The Idea of an Essay, Volume 4: Sprouts, Shades, and Sunshine

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The Idea Of An Essay
Sprouts, Shades, and Sunshine
The Idea of an Essay: Volume Three

Sprouts, Shades, and Sunshine

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The Department of English, Literature, and Modern Languages

Our Mission

Hello from Cedarville University, and thank you for your interest in the Department of English, Literature, and Modern Languages. Our programs produce men and women who communicate effectively and think deeply, cross-culturally, and creatively about the ideas that have shaped and continue to shape our world.

Our mission is to challenge students to go beyond expectations. Henry David Thoreau once wrote that we hit only what we aim at and thus ought to aim at something high. We agree — aim high. Who will write the definitive scholarly treatment of Don DeLillo’s work? Who will share Christ by teaching English to migrant workers in west Michigan? Where is this generation’s C.S. Lewis or Flannery O’Connor? At Cedarville University, we want our students to aspire to such heights.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Instructor Biographies**... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... VIII

**2016 Composition Contest Winner**

First Place: Beansprouts and the Roots by JooHee Jung ........... 1
Second Place: Hughes Hue by Jean-Luc Schieferstein .......... 10
Third Place: The Promise of Sunshine by Allison White .......... 17

**Narrative and Memoir**

The Nature of Literacy *by Adam Rinehart* ..................... 22
The Creative Journey *by Michael Nuzzo* ....................... 25
Rebekah’s Story *by Nathan Shinabarger* ..................... 28
On Love *by Cat Clemons* ........................................ 37
Originality *by Peter Kennell* .................................... 41
My Journey to Know the Love of God *by Timothy Cannata* .... 50
Moved to Mourning *by Miranda Dyson* ....................... 56
Literacy Narrative *by Katelyn Whalen* ....................... 61
My 104,000-Dollar Summer *by Gregg Mendel* ................ 66
Falling in Love with a New Found Land *by Kyle Spencer* .. 70
Brick by Brick *by Matthew Beal* ............................... 75

**Analysis and Response**

Racism in the 1960s: America’s Great Failure
*by William Tomlinson* ........................................ 81
Nature’s Inspiration *by Kristen Cochran* ...................... 84
The Blessings of Pain *by Gregg Mendel* ..................... 87
Prices and Patriotism: Restoring Lost Value
*by Peter Kennell* ............................................. 92
Good Grief! *by Cat Clemons* .................................. 98
Is it Fair to be Fair *by Gregg Mendel* ...................... 102
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Education and Credentials

- M.A. in English and American Literature, University of Dayton
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- Sport coats
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- Complicated strategy board games
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Professor Mary McCulley joined the faculty of the Department of English, Literature, and Modern Languages in 2015. She grew up in Texas with four siblings and two godly, loving parents. The Lord saved me when I was around 8 years old and has called me to be actively involved in music and children’s ministries since I was young.

**Education and Credentials**
- ABD in English, Texas Christian University
- M.A. in Rhetoric and Composition, Texas State University
- B.A. in English, Texas State University

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Professor Messer taught several years in secondary education before joining the faculty at Cedarville in 1998. She teaches general composition and literature courses as well as methods courses for future English teachers. She currently serves as the program coordinator for the Adolescent and Young Adult Language Arts (AYALA) majors and is a key contact for questions concerning the English education program. She also serves as faculty advisor for *The Miracle*, Cedarville’s yearbook.

Education and Credentials

- M.A. in English, Wright State University
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Interests

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Professor Moore directs the University’s Writing Center, and in 2008, she received the Dean’s Service Award for her work. She is also the author of the poetry books, *Slipping Out of Bloom* and *Election Day*. Professor Moore has been nominated for the Best of the Net anthology and twice for the Pushcart Prize; she has also received the Editor’s Choice Award from Writecorner Press, the Rosine Offen Memorial Award from the Free Lunch Arts Alliance, and the Janet B. McCabe Poetry Prize from Ruminate. You can learn more about her work at www.julielmoore.com.

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Education and Credentials

- Ph.D. in Literature and Criticism, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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2017 Composition Contest Winnners
Beansprouts and the Roots

_JooHee Jung_

In the United States, football refers to the sport that involves tackling and throwing an oval ball by hand. In Britain, football refers to the sport that involves dribbling and kicking a round ball with the foot. Although the two countries use the same word, what they mean by that word is totally different. Likewise, the definition for the word health differs by culture across the globe.

Culture heavily influences one’s definition of health. Joyce Newman Giger is a registered nurse and the Lulu Woff Hassenplug Endowed Chair at the School of Nursing of University of California Los Angeles. In one of her books Transcultural Nursing: Assessment & Intervention, she explains how cultures around the world view health and illnesses differently. For example, many Mexican Americans define health as the equilibrium in the universe where forces of “hot,” “cold,” “wet,” and “dry” are balanced. Any imbalance among the four forces would lead to various illnesses. Mexican Americans also think that they can restore the equilibrium by eating certain food and completing certain practices. Many Mexican Americans also think that illnesses are a curse or punishment from God or a natural manifestation of old age; therefore, many elderly Hispanics do not seek any treatment (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008). This particular behavior of elderly Hispanics, ceasing to seek treatment for their illness, is the result of culturally-induced thoughts. Their culture has influenced them to think that illnesses result from old age. In an American viewpoint, this would be absurd. Why wouldn’t anyone who is ill seek medical treatment when it is available?

It is simply because Mexican Americans’ definition of health is different; therefore, their way of approaching disease and illnesses is also different. Through this, one can see how culture influences health. It explains why groups take part in certain practices that medical professionals don’t always understand. If nurses act upon the assumption that their approach to a disease corresponds with the Mexican Americans’ approach, they greatly risk upsetting them.
by crossing the line of what is culturally acceptable. Therefore it is important to approach a patient with a culturally sensitive mind. But, here is the twist. What if certain cultural practices or traditions put one’s health at risk? Though it is important to approach a patient with a culturally sensitive mind, nurses should help their patients to moderate and regulate cultural behaviors and culturally-induced assumptions that are harmful to health.

As a nursing student, I learn that it is important to be sensitive to my patient’s values and belief systems. I learn that my patient’s cultural background influences his or her way of coping with illness and diseases. Dr. Dawn Doutrich, an associate professor at Washington State College of Nursing, emphasizes the important of cultural proficiency in his article Identity, Ethics and Cultural Safety: Strategies for Change. “Nurses are committed,” he says, “to respect the patient’s autonomy, recognizing his or her freedom to contribute to the treatment process.” However, as much as it is important to understand the patient’s culture, it is crucial, first and foremost, to help the patient to become healthy again. In fact, nurses must prioritize the goal to restore the patient’s health above anything else. Though it is important to approach a patient with a culturally sensitive mind, nurses should help their patients to moderate and regulate cultural behaviors and culturally-induced thoughts that harm the patient’s health. I am not implying that culture is secondary in nature. In fact, it is an indispensable part in planning patient’s health care.

A culture revolves around the heart of an ethnic group. In fact, it is one of the most celebrated components of humanity. Culture refers to the cumulative reservoir of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies and religion that a large group of people came to adopt over time as something acceptable and customary (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Although culture is tacitly oriented, it speaks volumes of what a group of people believe and value. Culture not only encompasses a people group’s general beliefs and values but also revolves around the food and social atmosphere. For example, African Americans are particularly family-oriented because their ancestors valued family reliance. Family reliance and trust were what embraced and healed the wounds of the torment of slavery among them (Guada, 2012). The time of slavery shaped the way African Americans interact with...
one another and how they view and solve problems. Like this, people construct a sense of identity and belonging around their culture. Therefore, culture cannot be dealt with lightly. Likewise, Nurses should not passively overlook their patients’ culture. Otherwise, a condescending comment on a cultural practice will most likely come across as a great offense to those who identify with the culture. This is why it is so important to uphold each culture with respect and appreciation.

One component that makes a culture unique is its cultural practices and traditions. Practices and traditions usually embody an underlying meaning and certain values that a people group highly esteem. For example, in Filipino culture, when a young person encounters an elderly person, the younger one takes the right hand of the elder with his or her right hand and touches the back of the elders hand to his or her forehead. Though such a practice is a typical greeting, it also represents a sign of respect and an act of blessing towards the elderly. Other cultural practices may consist of the heavy usage of herbs in countries like China and Japan to promote health and long life.

However, rarely do people realize that there are cultural practices that put one’s health in serious risk. American Indians smoke for cultural reasons. Some South Koreans are forced to drink multiple times a week due to cultural pressure. Many Koreans put themselves in a greater risk of gastric cancer because it is normal for them to double dip their spoons into a communal soup. Hispanic parents consider a fat child as a healthy child so they overfeed their children even as toddlers, which results in obesity and causes multiple health issues in later years. Such practices and customs may appear to exist for legitimate reasons; however, they involve significant drawbacks concerning one’s health. But this is what they have been doing for all this time! What they do is what makes their culture! Yes, that is true. However, if those practices compromise one’s health, they are certainly problematic. Nurses must address the potential dangers that may arise from those practices.

Smoking is one of the habits that many people came to love and enjoy. However, the situation changes when smoking is practiced not for enjoyment, but for the sake of cultural conformity. Some American Indian populations integrate smoking into their culture. Dr. Felicia Schanche Hodge, a professor in the School of
Nursing and School of Public Health at the University of California at Los Angeles, studied the way American Indians viewed smoking. “The rituals of smoking at ceremonies and tribal functions were important to focus group members [American Indians],” says Dr. Felicia, “One participant stated, ‘Tobacco is used in a ceremonial way at funerals and wakes’”. This quote exemplifies how detrimental practices such as smoking do exist within a culture. Smoking has ever so deeply been rooted in their culture that it has influenced how young American Indians view smoking. Smoking has become one of the ways they identify with other American Indians who also smoke. They are now indifferent to the harmful impact that smoking has on their body (Hodge, 2006).

