do to take it all back."

Then you wake up,  
Just to find it was all a dream.  
You see you're your dorm room,  
Running late for class you think as you sit up,  
"Am I glad to be chasing this dream!"



# Appendix

Due to the large number of students' submissions from Dr. Maha Alawdat's English 121, and due to submitting more than one essay by the same student, we found it proper to include them in the Appendix in respect to the students' effort to write and sent to CQ. This gives more options to see how the same student used some of the Hots to analyze more pieces, and at the same time, to compare how many writers used different HOTS to analyze the same literary piece

Pieces on pages 138-162 are HOTS; see the discussion of HOTS on page 6.  
Pieces on pages 163-166 are all poetry; see the prompt on page 129.

# Story to poem Comparison

I will be comparing the story "Rules of the Game" to the poem "As I grew older". In "As I grew older" from the very beginning of the poem achieving one's personal dreams despite all else is the distraction and road blocks is the point of the poem. In "Rules of the game" one's personal dreams isn't truly effected until the end of the reading. At the end of the reading Waverly Place Jong realizes for her true dreams to become true she must disassociate herself from her family. For this is the only way she can truly make her dreams come true. In all honesty Waverly's real problem is with her mother. Waverly's mother is her brick wall that she must knock down to become what she wants be in life.

"As I grew older" and "Rules of the Game" compare to each other pretty well because of the struggles that are faced to get where you want to be in life. In "As I grew older" the main focus was to break down any barrier necessary that would keep anyone from being able to get to their dreams. It also gives you this sense of an internal struggle to become better than you can ever be. In "Rules of the Game" the obvious struggle is between Waverly and her Mother but there's in internal struggle there too, one that over powers the external struggle.

Waverly's internal struggle to separate herself from her family is one that starts before she ever realizes it does. The reading gives you the impression that it starts once she becomes a chess prodigy but it starts way before that. It started when the story described her brother's names and then her own, at that very moment her internal struggle to leave her own mark was created. Leaving her own mark and finding out who she really was became a very prevalent part of the story and it's more than likely the reason why she reacted the way she did with her mom after her mom walked around china town announcing that Waverly was a chess prodigy.

At that moment Waverly's hard work had finally paid off for her and she finally made it just about her and then at that very moment her mother took it away from her. It was something she couldn't handle and was the reason for her backlash towards her mother. It also shows her internal struggle that she thought she just had beat, being taken away from her because of her mother's traditional values and Waverly's American values clashing. The Chinese idea that your children's success is a direct link to you and the American values that are taking over in Waverly saying that she is the only person responsible for her success conflict and clash. Which starts her struggle with her mom.

## Appendix

Waverly's struggle with her mother becomes so strong because she had her dream right in front of her and she could see her light but at that very moment it was blocked by her mother the brick wall in this example. Her dream of being her own person aside from her family was now once again blocked in her mind and there is nothing that she could do about it, so she tries to run from her problem and that doesn't work so she comes back home to face her problem head on. Our reading of the story ends but if it's anything like the author life I believe that she broke through the wall that is her mother to do what she wanted for herself and followed her dream to the best place for her.

The struggles that are faced in "As I grew older" and "Rules of the Game" are everyday struggles for most people and are something that shouldn't be taken lightly by anyone. Internal and External struggles plague most people who are trying to accomplish their dreams and "As I grew older" and "Rules of the Game" both make you realize how can't let your dreams be blocked or deferred by anyone or anything. They show that nothing should be able to block you from your true happiness and prosperity and your dreams should always come first. This story and poem are constant reminders that you are your main priority and that you should put your dreams and true happiness first.

# Expect the Unexpected: Good Hearts Exposed

Humanities Literature is classified by literary content that forces readers to gain an understanding and appreciation of the criteria with the use of critical reading skills. Two old-fashioned famous stories that were assigned in this particular course encouraged me in the sense that there are still good people left in society, contrary to popular beliefs. "Thank You Ma'am" by Langston Hughes and "Mr. Know It All" by W. Somerset Maugham had a general plot twist in common, as well as many themes, morals, character interactions and final messages. The numerous similarities between the two stories were significant to me because they both told such extraordinary stories of people who did the right thing even when it was not the desirable option. That is a remarkable trait of humanity that is not common amongst my generation so I quickly gained an appreciation for the messages that "Thank You, Ma'am" and "Mr. Know It All" have in common. The utilization of the Higher Order Thinking skills (HOTS) "predicting, uncovering motives and inferring" were crucial during the reading of these stories. The use of the HOTS allowed me to progressively gain a better understanding of the stories. Using the HOTS as I read the stories also gave me the ability to adopt other possible perspectives of the qualities of the reading. They basically served as a student-friendly beneficial method of literature analysis. The authors of "Thank You Ma'am" and "Mr. Know It All" wrote very similar stories about characters that were forced to react impulsively to the situation at-hand. Their reactions exposed their good-hearted true colors.

The three Higher Order Thinking skills I chose to focus on as I analyzed "Thank You Ma'am" and "Mr. Know It All" are predicting, inferring and uncovering motives. From the wide variety of HOTS that I learned and used while completing my assigned readings, I chose these specific three because I used them the most as I read Hughes' and Maugham's stories. Predicting is defined by the reader guessing what will happen next in the story based on general assumptions, context clues, character's behavior and the story line. As I read, my predictions of what would happen next in these stories were quickly proven wrong because the plots were so unique and the characters' behavior was so unexpected. As I grasped the concept of inferring, I learned that the authors of these stories gave their readers the responsibility to form their own judgments of exactly what the characters were doing and thinking and why. Inferring was an important HOTS that I learned and utilized while I read "Thank You Ma'am" and "Mr. Know It All" because I had to come up with my own conclusions and

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justifications of the characters' behavior. Uncovering motives was the significantly unique HOTS that I learned how to utilize while reading the two stories. As I read the stories and progressively understood each character's personality, I was able to figure out exactly what their motives were behind their decisions, actions and general behavior.

