

VSCC English Department's Best Essays Summer/Fall 2007

English Composition at VSCC: Expository Writing, Researched Argument, and Literary Analysis

Introduction

The fourth edition of the *VSCC English Department's Best Essays* focuses on the three major categories of writing that students at Volunteer State Community College do in the various English courses we offer: Expository Writing, Researched Argument, and Literary Analysis. The purpose of this edition is to provide our faculty with helpful tools for teaching writing and critical thinking skills to our students by offering sample student essays, chapter introductions focused on modes-based writing and literary analysis, and quick tips to offer to students as they write and revise their essays.

As evidenced by the wide variety of student writings in this publication, Vol State students are offered creative writing assignments, and these student essays exhibit the elements essential to a college-level essay. These student submissions have been judged holistically based on the criteria for good writing: creatively developing ideas around a focused thesis statement, logically organizing thoughts into unified and coherent paragraphs under that thesis, understanding of audience and purpose for which a student is writing, and using appropriate language and proper documentation based on the rules of written communication. These criteria are the focus for the suggestions offered in the chapter introductions, and the Best Essays Committee believes that we have chosen a sample of student essays that best exemplifies these qualities of good college-level writing.

As Laura Black, Director of VSCC's Language Center noted in the second edition of the *Best Essays*, "It is essential that our students understand how their abilities to think critically and to express their ideas in written communication have an impact on our

society, our culture, and our everyday life.” With this understanding, our students will become more effective communicators so they may become more successful in a world that demands an awareness of our environment and our place within it.

This edition includes student essays submitted between the Summer and Fall 2007 semesters, and it is representative of the diversity of the type of students in writing and English classes at Vol State. Our number of submissions continues to grow, and we hope that our English faculty will continue to recommend to this contest the best students from their developmental writing, composition, and literature classes as a way to recognize their hard work and their creative approaches to writing assignments.

--Renee' Byrnes, Instructor of English
August 15, 2008

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SECTION 1:
EXPOSITORY WRITING

Narrative Writing

Narration is frequently the first assignment in most English 1010 Composition classes but may also be assigned in other classes or used as support in other types of essays. Although students and teachers often view narrative writing as one of the simplest forms of writing, there are actually many skills a writer needs to effectively convey meaning in this form.

The purpose of narrative writing is to tell a story with which an audience can relate or from which an audience can learn. Narratives must have both a cohesive plot and a central point of significance to be complete; you cannot have one without the other. While many narratives may use a clear thesis statement to present the main idea of the story, others are not so explicit. The thesis in any narrative, however, should reveal the purpose or reason for telling the story in the first place so that the audience can understand the story's underlying significance or relevance to their own lives.

Narratives are organized around the plot points of the story a writer is telling and developed with the most important details. Often, a writer will start the paper at the beginning of the story and tell us the story straight through. Another way of organizing a narrative is to tell the story as a series of flashbacks where the plot is interrupted in well-chosen places with commentary by the writer. Once the writer has a purpose, thesis, and method of organization, he or she can begin to develop the plot of the story. Often students can get bogged down in all the possible details they can include in their narrative. For example, if the writer is telling a story about a childhood baseball game, he may be tempted to tell his audience about the uniforms, the weather conditions of

the day, and how many people were watching the game. While all of these details help create a precise picture of that baseball game, they may not have anything to do with the point the writer is making, i.e. the writer's specific purpose. A good rule for developing narratives is to include details about emotions and thoughts of the central characters, and descriptions of the most important objects and places to give the audience clues that will lead the audience to the central purpose of the story.

When a student writes a narrative, it is important to keep in mind the fact that the reader might not be as familiar with the events and places as the writer is. Consequently, the writer should try to include details that will make the readers see the characters and events of the story as if they were watching the story play out in front of them. An audience should be able to anticipate the point the story is making and follow the plot of the story without confusion. Narrative writing, at its best, will take an audience through some chronological version of events and reveal to them something that they can learn through the experiences of others.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Pay close attention to the assignment requirements for length when determining the timeframe for your narrative. Especially in English 1010 essays that are usually shorter in length, it sometimes helps to consider narrowing the timeframe for the body of the essay to the most significant part of a day, an hour, or even a portion of an hour. Then, student writers can employ methods of flashback or use introductory paragraphs to offer essential background information (exposition) for the narrative.
2. Prioritize when it comes to choosing the most important details, characters, and events for developing a narrative, but make those details, characters, and events

vivid for your readers by employing methods of description and appealing to the five senses. Keep your audience in mind by understanding that they may not be as familiar with the people, places, and things that make up your story, so you may need to offer a little more description for those people than you would for others.

3. Don't forget to include dialogue in your narrative, but choose dialogue that reveals something about the characters or the relationships between the characters who are speaking to one another.

“Welcome to the Real America” -- In this emphatically organized essay, an ESOL student who immigrated to the United States presents observations about his experience as a new arrival. He writes to inform other newcomers about the realities of living in the United States, and, in doing so, offers a candid view of American culture for those of us who are native-born. The three-pronged thesis of this essay leads to a well-organized paper, and the specific examples the writer uses validate his general observations.

Bol Ring

Prof. Cindy Chanin

DSPW 0800

29 Oct. 2007

Welcome to the Real America

America in some third world countries seems like heaven on earth. Even though America is the richest country on earth, the people in this country make it that way. When I was coming from Ethiopia, I did not expect life in America to be hard, fast paced, and expensive.

I was born in a country where people struggle just to put food on the table for their families. When I was living in Ethiopia, the perception of going to America was that it is a place where people hardly do anything. However, the reality of life in America is very different from how many people in different countries perceive it. From the first day I came to the U.S., life has been a struggle. I was less than a week in the U.S when I first started waking up in the morning to go to school. Ever since then my life has been a struggle to make it. For example, I had to finish my middle school to go to high school. I had to do that so I could make decent salary when I started working. Furthermore, I wanted to go to trade school to avoid working in factory jobs, so I went to Nashville Auto-diesel College to be a mechanic. I was working while I was going to

school. I spent nine hours at work and eight hours in school. I spent another two hours driving from home to school, which was an hour away from where I live. Sometimes I did not even have time to take a shower. It is almost opposite from what many people perceive the life in America would be like. When I graduated from NADC, I started working as a mechanic. I like being a mechanic, but I do not see myself doing it for the rest of my life, so I started taking classes at Volunteer State Community College. I want to be an aerospace engineer. America is made of hard working people who use technology to assist them. As I realize now, America is not different from other countries, but the people living in America are the ones who are making the U.S. different from the rest of the world by working hard and using their minds. I work together with many Americans so that is how I know.

Another thing I did not expect from life in America is the speed people operate. In America, time is everything. From the moment a person wakes up, there is something waiting on them to do. For instance, going back to when I was in middle school, I had to get up at six o'clock in the morning. I had to wake up, take a shower, and go outside to wait for a bus. If I was late by two minutes, I would miss the bus and would have to walk to school. Furthermore, when I started working as a mechanic, I had to get up at the same time and go to work. If I were late for work, I would have gotten fired. Americans say, "Time is money." Time is one of the most important things a person in America gives. People in American would rather spend money than time.

The last thing I did not expect from life in America is the cost of living. Cost of living in the U.S is very expensive. In America, almost everything costs something. When I was living in Sudan, the only thing I had to worry about was the food I was

going to eat. Almost everything was free; the house was free, the water was free, etc. However, in America, taking a shower costs people money. Even using a restroom costs something. My utility bill is almost \$500 a month during winter months. The house costs another \$500 a month, and some other small bills cost about \$200 a month. In many countries, if a person is making \$1200 a month, he/she is likely to be rich, but in America if a person is making the same amount, he/she needs help financially.

In conclusion, America is surely the land of opportunities; however, it is a difficult road to get those opportunities. It is the richest country in the world, but the people in the U.S make it rich by working hard and having technology to help them. Out of many things to expect from living in the U.S, do not forget to expect a hard, fast pace, and expensive life in America.

“The Move That Changed It All” -- In this narrative essay, the writer shares the fears, expectations, and eventual significance inherent in leaving the comfortable and familiar for the unknown. From the clear thesis to the satisfying conclusion, the writer shares both the emotions and the concrete details of her experience, and she proves that the first major move of her life really did “change it all.”

Title: The Move That Changed It All

Thesis: What I learned in the end was that change is scary and is usually hard, but sometimes the hardest thing and the right thing are the same.

Purpose: To inform people that we *all* have to do things in life that scare us, or things that we don't want to, but change most of the time works out for the better and can help you find a part of yourself you didn't even know was there.

Audience: 12-30; men, women and teenagers; people who have moved or experienced a dramatic change in their life; people who have experienced change for the good and even those who have experienced change that turned out not as well.

Benefit: People will get a positive story and feeling about change and perhaps the story could help them to be a little bit more accepting of change; in theory, they will see that something good could come out of it. Also, people who have experienced change for the bad can use this story as a way to know that it can work out if you are willing to try new things and to be open to new experiences.

Sarah Zerfoss

Prof. Renee' Byrnes

English 1010 Section 551

August 7, 2007

The Move That Changed It All

When I was sixteen years old, my life changed more in one year than I ever thought possible. I went from living the life I had always known to living one I never thought I could. I had been raised in Big Lake, Minnesota, most of my life. I had gone to Big Lake Elementary, Middle, and High Schools with the same kids. It was all I had ever

really known. I knew there was life outside of my comfortable little existence; I just wasn't running towards the door to find it.

When my mother and father sat me down to explain to me that we were going to be moving, the news hit me like a ton of bricks. I was shocked and appalled. I would finish out my sophomore year in Big Lake and start my junior year of high school in...HARVEST, ALABAMA? To say in the least, I was in for a culture shock. I considered myself well-traveled, even at sixteen, but Alabama was a place I knew very few Minnesotans had ever ventured.

As I packed my bags and said my goodbyes to all those I loved, I was overcome with worry and sadness. In the eleven years that I had spent living in Big Lake, I had given it my heart. I always knew I wanted bigger and better things, but I was worried I wouldn't find them in Harvest. I was scared of change, and my biggest fear was that the life I was going to have wouldn't be as good as the one I was getting ready to leave. But I had to go; I was headed south bound, for better or worse.

One semi-truck load and a whole lot of miles later, we stopped at the driveway of our new house. It was small and looked too much like all the other houses in the neighborhood. It looked as though all the houses had been made out of gingerbread by the same unimaginative child. Same design, same yard, same cars, even same people, it seemed. But this was it, the pathway to my new home and my new life. I grabbed a box of my belongings and slowly and steadily trudged towards the door.

As the front door to my new house and my new life swung open, I saw a beautiful, sunken living room, a cute, quaint kitchen, and an adorable breakfast nook, and as I rounded the corner, I saw a striking pink bedroom with a whole wall done to

look like a Hawaiian sunset. I couldn't believe they even made rooms this beautiful in Alabama. I was impressed! As my beautiful pink room started to fill up with all my pictures of "home," my kick-knacks, my posters—all the things that were "me"—I realized that maybe life here wouldn't be all bad. Maybe I could start a new life here, the life I always wished I could have.

I started school at Sparkman High School the next Monday. I spent the entire day with sweaty palms and a nervous shake. Actually, I spent the first week with sweaty palms, but I survived it. It was new and definitely scary. There were so many things to worry about, from finding new friends to just finding my way around. But every day it got a little easier, and every day someone new remembered my name. Suddenly my sweaty palms were dry and were shaking the hands of all my new friends. Before I knew it, I got invited to my first party. I thought at that moment that my life was probably never going to be the same, but for the first time, I realized maybe that was a good thing.