Such smoking practices among American Indian youths have put them into critical health problems. Research on the effects of smoking have proliferated over the past few decades and many observations conclude that regular smoking leads to lung cancer (Lee, Foley, & Coombs, 2012). Dr. Marcus Plescia, director of CDC’s Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, surveys the prevalence of lung cancer mortality rates among the American Indians in his article Lung Cancer Deaths among American Indians and Alaska Natives 1990-2009. The article reports that American Indians have relatively higher incidence of lung cancer when compared to the incidence among the general population of the United States. The wide use of tobacco has taken its toll on the American Indian population (Plescia, Henley, Pate, Underwood, & Rhodes, 2014). Should such a misfortune ensue? Although it is important to uphold the culture and respect the practice of smoking, it is necessary to weigh the detriments also. If the American Indian population does not find a way to moderate their tobacco usage, the ethnic group will wither away. Nurses should address the hazards of smoking, teaching and encouraging the American Indians to regulate it for the sake of maintaining health and preserving the Native American population.

Another example of a cultural practice that takes a toll on one’s health is the drinking culture in South Korea. As a Korean, I have heard countless stories and seen situations where excess alcohol intake has endangered a significant portion of the Korean population—especially in the business world. Business in Korea differs from businesses in other cultures because it is set up in an unspoken yet strict hierarchy. Maintaining a good reputation among
peers and especially elders contributes greatly to one’s business career. Presenting oneself as a socially competent businessperson improves one’s chance of achieving a higher position. A way to show that one is socially competent is through drinking etiquettes. As part of the businessman’s tradition, they go on meal outings every week. As part of the meal, they always order alcohol or beer. One of the drinking etiquettes is to finish whatever the elder pours in your cup over the course of the meal. If a businessman rejects the cup that an elderly colleague poured, he is doomed to be the victim of discrimination. In this case of rejection, he not only breaks the friendly atmosphere but also shames the one who offered the cup. Cultural peer pressure does not allow for an easy refusal. An anonymous businessman in Korea testifies, “It’s really hard to build relationships if you don’t drink.” Such fear of discrimination dictates the prevalence of drinking among Korean businessmen across the country.

Even throughout Korean history, fermented beer and alcohol dictated all social events. Alcoholic drinks were counted as an indispensable element of the table—especially the table of guests. The act of pouring liquor into another’s cup was a symbolic action of trust and friendship between the guest and the host. Such social drinking continued over time until today. In fact, an average Korean businessman partakes in social drinking at least once per week (Y. Kim OiSaeng, 2012). As a person who knows the Korean culture, I understand why it is so hard not to gulp that cup of liquor that an elderly offers. However, I also believe that it is necessary to persuade the Korean businessmen to limit their alcohol intake. I am not saying they should give up their culture nor am I renouncing their method of building friendships. But I do stand with a nurse’s viewpoint that regular alcohol consumption will result in complex health issues such as liver cancer. In fact, South Korea ranks the 11th of the world with the number of cases of liver cancer diagnosed per year (Chuang, Lee, Wu, Straif, & Hashibe, 2015). Maintaining one’s relationship with other businessmen is crucial for maintaining the job. However, at the end of the day, what matters—one’s health or the job? No businessmen can work with an IV needle stuck in his arm. Be healthy first, then the job can follow. When there is a disparity between one’s cultural practices and health, one’s physical well-being should take precedence over social well-being. However, at the same time, nurses must approach the cultural practice of
drinking with compassion and understanding.

Practicing cultural drinking is not the only factor that affects the health of South Koreans. The prevalence of double dipping at meal tables has increased the incidents of gastric cancer among the Korean population. It is a part of the Korean food culture to have many communal side dishes and soups. Although it is table etiquette not to dig deep and touch everything in the bowl, risk of Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) transmission is inevitable (M. S. Kim et al., 2013). H. pylori are bacteria that usually reside inside the human stomach and cause inflammation along the stomach lining. Many analyses indicate that such inflammation of the stomach leads to gastric cancer (Yeh, Goldie, Kuntz, & Ezzati, 2009). A common tactic that the bacteria use to enter one’s body is through saliva. By sharing saliva by double-dipping, one can transmit H. pylori to another person. It has been (or still is in some rural areas) part of the culture for families to share one big bowl of soup instead of having individual bowls. As a result, family members would double-dip their spoons into the soup, allowing their saliva to mix. Such cultural practice allows H. pylori to invade the stomach of other members of the family. Thus, this leaves the entire family vulnerable to gastric cancer. Such cultural meal practice explains why gastric cancer is so prevalent among the Korean population (Massarrat & Stolte, 2014). Hundreds of Koreans are diagnosed with gastric cancer every year. Medical bills soar. Families go into debt. This raises the question: is the cultural practice really worth the risk of gastric cancer plus the medical bills plus the debts? In this situation where cultural practices put one’s health at risk, the value of participating in such practices pales in comparison with maintaining one’s health. Despite this fact, however, nurses must strive to uphold the dignity of the culture while continuing to negotiate the possibility of moderating the practice.

Practices and traditions that have been continued for an extended period of time are very challenging to modify or even moderate. People’s judgment on what is healthy and unhealthy is heavily based upon cultural perceptions (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008; Leininger & McFarland, 2002). For example, in Hispanic cultures, people do not consider obesity as a health threat. In fact, Hispanic mothers believe that fat babies are healthy. Therefore, they feed their babies incessantly (Giger & Davidhizar, 2008). Little do parents
realize that obese babies are likely to become obese teenagers and adults (Garnicia, 2004). This explains the reason behind the shocking predominance of obesity among Hispanics. Richard S. Garcia testifies his struggle as a Mexican American pediatrician to correct Mexican mothers who come into his office with their obese child saying, “No come nada!” Meaning, the child “doesn’t eat anything!” “I disappoint them each time,” says Dr. Garcia, “all the more so because I’m Mexican American; I should not only understand but should agree with their anxieties.” What drives the Mexican American parents to constantly feed their children is the fear of malnutrition. Such fear is understandable in the context of culture; they do not want their children to go hungry. However, overfeeding one’s children has dire consequences. Children who are obese are at a greater risk of high blood pressure, which also puts them in a greater risk of other fatal diseases such as strokes and heart attacks in their adulthood. Dr. Garcia draws a clear line between culture and health. “The view that overweight babies are healthier babies is culturally imbedded, reinforced by friends, grandparents, and history... But I don’t agree with it...I try various strategies to convince the parents that their child doesn’t need more food.” Dr. Garcia exemplifies the ideal attitude that nurses must adopt. Although one may not agree with the client’s thoughts, just as Dr. Garcia did not agree with his own culture’s belief about health, nurses should never cease to address and communicate the discrepancy between cultural practices and optimal health to the client. After all, nurses are expected to provide the best care possible so that patients will regain their health. Therefore, they must rectify the misconstrued thoughts and behaviors even if they are culturally embedded. Uphold the culture; suppress the faulty practices. This is the balanced approach between the action of communicating the need for change while maintaining a considerate attitude towards the patients’ definition of health and culture.

It is the nurse’s job and obligation to look out for the patient’s best interest in the context of the patient’s culture. However, when cultural practices and traditions result in detrimental health effects, they do not take precedence over the proper health care provided by the nurse. Remember: Culture is not the problem. Behaviors construed from false premises are. At the same time, nurses should not ignore their clients’ cultural values and traditions, but try to
understand where those are coming from. Nurses must cultivate the eyes to see beyond the culture itself and detect the possible hazards from practices and traditions that underlie the culture. Address the behaviors, not the culture. Instruct the patient. Open their eyes to the perspective beyond their culture. Embrace and heal the person that is behind the façade named culture.

References


Hughes Hue

Jean-Luc Schieferstein

Langston Hughes was a peculiar man. He had strong, ideological regards for African-Americans and very little for much else. He rarely wrote of, or at least focused on, love, hope, and other ideals. Instead, his bent was politics for equality combined with African-American representation and portrayals. As one critic put it, Hughes’ work was “spaces worldwide in which we find avant-garde literary practices typically excluded from modernist studies for being too ‘transparent,’ too ‘realistic,’ too ‘ethnic,’ or too ‘political’—or simply for using languages other than English” (qtd. in Whalan). Hughes’ was a man born and refined in fire; shaped irrevocably by the times and key points in his life. Despite these, we see an individual who never lost sight of who he was, or aspired to be, even if he ultimately was short-sighted. To encounter Hughes first as an epoch invites us then to understand what fundamentally drove him and, finally, to evaluate what he has written alongside critics and Christian perspectives. In proposition of this personage of peculiarity, perhaps his short-sighted, crusader attitude was in effect a result of the one thing he lacked—love.

Hughes’ life plays out much like Moses of the biblical epic. Raised in an elevated stature of cushioned wealth, status, and education, he was not destined the same fate as many African-Americans of the time where segregation was rampant. One critic put it, “By birth he belonged to what Du Bois famously extolled as ‘the Talented Tenth’ the minuscule portion of Afro-America he expected to lead, and represent, the race” (Anderson). He, in effect, was raised as a “prince” with potential for privileged living. Yet, Hughes’ was not immune to the oppression as especially “in college he [Hughes] had felt the sting of racial inequality” (Rampersad, Rossel, and Fratantoro xix). Hughes decided not to turn a blind-eye. Interestingly though, Hughes took up neither the cause nor the mantle of those in whom he called, “my people” right away. By extent, he couldn’t relating “in a 1929 letter he admitted that almost
three years passed at Lincoln University, with its virtually all-black student body, before he felt comfortable facing black strangers” (xiv). Realizing that his affiliation with the culture left his own heritage lacking, he immersed himself—opting out of an otherwise Ivy League education. He even accomplished to set sail and travel to Africa, no doubt thinking he would be able to experience the authenticity of his ancestry and connect with what was essentially alien to him. Hughes, unlike Moses, did not experience this “exile” for quite the sum of forty years, but it evidentially shaped his writings of the late 1920s.