Langston Hughes' "Thank You Ma'am" was about a young boy named Roger who ran up on an older woman named Mrs. Jones trying to steal her purse. Mrs. Jones got a hold of Roger before he could get away with her belongings, so she decided to take him home, get him washed up and feed him dinner. Mrs. Jones' unusually kind reaction to Roger's attempt at thievery speaks volumes about what kind of person she truly is. Mrs. Jones immediately recognized that Roger's behavior was fueled by his lack of guidance in his home, so she returned his bad behavior with a good deed. Although Roger considered leaving as soon as Mrs. Jones turned him loose, he entertained her good-hearted gesture by following her orders to wash his face and join her for dinner. Roger revealed that he had nobody at home to discipline him or give him any guidance in life. He also revealed that his attempt at stealing her purse was fueled by his desire to purchase a new pair of blue suede shoes. Mrs. Jones responded by handing him money and reiterating the lesson that stealing is never the answer, he should simply ask for help. Mrs. Jones behaved in such a generous and understanding way, it instilled a valuable lesson in Roger.

"Mr. Know It All" by W. Somerset Maugham told a story of a man named Mr. Kelada who always had something to say and somebody to prove wrong. The narrator of the story roomed with Mr. Kelada on a ship full of people who were on various business missions. Everybody disliked Mr. Kelada because he acted like he knew everything and he was above everyone else. One evening at dinner, a couple on the ship Mr. & Mrs. Ramsay sat at dinner with the narrator and Mr. Kelada. They had a discussion about Mrs. Ramsay's pearl necklace in which she claimed she purchased by herself in New York City. Mr. Kelada and Mr. Ramsay made a heated argumentative bet regarding the authenticity of the Mrs. Ramsay's set of pearls. She was very hesitant in allowing Mr. Kelada (a pearl expert) to inspect her necklace to prove who was right. This gave Mr. Kelada the idea that Mrs. Ramsay was hiding something from her husband. Despite Mr. Kelada's constant need to prove everybody around him wrong, he faked the scenario and allowed himself to look like a fool so that Mrs. Ramsay's dirty secrets would not be exposed to her husband and everyone else on the ship. Later that evening, Mrs. Ramsay secretly slipped the well-deserved bet money underneath Mr. Kelada's door. The narrator was in

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the room and realized that Mr. Kelada was actually a good-hearted man who obtained the ability to do good for others and not just him. This is an instance in which Mr. Kelada could've been selfish and took the crown as the "Mr. Know It All" that he was infamously known to be, but he quickly decided that Mrs. Ramsay's well-being was more important. Not only was this another story about a person whose good heart shined bright, it also portrayed the lesson "don't judge a book by its cover." Everybody on the ship judged and labeled Mr. Kelada as nothing but a stuck-up "know it all." Mr. Kelada reacted to the situation at-hand selflessly and good-heartedly.

Reflecting on the literary criteria of "Thank You Ma'am" and "Mr. Know It All," I have identified many similarities. Both of the stories provided the reader with ample information of the main characters. At the same time, the reader was forced to infer what the characters were really thinking, feeling and assuming which led to uncovering motives behind their actions. Both of the stories also began with characters having negative first impressions of one another. In "Thank You Ma'am," Mrs. Jones assumed that Roger did not have anybody at home to discipline him or give him any sort of guidance on how a boy should behave or take care of himself. Roger predicted that Mrs. Jones was going to take him home to punish him, but she did no such thing. She used a different tactic - her genuine, empathetic, caring heart - to teach Roger a lesson. In "Mr. Know It All," the narrator thought that Mr. Kelada was nothing but an arrogant individual who believed he knew everything and wasn't afraid to prove it. The narrator predicted that Mr. Kelada would go to any length to prove that he was right about the pearl scenario. I recognized that Mr. Kelada inferred that Mrs. Ramsay actually got her pearls from another man when her husband was away on his business trips. Mr. Kelada knew that if he proved that the pearls were real; her husband would know that she had been receiving gifts from other men. In this case, Mr. Kelada empathized with Mrs. Ramsay and decided to look like a fool to save Mrs. Ramsay the marriage issues that would arise from exposing her secret. Another similarity I recognized between the two stories is the stereotypes that were present. The Reader-Response Theory was helpful in identifying these similarities because I was able to view the current scenario from the characters' perspectives, which is what the Reader-Response Theory encourages. In "Thank You Ma'am," the stereotype of poor people being thieves came into play. Roger was a poverty-stricken little boy who tried to rob an old woman so that he could buy himself new shoes. Mrs. Jones recognized this stereotype and did everything in her power to turn Roger into somebody who no longer classifies with that negative stereotype. This justifies my identification that Mrs. Jones has a good heart and that is her motive behind her actions and general behavior. In "Mr. Know It All," the connotation of being a "know-



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it-all” served as the stereotype. Everybody on the ship was annoyed by Mr. Kelada’s habit of involving himself in every conversation; they viewed him as a “typical Levantine.” A Levant is a negative stereotype that labels a person who always leaves in a hurry to avoid paying debts. Mr. Kelada shot down this stereotype when he revealed that he is an expert on pearls. Most importantly, he proved this label wrong because of the way he demonstrated a selfless act by helping Mrs. Ramsay. The main idea and plot of both stories were similar because both forced the main character to react impulsively. Both of the main characters in the stories, Mrs. Jones and Mr. Kelada, reacted impulsively in very kind, unique, good-hearted ways. The morals and final messages of the story were also extremely similar. Empathy, acting selflessly and defying stereotypes were similar morals within both of the stories. In “Thank You Ma’am,” Mrs. Jones was talking to Roger:

“You thought I was going to say, but I didn’t snatch people’s pocketbooks. Well I wasn’t going to say that.” Pause. Silence. “I have done things too, which I would not tell you, son-neither tell God if he didn’t already know.”