After a while, I lost contact with some of my friends from Minnesota. We had all said that we would call and visit and that things wouldn't change, but they did. But not everything: my very best friend in the entire world, Katie came to visit me in Alabama for my first New Year's Eve there. She spent a week at my house with me, and while she was there, I felt like nothing had changed. I had missed seeing her every day and being able to go to her house, but I loved having new things to tell her and new stories to share. I had been so afraid that I would lose the people and things that I loved from Minnesota, but what I actually got was all the things that truly mattered from Minnesota and all the new blessings life brought me while in Alabama.

I had been afraid of change and of facing something I didn't know, so sure that any life in Alabama couldn't compare to the one I had lost in Minnesota. I have moved four times since that move to Alabama and now I don't think I could ever live in the same place for eleven years again. Because with change, you will never lose who you were; you just get another chance to realize who you are. What I learned in the end was that change is scary and usually hard, but sometimes the hardest thing and the right thing are the same.

“That Old Green Cadillac” -- The author of this highly descriptive essay takes her readers through a gamut of emotions on laundry day. As the day begins, she effectively describes the setting for getting the laundry ready and her feelings of anger toward her sister, who flits off, leaving the author to do the wash. As the day progresses, she vividly explores her feelings of elation when her mother arrives unexpectedly with Mr. Harvey in the old green Cadillac. By using appropriate transitions and descriptions, this writer shows her emotions turning from anger to happiness instead of simply telling us that they do. The assignment here was to write a descriptive narrative and to integrate relevant quotations from two different sources, and this writer weaves those quotes smoothly into her own narrative without jarring the reader out of her own story.

Barbara Jackson

Prof. Lydia Wiggins-Azimi

English 1010

25 April 2008

That Old Green Cadillac

It was a hot summer day in July, about 93° Fahrenheit outside at 1:30 in the afternoon; the haze in the air was so thick I could see it moving. I was preparing to do the wash for the week, and I wondered about asking my sister to help; after all, her clothes were dirty, too. Just as she turned the corner, I looked down at the loads of clothes that had been separated and asked “Want to help?” She looked at me with her head tilted to one side, hands on her hips, eyes looking me up and down, nose turned up and said, “I’m going down to my boyfriend’s house.” She wore a red flowered see-through halter top that dipped in front; her pants were short, red, and so tight her butt cheeks hung out. Deborah loved the attention she got from men. Unfortunately, six months earlier, all of the chores in the house had been assigned. I often wondered why all the cleaning was my responsibility, but I never asked why. I said to myself, fighting

back the tears, “How can she leave me here with so much to do? I am her sister; doesn’t she care?”

The water was heating on the stove in the kitchen; meanwhile, I looked for the twenty-year-old washboard in the closet discolored from years of use. The soap had to be made, clothes washed, rinsed, wrung and hung out. I was frustrated with life, pissed off at my sister and old thoughts of running away came flooding back. I wanted to scream. We didn’t have an air conditioner, and the fan was old and seldom worked. The apartment was winterized to keep the cold out, which meant the heat stayed in; it felt like a sauna. Sweat ran down into my eyes stinging as it rolled down my face and under my chin. The clothes I put on an hour earlier were moist, especially under the arms. I felt weak, so I sat down for a moment, grabbed an old magazine and began to fan with it. The beds had been made; the floors had been swept and mopped, and the living room was clean; the only thing left was to pre-treat all the soiled clothes and then wash. I stared at my sister as she sashayed out the door, and every part of me wanted to yell out, “You whore! You bitch! Come back here and help,” but she was Daddy’s favorite, and she knew it.

Once my sister was gone, I could finally release the anger I harbored inside. I cried and screamed so loud I became sick. I cursed at life. Having so much responsibility at the age of 11 was overwhelming. Wiping the tears from my eyes I remarked, “Maybe when I turn twelve, my life will be different.” After five minutes or so I realized there was no time for feeling sorry for myself. I dried my eyes, blew my nose and obeyed my dad. The large pot on the stove for washing had steam rolling up towards the ceiling. The smaller pot on the stove smelled like burnt powder and lilacs. The smell of burnt powder was

the browned flour with chunks of lye in it. The smell of lilacs was a combination of different pieces of soap: Dial, Ivory, and Camay with a hint of cheap lavender scented perfume. The mixture had begun to rise and bubble: time to wash. I placed a small rug on the floor beside the tub and got down on my knees, bending my body just right so there was no strain on my ribcage. I added a half cup of the homemade liquid soap and stirred quickly. Steam rose from the tub. The soap was strong; I could see my hands turn a mild ash white. The wash board never moved.

After washing the first couple loads of clothes, I was ringing wet and my eyes burned from sweat. I needed a drink of water and a puff of my inhaler, so I took a break. While I was standing at the refrigerator, I thought I heard a familiar sound. I ran to the door with anticipation, but no one was there. I hurriedly drank my water, took a puff of my inhaler and went back to washing. Sweat rolled down the walls in the bathroom until the rug I used to kneel on while washing was almost wet. Suddenly in the distance, I thought I heard the roaring ker-thump of an engine. The sound was like the old green Cadillac Mr. Harvey drove. He had an olive green, 4-door 1960 Cadillac with some kind of bird on the hood. The driver's side door was a different color. When my sister and I were little, we saw our mother wreck Mr. Harvey's car a couple of times after she had been drinking, but Mr. Harvey never showed anger toward Mama around me. They always seemed happy. I heard the sound getting closer; I wondered, "Is it mama and Mr. Harvey?" My heart leaped into my throat the way E.B White describes it in his essay, "Once More to the Lake": like "children screaming with delight at the new sensation" (97). I ran to the door with anticipation once again and opened it, and this time I saw the old green Cadillac.

I darted out the door; I said “Hi, Mama. Hi, Mr. Harvey.” They were glad to see me; I was glad to see them. They looked around nervously and handed me a package with my name on it. I thanked them. I wanted to ask them to get out and come in, but the last time they did the police were called. My mother, Mr. Harvey, and the man that raised me didn’t get along. I wanted to go with them, but I didn’t want cause any trouble. This situation was similar to the line in Mary Oliver’s poem “Singapore” when she says, “Yes, a person wants to stand in a happy place in a poem” (136).

As the car backed out of the driveway I looked at my mother; she looked at me, and we both started to cry. She blew me a kiss and mouthed the words, “I love you.” I ran after the car until it reached the end of the driveway and waved to them until they were out of sight. Once again, the sound of the old green Cadillac faded into the distance. I skipped back into the house and opened my package; in it was a new pair of red tennis shoes. I knew I had to get back to work, but I didn’t care. The look of love my mother and I shared that day was a shield of hope which let me know: somebody loved me. I knew without a doubt that I would see the old green Cadillac again.

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“The Ghosts of Baynes Creek” -- Who doesn't like a good ghost story? The writer of this essay chose to narrate an event that was passed down through generations of storytellers and, most likely, was embellished with every retelling, including this writer's own experience with the haunting. An effective ghost story depends on a compelling setting, often including isolated places, dark nights, foggy landscapes, and eerie sounds. The writer of “The Ghosts of Baynes Creek” creates such an atmosphere through imagery that conveys the appropriate mood and sense of place and time.

Adair Scholten

Prof. Renee' Byrnes

English 1010, Section 551

14 June 2007

The Ghosts of Baynes Creek

Have you ever felt chills while telling or hearing a ghost story? Is it possible legends or ghost stories can start from someone's tragedy? There was a ghost story that I heard over the course of my childhood that intrigued me enough to search for evidence behind the frightening legend of the Baynes Creek Ghosts. It was a story about a couple whose lives came to a tragic end at Baynes Creek.

The one-lane bridge that led to the creek was just a few miles from our farm. The bridge had become old and weathered, and we couldn't use it for passage. The narrow dirt path that took us to the creek was behind the barn leading in to the woods. The trees and bushes and vines were so overgrown that it was creepy even in the daylight.

The story had become legendary. The folks in town say it was in the early 1900's that old man Bayne became owner of the land that surrounded the one-lane bridge. The bridge gave access to the folks across the creek. It was a dangerous shortcut to town. Everyone preferred crossing the bridge in the daylight. If anyone was caught on the other

side of the bridge by nightfall, it made seeing the “safe” side of the bridge very difficult because the bridge was so narrow.

One dark, foggy night, Mrs. Smyth was crossing the bridge with her horse and buggy. She knew the fog was heavy; she could feel it clinging to her skin. The air was thick, almost suffocating, so she was hurrying to get her sick baby home. As she drove, thoughts swept through her mind with news the doctor had revealed. She had no way of knowing that her husband was approaching from the other side of the bridge.

From the other side of the bridge, old man Smyth was trying to make sense of the news he had heard earlier about his new baby. He thought of his wife and how she must be feeling. Neither of them could see the other approaching because the fog was so thick. The two of them collided with such force that it sent both child and mother to the side of the bridge. She screamed for help while holding her child with one arm and holding on to her life with the other.

She could hear noises but wasn't sure the rider and horse were thrown from the bridge on impact. She heard her horse and buggy go over the side of the bridge. She could hear the horse gurgling for air, but within a moment the gurgling had ceased. She was hoping the other rider would hear her and assist her and the baby to safety. She clung to a dangling part of the bridge while screaming and wailing. Below her was rushing water. She had very little strength. Her body was giving in to fatigue, and her mind raced with fear. Could she hold on, or would she let go of the splintering wood?

The moment came when she could not hold on any longer. She kissed the baby's face and said a prayer. Then she let go of the wood that was connected to the bridge. Her body plunged into the cold, rushing creek with her child in her arms. She felt herself

sinking and let go of her baby. The current pulled her under, yet it pushed the baby to the bank.

The husband and wife both died on that black and foggy evening. The child grew up and would often visit their watery grave. Sometimes he could hear cries from the creek.

When we heard the story about the cries from the creek, my friends and I decided to have our own ghost hunt. We gathered our gas lamps and hunted for ghosts in the trees and the shallow creek. We heard muffled sounds and rustling in the trees ahead of us. We decided to turn back and run for a clearing in the woods. When we reached the edge of the woods, we could hear the wind howling through the limbs and leaves as if it were speaking to us. By then I was so spooked that I'd had enough ghost chasing for the night. I shouted, "We should leave now!" The feeling of someone following us grew with every step. We ran to the narrow, one-lane dirt road as fast as our feet would take us. We did not look back.

Today it still gives me chills to hear folks tell that haunting story of Baynes Creek. Hometown folks have been to the creek in the evening, when the mist is barely touching the creek's edge. They listen closely, and they say they can hear the muffled screams. They hope to catch a glimpse of the man on his horse, looking for his child. Sometimes we wonder how ghost stories get their beginning. Could it be from someone else's tragedy?

Descriptive Writing

As part of the human experience, we take in and process the world around us through the use of our senses, and many times, we form opinions about objects, places, and people within our world based on the use of that sensory information. These sensory impressions are often the basis for our writing when we write a descriptive essay. The purpose of descriptive writing involves helping an audience understand more fully the subject of an essay, usually a person or place with which the audience is unfamiliar, and to create a dominant impression of that place or person.