Enter in the rest of Langston Hughes’ life and career—an emboldened, youthful figure with the audacity as a waiter to drop “of a few sheets of his poetry” upon seeing prominent poet Vachel Lindsay “dining in the restaurant one night” (Zieger). Resultantly, this launched a career that permeated the next four decades as one of the forefront representatives of the Harlem Renaissance and arguably one of the most proliferate African-American writers of the century. Like the biblical figure Moses, he transformed himself from a “prince” raised amongst the oppressors and embraced his heritage to become the liberator, prophet, and law-giver through his prose, playwrights, and poetry.

If this then was the blaze of his life, then the kindling came from the quieter, more tragic moments of his younger years. Nothing gives better testimony to this than a chapter from his first autobiography titled “Salvation,” demonstrating that much of who Hughes was began when he was fairly young—notably, his antagonism toward Christianity, his love toward people, and his dysfunctional home-life.

First, “Salvation,” in its essence, is a recounting of child-Hughes and his rejection of Christianity. “And I hadn’t seen Jesus, and that now I didn’t believe there was a Jesus any more, since he didn’t come to help me” (Diyanni 264). Just as Jesus seemingly spurned Hughes, Hughes would spurn Christianity. Sadly, Hughes’ disinterest and sometimes outright antagonistic view of Christianity persisted throughout his career, and he remained ever secular with his written works.
Second, “Salvation” reveals an aspect of Hughes’ character that continued to remain a prominent, guiding force in his life. In the narrative, it was clear young Hughes cared for people with his concern of “holding everything up so long” and his tears “that I had deceived everybody in the church” (Diyanni 263-64). Hughes’ never ceased to invest in others, and his earnest passion for black equality was as real and hot as any—born from that same compassionate attitude presented in his twelve year-old self. Arnold Rampersad noted readily Hughes “love of people” throughout his life (Rampersad, Roessel, and Fratantoro xi). Margaret Walker would fondly recall, “Everybody seemed to know Langston, and he was laughing, smiling, cracking jokes as usual, and he was slapping the shoulder, shaking hands, and being greeted in turn.”

A final, third, particularly important element then that can be drawn from this narrative is that of Hughes’ home life—although it is merely a cliff-note. Notably, in recounting he lived with his aunt and uncle. Hughes did not have a stable living. Neither of his parents made themselves available throughout his childhood. He, instead, often went to live with relatives, in particular his grandmother who did not have the mental faculties or intellectual acuity to attend to young-Hughes psychological development (Rampersad, Roessel, and Fratantoro xi). What she did have was books, and this is considered one of the key instances that set Hughes on his path to literacy. However, it is to be wondered what books Hughes read, and whether they could ever offer that same love, if any kind of love, as would have two parents singularly, persistently invested in his life. It is not surprising then that he very likely resented both of his parents—without question his father, but possibly his mother as well. Rampersad very poignantly speculates to this reality, “[Hughes] perhaps hated her [his mother], just as he hated his father” (xxiv).

The branding of disregard did not end though with the escape of adulthood. After Hughes had the audacity and boldness to present some of his poetry to Vachel Lindsay, it effectively kicked off his career, and earned him what would be his one and only patron. The lady’s name was Mrs. Charlotte Mason, known as “Godmother,” and she treated him abundantly well, “lavish[ing] money, praise, and what seemed like love on Langston” (xxiv). Then, for reasons still unknown, she broke off ties with Hughes. Hughes reaction to this was nothing short of depression as “he became violently ill”
with many dark writings preserved and addressed to his patroness (xxiv). Accordingly, there exists past this point no further record, letter, or recounting of any singular individual to ever effect Langston Hughes so deeply. It is curious to mention, and perhaps important to note, he is never known to take a lover, marry, or court any woman (Anderson). While speculation may abound concerning the implications of his previous fraught paternal relationships, and otherwise non-existent ones, it is no doubt they took their toll.

What has blossomed then is a man who knows rejection, and so cares for the dejected; those seemingly despised he takes up their cause and becomes their advocate. This advocacy for African-Americans became the parliament of his life. Where before he extolled the virtue of the African-American, now he demanded their recognition. Yet, bound to this only cause, he often failed to consider the bigger implications in his sole effort to establish and legitimize African-Americans.

This demonstrates itself during the middling part of his writing career. Hughes, who now was an established writer, became a large, vocal proponent of communism. This involvement fluctuated going from the spokesperson for Communist Party affiliates to eventually bowing out as it negatively impacted his readership; then coming to a head again when he was investigated by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, in effect, meant to persecute communist sympathizers in the U.S. All that was known initially concerning the outcome of this trial on Hughes’ part was public denunciation of communism, years later records revealed that in a private recess with government officials he passionately defended communism, “lecturing the subcommittee” before being reprimanded (Whalan). What made Hughes recant was a trumped-up threatening charge of perjury for advocating communism while stating under oath he was not a communist.

This is an excellent case of Hughes desire for African-Americans blinding him from thinking critically. This isn’t to say that purely because Hughes supported communism that he was short-sighted, rather that it was only a means to an end for him, stating, “I never read the theoretical books of socialism or communism . . . [but my views were] largely emotional and born out of my own need.” Fundamentally, he saw it from only one angle: It ensured that everyone, whites and blacks, were on equal terms of
influence and position.

Aside then from his political bent, other areas that drew criticism in Hughes’ works and life were primarily his style of writing and the way it reflected his view of African-Americans. In a very telling way, Langston Hughes recounts African-Americans development of prominence in poetry by subtly hinting at his own views in “200 Years of Negro Poetry,” pointing out the Black Muslims and African Nationalists being “exceptions” and inserting his own patriotic poem “I Too Am American” (94, 95). This is furthered by his analysis that it is almost inescapable to be black and not write racially, of which he suggests as only proper (95). What can be gleaned here is that he values the unique culture that has developed and wishes to assimilate neither an entirely white culture nor native African culture. Hughes believed entirely in an authentic one-hundred percent African and one-hundred percent American persona.

Hughes also made himself clear in another way, and that was with his poem “Crowns and Garlands.” In this poem Hughes was critical of fellow African-Americans that relied too heavily on black celebrities rather than taking arms up themselves. He himself elevated the individual African-American in much of his works through his characters and “simple and easy” language, which “surely no poet has ever appealed to any wider spectrum of readers” (Dace). Altogether these were the areas that drew the biggest ire from his contemporaneous critics, as well as the praise.

It has been observed in retrospect as well, Hughes often balanced as if on a tightrope a mediating position between extreme views on how African-Americans should produce works of art, either as protest or pure expression [McLaren xi]. Fundamentally, it displayed Hughes’ dogma, those personally developed views for African-Americans, which were his greatest charm and perhaps his singularly greatest weakness. As already pointed out, this tunnel-vision view came to head with his advocacy for communism. Conversely, one has to wonder what Hughes’ skipped out on entirely because he didn’t feel it met his idealized view of African-Americans. In one respect, this solidifying of a distinct African-American personage has greatly enriched and shaped a multitude of African-Americans. Yet, at the same time, it has made the racial identity more than skin-deep and can be observed in its own evolution as part of the reason why such discrimination and stigmatism still exists.
By encouraging and indicating a necessitating of racially inspired works and way of life, he inhibited integration and promoted a culturally-based segregation.

Looking then on Hughes’ life and works, we see a reality—a worldview—that is fraught with inconsistencies and obstinacies. In rejecting the Biblical model that provides the framework for an upstanding individual, he substitutes it with his own. In effect, he promotes a black supremacy, curiously portrayed through his famous character “Simple,” who professes if “colored people” had been in the Garden where Adam and Eve were tempted, they wouldn’t have been tempted (Hughes 25).

Langston Hughes was a man motivated to love those same people he felt, like himself, went so unloved. The tragedy of it all then is that Hughes never really had or could love, because “God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn. 4:16 ESV). In rejecting God, he had rejected love, and all he could offer was a counterfeit. Yet, Hughes’ has no way of truly harmonizing—and thus realizing and appreciating—diversity; however, for the Christian we know, “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function” (Rom. 12:4). He has no way of promoting equality, yet for the Christian, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). He, instead, is floundering and drowning, drawing on only what little experience of life he has to go on with nothing so much as empirical or authoritative to show. Langston Hughes was an amazing writer, a compassionate individual, and remarkable figure, but perhaps in more than one way that great criticism is true, “Every time I read Langston Hughes I am amazed by his genuine gifts—and depressed that he has done so little with them” (qtd. in Whalan).

Works Cited


The Promise of Sunshine

Allison White

New beginnings are never easy. The silent ache creeps in, past all hopeful wishes, kicking them out of sight, out of mind. My mind was crammed with thoughts, possibilities available to me as I started over in this new city. The possibility of friendship, which should have been exciting, just made my stomach churn. I craved the new relationships, yet the fear of rejection overwhelmed me, leaving behind an aching in my chest. My family had moved permanently to sunny California only sixteen hours ago, from my childhood home in Puyallup, Washington. I sat in the cramped school bus on my way to a weekend retreat with a bunch of girls I had just met from my new church in Santa Clarita, California.

I pulled at the bottom of my pink and black swim top. It was so out of style with its high neckline and busy, paisley pattern, but I had never needed a swimsuit in Washington. I hadn’t had time to buy a new swimsuit for the retreat. My mom forced me to go, thinking it would be a good opportunity to make new friends.

“Don’t worry Allison, most of these girls have been friends since kindergarten but I am sure they are all very nice,” she said as she handed me my beach towel. “You’ll become friends in no time.”

I frowned. Yeah right, I thought to myself, but I tried to seem enthusiastic so my mom would not worry.