Mrs. Jones saying this to Roger portrays her true empathy for him. She basically says that she is in no position to judge Roger, but she scolds him anyways in hopes of teaching him a lesson. In “Mr. Know It All,” Mr. Kelada says to the narrator “no one likes to be made to look like a perfect damned fool” after he sacrifices his own pride to keep Mrs. Ramsay out of trouble. The fact that he went ahead and allowed himself to “look like a perfect damned fool” anyways, proves his empathy for Mrs. Ramsay. This similarity that I identified in both stories struck me as very genuine which is why I chose to focus on it.

Genuine acts are no longer common in modern-day society. I believe that as individuals, we need to fulfill our duties of passing on good deeds and good lessons that we were fortunate enough to learn in our lifetime. The main characters in “Thank You Ma’am” and “Mr. Know It All” certainly carried motives of helping other people, which typically influences other people to behave in the same kind of positive way. Using the Reader-Response Theory as well as the HOTS that I discussed, I was able to compare all of the literary qualities of the stories. This allowed me to gain other perspectives of the stories and come to my own conclusions of what was going to happen and why a character behaved the way that they did. The final messages, morals and plots of the stories were very similar in powerful, positive ways. Overall, I gained a huge appreciation for the authors of the stories, Langston Hughes and W. Somerset Maugham, because they wrote about the good qualities of humanity and that inspires me to recognize and appreciate them in my everyday life.

Bonnie Kautzman,

# “Option 1: Perspectives of Other’s Dreams”

There are many ways of looking at a piece of poetry and it involves looking at it through other people’s shoes. I will be working with the themes of growing up in life, and having to pursue your dreams even when there are many obstacles that are in the way. “As I Grew Older” by Langston Hughes and the poem that I wrote that has a similar theme to it so that is why I chose them. My specific poem is more about growing up with the dream that we could achieve anything we could put our mind to, and then realizing how hard and stressful it will be when we actually have to be responsible for everything related to it. They are poems that I felt could be very closely related to discuss. Distinguishing different perspectives is the HOT that looks at different ways of interpreting the story from the characters and the readers of this piece of literature (Alawdat 2). Next, “As I Grew Older” and my poem are very closely related with looking at different perspectives with the HOT and reader response theory.

High order thinking skills are useful for looking at different kinds of literature and most people do not realize that they are using them. One of my favorite HOTs is the Distinguishing Different perspectives because it is the most interesting out of the bunch. It allows for the individual that is reading a poem or book to get understanding of what is happening in the minds of the characters (Alawdat 2). Characters allow for the reader to get inside the story or otherwise in the way that they have not before. Sometimes there are only a couple characters so there is less to look at but more complex things to look at when it comes to perspectives. There are certain ways to look at specific events that another character in the story might have a different perspective than from one of the other people (Alawdat 2). For example, the man in the poem would have a different view on the world than other men do not have the darkness of racism that trying to crush their ambitions of being something bigger than themselves.

Langston Hughes’s poem “As I Grew Older” was a wonderful way to look at overcoming obstacles even when the whole world is against your dreams. It was a powerful influence and inspiration for achieving the seemingly impossible ambitions that we come across in life. There were literary terms used for the poem that described many things that were going on at that time for many people. He discusses about how he wants to break through the shadows that are surrounding him and how he desires to stay in the light because that

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is the only way he is going to be able to achieve his dream (Hughes 1). Langston also is able to bring the racism aspect into the poem because that was what was happening in the 1920s and 30s during the Harlem renaissance era (Hughes 1). They were trying to find ways through literature, art, and music to assist in their cause to bring awareness to help people in their area (Hughes 1). I do not have any idea of what they had to go through to make their dreams a reality but it was a giant struggle that should be recognized by many audiences everywhere. There is still struggle happening for people of different races to be able have their ambitions not be fought against in such a nature that they might be scared to push against the walls keeping them in.

While I was writing my poem for the module, the poem "As I Grew Older" inspired me to write about how people are anxious to grow up but then realize that it is not all that is cracked up to be. Throughout our childhoods, we watched the older children around us doing activities that we were not old enough to experience yet. Childhood is a wonderful time in our lives that we both want to grow old of and hold onto at the same time. The big kids actually wanted to be us because they missed the easy times of being a toddler. It is quite ironic because there were no worries then because we just got to play, and parents did all of the work. They had to provide food on table, pay bills, discipline mischievous children, and have their own time. Elementary school was so much fun when we look back on it because our homework was coloring but we did not think it was easy back then. We were struggling over math, learning letters, writing in cursive, and having to deal with a lot of kids. There were dreams of being princesses, astronauts, presidents, architects, and many other unrealistic occupations at the time.

When I went to high school, it was full of a lot of tall older kids who seemed so intimidating at the time. Everyone looked up to them and what they got to do. It looked so cool and exciting because we wanted to be them. They got to do so many activities that were not available for a couple years. Their lives seemed so interesting because I was looking through the eyes of an underclassman. It was not until I became one of them is when I realized how expensive and stressful it was in reality. Prom dresses cost a lot of money, and jobs were required to pay insurance so that way you have a vehicle for a minimum wage job. It was very difficult to maintain good grades, jobs, activities, relationships, sleep and personal time. College seemed so cool when people talked about it and independence but it is really a stressful process. Everyone thought the whole college acceptance process was demanding including having the SAT and ACT tests, AP classes, and optional personal essays but that was only the beginning. There is the means of how to pay for it with financial aid, and then

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hoping to have scholarships to help because student debt is similar to a cliff that might collapse on you. People still want to grow up while in college though because they want to be able to go out on the town to venues that are restricted to 21 and over. I am personally more concentrated on reaching a college degree with as little student debt as possible.

The HOTS were very useful for looking at the themes which were racism, struggles in the way of achieving a dream, and growing up. They were good at explaining certain points that I would miss in the poem if I did not use them. The perspectives were wonderful in the way that I could support my ideas for my poem in the best possible view ever. Reader response theory also assisted with analyzing "As I Grew Older" and writing my poem that was with a similar theme. It really helps the reader take the spotlight as opposed with other theories that we have looked at throughout the weeks in this class (Alawdat 3). Sometimes people forget about what the reader's point of view on different parts of the story is because that is important too and only focus on what the author meant in their writing. It is a give and take process because literature is not about the writer because their writing has to become popular by crowds of people and critics who have to read their material and approve of it.