The most explicit statement of that impression should be offered in the thesis of the descriptive essay. This thesis should show the audience the writer's plans to reveal something new or unconventional about the essay's subject. For example, a descriptive essay about an umbrella might have the following thesis: "While an umbrella is very useful in the rain, it also serves as an example of one of architecture's most useful elements—the arch." This thesis prepares the audience to look at an ordinary object in a new, more complete way, emphasizing the purpose and need for creating an essay to describe something.

Description can be used as a method of development for an entire essay, or it can be incorporated into other modes of writing, like narration, comparison/contrast, and definition to make those modes of writing more sensory experiences because descriptive papers seek to use language that creates for the audience a vivid mental picture.

Developing descriptions often means using similes and metaphors to describe something, invoking all five senses. For example, a writer may choose to describe eating a jalapeno

pepper in the following way: “Once the tongue registers the heat of the pepper, it is as if your whole mouth expands in an attempt to get away from the flames but cannot quite stay out of reach.” When an audience reads language such as this, they can understand the feeling much better than if you simply wrote, “Eating a jalapeno pepper makes your mouth hot.” At its best, descriptive writing allows readers to close their eyes and see the event, person, object, or place being described in the essay. The ultimate goal is to create an impression and to convey your attitude towards that subject by offering the most revealing and significant details and anecdotes about the subject.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Pay careful attention to the details and examples you include: all should work towards conveying a dominant impression of the subject of your description, and they should be the most important details and examples for the reader’s understanding of that subject’s significance to you and your audience.
2. Avoid over-idealizing or demonizing the subject of a description. Present your description as being objective and realistic. Nothing is completely good or bad, so describe the subject as something REAL. Don’t forget to use sensory images, especially similes and metaphors, to draw your readers into the description.
3. When describing a person, choose the person for your description wisely. Avoid a person that will lead you to be overly sentimental, such as a family member or friend who has recently died. Choose, instead, a person who is somewhat unusual or engaging, not only to you, but to your audience.
4. Also, keep in mind that this is not a story about your experience, so remember that your purpose in describing is different from the narrative.

"Grandpa" -- A good example of character description, this essay begins with a physical description of how Grandpa carries himself and leads logically into a description of his personality. In fact, the thesis describes Grandpa as "a character," and the rest of the essay goes on to show what makes him such. It has been said that supporting examples which "show" the reader are often more effective than those which merely "tell" the reader, and this essay mostly does the former, providing brief anecdotes to illustrate facets of Grandpa's character. Readers can see and hear Grandpa moving and speaking, characteristics of good descriptive writing.

Peyton Harper

Prof. Renee' Byrnes

English 1010, Section # 96

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Grandpa

In most cases, grandfathers are very stereotypical; they are elderly, retired, do not generally cause a fuss, and always sugar-coat bad situations. However, this is definitely not the case with my Grandpa. Grandpa is not your typical grandfather. He still works, he almost always causes a fuss with everything that he does, and he will always tell you what is really happening. No matter which name you know him by—John, Johnny, or any one of the many unmentionable names that he has been called—Grandpa is a character.

Grandpa is not very imposing physically anymore. He is approximately five foot eight, balding, walks around like he is drunk because he has had a stroke, and carries a cane that he wields like Excalibur. Wherever he points his cane is where he expects you to jump to and pick up, fix, or move whatever it is that he is pointing at. No matter how unimposing Grandpa may seem physically, he carries himself with a poise that

demands respect from others. Nevertheless, if someone does not think that he deserves respect, he will not hesitate to tell them that he does.

The summertime to most kids means time off, lying around the house, spending time around the pool, and hanging out with friends. To me, summertime means all of these things and spending time with Grandpa. No matter what I have planned for a summer day, Grandpa always has something else planned for me to do that is a bit more important.

His plans, no matter how unimportant they may seem, still have to be done right away, or “right quick,” as Grandpa would say. This “right quick” attitude is one that he takes with anything that he decides to do despite what time of day or night it is, and despite whatever else may be happening. It is hard to think of just one situation in which this “right quick” attitude has caused more trouble than it is worth: because whatever it is that has to be done always has to be done at the most inopportune time. I can remember one situation on my birthday when two baby goats had to be vaccinated. This had to be done on my birthday because Grandpa deemed it important. Therefore, it had to be done “right quick” or else the world would end. Fortunately the situation only delayed my birthday dinner about ten minutes, which is not a bad outcome for a very inopportune situation.

Every summer since I was ten, I have spent a great amount of time riding around with Grandpa. Since I can remember, Grandpa has never had a real job. He has always taken care of rental homes or supervised small construction jobs, which means driving around town from job to job. When I was thirteen, Grandpa finally made driving around from job to job interesting because he let me drive that summer.

It is highly illegal to let a thirteen-year-old drive around town in a truck that typically has out-of-date tags with a supervisor who is considered by many to be a less-than-great driver. Because Grandpa has run out of gas more times than anyone can remember, has never liked stop signs, and has hit one school bus, people tend to believe that he is not a great driver. However, I would bet money that he has gotten out of more tickets than a judge. Letting a thirteen-year-old boy drive is illegal enough, but it is even more illegal to let a thirteen-year-old boy speed while driving out-of-county. This situation made no difference to Grandpa. He would just say, "Don't worry about it, and if something happens we'll just deal with it." Fortunately, nothing ever happened involving the law, but things did happen that involved other family members. Grandma, Mom, and a few others did not think that it was such a good idea for me to be driving at such a young age, but Grandpa simply told them, "He's got to learn to drive sometime." So we just kept on trucking.

Grandpa may not be your everyday, run-of-the-mill grandfather, but he is an irreplaceable part of my life. Grandpa has helped me to develop my attitude so that I am very carefree and so I can enjoy life. I have even adopted a few of his driving skills, but I have yet to run out of gas. With my Grandpa behind me, I doubt that I will ever run out of gas because he is always pushing me to work hard and do my best. Without my Grandpa's influence, I would not be who I am today.

Writing Definition Essays

Much of the way we view the world is founded on the way we define certain terms. Often we have conflicts based on the different ways we define the same ideas and principles. Understanding another person's point of view means understanding how they define and use certain words. When we write definition essays, we give our audience a clear sense of how we understand an important term. In this way, definitions provide us with a way to communicate our own ideas and understand the ideas of others.

Definition seeks to explain the meaning of words or concepts that are abstract with concrete language. Definition essays ask (purpose) and answer (thesis) questions: what is liberty, what is peace, and who has freedom? These ideas do not have objects that we can look at to help us understand them. In definition writing, the writer seeks to explain these terms so that an audience can understand and apply them to their own life experiences. After reading a definition essay on peace, an audience should be able to identify peace when they see it covered in the news or on the face of a person they come in contact with.

Developing a definition essay can be done in several different ways. A writer can incorporate all or just one of the following developmental tools into a single definition essay. The term can be described by identifying a conventional definition and showing how that definition needs improvement to fully convey the meaning of the term. Also, an author may define by negating, or telling the audience what a term does NOT mean; however, when using negation, you must always remember to emphasize what the term

does mean after you have explained what it does not. Another method of development is through exemplification, providing examples that offer illustrations of the definition of a term in the context of a real or a hypothetical experience. Using these methods of development individually or in any combination creates a well-developed definition that an audience can relate to.

When writing a definition essay, the writer must always remember that his audience may not be aware of how a term is used and why it is important to use the term correctly. A clear introduction can emphasize this purpose in defining so that the audience will be willing, from the beginning of the essay, to accept the writer's definition of the term. If a writer can show his audience how his term can connect to their lives through defining, that audience will ultimately find value in reading the essay.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. When defining a term, provide the reader with some criteria that are necessary to your definition of a term. Think about what qualities are most important to your own understanding of the term and share those with your audience.
2. Start with what is familiar to every reader: the dictionary definition, also known as the denotative definition. However, do not simply accept that definition as being completely correct in every case. Recognize the importance of connotative meaning and how experience with a word changes the meaning for different groups of people.
3. Sometimes it is helpful to employ other rhetorical methods, such as narrative and descriptive writing, to explain to our audience the events that brought us to define a term in the way that we do or to describe objects that are symbols of an abstract concept which we are trying to define.

"Our Mommies" -- This descriptive essay is a nice extended definition of a "good mother," with an abundance of specific examples as well as a good understanding of the effectiveness of analogy (in this case, the superhero, the "ultimate Google," the "Band Aid," and the "beat up car that runs better than an Escalade"). Not intended to be a description of any specific mother, the student describes and amplifies the abstract concept of what "mommies" are quite well. To provide unity to her extended definition, this student explains the significance of the definition of her term in her thesis: "By examining who moms are, it will allow us to understand their struggles in life and appreciate what they do for us more."

Purpose: To define who a mom is and highlight her qualities that are sometimes overlooked or taken for granted.

Audience: Younger audience from 16-22, who may not appreciate their mothers during that time in their lives. Mothers, who would find this essay humorous and accurate. Also husbands (23-50), who may not appreciate their wives enough.

Thesis: By examining who moms are, it will allow us to understand their struggles in life and appreciate what they do for us more.

Heidi Henline

Professor Daniel Kelley

English 1010, Section #23

20 November 2007

Our Mommies

Being a mom is a twenty-four seven job. Perceived as painful naggers, punishment enforcers, and personal chauffeurs, moms are unappreciated and taken-for-granted resources. While dads and kids are struggling with work and school, the mommies of the world are juggling jobs, clothes, dishes, dinners, practices, baths, and bedtimes. Lacking in heart, the dictionary definition of a mom is unable to bring to light who a mom is and what her roles are in life. As the heart and soul of our families, moms are important

people to be defined. By examining who moms are, it will allow us to understand their struggles in life and appreciate what they do for us more.

A mom is a modern day superhero. Her home is like a superhero's cape; as the cape shields the hero from the weather, so a mother's home shelters her children from life's storms. As a superhero's belt holds together his shiny spandex suit, so a mother holds together her family under one roof. Furthermore, as a superhero's heart is set to fight the bad guys, so a mother's heart is set to love her children unconditionally. Although she may not represent the average superhero, she is the superwoman, who provides for you, loves you, and protects you.

Multitasking is an art form that thrives within our mothers. Putting on the coffee, making up the lunches, and wiping down the messes are her games, and "the Mominator" is her name. After she says "Hasta la vista" to the kids, her mission is just beginning. Rushing to work, she laboriously pores over her tasks. Returning home, she seamlessly carries out her chores. She walks the dog. She prepares dinner. She washes clothes. Once the kids are in bed, she attends to the dishes and dusts the house. This process is never-ending. When a new day dawns, additional activities add to the mixture of a mother's full time job. Baseball and softball practices, piano and ballet lessons are all incorporated into the cycle. A mother's work is never done.

Moms are the ultimate Google. They are always there to find your shoes and remember your coat and hat. Moms never forget your birthdays and always take you to your doctor's appointments. Enabled to store information like a computer, mothers are experts in several fields. Marvelous at improving homework and watering the plants,

mowing the yard and buying school supplies, moms have skills that come naturally.

Truly, our moms are the best.

Despite the numerous obvious tasks that a mother does, those tasks do not fully encompass the role that she plays in our lives. Aside from the mundane jobs of chauffeur, cook, doctor, teacher, and friend, our mothers provide comforts like no one else can. A mother is chocolate cake. While mushy on the outside, she is comforting and sweet on the inside. She is able to cure every ailment, bind every broken heart, and fill every single gap. Like a warm, snuggly blanket, moms care for us from the inside out. When we are searching for some warmth, they provide the heat. They enclose us within their love and protect us from life's storms.