A squeal of laughter broke out behind me, jerking me back from my melancholy thoughts. The bus was loud with conversations about the Dodgers’ next big game and what new trend was hot for the summer. I had been able to tune out the dull roar of conversations that I was not a part of and immersed myself in my own thoughts. I looked tentatively over at the girls in the seat across from me. One girl with flat, brown hair and large, droopy green eyes was sitting with her back up against the window, talking. Her face lit up with animation that comes from telling a really good story. Jana, I thought, I think someone said that’s her name. I felt that ache in my chest again. I thought for a brief moment about scooting over and trying to introduce myself, but I was sure they wouldn’t welcome the new girl into their conversation. My stomach churned at the thought. Why was it so hard to be friendly?
I turned slowly back toward the half opened window. The sun was shining down on my pale skin, but I shivered inside. I looked up at it wondering how I could feel so cold inside despite the beautiful California day. Everything looked so different. I longed for the damp chill of the Washington rain. Everything seemed constant there, familiar and comfortable. I missed the beautiful snowcapped mountain, towering behind the refreshing evergreen trees, and the dull, gray sky that seemed depressing yet somehow comforting. I took a deep breath and immediately wrinkled my nose. How different the smell of salt and sunshine was to my spinning mind. It wasn’t unpleasant, just different. I closed my eyes, imagining the crisp, misty air of the mountains, now so far away from me. The giggling from the girls sent my thoughts into the past. The face of my best friend Hannah appeared in my already jumbled up mind. The thought of her crooked, goofy smile, brought a meager smile to my face. I was grasping at straws, I pleaded with my brain, Please, Please, send me anything to make me happy. Instead I was launched back into a bittersweet moment.

The last day of 6th grade was my final day in Washington before the big move to California. I wanted to savor this last day with my chummy classmates; we had all become close throughout the year. “School’s out!” one of the boys yelled and the room erupted with excited shouts. In no time, every seat was empty, every seat but mine. I looked around the sage green room. My classmates’ artwork hung on the walls: every picture showed an individual personality. I admired them, even the unappealing, unimaginative pieces that were just created to receive a decent grade. My heart sank. Leaving this room meant that my life was changing, things would never be the same. I heard rushed footsteps. Suddenly Hannah burst through the door and tried desperately to catch her breath.

Between gasps of air she sputtered, “I was afraid you were already gone!”

She reached into the pocket of her torn navy hoodie she always wore and pulled out a note with the name “Allie-sun” scrawled on it in sloppy handwriting.

“Don’t open it until you are at your new house in Cali,” she blurted out. “I’m gonna miss you more than I would miss air, or something.”

I smiled and threw my arms around her. “I have something for you too,” I said as I pulled a plastic bag out of my backpack. The bag crinkled as I stuck my hand in and pulled out a bracelet made out of red, orange, and green embroidery floss.
“I know these are your favorite colors,” I explained as she touched the tiny beads that were woven into the bracelet. “I made these so you never forget me. I have one too!”

I held up my wrist and showed her the bracelet of the same colors that was tied tight across my wrist.

“I’ll never forget you”, she murmured with a serious look in her usually dancing eyes.

She hugged me again and whispered, “best friends forever?”

I felt a lump in my throat. “Best friends forever,” I replied as a tear rolled down the side of my nose.

I shifted on the uncomfortable, springy bus seat, as the memory faded away. One single tear escaped my eye and raced down my cheek. I quickly wiped it away, but one after another the tears rushed from my eyes.

The girl in the seat across the aisle from me whispered to Jana, “she is so weird! She hasn’t said a word since we left the church.”

My heart stung like it was pierced with a thousand icy needles. I felt hopeless and frozen in my seat. I had never been able to become friends with girls easily. What was wrong with me? I tugged at the friendship bracelet on my arm. I turned away to face the window. The palm trees were racing by; they were blurry spots of green in my already fuzzy vision from all the tears. I pulled harder at the bracelet on my wrist as the pang of loneliness throbbed in my chest, leaving a slight red mark. I tried to concentrate on the landscape rolling by. All I wanted was to forget the ache; I wanted to be numb.

The brightly colored houses made my heart feel light for a few moments. How strange the houses looked near the California beaches: so welcoming, so snug. The passing cars whizzed by, everyone in California seemed to be in a hurry. The pain was back; I missed the quiet, private woods behind my house. I looked down and discovered that I had absentmindedly pulled the friendship bracelet into my skin. Someone please care, can’t you see I’m hurting? My mind screamed. My wrist throbbed and started to bleed slightly. I didn’t care. All I wanted was the friendship I craved. The bitterness welled up inside me like a storm and I pulled so hard on the thin bracelet that it snapped. I clutched the ruined bracelet in my shaking hand so hard my fingers turned white. I tried to control my tears, to calm my racing heart, and gather my jumbled thoughts. You are bigger than this, I thought. Bitterness won’t do you any good. It was time to let go, to move on through the icy ache in my chest. I was tired of hurting. A voice whispered in the back of my mind, friendship has to start somewhere. I gently traced my finger
along the beautiful, ruined bracelet. I realized focusing on sweet, old friendships could take my eyes away from the bright horizon of vivid, new relationships. I looked at the half open window and up at the blue sky and white, puffy clouds. A calming sensation seemed to float down through the sun’s rays and fell on my face. Taking one last longing look at the ripped bracelet in my hand and tossed it out the window. I wiped the tears from my cheeks and laid my throbbing head against the window.

The bus rattled along, shaking my entire tired body. A girl bounced down on the empty seat next to me.

“Have you ever been to Oceanside?” she asked, giving me a huge brace covered smile.

“No, I just moved to Santa Clarita yesterday” I stammered, pushing my hair back from my face and quickly wiping away the trace of tears from my cheeks.

She looked at me with her wide, brown eyes.

“What? No wonder I’ve never seen you before, I’m Jasmine”, she tossed her thick brown hair over her shoulder and stuck out her hand.

I shook her hand, hoping she didn’t notice the red ring around my wrist where the bracelet had been. “My name is Allison” I said shyly.

Her blue and white striped swimsuit humorously clashed with her green and yellow plaid-patterned shorts.

“I’ve never met an Allison before, I already like you!” she said, my heart leaped in my chest and I smiled at her.

Why is she being so nice to me? My gaze drifted toward Jana as the group of girls in the seats around her giggled at her story. I felt my smile fade.

Jasmine put her hand on my shoulder, “Just ignore them. They don’t like anyone who’s not exactly like them.” She rolled her eyes, “That’s why they don’t want to be friends with me. My friends call me Jazzy. Please! Call me Jazzy”.

Jazzy pushed her bag under the seat in front of her as if to assure me that she was there to stay. My eyes went back to the window, up towards the lemon sun and didn’t try to hide the smile that stole its way on to my lips. I couldn’t help but hope this promise of friendship would last for more than this moment.
Narrative & Memoir
The Nature of Literacy

Adam Rinehart

It is a beautiful spring day, and outside the birds are chirping, the sun is shining, and the trees sway in the wind. Enviously, I stare out of my bedroom window at my favorite climbing tree. If only I could focus on the task at hand. If only I could experience the freedom I feel when I am connected with the great outdoors: being near the birds, feeling the sun on my shoulders, my face staring into the wind. This is what I live for. But here I am, painstakingly completing my homeschool assignments for the day. I glance around my bedroom, admiring the loft that my father built for me and the miscellaneous objects organized into neat little rows on my shelves. Just downstairs, my sister practices piano and I hear her sigh in frustration at the mistakes she makes. On this day, I am searching for a reason to care about what I am learning, and searching for a reason to stay trapped inside on this beautiful spring day. My nine-year-old body bounds down the beautiful, Victorian-style spiral staircase and I race into the kitchen to find out what I get to eat for lunch.

“Mom, what’s for lunch? I’m starving,” I say. Without missing a beat, my mother responds, “Adam, it is insensitive for you to say that you’re starving, you don’t actually know what it feels like to starve. Have you finished your schoolwork for the day?” “Kind of…,” I say. “Can I go outside?” “Not until you finish your schoolwork and do your chores,” she says.

Reluctantly, I exit the kitchen and return to my room, unmotivated and distracted. If I can get through the next few hours and be relatively undistracted, I can finally taste the freedom of the outdoors. I lay down and pick up the big, heavy book on Greek Mythology. I sigh. Why do I have to learn about Zeus, the god of thunder, on the most beautiful, sunny day of the week? Life is so hard.

An hour later, I hear a car door slam and I race down the stairs just in time to greet my dad as he walks in the house.
“Daddy!” I exclaim. “Hey there, Son. I have something that I think you will enjoy reading,” he says. He hands me an old, brittle book entitled *Tom Sawyer* by Samuel Clemens. In my nine-year-old eyes, it looks to be at least 200 years old. I take the book from him, “thanks Dad, maybe I’ll get around to it sometime.” After surviving my homework and chores, I finally have my chance to go outside. As I exit the back door, I am quickly re-acquainted with the joys of nature. Immediately, I dash over to the neighbor’s house to get my friend, Braxton. Braxton and I do everything together; from playing “spies”, to catching bugs, to climbing trees. After getting his mom’s permission, Braxton’s small, slim figure runs out of the house, ready for adventure. With barely two acres of property between the two houses, we certainly know how to keep ourselves occupied. Today, Braxton (as usual) wants to catch bugs; however, this is going to require some negotiation, because I am dying to climb our favorite tree. “Okay, how about we catch bugs for thirty minutes, but then let’s go climb the tree,” I say. “Sounds good to me! Can we look for ants first?” he says. “Yeah, let’s do it,” I reply. And so continues our adventure: the demise of countless insects, and a trip above the ground in the safety of sturdy limbs and leafy branches. This is the place where I do not have a care in the world. I don’t have to think about my daily homework or tasks; instead, I just sit and focus on the nature around me.

The time comes when we must both go our separate ways, and I reluctantly return to the confines of the indoors, where my entire family seems to happily co-exist in the world of knowledge and education. After dinner, my three sisters and I do the dishes and then play a board game with our parents; however, as soon as the game ends, my sisters and parents return to their various books of adventure, mystery, and theology. Now I am left to my own devices. Unlike most of my friends, I do not own video games, and my family does not have television. Not owning video games gives my family more time to spend together; often times, my mom or dad read to all four of us before bed. I enjoy these times, but tonight we won’t be reading as a family. What should I do? To kill time, I go find the family dog, Ginger. Ginger is a medium-sized, short-haired dog, and her fur is golden-yellow and white. Naturally, she’s sleeping…she’s
so lazy. I gently rouse her; she opens her eyes, licks her lips with her long, pink tongue, and promptly returns to her nap. My last source of entertainment has failed me. It’s time to do something drastic.