I found that this specific module was very useful and helpful for understanding different ways of looking at a situation. There were many ideas that I learned from the poem including realizing that I go through many struggles to achieve my dreams. There are many experiences that we do not have to deal with if we are different race because some do have a more accepted time than others. Mine are not based on race but gender and appearance. Some people do not believe that women can do an equivalent accomplishment of a job that a man can do. They believe that they are weaker, more emotional, not equipped, and unworthy of certain occupations. People do not take me seriously sometimes because of my appearance and that is disappointing. I look very innocent and individuals take that as I cannot be allowed to do certain things because I would need to be protected. This just encourages me to work harder and study a lot so that way I can prove to people that I am someone who can keep up with their speed. All in all, the two poems displayed usage of the HOT and the reader response theory with all of their literary terms in the poems.

Steven Williams

# Untitled

## Introduction

Throughout this English course I have had the Joy of reading very many deep and meaningful pieces of literature. When I had to choose two to compare it was easy because there were already a specific two that stood out to me more than the others. “Thank You Ma’am” by Langston Hughes, an inspiring story of an impoverished boy who tried to steal an old Woman’s purse, and “Rules of The Game” by Amy Tan, a story about a little girl who stumbles across an incredible talent, who continuously battles back and forth with her mother. I will be taking advantage of the following Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs): Inferring, making connections, and comparing and contrasting to show how these two seemingly unrelated stories could be connected.

## What are the HOTs

(Inferring, Making Connections, Comparing and Contrasting)

The definition of inferring is to “Deduce or conclude information from evidence and reasoning rather than from explicit statements”. I interpret this to mean, to read between the lines and to create your own meaning of the literature. “Indeed, the only way one can ever discover unity in texts or identity in selves is by creating them from new own inner style”(Goldstein). I found this in the “Reader Response Theory”, and it sounds a lot like what inferring is. Finding that deeper meaning in what you read. In a wide large amount of today’s literature, the authors tend to leave out specific details so that you as the reader can add those details for yourself and sort of personalize the story. This can make it much easier for someone to connect with the text and enjoy it to the fullest.

Another good way to connect with literature is to connect it to the things around you or even to yourself. That also happens to be the second Higher Order Thinking Skill that I will use to compare “Rules of The Game” and “Thank you Ma’am”. There are three different types of connections that can be made with text: text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world. Text to text, is exactly what it sounds like, you are making a connection between the text you are reading and another text that have read at some point. Text to self consists of making a connection or connections between the text and something in your life. When reading, I continuously try to make connections to what I am reading. I like to be able to find something from my past that can place me into

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the story and shows me how the main character or narrator feels. In “Rules of The Game”, Waverley’s mother was tight on how she practiced. She says, “I found it difficult to concentrate at home. My mother had a habit of standing over me while i plotted out my games”. I began playing trombone in middle school, and my dad played trumpet for a large portion of his life. When I practiced at home, he was constantly over my shoulder trying to fix things. I knew he was just trying to help me, but I shared that feeling with Waverly on how it makes it hard to practice under all of that pressure.

The last type of connection, text to world is in a way like text to self. You want to connect events in the story to things that are happening around you, but this is a much broader category. Things that are happening around the world. like world politics, natural disasters, or even gas prices.

The third HOTS, Comparing and contrasting, is looking at how two texts could be alike, and then finding their differences. For example, some of the themes I found for “Rules of The Game” were invisible strength and determination, but for “Thank You Ma’am” I found generosity and honesty. That is contrasting, or how they are different, but I also found two themes that seemed to emerge from both stories. They were good character and learning by doing. By looking for both the similarities and the differences I can examine the texts at a deeper level.

### Brief Summary

“Rules of The Game” by Amy Tan is about a young Waverly Place Jong, who lives with her two brothers Winston and Vincent, and their very strict mother Lindo Jong. One year their family went to an annual church Christmas party, where the children got to choose gifts out of a sack that was donated by another nearby church. Her older brother Vincent picked a chess set, Waverly picked a twelve pack of Life Savers, and her other brother Winston picked an intricate Plastic model replica of a World War II submarine. Waverly watched her brothers play and eventually got her turn to play. She repeatedly played her brothers until she was better than them and they eventually lost interest in the game.

With no one to play with, young Waverly headed to the local park to play against the elders that gathered there. She would bet packs of the Life Savers to get them to play against her. She became acquainted with this one old man Lau Po, that started teaching her the secrets of chess. Over weeks she learned very many secret attacks and strategies to become a chess master. Once she was good enough, Lau Po suggested that she compete against others at the local tournament. Waverly does and surprisingly get win after win until at the age

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of nine she is a national chess champion. She even makes it to the cover of LIFE magazine to challenge an older chess champion.

In the wake of all of this, her mother goes around flaunting that Waverly is her daughter. Waverly grows tired of her mother trying to show her off, and mentions it in a store. Needless to say, her mother did not like that one bit. As they head out of the store Waverly knocks an elderly woman's groceries on the ground, and runs away to hide in the alleys for hours. She comes home hours later to her mother denying her existence. We are left with Waverly lying on her bed debating whether to leave her family to be herself or to stay and deal with her menacing mother.

"Thank You Ma'am" by Langston Hughes opens with Roger, a boy who tries to steal Mrs. Jones pocketbook to buy a pair of blue suede shoes. It does not go as Roger hoped. He ends up falling to the ground then Ms. Jones decides to kick him. She picks him up and questions why he did that. He lies, but later in the story we find out he wanted to buy these shoes that he passes every day. When Ms. Jones finds out that Roger doesn't have somebody to wash his face and feed him, she takes him to her house to wash his face and further question him.