Easily associated with common objects that give us great joy, moms are simple pleasures. Like a brown fabric Band-Aid, she is able to fix every problem, mend every stitch, and heal every bruise. For those times when we are feeling down, moms are our chicken noodle soup. They are that saltiness that cures our ailing bodies. Assuming the role of a personal therapist, moms talk out the problems, sooth our souls, and prescribe a prescription. When we are dissatisfied with ourselves, moms love us the most. While others may disappoint us, moms never let us down. As our ever-present cheerleaders, moms motivate us even when we feel defeated. In all of our phases of life, our moms are there through the thick and the thin, and the good and the bad.

A mom is invaluable. Like a beat up car that runs better than a new Escalade, she is rusty and worn on the outside. However, a mom on the inside is illustrious and bold. Unlike other objects such as a desk or a watch, a mom can not be packaged into a nice brown box, slapped with a label, and shipped to the nearest retailer. Regardless of what

we call our moms, be it “mommy, mother, or mama,” her part in our lives is short but meaningful. Let’s remember to acknowledge her accomplishments for us. Our mommies keep us safe until it’s our time to face the world. Let’s recognize the jobs our mothers face every day. They keep us warm until it’s our time to face the cold. Let’s realize that we all have a purpose to fulfill and that moms have the ultimate purpose to fulfill. They put up with us until it’s our time to let them go. They will always be our mommies, and they will always love us the most.

Writing Process Essays

Most of us are familiar with cooking instructions and how-to guides for craft construction. These are often written in a telegraphic style with an implied second person voice: “Take one yard cotton and cut into 6” squares.” Usually these instructions follow a kind of chronological order in that we begin with the first steps and we end with the completed casserole or throw-pillow.

The process essay similarly endeavors to direct or inform the reader, but in full sentences, ordered paragraphs, and often with precise descriptions and examples. For this reason, many instructors disallow recipes and craft instructions from the range of possible topics. Students are encouraged to write about one of their special skills. The first step is to realize that their audience lacks their expertise. Just as a teacher must present information at an accessible level in the classroom, the writer of the process essay must keep the reader’s abilities in mind at every turn. Depending on the technical level of their topic, writers must accommodate their readers’ unfamiliarity with technical terms, tools, machinery, procedures, and professional jargon, and integrate definition and clear description where needed. Writers of the process essay must also make an appeal to the reader’s curiosity and furthermore to convince the reader that the process they are about to read about will be valuable knowledge for them.

There are two types of process essay: *informative* and *directive*. The *informative* process outlines the steps taken in the accomplishment of a goal. Examples of informative process topics are: “How Birds Teach their Young,” “How the Human Liver Cleanses the Blood Stream,” “How the School Newspaper is Printed,” and in a more humorous vein,

“How Women Shop at a Shopping Mall” and “How Men Shop at a Shopping Mall.”

Note that the informative process essay is usually written in third person and has a general reader in mind.

The second category is the *directive* process essay. These often address the reader directly in second person. Suggested directive process topics include “How to Shop for a Used Car or Truck,” “How to Behave on a First Date,” “How to Lose Weight,” or, for more tongue-in-cheek topics, “How to Flunk out of School” and “How to Go Broke.” In the specific assignment for the essay that appears in this publication, students were encouraged to consider lighthearted topics and be sarcastic or ironic in tone if they felt like it.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Organizing these essays is a real challenge for many students, but most find the process essay quite manageable if they see a chronological order of steps and prepare an outline before beginning to write. For many students, preparing outlines will become a solid option for process papers.
2. Students will find it easier to narrow their topic choices and to develop the content of their essay if they have a clear understanding of the audience to whom they are writing. Take time during your prewriting stages to decide who needs to know how to complete the process about which you are writing and who would have an interest in it so that you’ll know how to approach the topic.

Prize Winner: "How to Think You're Saving Money on Hair Color..." -- Process or, more specifically, "how-to" writing can, and often does, fall into tedium, probably due to a "cookbook recipe, step-by-step" format that is inherent to its structure. This essay avoids that trap, however, with the writer's witty voice, of which we first get a glimpse in the title, and which becomes more apparent in the course of the paper. Part of this essay's effectiveness and entertaining quality is the writer's use of a hypothetical character who is going through this step-by-step process, rather than taking an instructive tone—"do this; do that, etcetera." Using this more creative format, the writer can digress a bit and describe things going wrong with flair, yet without derailing the directive process of the essay.

Penny Fox

Prof. Cynthia Wyatt

English 1010, Section 024

4 December 2007

How to Think You're Saving Money on Hair Color While
Actually Spending More Than You Should

We've all seen them: women, usually pretty young, with three inches of brown re-growth and the rest of the twelve inches of hair in varying shades of blonde. Usually, they're trolling the hair color aisle at the local drugstore or Wal-Mart looking for just the *right* shade of blonde to use this time. Occasionally, you might see one with a box of brown hair color in their hand. These folks are a special breed. They are the brave ones who are sick of their high maintenance blonde and have decided to go back to brown, but they don't want to go spend any money at the salon, so they've decided (wisely, they think) to color it themselves. After all, it has worked so well for them until now; just look at all those lovely shades of blonde changing colors slightly every couple of inches as you glance down the hair shaft from re-growth to ends!

Unfortunately for our brave one, going brown is easier said than done. Part of the problem is the way color companies look at color and the way non-hairstylists look at color. Color companies work with a formula that hasn't changed for years. Hair color is divided into levels of light and dark. A level one is black, level ten is lightest natural blonde. Platinum, like Marilyn Monroe, is a level twelve or thirteen. Here's where the problem exists. Most people think of their hair as brown. Usually, it isn't. People who would say that their hair is brown fall somewhere in the middle between one and ten. Most Caucasians are a level five or six. They would say that their hair is *medium brown*. This is not true as far as the color companies are concerned. Actually, a level six is considered dark blonde, and a level five is light brown. An actual *medium brown* is a level three, just two little levels up from black. Think Catherine Zeta-Jones. Most of us, however, think that a level five or six is medium brown. Think Matthew Perry or Emilio Estevez. Their hair is actually light brown or dark blonde.

So, back to our brave one in the hair color aisle at Wal-Mart. She's naturally somewhere in the middle, just like most white girls in this area. Unfortunately, she believes she is a medium brown, and is holding a box of hair color that says just that. Thinking she has found just the right shade of brown, she makes her purchase and heads home to "go back natural." As soon as she's done, she can tell that something has gone horribly wrong. Frantically, she begins drying her hair, hoping it will begin to look lighter as it dries. It doesn't. She stares at the mirror in horror as she looks at her "black" hair. Actually, it's medium brown. Putting on a hat, she races back to Wal-Mart to purchase a blonde color to hopefully lighten her hair. She gets back home, applies her color, waits anxiously for it to process, only to find that this time, the blonde failed her.

What she doesn't know is that hair color won't lift out artificial hair color that is already on the hair. She's afraid she'll be stuck with this dark hair for a long time.

The first thing the next morning, she calls her hairstylist. After a brief explanation, she begs her stylist to work her in today. She doesn't care how much it costs; she just wants the "black" off of her hair. After all, now is not the time to be concerned with money! "If only I'd thought that in the beginning," she says to herself as she drives to the salon.

Six hours later, she is still at the salon with what is hopefully the last application of bleach on her head. The last time they shampooed, her hair was still a dark orange color. Her scalp is somewhat tender, and the hairstylist says that they will stop soon because it won't take much more. Will she be stuck with orange hair now? Finally the hairstylist says it's time to shampoo, again. Now her hair is still a shade of orange, but a lighter shade of orange. The hairstylist is pleased and says that there should only be one more application of color. This color will be a dark blonde, a level six which is our brave one's natural level. This color, in contrast to the bleach, feels cool and conditioning, and after forty five minutes, her hair is shampooed for the last time today. As our brave one looks in the mirror, she is relieved to see that her hair is a more *normal* shade of what she thinks is brown. Now, after seven hours in the salon, our brave one pays her \$400.00 bill without flinching. She's just grateful to look somewhat normal again. She asks, just out of curiosity, what it would have cost if she had just come to the salon to have her hair colored in the first place. The stylist says anywhere from \$80.00 to \$100.00. Here is where our brave one flinches. Lesson learned--she will never color her hair herself again. After all, to quote Dolly Parton's character Truvy in the movie

Steel Magnolias, “There is no such thing as natural beauty!” And that is how to spend more money than you should while thinking you’re saving money on hair color.

Comparison/Contrast

Examining our world in terms of comparison and contrast is one of the most common intellectual activities we do on a day-to-day basis; it's the kind of thinking on which most practical decisions are based. These may be big decisions—choosing a college, buying a car, deciding on a career—or small decisions, such as what kind of shampoo to buy or where to go for pizza. In all of these activities, we are doing mental work—logically examining the information available to us and making a decision, based on that information. This decision results in our choice between two or more items or in our passing judgment on objects that are similar in some way, though not in all ways. In writing a comparison/contrast essay, we strive for the same goal except that in our writing, we explain the reasons behind our judgment to an audience outside of ourselves.

When writing comparison/contrast essays, we compare items to help our audience understand our choices or judgments. The audience comes to understand why we make the choices we do or come to a certain conclusion because we offer them the information that we have examined in order to come to that conclusion, information which they may or may not have had before reading our comparison. Many times, then, our purpose in writing is also to help people understand something with which they are not familiar. In such cases, we compare an object unfamiliar to the audience with something familiar to them, forming a basis of comparison so that they can understand the type of object we are examining even if they have not directly encountered it in their own lives. Ultimately, we write comparison/contrast essays to

share our knowledge about a subject with others and to persuade them to understand the subject in the way that we do, thus seeing our judgment as valid.

We make our judgment reasonable to our audience by deciding on specific points of comparison to ensure that we analyze our items based on the same criteria or standards for each item. For us, as writers, to set these criteria, the items we compare must be on the same level in some way; choosing items that are too different from one another makes it difficult to set standards that your audience would expect from both items. In our writing, we explain the similarities and differences between the items that we are comparing, illustrating how well those items live up to the expectations we have set for them. We pass judgment on the items, usually expressing a preference for one or noting the advantages of one over the other. This judgment is most explicitly stated in the essay's thesis, and writers support that judgment by comparing and/or contrasting the items in the essay's body paragraphs based on the criteria that we have previously set forth.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Stick to two items for comparison and contrast because it's easier to manage.
2. Make sure that your items are comparable or are on the same level in some way.
3. Avoid vague thesis statements such as "There are many similarities between item A and item B." The audience cannot understand your perspective on or your judgment about those items based on this kind of thesis.
4. Understand that you may focus more on similarities *or* on differences; you do not have to treat both equally in your essay. However, even if you're focusing more on one than on the other, you should include at least one consideration of difference or similarity to show your objectivity towards the subject and your understanding of the ultimate connection between the objects you are comparing.

“The Good Teacher vs. the Bad Teacher” – While this essay needs a works cited page and a stronger introduction and conclusion, the writer develops the thesis with clear and compelling contrasts. With carefully chosen and well-integrated quotations from the texts of the stories, “I Became Her Target” by Roger Wilkins and “Shame” by Richard Gregory, the writer expresses both outrage and understanding in a persuasive voice. A singular strength of this essay is the writer’s use of supporting quotations to develop a case that moves the reader to a chilling acknowledgment of the horrific impact of a “bad teacher” upon her struggling student.