Returning to my bedroom, I pick the “200-year-old” copy of Tom Sawyer. Sighing loudly, I begin reading. “This book is such a drag,” I think to myself.

Twenty minutes later I am totally engrossed in the wonderful story called Tom Sawyer. I am reading about a young boy named Tom, and he is just like me! Tom is the very definition of adventure: he sneaks out at night, he runs away to an island, and searches for buried treasure. This is the first book I have read that I truly connect with and understand. This is almost as good as playing outside. Somehow, I feel like reading this book is helping me connect with nature in a subtle, yet effective way. Perhaps I don’t necessarily have to be outside to experience nature.

Two weeks later, I read the last word with deep satisfaction, knowing that I have gained something that cannot be gained any other way. Reading can help me understand and appreciate the world in a way I never imagined. Reading is almost as beautiful as experiencing nature itself. Reading makes the world around me more tangible. The best part is that it is right at my fingertips whenever I want it. I don’t have to wait for a beautiful, sunny day because all I have to do is open a book and discover a wealth of adventure, mystery, and knowledge.

It’s a cold, winter day, and outside it is snowing and the wind is almost too cold to bear. I am sitting in my dorm room, surrounded by pictures of my friends and family, school supplies, and many books. My roommate brews coffee, and I willingly breathe in the pleasing aroma. Today, I am content to be inside. Today, I have much to learn. I don’t need a beautiful, sunny day to experience joy and satisfaction. I have the opportunity to learn about the world that God created through the beauty of literacy.
The Creativity Journey

Michael Nuzzo

Our plush couch is trying to swallow me. Its soft warmth is trying to trick my entire body into falling asleep. Any other time I would have given into this pleasure and let the world quietly slip away for an hour or two, but not tonight. I did not want to be here. Please don’t ask me a question… Don’t move, she might see me… If I don’t say anything, maybe she’ll give up… “Well,” Uh-oh, quick, think of something! “What did the hare do?” my mom asked. “Um, uh, well he, uh,” I stuttered. The room was dead quiet. I looked for an escape from this tortuous moment. The large windows which covered our entire wall, where perfect for daydreaming but would offer no such luxury this late at night. Instead of gazing into the large blue sky, or determining if those were cows or hay bales on the horizon, all I could see was the reflection of my mother staring at me, waiting for an answer. My mom has been trying to help me write this paper about The Tortoise and The Hare. I hadn’t started it, and, yes, it’s due tomorrow. She didn’t understand that I just can’t write. I always freeze. Every time I try to put my thoughts on paper, it is as if some evil villain locks the door that lets my creativity flow.

I always have a difficult time writing. Ever since I can remember, the emptiness of a blank page begs the impossible. To me, trying to write is no different than trying to solve a math problem without being given the problem statement. I am scared to write because I don’t want to answer incorrectly. But still, I want to write, I want to be successful. Will I be doomed to continually stare at my blank computer screen as the clock ticks, or can I break this cycle?

Our dim office was quiet. Not the kind of quiet you hear when you are nervous, but the quiet that comes with the relaxation after a perfectly completed task. The clock ticked quietly as a delicious aroma filled the air. My fingers were lightly touching the heavily used keyboard and my cheeks hurt from the joyous smile on my face. I looked at the small clock sitting on the windowsill to my left and thought to myself, “five-thirty, just in time for dinner.” I had
just finished writing my first poems. My eyes scanned each one meticulously for mistakes, even though I had already checked three times. “Spring”, “Summer”, “Fall”, and “Winter” were my “down to earth” poems. Each described with physical elements, such as temperature or the delightful smell of food. But there is one poem I can’t wait to show my teacher, “Space”. “Space is wide, space is deep, darkness all around…” this beginning of my poem shows how elementary it is, but that doesn’t matter, the page isn’t blank.

These poems were the first complete pieces I had written by myself. Creative writing, as they called it, was not easy for me. I could quickly spit out labs, research papers, or even the occasional bibliography because all I had to do was regurgitate learned information. Anytime when I had to think about feelings or, heaven forbid, make up my own story, I froze. My mom bought three or four different writing textbooks to help me improve my writing, but I was science and math oriented, according to society, it was expected that I would have trouble writing, and I fit the bill perfectly. When I finished these few short poems, I immediately called my mom into the room to display my first literary art. “I wrote them all by myself!” I proudly stated. She gave me a hug and told me how good they were. Her affirmation to my “masterpieces” sparked some confidence in me. I broke the cycle.

From then on, my writing became increasingly better. I wrote a ten page paper about the summer we demolished, moved, and rebuilt our barn; of course, this actually happened, so it was not too challenging. More impressively, I wrote a piece about the book, The Giver. The assignment was to take the open ending of this book and finish the story. I knew something had changed in my writing because I actually enjoyed this assignment. I actually enjoyed creative writing! I believe my reading habits had something to do with that.

Ever since I was little I loved to read. Like, absolutely LOVED to read. In my mind, I would become the characters the books were about. I was an extra friend that adventured to magical lands in the Magic Tree House, or a soldier marching into battle ready for the civil war. I was with the Pevensie children when they met Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, I was Digory Kirke venturing through early Narnia with Polly Plumber and my crazy uncle, I was Alex Rider.

Alex Rider was a super cool, sixteen year-old spy for the British
Secret Intelligence Service, MI6. Anthony Horowitz had redefined my identity by projecting me into his “Alex Rider” books. I don’t remember how I obtained the first book, but it didn’t matter, as soon as I read the first chapter of Stormbreaker, I was hooked. I devoured all nine of Alex’s missions as fast as I could. I felt the confusion when the Russian, Yassen, killed his loving uncle. I felt the adrenaline when Alex was chased by a shark into an underwater cave where he discovered the secret entrance to the fortress. I felt the depression that came with knowing his father used to be an assassin. And when tears stained his face with the death of his closest friend, my heart was broken. The Alex Rider series is one of the most memorable I’d ever read. He had the gadgets, he had the wit, and he had the adventurous life a young boy, like myself, dreamed of.

As I grew older and life became busier, I fell away from the books that inspired me to write creatively. Life told me that reading takes too much time and isn’t beneficial in the “real world”. As a result, I stopped writing. Just a couple of days ago I was assigned the book The Teacher Who Couldn’t Read. I put it off like it was a chore, I don’t have time to read, but once I read the first two chapters, I once more became that little boy who couldn’t put his books down.

I used to have a difficult time writing, but now, the emptiness of a blank page no longer begs the impossible, rather, it proposes a challenge. The challenge to let my creativity flow, to defeat the villain and take back the key to my imagination. I am no longer scared to write because I know there is no incorrect answer. I write, I read, and that little boy rejoices to be set free on every new adventure.
Rebekah’s Story

Nathan Shinabarger

I’m coming down the stairs, and I overhear my mom on the phone. “Ohh no..” I hear mom utter faintly, as if to herself.

She quickly hangs up and orders “Everybody in the car! Rebekah just stopped breathing.”

Ninety seconds later, I’m in the car with two of my five siblings and my mom, and we’re rushing down the driveway. We race down the county roads; the trees passing us in a blur of color, until we make it to the highway where our mom really lays on the gas. Mom issues an order to my brother.

“Noah, get my phone. Call daddy.”

Noah obeys and hands the phone off, but dad doesn’t pick up at first. Mom calls again, and he still doesn’t pick up. She knows better than to get upset right now, so she focuses on the road, and we keep rushing forward. When we come to the stoplight before the hospital the light is red but, mom rushes into the turn anyway, and grabs the nearest parking spot she sees. In a frantic rush, we arrive at the third floor – the Surgical Trauma Intensive Care Unit – uncomfortably familiar with the hallways and back stairways through the hospital. We burst through the unit doors, and are met by our younger sister, Elizabeth. She’d been staying with our second oldest sister, Rebekah, who was in critical condition. Yesterday the room had looked so nice, with countless gift baskets from caring friends, and cards expressing others’ prayers, but now we only see a medical team swarming around her bed. She’s lying there, unconscious, with a ventilator forcing air into her lungs. We watch anxiously from the sidelines as the medical staff run more tests on her. Families of friends gather outside, but we’re emotionally too wasted to see them. Our family alone together gets in a circle, and we cry and pray.

* * * *

Rebekah’s medical complications had begun about a month previously. I was in Thanksgiving day chapel and I had been planning
on leaving right after chapel to eat quickly and study, so I sat alone in the back. In the middle of worship, I felt my phone vibrating. I looked down and saw that my mom was calling. Typically, my mom had been very aware of chapel times, so to receive a call at that time was odd. I stepped outside into the coatrooms to take the call.

“Hello?”

“Hi, it’s Elizabeth. Mom really wants you to be praying. Rebekah’s still sick and is feeling awful. We’re taking her into the ER now, and mom’s afraid something is more seriously wrong with her. She’s crying and its a mess.”

I made a point to talk to Rebekah briefly, told her I loved her, and to hang in there because I had a gift for her when she could eat again. I talked to mom who feared Rebekah was having kidney failure or maybe even had Crohn’s Disease, but it’s wasn’t clear yet.

I hung up the phone, and my heart sank. God is a jealous God, a God who desires our all, and here I felt Him beginning to test what I treasured most. I was scared by what God might allow to bring me to fully rely on Him. I feared the worst.

I headed back into chapel, but a dark fear had settled on me. As I walked back into Chapel, I heard the song ‘Count Your Blessings’ beginning to play. The joyous music played as everyone enthusiastically sang along, but I stood in the back, frozen with a fear of what the future held. As I weakly tried to mouth the words, the song reached the chorus ‘count your blessings name them one by one...’ I felt hot tears burn down my face as my mind wandered, and I paused to name each of my siblings. I realized my biggest God-given blessings are people and they’re my siblings.