Roger has the chance to run once they get back to her house, but he does not. He is confused why she is helping him so much even after he attempted to steal the purse. Ms. Jones feeds Roger has him wash his face and then talks to him about how you do not have to do things like that to get what you want, then proceeds to give him the money to buy the blue Swede shoes he wanted so bad.

## Discussion

As I said before, there were many themes that stood out to me in these texts. In "Rules of The Game" Waverly mentioned invisible strength, and I also saw determination from her when she spent so much time practicing and trying to get better. In "Thank You Ma'am" I felt honesty and generosity would be best because Ms. Jones showed so much generosity but also tried to teach him Honesty. Character and learning by doing, the two themes that seemed to emerge from both stories. In the first couple of lines, Waverly talks about how her mother presses the subject of invisible strength and "biting back your tongue". Those two things to me sound like defining character. Ms. Jones is also trying to teach character to Roger when she scares him by taking him to her house. She wants him to learn from his actions, which also happens to come up in "Rules of The Game". Waverly does not become a master of chess overnight, by just staring at the board. The spent weeks practicing with Lau Po and her brothers, learning what she did wrong every time, and fixing it the next time. The phrase

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“practice makes perfect”, embodies Learning by doing.

By inferring, I seemed to get the vibe that both characters came from lower class or impoverished backgrounds. I get this from the fact that Roger was trying to steal a purse to get what he wanted, and That Waverly and her brothers Had to get their Christmas presents from a toy drive where pieces were missing.

These text-to-text connections show me that in both stories, a younger character that due to some situation is pushed to do something they know they should not have. Since Roger had no money and wanted those shoes, he tried to steal the purse. When Wendy was fed up with her mother trying to show her off everywhere, she told her mother that she was embarrassed by it. Both actions were followed with swift backlash.

### **Conclusion**

Taking advantage of the following Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs): Inferring, making connections, and comparing and contrasting, I showed how these two seemingly unrelated stories could be connected. The Two characters Roger and Waverly. who seemed to be from lower class families, both provoked to do something that they should not have. The difference was that Roger was taught character as a result of this mistake, but Wendy could have avoided putting herself in that situation if she would have listened to her mother and held in what she so dyingly wanted to say.



# The Choices We Make

## Introduction

The poem I will be focusing on is, "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost. The story that I will be comparing to the poem is, "Thank You, Ma'am" by Langston Hughes. To truly understand the comparison between the poem and the story, I will be focus on using the HOTS of inferring these 2 pieces of literature to dig deeper in what the author was trying to express to their readers.

## What is the HOTS?

The HOTS I will be using is Inferring. This means that I will be thinking outside the box of what the authors meant by their work. Trying to find more information that was not stated in the poem or story. This HOTS allows me to understand the emotion the character might be going through without the author having to reveal if they are afraid or scared. Inferring can give a better perspective of how a simple poem can mean a hundred different things. Looking past just the front face of the poem and understanding what's behind it.

## Brief Summary

In the poem, "The Road Not Taken," is about a traveler that has come across two. He is not sure which path to take and must think about his decision. Both paths are not equal, therefore brings more questions to the traveler. In the end, the path he took made all the difference. In the story, "Thank You, Ma'am," is about a young boy named Roger that got into some trouble. He thought that trying to steal a purse was a good idea. Although he was caught for his crime, the woman that he tried to steal from turned out to be his wake up call to his life. His confrontation for a crime became a point in his life that he will never forget.

## Discussion/Comparison

A similarity that I found between the two was, that they both teach you a life lesson. In the poem, the traveler must make a decision on which path to take. One path has been used very often by the looks of the footprints and the other path has not been used very often from the lack of a clear path, the leaves cover most of the path. Using the HOTS of inferring, the traveler seems concerned with which path to take. He is not sure if either path will be good or bad. We can apply this in our own lives because we have to make choices that we are not too sure about either. For the traveler, he must think about his decision on which path to take for at least a day. This

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shows that the traveler thinks about his decision and does not rush into a conclusion. In the story, Roger does not think about his decision and rushes into stealing a woman's purse. His failed attempt got him caught and now has to face the woman herself. By the way the author describes the physique of the boy, it seems as though he may be homeless, small, and skinny. No one just tries to steal a purse just for fun. He was after something he wanted. The woman brought Roger back to her home to confront him on why he would do such a bad thing. In his response he said, "I wanted a pair of blue suede shoes (Hughes)." Roger must not have any money for him to try a steal from someone. By inferring that the boy couldn't find his words when being confronted by the woman, you can tell that he is frightened.

As the story continues along, the woman seems to be helping the boy by getting food into his system and washing him up. The way describes the scene, I imagine in my head a small boy that's dirty from being out in the streets for a while and hungry. This sign of friendship coming from Mrs. Jones shows Roger that his choice to try and steal from her was wrong. She has changed his life for the better and he will never forget the day she made him a better person. In comparison to the poem about a traveler trying making the right decision on which path to take. The traveler takes his time to think about what he wants to do rather than rushing into a rash decision. The way the author has the traveler choose the path of the least traveled on makes me infer that maybe the traveler wants to become a leader not a follower. He could have chosen any path but leading a path was the choice made. In the end, the path least taken, made all the difference. At first, I couldn't tell if the path the traveler took was good or bad. I kept reading the poem over and over again to try and read between the lines to find more information. I finally figured it out and came to the conclusion that the traveler's chose to take the road less traveled made all the difference in a positive way. At the end of the poem, the traveler's words were, "And that has made all the difference (Frost)." The author tried to make this poem a life lesson where becoming a leader was the better choice than being a follower. I can personally relate to this poem because I too had to make a choice between 2 paths and I was not sure which to take. There were many questions that I had much like traveler but in the end the choice I made truly made the difference in my life for the better. I could not have pictured a better decision.