Bol Ring

Prof. Cindy Chanin

DSPW 0800

19 November 2007

The Good Teacher vs. the Bad Teacher

How much does it take for a teacher to change someone’s life for the better or for the worse? Teachers have very big influences on society as a whole. Without teachers, there would not be any doctors, lawyers, scientists, etc. Teachers have little room for mistakes because their mistakes can be disastrous for the students. There is a thin line between a bad teacher and a good one. Miss Bean in “I Became Her Target” by Roger Wilkins and the teacher in “Shame” by Richard Gregory have different views of the narrators, different objectives for the narrators, and different outcomes on the narrators.

The first differences between Miss Bean and the teacher in “Shame” are the way they view the narrators. Miss Bean in “I Became Her Target” views the narrator as a smart student who happens to be the only black student the in whole school. The narrator points out, “I was a twelve-year-old black newcomer in a school that was otherwise all white” (Wilkins 565). Miss Bean knows the situation the narrator is in, so she begins to make him comfortable and think on his own. While other teachers just

ignore the narrator, Miss Bean begins to make the new student think. The speaker says, “On the morning after having read our first assignment, she asked me the first question” (Wilkins 565). Miss Bean is a very liberal person. The narrator declares, “She was viewed as a very liberal person who believed, among other things, that Negroes were equal” (Wilkins 565). On the other hand, the teacher in “Shame” views the narrator as being stupid and a troublemaker. The speaker reports, “I was sitting in the back of the room, in a seat with a chalk circle drawn around it” (Gregory 560). The teacher makes him sit in that seat because she thinks he is a troublemaker. The narrator comes from a poor family, so he goes to school hungry, which causes him not to pay attention. But the teacher just sees him as a stupid black kid who doesn’t want to pay attention in the class. He confirms, “Teachers were never interested in finding out that you couldn’t concentrate because you were so hungry, because you hadn’t had any breakfast” (Gregory 560).

The second difference between the two teachers is their objective for the narrators. Miss Bean wants the narrator to feel smart. She wants the other students to see that he is as smart as any other students. The speaker writes, “Later in the hour, when one of my classmates had bungled an answer, Miss Bean came back to me with a question that required me to clean up the girl’s mess and established me as a smart person” (Wilkins 560). She also wants the narrator to know that he is smarter by asking him questions for him to think about. He confirms, “A few days later, Miss Bean became the first teacher ever to require me to think” (Wilkins 566). Roger struggles to answer the teacher’s questions, but he answers them anyway. Furthermore, she begins to make the narrator realize that he can make his own opinions. Before then, the narrator was just

going with other people's opinions. He notes, "In those days, all my opinions were derivative" (Wilkins 566). Day after day, Miss Bean keeps asking the narrator more questions that require him to think. She gives him the value of an education--that is, teaching him to think and form opinions.

On the contrary, the teacher in "Shame" wants the narrator to be isolated, and she humiliates him if he tries to become a part of the class. She puts the narrator at the back of the class in a seat with a chalk circle around it. The teacher creates that seat for troublemakers and idiots. She wants to make sure that the narrator gets embarrassed. For example, one day a teacher asks everyone to ask his/her dad for some money to give to the Community Chest, and the narrator wants to impress his girlfriend. The girl's name is Helene Tucker, which the narrator calls "a symbol of everything you want" (Gregory 560). He loves that girl so much that he thinks she is the reason he goes to school. He says, "I think I went to school then mostly to look at her" (Gregory 559). The teacher wants everyone to ask his/her dad for some money on Friday, and he/she will turn it in on Monday. Even though the narrator doesn't have a daddy, he wants to impress Helene by giving from his own pocket. He admits, "I had money in my pocket from shining shoes and selling papers, and whatever Helene Tucker pledged for her Daddy I was going to top it" (Gregory 560). On Monday morning, the teacher starts calling names of those who pledge their fathers are going to give money. "Helene Tucker?" calls the teacher; "My Daddy said he'd give two dollars and fifty cent," Helene replies (Gregory 560). The teacher goes on to call everyone's names alphabetically, but she closes her book without calling the narrator's name. So he gets up, "What is it now?" asks the teacher (Gregory 560). The narrator argues, "You forgot me" (Gregory

560). The teacher turns around toward the board, and she doesn't want to pay attention to him. The teacher replies, "I don't have time to be playing with you, Richard" (Gregory 560). Even though the narrator tries to tell the teacher what his daddy pledges, the teacher keeps being rude to him. The teacher adds, "Sit down, Richard, you're disturbing the class" (Gregory 560). As the conversation goes on between the Richard and the teacher, the teacher begins to use harsher words. She declares, "We are collecting this money for you and your kind, Richard Gregory" (Gregory 560). Richard is determined to impress his lovely little girlfriend, so he pledges more than she does. In front of the whole class, Richard announces, "My Daddy said he'd give fifteen dollars" (Gregory 561). Rather than telling Richard good job like everyone else, she instead humiliates him in front of the whole class by saying, "We know you don't have a Daddy" (Gregory 561).

The most important differences between the two teachers are the impacts they have on the narrators. Miss Bean teaches the narrator to think and become smarter. The speaker in Wilkins's story points out, "She was the first teacher to give me the sense that thinking was part of education and I could form opinions that had some value" (566). As Albert Einstein says, "The important thing is to never stop questioning." Miss Dorothy Bean keeps on asking Roger Wilkins, the narrator, questions every day. She keeps on asking him some questions, and he feels like his answers are better than before. Wilkins confirms, "My answers became stronger and more confident" (566). In contrast, the teacher in "Shame" brings shame into Richard's life. Richard is now ashamed, and he hates his life of being poor. He admits, "I never learned hate at home, or shame. I had to go to school for that" (Gregory 559). Now Richard feels like everyone feels sorry for

him. He cannot even do the things he used to do because he is ashamed that everyone is feeling sorry for him. He walks out of the classroom, and he starts to hate school. He says there is shame in school. He writes, "Now there is shame everywhere" (Gregory 561).

In conclusion, words are more painful and last longer than a physical pain. In a small moment, words can bring permanent changes in a person's life, so everyone needs to use them carefully. There is a very thin line between ruining someone's life or improving it. The two teachers have different perceptions for the narrators, different plans for the narrators, and different impacts on the narrators.

Prize Winner: “The Italian Job(s)” -- In this essay the author uses comparison/contrast to discuss the differences between an earlier version of the movie The Italian Job and the 2003 remake. A significant segment of the essay is given to describing the role that the Mini Cooper cars play in each movie; this author has a clear preference for the older version of the car, and she obviously is enthralled and knowledgeable about the Minis. The content of this essay is well-developed and clearly organized, and the author is quite proficient in making clear the similarities and differences of setting and plot in the two versions. Although more quotations from the films could be used to strengthen the author’s point of view and some of the language is rather repetitive, the overall essay is strong and very clearly supports the comparative judgment offered in the thesis.

Megan Tamas

Professor Kilbane

English 1010

August 29, 2007

The Italian Job(s)

“You’re only supposed to blow the bloody doors off!” screams the angry Michael Caine to his demolitionist. Caine made this quote famous in the 1969 British classic The Italian Job. It’s a car chase thriller made famous for its stunts with three Austin Mini Coopers. The film was later remade in America in 2003 with BMW’s new model Minis. Nonetheless, it kept the audience awed with impressive driving and seemingly impossible stunts. While there are several similarities between the two films, the remade version contains several dramatic differences that make it a completely different experience than the original. These differences include the models of the cars being used, the settings in which the films take place, and the overall plot. Though different, both versions of The Italian Job deliver a high-speed, action-packed adventure that takes audiences on the ride of their lives.

No new model car can beat the classic version it was designed after. Moreover, the classic Mini Cooper is irreplaceable and is still a legend today. The original Italian Job uses three of these legendary classics with the Union Jack colors: blue, white, and red. A big difference between the old and the new Minis is not only in their appearance, but the physics and the mechanics inside them. The classic Minis have a small engine that only came with a manual, four-speed transmission, and the fact that the transmission was manual put some limits on what stunt drivers were able to perform compared to what they can perform now with an automatic transmission. Not only did the old Minis have manual transmissions, but power steering was not invented yet. Every turn had to be done by using one's own arm strength. This fact is what makes the stunts in the original film so impressive. For the scene in which the cars are making a get-a-way through a sewer tunnel, the cars were so light that they were able to drive up and down the circular sewer walls. In order for the BMW Minis to drive the same way the old ones drove, the engine had to be modified to a lighter, more powerful engine in order to carry the weight of the vehicle. Also, additional weight had to be removed from the car to make it perform the stunts, including some of the steel and the backseats.

The old Italian Job's setting is quite different than the remake's. The old version's story begins in London, England. London is the place where the movie's plot is introduced. The main character plans to steal gold from a bank in Turin, Italy. He gathers up a team of masterminds to perform the robbery. The other half of the story moves to Turin, Italy, where the car chase begins in the old historic city. The car chase ends, and the plot concludes in the Italian Alps, where the movie ends in a cliffhanger. As for the new The Italian Job's setting, it starts out in Venice, Italy, and then the story

continues in Los Angeles, California. Once the gold robbery is planned out, the characters return to Venice, Italy. However, very little of the movie's setting is in Italy because the majority of the events take place in Los Angeles. The change in setting in the new film not only creates a different look, but dramatically affects the storyline.

The plot of both the old and the new The Italian Job are very different with few similarities. The old version stars Michael Caine as Charlie Croker and a group of mastermind criminals who plan to steal gold from a bank in Turin, Italy. The plot of the old version is about Croker and his group planning and setting up the robbery in London, England. Then, when the plan is completely formed, they caravan to Turin, Italy, to execute the plan. The story then concludes with the group trying to make a getaway with the gold in the Italian Alps in hopes to make it to Switzerland without being caught. The movie does not have a conclusive ending because the movie ends with the group stuck in a literal cliffhanger. The group apparently takes a wrong turn too fast, and they are left with half of their bus hanging off of a cliff. The only thing holding them in place is the gold on one end of the bus, and the characters on the other end. The new version of The Italian Job took a very different approach and contains a completely new plot. As in the first, the main character – played by Mark Wahlberg - sets up a small team and plans and executes a gold robbery in Venice, Italy. Just when the team believes their heist was successful, a traitor in their group takes all the gold and leaves the team to die in the barren, frozen Swiss Alps. The main basis of the new movie is the team's plot for revenge on their deceiving former teammate, who has spent the money on every thing each teammate claimed he would get with his share of the stolen gold.

Even though there are major differences between the two versions of The Italian Job, they have several basic similarities. The two main characters Charlie Croker and John Bridger remain in both versions, though the characters themselves are very different. Each movie's plot contains the plan to steal gold in Italy. The main premise of the original movie is the planning of the robbery, the execution of the plan, and the actual getaway. The new version takes the original story to the next level and adds more plot, new characters, and new settings. Similar events occur in both versions, such as using a traffic jam in order to escape in Mini Coopers. The main spirit of the film doesn't change, and the highlight of both films is still the delightfully tiny Mini Coopers performing stunts that more aggressive-looking cars are usually seen performing. Even though the original and the remake were greatly different, they both have wowed audiences with their incredible stunts with the Minis, beautiful settings, and wonderfully exciting stories.