Noah and I returned home for Thanksgiving, and Rebekah was still sick. She’s had been feeling a bit better though, and wasn’t hospitalized. The doctors determined she had clostridium difficile (c-diff), and decided to run tests for Crohn’s. Overall, it looked like she was going to be sick for about another week and then start getting better. Despite the contact precautions, I hugged her goodbye, and headed back to Cedarville.

A week later I headed into finals week, and Rebekah still hadn’t gotten better. Near the end of finals, she was admitted to a hospital for sharp intestinal pain and they ran more tests. The tests
were inconclusive however, so the doctors continued to pin the pain on the c-diff.

After finals, we returned from Cedarville to Rebekah in a regular hospital unit, still awaiting test results, on a restricted diet. Shortly thereafter, they discovered that Rebekah had a bowel obstruction and after an exploratory surgery, determined that a part of her small intestine had constricted and died and would need to be removed. After the surgery, she seemed healthy for two days, but began having sharp intestinal pain again. Another exploratory surgery revealed what had just been healthy intestines had also died, and needed to be removed. Between surgeries, Rebekah’s blood pressure sharply dropped and she had to be resuscitated. To watch her more closely, she was moved to the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit.

In order to combat this unstable state, she was put on a sleeping medication that was supposed to sedate her for 24 hours. Shortly after surgery, our family began to wander around, and I stopped and asked if it’d be good to pray. To our amazement, we saw Rebekah’s face trying to move. The muscles were mostly suppressed, but she was trying to nod her head yes, so our family took the moment to pray. God had pushed me, and was testing me, but I knew he was still in control. Both of these surgeries were relatively simple operations, and promised a quick recovery.

After her intestinal surgeries however, Rebekah healed much slower than expected and was transferred to the Surgical Trauma Intensive Care Unit. After three exhausting days of poor recovery there, we received the chilling call, that she had stopped breathing and rushed to the hospital.

*   *   *   *   *

As we stand outside the hospital room waiting, our dad shows up, still in scrubs from his own surgery, and we receive the gritty detailed medical report of our sister’s condition. She had an unexplained neurological event, probably a seizure, which led the medical team to further investigation. She’s still suffering from seizure like brain activity, so the physicians put her into an induced coma. Her bowel is continuing to die, and now her liver is failing. It’s firm, indicating the enzymes that clean up the bloodstream aren’t filtering enough, and when the computer tries rendering a chart of her enzyme levels, the jagged lines go above what the computer can
even display. With a failing liver, the medical staff decide to check her lactic acid levels, and find them higher than they’ve seen in nearly any patients before, meaning Rebekah is probably sustaining permanent mental damage.

Our family walks together outside the large double doors of the unit, where we meet close friends and church family who have come to support us. We gather in a circle and pray, each prayer bringing tears, but building our hope and trust in our heavenly Father. We open the Word, and let it speak into our broken hearts, reading its eternal truths. Later, outside the unit, I sit to eat a cold vegetable stew some friends had brought, but I don’t feel particularly hungry. The food just rests unsettled in my stomach. I had always seen situations like this happening to others, but never believed they could happen to me. God however, can act through anything to draw us closer to Him.

Within the day, the medical staff decide Rebekah needs treatment at a more advanced medical facility, and decide to fly her to the Vanderbilt Medical Center. The days following prove to be an emotional rollercoaster with times of great promise, followed by times of desperate hopelessness. We drive to Nashville with dreary tired eyes, arrive at the hospital, and ride the elevator up to the eighth floor. We turn the corner, and see the waiting room where we’ll spend most of our time for the next few days. The stale air hangs heavily in the room, only accompanying the weighty feeling people are already bearing as they enter. The room has a nice window that allows light from the outside, but on this overcast day, the light seems gray, muted. The soft plinking of the gentle rain on the metal and windows outside is the physical representation of this storm our family has been fighting so long. Sometimes pouring, sometimes pausing, but usually slowly falling, continually, the storm not improving, generally getting worse. I breathe wearily, with countless days of stress and poor rest behind me, and untold amounts ahead. I unload my backpack next to a chair in the corner, though it could be any, they’re all empty. No other visitors come this time of year. I head out of the room towards the other end of the hall, through double doors and under an overhead sign reading Medical Intensive Care Unit. My mother meets my siblings and I wearing grief on her face, but trying to stay strong. She leads us with a slight degree of urgency around the unit to my Dad. He looks at us, and
hugs us all slowly, with a face bearing deep understanding of the medical situation, and its gravity. We gather all around as Dad gives us the medical briefing.

“They’re going to look at Rebekah’s gut and see how much they think is viable, and what can be saved. If there’s enough there, they think they can save her, but otherwise…” he swallows, “this is probably it.”

Our family slowly absorbs this truth over the next few minutes, suddenly realizing just how valuable these moments we have with our family are. We all gather around Rebekah, gazing into her still face, minds flashing back and remembering days when she was still moving, when her face still smiled. My siblings start pouring out apologies to Rebekah in the realization this may be a final moment with her, now deeply remorseful of all the moments we were selfish and put ourselves first. Our hearts break as we leave the room, allowing the surgeons to perform their assessment.

We head to the waiting room, and pray earnestly, asking ultimately for God’s glory, thanking Him for the family we have, and begging for His healing touch. Seemingly an eternity later, the doctor comes back from the bedside operation to report.

“We can’t make any guarantee, your daughter is in an extremely unstable condition, but we think there is enough viable gut there that we can work with it. It isn’t going to be a quick road to healing, but I think we can get there.”

Incredibly thankful, but also exhausted, my siblings and I head to the nearest hotel that evening to sleep. It’s a cool December night and as we go to bed, we realize it’s our eldest sister’s birthday. In two weeks, it’ll be Rebekah’s birthday. We pray she makes it until then, but more than anything else, we pray that God glorifies Himself in all that happens. That is all Rebekah would ever want, and God has brought us to a point where we can truly desire this too. Over the next two days, Rebekah’s health continues to fluctuate, until she unexpectedly has a stroke in her frontal lobe. For several days, our family and prayer network had been praying God would make it clear whether He was calling Rebekah home, or if she still had time to serve on earth. This stroke seemingly provides a clear answer, even if it is one that pains our family deeply. When the MRI results come back, they don’t show any medical cause of a stroke, which leads us to view the stroke as a clear movement of God’s hand.
The medical staff sustain hope for her recovery however, so after another long day, we head back to the hotel.

At 3AM, a shrill phone ring pierces the darkness of our hotel room. I glance at my screen, and it’s Dad calling.

“Hey” I answer.

Dad just says, “Rebekah isn’t doing well, you all should come in.”

“I’ll get everyone and we’ll be right there.”

I stumble to turn on the bathroom light, and announce “Rebekah’s crashing again, Dad says we need to come in.”

Rachel goes next door to wake our Aunt and Uncle, and we all grab sweaters and hop in the van. At this point, we’re all too emotionally weary and tired to even process what we’re going in for. We drive in silence, arrive, and with a hurried walk make our way through the hospital, straight into her room, where Dad explains the situation.

“Rebekah was doing okay, but really started crashing at 2:30 and never really pulled out. She isn’t doing well, her pressures are dropping, and they can’t medicate her any more because of her fluid levels. This might be it.”

We cry bitterly and cling to each other tightly, wishing for anything in the world to wake us up from this nightmare we are living, but we know nothing will. We grab Rebekah’s hands, bloated from liters of excess fluid and failing kidneys. Through teary eyes, we look at her still face, which once was so full of life. The doctor comes in, and proceeds to list a number of heroic measures that could be attempted. Dad talks with him and ensures him that we’re sure of her eternal destiny and that we will be reunited with her, and don’t need any heroic measures. The nurse turns off her medication sustaining an induced medical coma to make her somewhat conscious.

We pray. Dad’s voice is usually strong, his figure confidently leading the path. Today, his voice cracks, his confidence shattered, he breaks down in tears, crying out to our heavenly Father. With tightly gripped hands, we continue to pray. All hurt and wandering, we come to find our only rest in the perfect and holy character of God.

We read Psalm 139, Rebekah’s favorite Psalm. Its words provide both comfort, and pain, sadness and hope. More than anything, its words provide truth.

Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

Parts of the psalm are comforting, and remind us that we can never be separated from God’s presence. This brings even more comfort, knowing that Rebekah, in the midst of her failing health, even in the midst of a stroke, is not separated from God’s all present, all powerful, and all loving Spirit.

For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Other parts of the psalm are nostalgic, sweet, but in a bitter way. It talks of how God intimately formed Rebekah and of how mysterious life is. With such an awesome God, the one who knitted us together, it becomes a challenge to not struggle with why God doesn’t continue to hold her health together. It is clear that He can, for He formed her, but why doesn’t He?

in your book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.

The psalm pushes us to realize that even these hard days are not out of God’s control, but have long been in His plan. While to us this time comes completely unexpected, we realize that this comes as no surprise to God, for He is the one who has written this story. lead me in the way everlasting!

This ending line perhaps more than anything else is hard for our family. Ultimately, we all want God to lead us to everlasting life, but in this passing moment, our hearts strongly yearn for Rebekah to stay here on earth instead. As our dad reads it, his voice pauses, and he tries to push through without sounding weak, but inwardly we all feel weak.

We have hymnals with us, and sing Christmas carols at first, and then hymns. They encourage our hearts with truth. Sometimes we make it through a song with strength, other songs reduce our family to further tears. Our eyes all slowly watch Rebekah’s heart rate begin to fall. It started at 132, but off her medication, her pressures begin failing and her heart rate slowly declines.

Eventually, as we end a hymn, our family watches her heart
rate drop from 17, to 15 until a few beats later we see the dreaded flatline. No more induced breaths from the ventilator. No more songs to sing. No more time to spend with Rebekah. A sense of priceless loss enters the room, filling our hearts with the realization of all our fears and tearing our hearts with a deeper pain than we ever imagined. In the midst of this however one more thing resonates in the room, more strongly than the rest: God is in control, and we can trust Him.