The poem and story can both teach others about a life lesson and are very good reads. After writing about these 2 pieces of literature, I can say that they have both changed my life in some form. The poem has reminded me to be a leader in life rather than a follower. Sometimes I loss sight of that and stray from becoming the best

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version of myself. The story of Roger meeting Mrs. Jones over an attempt of stealing her purse became the turning point in his life to becoming a better person. His rash decision of stealing money for a pair of shoes clouded his judgment on doing the right thing and not try to steal from someone for your own wants. He was so touched about how she treating him like a son by taking him in for a wash and feeding him food, that he couldn't get the words out fast enough to thank her before she closed the door on him. There is kindness in this world and we can't let a small mistake change us for the worst because sometimes those mistakes will make us stronger and better as we get older. As an only child with divorced parents, my mother was the one who gave me that care and nurture that I needed as I grew up and over coming mistakes that I made. I believe that Mrs. Jones was Roger's mom and gave him a wake up call to make something good out of his life and to help give him some compassion or motherly love that maybe Roger never had. Moving forward, I will always remember these pieces of literature for the rest of my life. I have saved them onto my computer and will to refer it as often as I need to remind myself about becoming the better version of myself and to look for help from the ones close or strangers to us because that just might help us get over those hard times we have in life.

## Conclusion

Throughout this course the 2 pieces of literature that stuck with me was, "The Road Not Taken" and "Thank You, Ma'am." I thought that they influenced me so well because of how personal it meant to me. I enjoy reading about situations where I can envision myself into the story or poem. They help me to see the world differently by opening my mind to what is important to me and to better myself. It was also easier to write about something I can personally relate to and can understand better what the author is trying to portrait to their readers. The life lessons learned here have helped me go through a tough time that I am trying workout. My 2 paths in life are going through college or enlisting into the Army. Like the traveler deciding which path to take, I have one path where everyone has done or I can start my own path where not many people have dared to go to. There are many questions that I have to ask myself such as the risks, life afterwards, and is it really what I want. Although I have not made my final decision on which path to take like the traveler but I have faith that the path I take will make all the difference in what the rest of my life will become. In the story about Roger, Mrs. Jones reminded me of my mom and how she shows both tough love and that motherly nurture that every child should have. I might not have stolen anything to get that turning point in my life but I did make mistakes along the way. Throughout those hard times of trying to learn from my mistakes, my mom would be there for me but eventually she has to

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let me go and let me start living my life, much like Mrs. Jones letting go of Roger. Even though Roger was not her kid, she helped him realize that he needs to better himself and learn that stealing is not the answer. I can truly say that this assignment has opened my eyes to a better life and a life that I will be happy with.

### References

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# One Kind Act: The Impact it has on People

For my final essay, I have chosen to compare and contrast a poem and a short story. The purpose for me writing this is to show the differences and similarities between a poem and short story. I want to show people that if you dig deep and really focus on what you are reading, you can find the true meanings of literary works and be able to interpret it in any way you feel. I plan on making an outline of the short story and poem in order to organize my thoughts and set each piece of information in a neat matter. Thus, it will help me to write my essay fairly easy and have my information organized throughout the essay.

I chose "Count That Day Lost" by George Eliot as my poem because it was such a moving and inspirational piece of literature. For the short story, I have chosen "Thank You Ma'am" by Langston Hughes because it was a very specific piece of work and it has many different lessons to be learned. I, also, believe it has many different ways of interpreting the gestures in the story, which makes me confident as a reader to choose my own path of interpretation. Both the story and the poem are pieces of literature that I look back on and can really reflect the meaning and I felt I connected most with the both of them, which will make writing about them very pleasurable for myself.

I truly think it is important for a piece of literature or any particular reading to speak to you on a personal level or relate in one way or another. It shows a lot of meaning and can potentially help guide that individual towards a positive lifestyle. The reason I say all this is because that is one of themes I am going to focus on during this paper. I think kindness and wanting to help others without any personal gain is very important. I think being able to see personal connections with others within the story is important and as a reader being able to relate or picture yourself in their shoes really helps get the feel for the story. Lastly, choosing the right path in life and being able to say that a story or a poem taught you that lesson is tremendous, I feel. I believe the previous things I just mentioned are some of the themes that the two pieces of work are trying to convey. There are plenty of others themes but I think these are the most important ones and they stuck out to me the most so I am going to focus mainly on those.

The higher order thinking skills I will be using is comparing and contrasting. I will compare the two literary pieces by finding similarities between the two and I will contrast them by finding differences among the story

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and poem. This higher order thinking skill will help me get to the core meaning of each piece of work but it will also make me reflect more in depth due to the close examination of detail. Thus, comparing and contrasting will allow me to draw conclusions from the story and poem based on the differences and similarities among them. Basically, I am going to be comparing and contrasting the themes of the two pieces of work, the characters, the overall message, the reasoning behind the story, and the whole picture of the two. My approach is to first compare all the things I feel are similar between the two and then contrast all the differences I see within the two.

First off, I think the poem and the short story are both showing acts of kindness. "Count That Day Lost" does not contain someone who showing kindness but it is explaining the acts of kindness. It is explaining how one act of kindness, without any self-gain, is a day that is well spent. "Thank You Ma'am" has a specific action where a woman helps a young boy named Roger and does not receive anything in return. The similarity is that these two pieces of work discuss a simple act of kindness without getting any kind of personal benefit except being able to say they made a difference. "Count that Day Lost" could lead someone to help others and make the most of their day and living that day to the fullest by one simple kind act, which relates to the older woman helping Roger become a better person in "Thank You Ma'am".

Each piece of literature has, what I consider, a dark aspect to them. By that, I mean a time of conflict or a decision that has gone bad. For example in the second stanza of "Count That Day Lost", Eliot wrote:

"You've nothing done that you can trace  
That brought the sunshine to one face-  
No act most small  
That helped some soul and nothing cost-  
Then count that day as worse than lost".

This means, in my opinion, that a day was wasted because nothing productive, like helping someone else, was done. The day was spent at your own leisure and no one else came to mind except yourself, which is why the day was lost. Similarly, in "Thank You, Ma'am" a bad situation led the woman and Roger to meet. It was late at night and an incident occurred where Roger tried to steal the woman's purse and he broke her strap in the process. Each of those bad situations helped explain the meaning behind the story and poem.