Prize Winner: “Wollstonecraft & ‘The Wise Neighbor’” – The writer of this essay draws a sharp contrast between the views of Mary Wollstonecraft, an 18th century feminist, and the advice of a character in “Wise Neighbor” by Pu Song-Ling. The “wise neighbor,” Mrs. Heng, advances a more traditional (or sexist) view of a woman’s role and purpose compared to that of Wollstonecraft. The essay sharply delineates the opposing views by skillfully integrating quotations from the story with references to Wollstonecraft’s positions in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Effective transitions link elements in the essay to maintain a clear and logical flow of evidence supporting the writer’s thesis statement. The conclusion is especially strong, a succinct, but comprehensive summary of the writer’s position.

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7 December 2007

Wollstonecraft & “The Wise Neighbor”

Mary Wollstonecraft was an 18th century feminist who had published A Vindication of the Rights of Woman in 1792. In the work, Ms. Wollstonecraft presents her arguments for the equality of women in such areas as education, intellect, and virtuous behavior. Considering Ms. Wollstonecraft’s personal views, how would she have felt about the advice which Mrs. Heng gives Mrs. Chu in Pu Song-Ling’s short tale “The Wise Neighbor?” Upon close examination, one must conclude that Ms. Wollstonecraft would not have looked favorably upon the advice.

The first piece of advice given to Mrs. Chu by Mrs. Heng is to withdraw into herself and repulse her husband. In other words, ignore him and reject his advances. However, Ms. Wollstonecraft’s work never advocates the idea of a woman ignoring her husband as a means of gaining what she desires. On the contrary, it is her belief that the

two sexes as a whole should use reason and open dialogue to achieve their goals (Wollstonecraft 743).

The second and third pieces of advice are for Mrs. Chu to make herself as unattractive as possible and then, after a month, to make herself as beautiful as ever. The idea of a woman using her outward appearance for personal gain is something Ms. Wollstonecraft would have abhorred because it is in direct conflict with her notion of abandoning the misconceptions of the body in favor of developing the mind. However, Mrs. Chu falls directly into Ms. Wollstonecraft's notion that "men endeavor to sink us still lower, merely to render us alluring objects for a moment; and women, intoxicated by the adoration which men, under the influence of their senses, pay them, do not seek to obtain a durable interest in their hearts" (Wollstonecraft 743). According to this, even if Mrs. Chu achieves her goal of regaining her husband's affection, her hollow tactics would secure only a fleeting interest rather than that "durable interest" in his heart.

The final two pieces of advice given to Mrs. Chu are for her to be seductive and to maintain this deception against her husband. Once again, the very idea of a woman seducing and deceiving a man to achieve her goals is contradictory to Ms. Wollstonecraft's views, believing that cunning is "that natural opponent of strength...that undermine[s] esteem even whilst [it] excite[s] desire" (Wollstonecraft 745).

At the beginning of "The Wise Neighbor," Mrs. Chu confesses to Mrs. Heng that, for a time, she wished to be the mistress rather than the wife (Song-Ling 777). Mrs. Chu wants what Ms. Wollstonecraft clearly detests when she states that "men, ... considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and mothers" (Wollstonecraft 742).

The problem is that these two women in question want completely different things and have two very different ideas about how to get them. While Mrs. Chu simply wants attention and affection from her husband, Ms. Wollstonecraft wants respect as well as an educational and intellectual equality among men and women. This glaring contradiction between the two is summarized perfectly by Ms. Wollstonecraft herself when she says that “the civilized women of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect” (Wollstonecraft 743).

In closing, Mrs. Chu uses her sexuality and cunning to achieve her goals, while Ms. Wollstonecraft views such tactics as degrading and detrimental to the advancement of women and would clearly not have approved.

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**SECTION 2:
RESEARCHED ARGUMENT**

Writing Claims of Fact

As active participants in our world community, we come into contact with the conditions of the world around us every day—through interacting with the people around us, watching the news on television, reading a newspaper, or even attending the performance of a drama. These experiences and the knowledge that we gain from them can often make us want to share our knowledge with others, a responsibility many of the world’s citizens take seriously. Oftentimes, that responsibility leads to a desire to write in order to share our own knowledge—and the knowledge of reliable authorities—with others in our world. This desire results in our writing claims of fact.

Writers of claims of fact seek to offer factual information about past, present, or future societal conditions that involve specific communities or interest groups. Many times, our purpose in writing claims of fact is to discuss our reasons for disagreeing with some widely held belief, or because we endeavor to inform our audience about a condition in our society with which the audience is unfamiliar. For instance, we may write a claim of fact to explain why we see a condition in our society as a problem for a minority group by illustrating how that group of people is negatively affected by the beliefs and actions of the majority. On the other hand, we may write a claim of fact to explain how a specific group benefits from a program that has recently been implemented by our community. Thus, a claim of fact does not have to focus only on the negative, but instead it focuses on simply offering information to an audience who does not have ready access to all the facts and, as a result, may be mistaken in their beliefs.

To strengthen our argument, we support claims of fact with factual information such as firsthand experiences, examples, statistics, and information from other reliable authorities whom the audience would be able to verify through their own research. Our argument is made sound by giving irrefutable evidence for the claims that we make, which are often inferences based on the factual evidence we have gathered. We typically can prove claims of fact without a doubt although there may at times be exceptions to the fact. The thesis statement should offer a comprehensive explanation of our attitude towards the issue on which the essay focuses. When writing a claim of fact, we should always write with a specific audience in mind, addressing those people or groups who would have a vested interest in the issue and how that issue is viewed by the community, or world, around them.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Be sure to offer evidence that is sufficient for proving your point, information that is relevant to the issue at hand. Depending on how complex or controversial your claim is, you may need to offer more data if the claim is difficult to prove or less if your audience would be easily convinced.
2. Always question the reliability of your sources because some may be misleading in the way they present themselves. Look for other sources who use your authorities' information instead of assuming the source is reliable. Since not all sources are reliable, it is up to you as the writer and researcher to determine the credibility and authority of your sources.
3. Balance information gleaned from sources with your own statement of factual information. Avoid reliance on the sources to make your argument for you; instead, offer inferences based on your interpretation and understanding of the facts.

“HPV Vaccine” – In this position essay, the writer effectively discusses the opposing viewpoints on the controversial HPV Vaccine, Gardasil. She supports her claim of fact that this vaccine is controversial with evidence from credible sources, introducing each of these sources with a signal phrase and correctly documenting them according to MLA guidelines both in the text and on the Works Cited page. Throughout the essay, she offers the reader the facts about the drug and its cost, effectiveness, and side effects for the recipient, and the writer brings her essay to a strong conclusion by encouraging her reader to consider his/her own position regarding this controversial vaccine.

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13 November 2007

HPV Vaccine

Maybe you’ve heard of the newly found human papillomavirus vaccine or the HPV vaccine. This vaccine has been controversial since its debut in the summer of 2006 when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved of the vaccine to prevent cervical cancer. Many physicians and parents have done their research on the new vaccine, Gardasil, and have made their decisions and taken a stand. Some of them have recognized the urgency for the vaccine and its necessity, while others believe that the vaccine should not be made mandatory to the recommended age range.

The decision that Gardasil should be given to girls as young as nine and mandatory for school girls from eleven to twelve sounds like a heavy overreaction at first, but for some it sounds like a plan. For people like Deborah Lee, “The development of Gardasil marked an important milestone: it is the first vaccine effective against a virus that causes cancer” (Lee par.7). She believes the vaccine has been ‘pushed’ into being mandatory so that the government can take a “herd immunity” approach to solving a

problem that Laura Egendorf states, “At least 50% of sexually active people will get at some time in their lives” (Centers for Disease Control par.26). Beverly Ballaro discovered that “[i]n the United States, of the nearly 10,000 women who are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year, approximately 3,700 will die from the disease” (Ballaro par.13). For these women, Gardasil seems like a miracle vaccine. People like Lee believe that “[i]f everyone is vaccinated [herd immunity] there is a good chance that dangerous strains of HPV can be eliminated entirely” (Lee par.10).

Those who believe that Gardasil should not be made mandatory come from a different approach. Moria Gaul, an analyst for the Family Research Council, believes that “[t]he government should not require that the vaccine be used in schools because doing so could send a dangerous message about safe sex” (Gaul par.1). Gaul even goes to the extent of encouraging follow-up studies on rates of STDs and rates of pregnancy due to the vaccine. For Gaul it is an easy decision that the HPV vaccine be at the discretion of parents. Many parents on this side of the HPV controversy would like to hold the right to discuss STDs with their children individually and privately. Most of these parents also hope that their children would save sex for marriage. These parents that think the need for an HPV vaccine doesn’t apply to their children most likely romanticize that their kids won’t have sex in a world that is very sex-oriented.

This vaccine is controversial not only because of its request to be made mandatory, but for many other reasons as well. One of the other reasons would be how much the vaccine costs. Nellie Bristol states, “The retail cost of the three-shot inoculation regime is \$120 per dose, or \$360” (Bristol par.93). Some would argue that’s too expensive especially with it being the most expensive vaccine yet. Although the vaccine is

expensive, most insurance policies have picked the vaccine up. It's even on many programs for children who don't have sufficient insurance coverage. For example, "The Federal Vaccines for Children Fund negotiated a discount and pays \$96 per dose, according to Merck (the developer of Gardasil)" (Bristol par.93). In some states there are even health departments that offer vaccines free or at very low costs.

The vaccine also concerns physicians in that once it has been made mandatory and parents are given an opt-out, those parents will also start denying other shots that are vital to Americans' health. Another cause for concern that Barbara Loe Fisher, co-founder and president of the National Vaccine Information Center, brought up is "[h]ow many vaccines are we going to require our children to get to go [to] school" (Bristol par.20). This is an understandable question considering that "[t]he CDC currently recommends children receive 48 doses of 14 vaccines by age 6 and 53 doses of 15 vaccines by age 12" (Bristol par.21). These figures do not include the HPV vaccine.

Is this HPV vaccine worth the fighting, controversy, and potentially fringing upon parents' rights for their children? Or has America already done this with the above-listed vaccines that are already mandatory to go to school here in the United States? There are these questions and many more that surround this vaccine. But isn't there always cause for concern and resentment against the new and unknown?

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Writing Claims of Policy

Claims of policy make recommendations. These recommendations call for a specific solution to a specific problem. Because students must establish that a problem exists or will exist before making recommendations or discuss causes and effects of a problem first, this writing assignment may be assigned later in English 1020 since students will need to understand how to establish a claim of fact, cause, or value first.

Currently in the VSCC English Department, English 1020 instructors may have students focus on a single issue about which they feel passionate such as “creating a living working wage for workers,” “providing affordable health care for all Americans,” or “establishing a daycare on VSCC’s college campus for students with childcare needs.” English instructors may ask students to build shorter argumentative essays—a claim of fact, a claim of value, a claim of cause—to establish a problem, and the student will end the course by writing a longer argumentative essay, a claim of policy that offers solutions to the problem. Some instructors may begin the course with an I-Search paper that allows students to explore their interests as they begin to shape their research for a claim of policy. However, other VSCC English 1020 teachers take an opposite approach, asking students to write shorter claims of fact, definition, value, cause, and policy covering a variety of topics—one topic for each claim type. All of these methods can yield strong claims of policy. In the following included claims of policy, we see differing cases.