Medical staff begin to enter the room, and Dad signs a few papers. We have the nurse take a picture to document the moment. We head back to the hotel, pack up, and begin heading home. It’s Christmas morning.

The drive home is long, but silent. Our family sits in a numbed shock, unable to know what even to say, what to think, what to even pray. I sit there for a time alone in my thoughts, and in the still drone of the road succumb to sleep after weeks of so little.

The next few days are filled with consoling phone calls, and planning for her funeral. Our family remains in this numbed shock, but as the planning continues, this shock slowly begins to wear off. The next few days, we greet hundreds of people impacted by Rebekah’s living reflection of Christ. That weekend, the funeral comes and we have a hard time fitting everyone within the church walls.

We sit numbly in the funeral, holding fast to God’s control. Rebekah’s death shook so much of my world. Places, sounds, smells, all ‘ruined’ with associative memory so strong that now they only bring pain. Indeed, there remains only one thing that Rebekah’s death did not shake: the power of my God. Despite my world crumbling and falling apart, God truly gave me strength to surrender fully to Him. My faith is tested through the fire of such a trial, but ultimately only strengthened.

The following weekend we drove to bury Rebekah. The day was bitterly cold, sharp wind racing across the plains of Ohio, and we huddled to stay warm as a friend delivered a gospel presentation. We place Rebekah in the earth, but only for a time. Truly the day will come with trumpet sound when Rebekah, and all those who have died in Christ will be risen again, in bodies untarnished by sin, free from the weight of the curse forever.

At first I didn’t understand how through death, God could silence a servant of His so great, who so boldly proclaimed His
gospel. Ultimately, we serve to glorify God right? How could God silence someone so clearly doing that? In God’s perfect sovereignty however, he did not silence Rebekah, but rather magnified her testimony. Through Rebekah’s death, people were able to witness a soul reliant on Him, even unto death. Not bitter, but overflowing with gratitude for the opportunity to serve such an awesome God. Rebekah’s death illustrated that when our lives have been lived wholly as a reflection of the gospel, our death speaks more loudly than our life ever could.
On Love

Cat Clemons

“I don’t know anymore. How are you?” He’s doing what he’s always done. Parry, block.

My fingertips absently trace the yellow swirls that decorate the couch I’m sitting on, but my mind is racing.

“I’m fine. Tired, I guess,” I say, anxious to get my brother back on topic. His voice is exhausted and despairing. I hesitate in pushing him any harder; his week was every bit as long as mine. Yet concern and curiosity drive me forward.

“Andrew, what’s going on?”

He sighs, his breath clogging up the speaker momentarily. “I don’t even know if Angie and I are still dating. In the past month, I’ve gotten three texts and two emails from her. We talked on the phone once, for half an hour.”

I press the phone to my ear harder, as if in doing so, I will wring the answers to life from its cordless existence. “You haven’t talked to Angie on the phone in a month?”

Some people have good families. I was blessed with a great family. In many ways, they have anchored me to the only normal parts of life I possess. They have surrounded me with love and smothered me with care—maybe too much at times. My siblings are the people I am closest to in this life. As the youngest, I was constantly in awe of everything they could do that I could not. It seems as if the first half of my life has been waiting until I was “old enough” to do what the big kids were doing—whether that was wandering out from our beach-house alone or playing in the cranberry bogs behind our little cottage.

Andrew, my oldest brother, has always been a demi-god to me. He could do no wrong; bold, adventurous, always pushing the limits, daring. I was his faithful cohort, and he was the leader of every exploit embarked upon. Unlike many older brothers, he never pushed me away as the annoying youngest sibling that I’m sure I was. He always had a special task for me, some sort of job that no
The Idea of an Essay: Volume 4

one else could do, something that made me feel useful and needed. He blocked my pain of being left out or left behind more times than I can remember. Parry, block.

I remember one afternoon when I was about ten years old at our family beach house in Massachusetts. My three older siblings and I had gone to dam up the entrance to a creek, preventing the coming tide. The plan was to hold the dam for as long as possible, and just as it broke, get into the water and be swept down the creek in the crash of salty waves. My parents, always concerned for my safety, had charged my oldest brother to watch over me. We had spent the day outside, our skin soaked with more than the sun, crab-fishing. In total, we had caught 107 large crabs by the time the tide tore through our dam. Cut off from reaching our cottage by the water, we had brought a rubber dinghy with us to cross the bay and reach the mainland. However, the dinghy could not fit all four of us and the 107 crabs we wanted to take back as spoils of the afternoon. Andrew, the ever-resourceful eldest, finally decided that I should sit in the dinghy while my three older siblings swam, propelling our vessel. This was a plan that kept me, his little charge, quite safe. That is, safe from the water, but not from the surplus of crabs, waving sharp claws at my fingers and bubbling fierce crab-threats, while scuttling around the dinghy to hide under my legs or scramble over the sides into the water. The trip to the mainland was uncomfortably long for me as I prodded crabs’ claws from my skin and scramble over my sibling’s hands, which were clinging to the side of the dinghy. Even in this wet, salty, and scuttling environment, my brother’s care for me was evident; he was in the water so that I didn’t have to be. Parry, block.

When I was about eight, I remember bursting into tears when my father briefly mentioned at bedtime that Andrew would not be around forever. While shaking my head at my childishness now, I can also understand my reaction. I have never lived in a world where Andrew has not been a huge part of it. The thought of living without him in my day to day life was harsh enough that my eight-year-old self was sure the world was coming to an end.

Sure enough, when I was eleven, Andrew left the family. He leapt out of the nest and into Life Action Ministries, a missionary team that travels the country for ten months of the year. For seven years, I had to get used to seeing my brother once in the summer and once
in the winter. After the fifth or sixth time I said goodbye, knowing I wouldn’t see him for months and months, I was finally able to speak through the tears to whisper a goodbye. But even after all the times I run at full speed down the train platform and am met with a hug from my hero, I have never successfully stopped the lump that forms in my throat. My friend, my leader, my brother, is home.

As I grew older, I came to recognize more and more traits Andrew had mastered. He kept the peace. He knew when to love and when to fight. When he spoke, Mom and Dad listened. When everything was going wrong at home, even though he was hundreds of miles away, he was the one who wrote me a long email saying how proud he was of me. He would call me randomly when I was at my wit’s end because God had placed me on his heart, and my big brother was faithful to heed the call. He parried with my pain, whittling it into the shadows. Parry, block. Parry, block.

Andrew clears his throat again over the phone, bringing me back to reality. I’m sitting in Cedarville University’s Health and Sciences Center. I can smell the chemicals that waft through the building. The seat is rough cotton and nylon beneath my restless fingertips. My brother is still on the phone that is now hot, clutched in my hand.

“No, we haven’t talked on the phone for a month.”

My mind spins. Andrew-- responsible, long-suffering, a man after God’s own heart-- is someone who isn’t trusted? The accusations piling up around him, laid there by Angie’s parents, are humiliating and insulting. Andrew and Angie’s relationship is perhaps the most monitored relationship I have ever seen. My brother rarely texts Angie and sends all complicated topics through email. If they were allowed to talk on the phone, it was for twenty minutes per week, and Angie’s mom had to be in the room to hear the whole conversation. The unrealistic expectations and regulations placed on the relationship were enough to make me livid; I didn’t know how my brother was able to keep his calm.

In my moment of anger and indignation, I could feel my chest physically aching for the emotional agony that my older brother was enduring. For months, the relationship had been on and off, both smooth sailing and a rickety rollercoaster, with little warning and barely any communication between each transition. Andrew never complained, but in the past few phone calls to me, his voice had been getting more and more worn through. He had been experiencing
severe depression and discouragement. The sudden lack of strength and confidence in his voice did more than just worry me; it frightened me. He had poured himself into God’s will for Angie and him; countless hours of prayer and counsel were behind him. The failure of the relationship would be a blow to many people, not just him.

“I’m so sorry, Andrew. That’s ridiculous. How can there even be a relationship where there is no communication?”

The answer: obvious. There cannot be.

I grab a piece of paper and a pen and write three words: “drip drip drip”. My heart is breaking and I don’t understand why. I feel guilty; this pain is not my pain, but borrowed wounds, I write. I’m sorry. I ache because I love. And I love you.

The phone call ends, and as I slowly take the phone away from my ear, a piece of my blurry life comes into sharp focus. The pain I feel isn’t wrong. Pain is what Andrew has always blocked for me; shielding me is how he loves me. The pain that tears through me like a knife now, separating my ribs and exposing my heart, is my clumsy attempt to block his pain; to love him in the way he has always loved me. I am willing to sit in a crab-filled dinghy to let him show his love, but I am more willing to get out of the boat and kick with him to show mine. Parried. Blocked.
Originality

Peter Kennell

I like to call myself an author, though I don’t really have any grounds for doing so, or any adjectives to attach to that definition. As far as “good,” “bad,” “boring,” or “interesting,” I’m just as happy to let other people decide what to attach if they call me an author. As one of those strange people who enjoy reading and writing about worlds which never existed to begin with, one of the things I value highly is originality, the ability to imagine and create something new rather than following the worn old path laid down by generations of others. However, I have struggled with originality from the moment I first picked up a pen and paper for one very simple reason. As King Solomon, one of the wisest men to ever walk this earth, stated so succinctly, “There is nothing new under the sun.

True to this principle, originality has always been something of a holy grail to the arts, an ideal always sought but never quite attained. After all, only God has the power to create something truly new. Nevertheless, authors have never stopped striving for this ideal, and I personally believe that the closest to achieving it one can come is when he finds a worthy idea as his quill, dips it deep into the well of his own imagination, experience, and understanding, and writes by the light of the Creator’s guiding star. Thus I seek to emulate this pattern. Though true originality is an unattainable goal, I still cling to the idea that there is always a way to make something more original, more unique to my own experience and understanding, than my previous work. Unfortunately, this idea is often extremely difficult to put into practice; in order to create works unique to my own experience and understanding, I have to first seek to understand myself. This task has proved nearly as impossible as achieving true originality. Nevertheless, in the process of pursuing it, I feel that I have grown both as a writer and as a person.