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Even though it does not directly state someone's life was positively changed by the actions of another, "Count That Day Lost" implies that that could happen. I interpreted the poem by concluding that by one person helping someone else it could leave such a huge impact on another individual's life that they could potentially further that kindness onto someone else causing a cascade effect. So, the person that is receiving the help could potentially go in a better direction than what they were headed. In comparison, the lady in "Thank You, Ma'am" came in contact with, what I like to call, a street thug that she could have turned in to the police. Instead, she took him in under her wing, cleaned him up, offered him a decent meal, and gave him money for something that his parents most likely could not have offered due to him stealing. For an assignment that corresponded with the story, I wrote a note to the older lady from Roger years after their meeting. I truly believe that by the lady taking the time out of her life to help Roger that he became a success person. I am sure at some point in his life Roger returned the favor to help someone else. Thanks to the lady, Roger was able to grow into a man and she led him down the right path by one act of kindness. As you can see, acts of kindness can go a long way for most people and it is something that can change lives.

Both the story and poem contained symbolism. For example in "Thank You, Ma'am" when the lady says, "You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is to wash your face. Are you hungry?" I think that symbolizes the love she has and Roger can look back and see her as a mother figure. In "Count That Day Lost" when Eliot wrote:

"You've nothing done that you can trace

That brought the sunshine to one face"

I think it symbolizes not bringing joy to someone's day. It means no one's face lit up with happiness due to a kind act. Symbolism helps put things into a better perspective that helps to understand the meaning of the literary piece.

One of the most obvious differences is the way each literary piece is being presented. "Count That Day Lost" is a poem. It consists of two stanzas. It is interesting in the way they are presented. The first stanza is explaining the requirements and possibilities for a good deed and the second stanza explains the dark side of not doing a good deed. Whereas, the short story is presented in a normal standard way. There is importance in the structure of the two because you need to know how to read each of them and know which parts of the pieces should be emphasized. Also, it helps set the tone for the piece of work.

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Even though both the poem and the story have similarities in their themes, they are not presented in a similar way. "Thank You, Ma'am" has actual characters that are involved in actual dilemmas. Whereas, "Count That Day Lost" does not have any actual characters or plot scheme within the poem. I believe the poem is directed to all the individuals reading it. Personally, I think it was easier to connect to the story just because it had a story line and plot, which made it much easier for me to visualize what was going on. "Count That Day Lost" was much more broad and to the point.

The short story is more direct. It is an event told by from the perspective of the narrator. It typically has characters, a central location where the story takes place, and a reasoning why the story was written. Ethnically speaking, I believe "Thank You, Ma'am" presented a typical stereotype that the rest of the world has. Roger was a young African American boy on the streets late at night. It made him out to be a street thug. There were more explanations behind why he was on the street and hungry but the story made it out to be the worst case scenario. For example, his parents could have been very busy working in order to provide a good life that they were not around to make him dinner every night. Whereas this poem was written by the author to send out a central message about changing the life of others by providing them with one simple act of kindness.

The endings of the story and poem were completely different. The last stanza of "Count That Day Lost" gives the down falls to not doing a good deed for someone other than yourself. After reading it, it makes my mind wonder to consequences of not helping others and all the self-draining risks of not helping others. Don't get me wrong it made me want to help people but it left me feeling somewhat disappointed because it made me think of the people in the world who do not care to lend their helping hands. Whereas, "Thank You, Ma'am" ended on a good note for me. Even though, the two never saw each other again, the ending left you to make your own judgments about what you feel happens in the future. Being the optimist I am, I believe that Roger went off to do amazing things with his life because of all the encouragement, influence, support, and the impact the lady left on Roger. I was able to make my own conclusions about the story and the poem did not give that option. It was both help someone and live life to the fullest or waste your days on yourself.

"Count That Day Lost" and "Thank You, Ma'am" have many similarities and differences within the pieces. Individually, I love the pieces. They both stuck out to me and struck me as thoughtful and endearing pieces, which is why I chose them. By comparing and contrasting them, it just led me to love them even more. Seeing how similar they truly are to each other shows how kind and interesting literature can be. The differences show



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how great variation can be and help readers to appreciate the creativity authors have.

Comparing and contrasting “Count That Day Lost” and “Thank You, Ma’am” really helped me get a deeper feel for the story and poem. I was able to take my time on the outline and really reflect on the similarities and differences that I found important. I even found things now that I did not notice earlier while we were working with them. As you can see, the differences outweighed the similarities but I would not necessarily consider that a bad thing. It showed me that the two pieces of work are unique in their own way and even I have a different way of looking at them.

Most importantly, I learned a lot about myself as a reader. I am able to see differences in the story and poem and relate them back to the actual reading as well as the similarities. To do this effectively, I have to reference a lot of things and go back to get the best support I can. If people just took their time with literature and really got to know what they are reading, many more people would not roll their eyes when they hear the word literature. It is all about mastering what you are reading and this can be done by using other higher order thinking skills.

I thoroughly enjoyed being able to work with these amazing pieces of literature again. I never get bored of reading them and I think that is because I use them to my own benefit. I chose to learn from them and take what they say to heart. I reflect positively on them and I believe that is why they have left such an impact on me. Needless to say, it is important to lend your good health to others and hopefully change the way people think and act into a more positive direction.

Kyle Napper-Green

# Topic one: Poem Connections

I wrote a poem a week ago for an assignment for the “As I grow older poem” and in my poem I made a connection on how a lot of things has changed since I was a child. In that poem I spoke on all the good I used to see as a child and how that has changed since that, but I also spoke on how some people still do some of those good things I saw when I was a child. When I first saw this assignment I wanted to make the connection between “As I grow older” and my poem but after rereading my poem I feel like it would be best to make the connection between my poem and “Count that day lost”. I feel like “Count that day lost” and my poem have a much stronger connection to each other than “As I grow older” does and because of that connection between them I feel like it would be a stronger attention grabber then “As I grow older” would be. I am preparing to show the connection between my poem and “Count that day lost”, the connection between my poem and “Count that day lost” are strong. I believe that this poem had a strong influence on the poem I wrote last week as well. I will also be showing the differences in my poem and “Count that day lost” there aren’t many but there are some.