Students can write successful claims of policy by clearly establishing a specific problem, discussing the problem’s causes or effects, offering an evaluation of the

problem, and providing a solution to the problem. As is the case in writing successful arguments, the claim of policy should also provide a clearly focused persuasive thesis that identifies the problem and solution, well-supported reasons backed by relevant and sufficient evidence, a counter-argument, and an appeal to an audience's pathos, logos, and ethos.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Note that policy claims are recognizable because they tend to use the words “should” and “should not,” but students need to also recognize when the words are implied. For example, “Support Our Troops” is a declarative bumper sticker that is a policy claim because the understood larger statement is, “We should support our troops.”
2. Writers of policy claims often have problems coming up with specific solutions for the problem, and many times, it is because those writers have failed to narrow their audience to a specific group of people. Consider your options when it comes to audience; in other words, determine who will be responsible for carrying out the actions you propose in your solution and what level of responsibility you are assigning to each group of people in that audience.
3. Don't forget to familiarize yourself with as many options as possible before suggesting a plan of action. Also consider research on solutions that have been implemented and how and why they have been unsuccessful in other places. This knowledge will help you improve your counterargument.

“Algae: The Fuel of the Future” – From the first sentence, this writer grabs the audience’s attention with the urgency of her claim, and she holds that attention throughout her essay by approaching a subject that is currently on the minds of many Americans, yet in a new way. Before presenting her solution, she establishes the problem of Americans’ dependence on oil, and then offers a solution that is less commonly proposed. The writer’s understanding of the needs and values of her audience in this essay is evident throughout the argument, and this writer is able to support her claims more successfully because of that understanding. Although there are a few block quotes that are not worked into the text as smoothly as others, overall, the use of evidence is clear and logical, and the writer presents her claim of policy as a realistic solution to America’s fuel problems.

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4 December 2007

Algae: The Fuel of the Future

The United States is in trouble. The price of gasoline continues to rise, with no end in sight. Oil has become so vital to the United States that the nation persists on purchasing oil no matter how greatly its economy suffers. Oil—or, more specifically, gasoline—is not a reliable resource. If the United States does not begin to concentrate on creating a renewable fuel source, then the economic and environmental consequences will be severely destructive. Fortunately, there is an alternative fuel source that with enough effort could become the solution that ends the United States dependence on oil. Scientists have discovered that a clean-burning bio-fuel can be produced from a vegetable oil that is created by algae during photosynthesis. Producing fuel from algae is the solution to many of the problems gasoline power has caused to the economy and environment.

America's love for sports cars and SUVs is a leading cause for its dependency on foreign oil. The problem with trucks and SUVs is their poor gas mileage, leaving Americans constantly filling up at the pump. James Outman states in his article, "The United States, with about 4.5 percent of the world's population, currently uses about 25 percent of the world's petroleum output..." (2). The high demand for oil created by America's transportation needs cannot be fully satisfied by America because the three hundred and eighty one million gallons used in everyday transportation cannot be supplied by America itself (Outman 2). Foreign oil producers can sell oil at ridiculously high prices, and America has no other choice except to purchase the oil. America's economy will suffer dramatically due to its high oil consumption rate and low oil production rate. James Outman states the following in his article on fuel efficiency:

...the United States produced 5.4 million barrels of oil a day, about 26 percent of its total consumption of 20.7 million barrels. The country's dependence on foreign sources of oil is a potential source of both economic and diplomatic instability, given that oil production and prices are both subject to political manipulation by major producers. (2)

Consuming so much oil is not only damaging America's economy, but the environment as well. America uses twenty five percent of the world's petroleum, making the nation one of the highest contributors of carbon dioxide, which is a major factor in global warming (Outman 2). Though a natural process, global warming is being dramatically sped-up by the high carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels. The main culprits responsible for high carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are gasoline-powered vehicles. According to Mark Solheim's article, "Best Values in Clean Cars," "Every gallon

of gasoline you burn spews twenty pounds of carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas, into the atmosphere” (3). Pollution caused by carbon dioxide emissions drastically affect the environment and also the air we breathe. Ian Parry states in his article “Fueling Discontent,” “The pollution costs of using petrol are of two main kinds: damage to health from breathing in emissions such as carbon monoxide and assorted particulates, and broader damage to the environment through the contribution that burning petrol makes to global warming” (2). Carbon dioxide emissions also damage the environment. In order to prevent further damage to the earth, a cleaner and greener fuel must be developed.

Several alternative fuel solutions have been suggested to replace gasoline as America’s primary fuel source. For example, suggestions have been made to use ethanol--which can be produced from crops such as corn and sugarcane--as America’s primary fuel source. However, there are too many downsides to ethanol that make the substance just as unreliable as gasoline. Growing the amount of crops required to produce enough ethanol to satisfy America’s transportation needs would cause severe harm to America’s economy. Food prices in the country would skyrocket because of the amount of crops needed to produce the ethanol. America needs a fuel that is easy to produce and can satisfy American transportation needs.

Producing fuel from algae is the only alternative fuel solution that is capable of satisfying America’s needs. According to Elizabeth Svoboda’s article titled, “The Greenest Green Fuel,” “Algae has some important advantages over other oil-producing crops, like canola and soybeans. It can be grown in almost any enclosed space, it multiplies like gangbusters, and it requires very few inputs to flourish--mainly just sunlight, water, and

carbon dioxide” (1). During photosynthesis, algae create a vegetable oil that can be turned into biodiesel fuel, which can be used to power almost all diesel engines (Svoboda 1). Producing biodiesel fuel from algae is not only easy, but economically beneficial. America’s transportation needs are immense and the nation needs a fuel that can satisfy those needs. Algae easily accomplish the feat of satisfying the needs of America transportation. According to Elizabeth Svoboda’s article,

About 140 billion gallons of biodiesel fuel would be needed every year to replace all petroleum-based transportation fuel in the U.S.... algae could do the job in just 95 million acres of land. What’s more, it doesn’t need fertile soil to thrive. It grows in ponds, bags or tanks that can be just as easily set up in the desert-or next to a carbon dioxide spewing power plant.... (Svoboda 1)

The technology required to produce fuel from algae is minimal and can be set up in areas that would now be considered useless, such as the desert. America could put the unused desert land to good use by building algae fuel-producing facilities in the desert. Using the desert would optimize America’s land use as well as reserve the rest of America’s land for crop growing. The best way of producing fuel from algae was developed by scientists at the University of Ohio. The scientists developed a bioreactor which funnels sunlight into fiber-optic cables that carry the light to glow plates inside the reactor. The glow plates reflect the light onto platforms on which algae grows. Eventually, so much algae grows that the platform cannot support the weight of the algae, and the algae falls into a collection duct, which leads to a processing mechanism that extracts the vegetable oil used to make biodiesel fuel (“Old Clean Coal” 2). Facilities could be built that can house numerous bioreactors that produce algae fuel.

Building algae fuel-producing facilities would impact the economy and the environment extremely positively.

The benefits of algae fuel are numerous. If America begins to use algae fuel as its main fuel source, then the American economy would improve dramatically. America would no longer be dependent on purchasing foreign oil. America would be producing its own fuel and, therefore, would eliminate one of the biggest costs that the nation constantly suffers. Algae fuel-producing facilities can help reduce carbon dioxide emissions dramatically. Algae thrive off of consuming carbon dioxide. The article, “Old Clean Coal” states, “...instead of releasing the carbon dioxide produced by burning fossil fuels into the atmosphere, why not recapture it by photosynthesis? The result could then be turned into biodiesel” (“Old Clean Coal” 1). The algae fuel facilities would remove 75% of the carbon dioxide from power plants’ exhaust. Reducing carbon dioxide emissions would help prevent the harmful consequences of global warming, which in turn benefits the environment as a whole.

In order to reap the benefits of algae fuel, the American government must throw its full support behind the research and development of algae fuel (Breslau 3). The government must convince American society and automakers that gasoline-powered cars are more trouble than they are worth and that America must develop a much greener mindset (Markels 2). Automakers must begin to produce cars that can run off of algae fuel. The American consumer must have a much greener mindset; they should stop being so concerned about the size or model of their vehicle and be more concerned with helping the economy and the environment. Only with the support of the government, the public, and automakers can algae fuel become the solution it was destined to be.

Algae fuel will benefit not only the United States but also the earth. If the United States shows devotion to helping the planet by switching to algae fuel, then the other nations of the world will see how beneficial algae fuel is and want to use the fuel as well. Who could have thought that the world could be helped so much by just a little green slime?

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“Sex Education: Too Much or Not Enough?” – Finding the right way to approach a sensitive subject can be difficult, but this writer argues that educating young people about sex is more important than failing to give them the information they need to make the right decisions. The counterargument against abstinence-only arguments in this essay is excellent, and the sources this writer has chosen to support her argument have a good balance between being credible and interesting, while also being correctly documented in the text and on the Works Cited page. The essay deals with a controversy whose roots lie in the struggle between values and culture, and this writer offers a reasonable solution for dealing with that controversy.

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10 December 2007

Sex Education: Too Much or Not Enough?

In the past, the argument has been whether to provide sex education in schools. Now that the majority of society agrees that sex education should be offered, the question becomes, “Which program: abstinence-only or comprehensive sex education?” Our government has been a proponent and has financially supported an abstinence-only curriculum as evidenced by the Landmark Report of Congressman Henry Waxman (Smith). The abstinence-only curriculum encourages teens to “just say no” and save intercourse until they are married. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the comprehensive curriculum. This program focuses on educating adolescents, so if they choose to engage in sexual intercourse, they can make an informed, intelligent decision based on facts. By having a comprehensive sex education program in schools, teens could better understand the development of the human body, the proper way to practice safe sex, and the possible bad results of a physical, intimate relationship.

Those who believe in abstinence-only programs argue that if adults talk about sex openly, they are condoning intercourse before marriage. Furthermore, if teens are encouraged to discuss their bodies and heightened emotions, they may want to experiment and explore their newfound sexuality. Supporters of the abstinence-only curriculum have tried to prove that too much knowledge about sex actually leads to more sexual activity at a younger age. Heidi Bruggink in The Humanist says it perfectly:

Over the past decade, rather than being encouraged to make healthy and informed decisions, teens in the United States became dangerously deprived of important information about their own bodies. As the nation became the only country in the developed world to promote abstinence-only sex education programs, our rate of STDs and teen pregnancy exploded. (par. 4)

Trying to tell adolescents to always say “no” when it comes to their sexual feelings is unrealistic. The teenage human body is like a sports car with its new engine revving and ready to race around the next corner given the chance. You can’t turn off your mind and your body the way you can turn the key in the ignition and kill the power. David Landry says, “The principal problem of abstinence-only programs is that students who don’t adhere to that message are essentially lost and receive no information about how they can protect themselves, especially if the only information they receive about the effectiveness of contraceptives is negative” (qtd. in Shelton). On the other hand, the comprehensive sex curriculum can stress the importance of sexual well-being, provide insight into overall sexuality, and emphasize positive interpersonal relationships.