In “Count that day lost” the author spoke on the deeds of people, the good and the just as I did in my poem. She spoke on how doing a good deed for someone without seeking anything in return was something good in its self and how that could say more than the good deed did. In my poem I stated how we as a society needed to get back to how I saw society as a child, were people helping each other and beautiful things happening was an everyday occurrence.

The underlying in both of our poems shows how doing something good for one person could change the outlook on that person’s life and next time around they do something for someone else out the kindness of their heart. These type of impacts on people lives our things that as people we don’t think does very much in the grand scheme of things but they do more than we ever know. Like holding the elevator for someone, while we might think nothing of it holding the elevator for someone trying to get to a class could be the reason as to why someone takes their final for a class or not. If you didn’t hold that elevator that person would have had to walk up the stairs and made them late for their class making them unable to participate in their final. Little things like this change a lot in people’s minds, yea you won’t receive anything in return for doing that but doing something just as simple as holding the elevator made the difference in another person’s life and it was a

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dramatic difference for that person.

My poem seeks more of a society change rather than just an individual change like in "Count that day lost". I feel as though as a society we need to change before us as individuals can change. I believe this because society is what changed us as individuals and the only way to get back to the individuals that George Eliot wants to see people as won't happen until society goes back to what it used to be. We need to get back to a society where people helped one another and neighbors weren't people who just lived nearby you but where friends almost like family. This is what is needed for individuals to get back to type of people that George Eliot would like to hear say that they had a day well spent. Until we get back to this as a society us as individuals will fall short every time.

The second half of George Eliot's "Count that day lost" talked about people who lived on the other side of spectrum of what she wanted see people come. It talked about people who didn't do good deeds for others and didn't anything that would make life a little easier for the next person. The type of person who watch you running for the elevator so you won't be late for your final and do nothing to help you. These type of people in my poem are what we have become as a society of people. We've become more about us, a "Me" society, a place were the only thing that matters to us is that we're not inconvenienced in any type of way during our day. These people type of people have driven a stake through what we used to be as a society and that's something that can't continue or things will only get worse. I'm not saying that are lives have to become all about helping others because I know that's not in every ones heart but if you can't find one good deed to do then you should do what George Eliot said and "Count that day worse than lost". If you can't find it in your heart to do one good deed in a day then what are you really living for as a person because your life is sad.

Us as a society needs to go from a "Me" society and become a "We" society, one that helps its fellow man, does good deeds for one another, and goes back to a distant family type of feel. Where you would help someone even though you don't know that person well. Once we as people get back to a "We" society we will evolve into the type of people that we try to raise our children to become. We also can't complain about anything that we're not willing to change. Complaining about it and not doing anything is just as big as not trying to change. Continuing to live like this doesn't help anything in any type of way. It's time to stand up and become better as a society of people.

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In conclusion, the connections between my poem and George Eliot's "Count that day lost poem" are relevant problems that we face as a society today. If we just could find one way to help someone each and every day we could change society as a whole while changing ourselves. If we stay on the track that we're on now we'll completely become a society where people are for themselves and no one else and that's a society that I would not want to be a part of. So, if you take what George Eliot and I have stated in our poems you'll become a better person and help get society back into shape.

Lauren Glinsky

# The Path of Life

Where do I go from here  
I'm unsure of which path to take  
I want to try and stay near  
What decision will I make

So I smile and chose a way  
No going back now this is it  
I try not to look astray  
Not sure what I'm doing I'll admit

I look at the leaves that are brown  
And hear the nature around  
I catch myself trying to frown  
But then I start dancing on the ground

I finally feel free  
Like a breath of fresh air  
This is the new me  
The one that is bold without a care

Bonnie Kautzman

# Childhood was such a dream to live

Childhood was such a dream to live,  
You could aspire to be anything you wanted,  
Parents assisted with every need,  
But all we desired was to grow up.  
Elementary school was where we started to develop,  
Aspirations were within reach in our own belief,  
There were no road blocks, but playing with them,  
The whole world was our oyster.  
Secondary education was full of the big kids,  
They had cars, jobs, and futures they were pursuing,  
Upperclassmen seemed like they had the life,  
Prom, relationships, and easy homework were wonderful.  
Reality set in when college came around,  
Tuition, books, and food were so expensive,  
Class and assignments became difficult,  
You were responsible for anything and everything,  
Growing up was not all that it seemed.

Samantha Watson

# Choices in Life

I am faced with moments in life

That stops me dead in my tracks,

With choices that cut me like a knife

As if there was an internal strife

Trying to take all the impacts

While I stand unaware of what will be,

I find myself lost in thought

Wondering what I'll see

Or if I'll ever be free?

Only to make my stomach turn to a knot

I make the choice

Without a doubt.

Do I take the path that will let me have a voice?

Do I take the path that seems overused and going through a drought?

And for that, I'll take the path of rejoice.

Blair Mundy

# One Road Divided

Who am I to say which road is wrong and which is right?  
Everyone chooses their path while dealing with a different plight  
One road, looking as promising as the other  
One filled with pleasure, and one that will make you suffer  
Not knowing what you'll get from either or  
A risk must be taken to find out what is in store  
So you take a breath, and then choose your path  
This decision that you make will be one that may always last  
Not knowing what's in front but you continue to walk  
Mind filled with wonders, questions and thoughts  
You choose the road that fits you best  
And see what is along it that may put you to the test





# Common Editing Marks

end Start = insert period



separate clauses = insert semicolon



this, this and that = insert comma



its = insert apostrophe



~~ir~~ regardless = delete

ran quickly = transpose (flip)



new. Point = begin new paragraph



tight er = close up; delete space



# tooclose = insert space



english = capitalize



YELLING<sup>lc</sup> = lowercase



*Title* = italicize