Sex is a huge part of the American culture. Turn on the television, go see a PG-13 movie, and chances are you will see some young teenage girl dressed provocatively trying to be popular and catch the hot, male jock. Tune into a popular radio station and listen to the lyrics of the top ten hits on a Saturday morning. Odds are you will soon be singing about “getting it on” and “sexy ladies.” Movies and music aren’t the only sources of media exposing young people to sex. James Steyer, co-founder of Common Sense Media, worries about how women are portrayed in video games: “You can get a blowjob from a prostitute in the back seat of a car in Grand Theft Auto. What does that tell you about sexuality?” he rages; “the studios shouldn’t be marketing that stuff to kids” (qtd. in Friedman).

Once a teenager makes the decision to have intercourse, the issue becomes how to do it safely and minimize the risks. Any responsible young person wants to avoid contracting a sexually transmitted disease, especially a terminal illness such as AIDS. “The public strongly supports giving young people accurate information about how to prevent pregnancy and HIV/AIDS and to stay healthy,” claims William Smith, a writer for The Women’s Health Activist. Research has proven time and again that condoms used consistently and correctly provide protection against getting or spreading a disease. Furthermore, there is no scientific study that proves that the availability of condoms results in earlier or more frequent sexual activity among teens (Elders).

Sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancies are major threats to young adults. In fact, “[t]here are more than 3 million STDs a year reported in those under 19 years of age” (Elders). According to the studies of Alexander McKay in The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, “close to 40,000 teens become pregnant each year and

most of these pregnancies are unintended.” Teenagers are prone to making their own decisions and are highly vulnerable to peer pressure. That is why it is so important to educate our young people about proper sexual health. At a minimum, adolescents should be provided with information on STD/AIDS prevention, reproduction, and birth control. It is important to note,

Abstinence-only is “catastrophe from a public-health point of view,” says Joshua Sparrow, assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and coauthor with T. Berry Braselton of the bestselling Touchpoints; “Aside from pregnancy, there are so many diseases that are quite preventable—chlamydia and herpes are on the rise. If kids who chose abstinence waver but do not have information on how to protect themselves, that is a recipe for a public-health nightmare that is entirely preventable.” (qtd. in Kelly)

The goal of sex education in public schools should be to provide teens with the information and skills necessary to avoid a negative sexual outcome. There are few members of society who believe that sex is a private matter and should not be dealt with on a public level. In The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, Alexander McKay states, “Since schools are the only formal educational institution to have meaningful contact with nearly every young person, they are in a unique position to provide...[teenagers] with the knowledge and skills they will need to make and act upon decisions that promote sexual health throughout their lives.”

Sexual health is a major, positive part of an individual’s overall health and well-being. We need to teach our kids to be honest about their feelings and to be very

conscious of their decisions when it comes to intimate, sexual relationships. If teens aren't given a good education, how can they possibly make good choices? Joycelyn Elders for the Greenhaven Press says it best: “[W]hat good is knowing math and science if you don't know how to protect yourself? The fact is, we invest more money in prisons than we do in schools. We're putting out a dragnet when we ought to be putting out a safety net.” By having a comprehensive sex education in schools, we can better educate the teens of today before the effect of a negative sexual experience occurs.

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SECTION 3:
LITERARY ANALYSIS

Writing Reader Responses to Literature

Writing about literature requires three basic skills: first, one must thoughtfully read and re-read a literary work for content, form, character development, theme, intent, and style; second, one must articulate clearly the effect which a work has on one's thoughts and feelings (likes/dislikes; inspiration/caution); third, a writer must back up all observations and judgments with illustrative quotations from the work.

We can approach writing about literature in the classroom through the rhetorical modes, say, for example, when we ask students to compare and contrast two characters or two settings or to map the process by which a character comes to a bitter end. We can also encourage students to write journals about the poems, stories, and essays we read in class, journals in which they analyze the work and offer personal comments about the way in which a character, situation, or event is relevant to their own lives. The difference between a journal and an essay will vary according to pedagogy, but many see the journal as a more personal form of writing where the essay adheres to more formal rules. One issue that arises in the classroom regarding journal writing involves the first person voice. Many students have been warned to never write in the first person when writing essays. The case may be made, however, for allowing the first person voice in journal writing, even though technically it is rarely unavoidable. Some instructors have found that students loosen up when allowed to write drafts in first person. The final draft can always be recast in third person, and transposition is a useful skill for development.

Journals about modern stories and biographical essays should allow the students to articulate the ways in which the characters, situation, setting, voice, or tone affect

them as readers. Many students put themselves in the shoes of individuals portrayed in compelling conflicts and predict how they would feel or act under those circumstances. Journals will also reflect themes such as social injustice, moral failure, and personal sacrifice from a personal perspective as well as an ideological one.

Journals about poems tend to be more analytical as to the deeper meanings beneath the poem's surface. It is good form to begin by describing the speaker in the poem and the apparent or implied situation. Then, analyzing from line to line, students engage the reader in the process of unfolding the images, word choices, even line breaks and punctuation.. Just as a good poem has an ending which feels like an "arrival," a student's journal about a poem can similarly seem to have gotten to a new place—a mental or emotional place which did not exist before studying the poem.

Quick Tips for Instructors:

1. Discussion of assigned reading in class should address the issue of writing about literature directly. The instructor can offer advice about how a student writer might quote physical descriptions of two characters to compare or contrast them.
2. Instructors can also guide students to look for "sympathetic" characters and voices in literature. It is often difficult for students to initially articulate the basis for their personal likes and dislikes, but pushing for clarity here is often the key to writing effective reader responses. Students must be encouraged to move beyond the simple "I don't like this poem" to the more complete statement, as yet unspoken: "I don't like this poem because the language makes me sad, or is off-putting." or "I don't like this story because the characters make bad choices that my friends would never make." The next step is to wonder why someone would write a sad or off-putting poem, or a negative-sounding story. At this point, we are talking about the writer's intent, or theme, or the audience for which the story/poem was written, the stuff of literary analysis.

“Response to ‘Doing Time in the Thirteenth Chair’” – This analysis of Scott Sanders’ short story “Doing Time in the Thirteenth Chair,” goes directly to the key question about whether justice is equally applied in our legal system. The writer establishes in the opening paragraph that the case of Bennie in “Doing Time in the Thirteenth Chair” answers this question in an alarming way. The writer organizes a sympathetic analysis to support his thesis that Bennie doesn’t deserve his verdict or his sentence. The writer includes thorough detail to support his points, and his use of the first person creates a strong voice that advocates for a closer examination of our justice system through the example of Bennie.

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19 October 2007

Response to “Doing Time in the Thirteenth Chair”

In Scott Sanders’ “Doing Time in the Thirteenth Chair,” we’re introduced to several characters, but none as sympathetic as Bennie. Imagine everything you do on a regular basis, from getting up early in the morning and working all day long to going home at night to relax and be with your loved ones. Now imagine all of those things you do daily are gone, that when you wake up now it’s to the clunking sound of your cell door opening to be served a cold and tasteless breakfast. It can happen to anyone, and it has happened to Bennie. Is it a fair judicial system that the people of the United States of America live under, or is it a far cry from the proper track that fellow Americans would like to see us on? The justice system in our country is based on rules and regulations that are supposed to be concrete and unyielding for everyone, but if this is true, then why does it seem that the police don’t have to always follow the protocols set out before them, such as in Bennie’s case. With multiple hardships in his past and errors

made repeatedly in his case, Bennie possibly doesn't deserve his verdict and definitely not his sentence.

Bennie's hardships are those that everyone dreads, from long hard work to past horrors creeping into our thought now and again, as well as the stress of daily life. Just trying to make it in the world seems hard enough for some people, in my opinion, but to have skeletons in your closet that you can't get rid of is even worse. Bennie has been with Rebecca for eight years, when not in jail, and has been raising her children from another man (or men) as his own throughout that time. He is working as a garbage man to try to make ends meet, coming home "smelling [of] other people's trash" (1137). He was drafted as a cook into the Army in 1968 and sent to Vietnam; shortly afterwards he was "transferred to the infantry" (1138) which is a high stress occupation to have in the Army, especially without proper training. "Artillery ruined [Bennie's] hearing, some of his buddies got shot up, [and] he learned to kill people" (1139), all of which turned him toward drugs to cope with his "constant terror" (1139). Ten years later (1981) after returning state-side, Bennie is still hooked on drugs to help him deal with the stress in his life and suppress the "[lifetime] worth of nightmares" (1141) he has accrued from Vietnam.

Guilty was Bennie's verdict, all of which was based on bad evidence, corrupt intelligence, and even worse assumptions. First impressions are misleading to most people, especially if a person's first sight of someone else is in a courtroom as a defendant. Bennie's appearance is described as his being a "squat, slit-eyed man, mid-thirties, stringy black hair parted in the middle, [and] a sparse black beard" (1131). The first appearance of Bennie, in my opinion, seems that he is a dirty bum that lacks

personal grooming skills and little care about his looks, life, or reputation. In fact, Bennie is a hard worker, a devoted father figure, and an ex-soldier for the U.S. Military. The evidence against him was “cocaine, hashish, [and white pills which were] barbiturates” (1134) that were given to the police by I90, a thief turned informant to keep out of jail for past discretions. I90’s brother even testifies that I90 is a cocaine user and drug dealer, but this is waved off due to I90’s brother’s mental incompetence to stand trial “on three [prior] occasions” (1136). There was also audio of the drug transaction according to “Officer B. [who] listened to the proceedings over the radio” (1138), but didn’t record the first “few minutes of the first buy” (1138) due to low batteries. Officer B. also destroyed evidence that could have exonerated or damned Bennie by “[erasing] the tape of the [first] buy” (1138) because he said “[police] policy is to reuse old cassettes”(1138). “The tape of the second buy [was] raw, indecipherable noise” (1138), showing once again no reliable, hard proof that a drug buy ever truly went on.

My personal opinion is that Bennie should have been found Not Guilty in this case although I believe him to be a drug use and, most likely, still dealing drugs. Certain things said by Scott, Bennie, and Rebecca all make me think this. Rebecca states that cocaine is “too expensive—it’ll run you seventy-five dollars a day” (1137), which makes me think, “How does she know the going rate on cocaine if she or Bennie weren’t selling it?” Scott states that Bennie’s thumbnails are “exceedingly long” (1139), which is a tell-tale sign of cocaine users; they use the long nail to scoop up cocaine to their nose instead of using a straw. Bennie flat-out says that “after the arrest, [it] forced him to go cold turkey on his dope” (1140), telling us that he has been using drugs the whole time and that Rebecca had lied earlier when she had said that “he’s clean, [and] he’s gone straight”

(1137). Despite all this, I still believe Bennie should have been found Not Guilty. In court, a person can only be found guilty if the proof is beyond the shadow of a doubt that the jurors unanimously feel that the accused is guilty of the crime by evidence, witnesses, and chronological factors. In Bennies case there were too many variables, or as Scott put it, “the facts are a mess, they are full of gaps, chuckholes, switchbacks, and dead ends” (1133).

I believe that the sentencing of Bennie is a far worse crime than anything he has done in his life. Although being a habitual offender and selling drugs in my opinion are horrible, the law is the guideline that every American has to follow, even if we don't like or agree with it, which is why I believe Bennie should have been found innocent and not sentenced at all. His sentence was “up to twenty-four years for the drug convictions, plus a mandatory thirty years for the habitual offender charge” (1143). Some of the jurors were devastated by hearing this from the judge, and Scott “swallowed carefully” (1143), letting us know that if they knew what the possible sentence was, that the jury panel might have voted differently. Remember that every decision you make in life can easily lead you down the wrong path, and sometimes even taking the right path can be wrong as well.

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