This journey has by no means been simple, nor was I quick to gain this insight. My aspiration to originality and ensuing search for self-understanding has been a lifelong struggle rife with failures and
setbacks that is only now beginning to see some small progress. In
order to really describe this process, I’ll have to turn back the pages
of time to my youth, when I learned to love to read.

My enjoyment of reading is central to my desire to write. After
all, why would I want to create something that I couldn’t enjoy?
Fortunately, I revel in a well-written book; the act of reading it is
so much more complex and subtle than watching even the most
expertly executed film. The use of language, layers of meaning, and
vivid descriptions reveal things about the characters, the setting,
and even the author that an image on a screen never could display.
However, given other circumstances, I might never have learned
that love.

My life through the end of high school could be described
as “isolated” in the truest sense of the word. I was separated from
the nearest other children my age by miles of rural countryside,
with no reliable contact with others beyond my own family and
no television, cell-phone, or other easy access to the outside world.
Some might consider this a dull and unenviable way to grow up; I
don’t. This isolation defined me, shaping me into the person I am
today. Without it, I most likely would have missed out on three
surpassingly amazing friends who shared a house and a childhood
with me. Besides, I might have been cut off from more typical and
modern forms of entertainment, but I had access to a vast library of
black ink on white and yellowing paper.

Though the library I mention could likely compete with many
smaller real libraries in number of books, it is not actually a library
but rather a farmhouse; I refer to the home where I grew up. Picture
for a moment a large, white house in the middle of the cornfields of
central Illinois. The house has grown over the years, much as the
crumbling palaces of ancient kings once did; parts of it are well over
a century old, while other parts have stood for less than a decade. I
could go on for hours about the cool shade of the maple and apple
trees, the gardens abloom with blazes of hue, the dim, musty old
barn and its empty loft, the aroma and flavor of fresh-baked cookies
in our grandmother’s kitchen next door, the dappled sunlight and
birdsong falling warmly through the branches of the trees and
entering my window, and the sleepy scent of the illuminated dust
motes floating by the windows on quiet afternoons, but none of that
is truly relevant at the moment. What matters are the books; our
house contained shelf after shelf of them. Nor were they restricted to
the shelves, spilling over into racks on the floor and onto the tables
and filling boxes. You could not walk into any room in my house
without seeing numerous books. One wall of my room was nearly
covered with bookshelves from floor to ceiling, and there were still
more elsewhere in the room. These books were as diverse as they
were numerous, ranging in topic from textbooks on metallurgy and
biology to children’s fiction, in age from the nineteenth century to
last year, and in complexity from War and Peace to the very most
elementary readers. There were books outlining art, literature,
history and society, as well as volumes of every genre of fiction
imaginable. These, together with my parents’ influence, set the stage
for my interest in reading.

My parents were actually the root of all the circumstances that
led me to enjoy reading. Their own love of reading gave rise to the
books in our house, which they had collected over the years. My
father, who can finish a six-hundred page novel in a single day, has
been especially involved in the assembly and consumption of those
books, though my mother is in no way exempt. Both of them strongly
encouraged me to read prolifically throughout my childhood. In
fact, one of the most powerful incentives for me to pick up a book
and eventually a pen as a child came indirectly from my father when
he would call us together and bring a story to life. His lively and
expressive manner of intonation would animate the worlds of the
stories in a way that brought out the subtle humor hidden on a page.
Thus my sisters and I would sit and listen and laugh at the ludicrous
notions of cowardly dragons and melting wizards, and revel in the
wit of Bilbo’s riddles, even as we took in the glorious descriptions,
the masterful words, and the sweeping unfolding plots laid out
before us by our father’s voice. Those stories became the fire that set
a great, rising wind under the wings of our imaginations.

That updraft whetted our appetite for more, and soon my sisters
and I were reading those books on our own, our minds transported
to faraway worlds where heroes fought and dragons danced the skies
even as we turned the pages of the books and filled in the pages of
our minds. Soon, just as hearing hadn’t been enough, simply reading
wasn’t enough anymore either. We wanted to create, to make dragons
dance and heroes fight against terrible evils, just like in the books we
read. Somehow, with childlike simplicity, we thought we could make
even better worlds than the ones in the stories.

This desire ushered in a long stage of our childhood in which my older sisters and I drew maps and argued back and forth, inventing and counter-inventing the lore and culture of imaginary worlds on the spot. We competed childishly to see who could make the best and most complicated world, sometimes even acting out the parts of the peoples living in the worlds we made. As we grew older, though, just talking about these worlds became somehow boring and empty. I think each of us was subconsciously reaching out, searching for something more.

I can’t point to the exact time we found that something; probably because it was there all along, and we simply needed a little insight to realize it. Whatever the case, my eldest sister was soon writing down stories and poems, giving her worlds a more tangible form. My second sister soon followed with stories of her own. I was a good deal slower, sitting back and watching my sisters write their stories while I still clung to the fabricated realities in my mind. One day, though, I got an idea stuck in my head that wouldn’t go away about a boy who receives a mysterious magical book as an anonymous gift. After several days of this idea nagging at the back of my mind, I relented and started writing; by the time I was finished, I had the first eight pages of a story. I continued to work on that story over time, and it grew into almost fifty pages of pure drivel before I finally discarded it as unsalvageable. That was my first failure, and looking back, I can see that the problem that killed it was a total lack of originality. At this point, I was basically just blindly imitating what I had seen. Even the original idea for the story was derived from another story I had read somewhere else.

Though that story was a total failure, it still held value in that it helped me learn the basics of what not to do. To write a good story, I couldn’t take an idea and forcibly graft stock plotline segments together on it to make a whole. Stories are like fruit trees in a way; you plant the seed, and they grow, slowly, naturally, but steadily. Depending on the work you put into them, they may eventually bear fruit, and the more care provided, the better the fruit brought forth. Using this analogy, my first tree was a lifeless mockery of the term; instead of letting it grow, I pieced together a motley assortment of dead wood from other trees and cut it off at the roots to graft on the unsightly thing I had made. Needless to say, I got no fruit as a result,
only experience.

Following that failure and others like it, I learned to grind the ideas up more finely, mix them more thoroughly, and paste them into the shape I wanted with linguistic varnish. Unfortunately, this form of “creative writing” was anything but creative; I was still just recycling other, greater authors’ work, parroting back the status quo I had seen so many times. The more I read, and the more I wrote, the more I was unable to avoid this fact. Time and time again, I came across plot devices I had used, characters far too similar to my own, and sometimes even the same names I had so carefully invented. Once, I told one of my sisters, “My stories are just a bunch of stolen ideas ground up and mashed together finely enough to be unrecognizable.” The gist of her reply was, “That’s what all stories are these days; all the new ideas were taken ages ago.” I clung to that idea. I told myself that it was fine to be unoriginal, because at least I wasn’t alone in it, and I lied to myself.

That lie became a roadblock, and my writing stagnated as I wore a rut walking up against it. If human originality can be defined as using the special properties and experiences God has given us to create something unique, this point was the lowest on my journey towards it; I churned out recycled ideas, pasting them uninventively into the pages of bland, mediocre prose, and tried not to be concerned with the emptiness flowing from inside me. The volume of my writing steadily dropped off as I began to lose interest in the stories I was “creating.” Eventually, however, the lie weakened. Though I began to neglect my pen, I never set aside my books; in their pages, I saw my own unoriginality reflected, but I also saw the authors’ own creativity, reflecting back my failings all the more. Their shining originality and the way it continually shed light on the blandness of my work created a nagging doubt within me, a remote spark piercing the shadows behind the wall I had built between myself and my true desire. That tiny light grew into a seething flame which slowly cut through the foundations of the barrier before me. As it collapsed, I was forced more and more to become honest with myself. Finally, I had no choice but to face the truth. I realized that I didn’t just want to forge sawdust tales; I wanted to write stories that moved people to think, to feel, and to aspire. I wanted to write meaningful stories that told stories of their own. I wanted stories that I could say I owned, not stories I just borrowed. I wanted my
creative writing to be truly creative, not just a formula, but an art. I wanted originality. Unfortunately, I hadn’t the faintest idea how to gain it.

Though I didn’t know how to achieve originality, I was able to recognize it and admire it. Therefore, I couldn’t help but envy and look up to authors like the apostle Paul, who could state the truth in such a boldly radical and original way, yet at the same time do so with such complex and subtle layers of meaning. In contrast, there was me, a boy whose skill fell far short of his vision. I sought to both entertain people and move them, and to show them through my work an ideal. This was clearly a horribly large goal for a little boy from outside a little town in a little corner of the country with little experience. Nevertheless, Paul, in his own inimitable fashion, reminds us time and time again that we are all imperfect and all equal before God. Therefore, even if I was imperfect, if there was a chance that I could create something that had worth and changed lives, was there any reason for me not to try? However, despite my resolve, I still couldn’t seem to write anything that I could call “mine.”

It turned out that Paul had the answer to my problem, and I just didn’t know it. Every beautiful word that Paul wrote was Inspired, breathed by God Himself as He carried Paul along and guided his thoughts. Paul’s originality was born from Inspiration flowing from the Original Source of all things. What I gained was nothing so majestic and holy, but I did eventually find inspiration of a far more worldly level, or rather, it found me.

By inspiration, I mean those tiny flashes of insight from a new and unique perspective that everyone has from time to time. Though these are highly unpredictable and seem to come and go as they please, I believe that it is one of a creative writer’s goals to harness these and convey them to his or her readers. I, at least, have never managed to write anything remotely worth reading without some inspiration. I can point to one specific instance in my life as the first time I experienced inspiration and recognized it for what it was.

This first flash of inspiration came suddenly and unexpectedly, as such flashes are wont to do. One day while my family was gathered around our dinner table, we were discussing authors, eventually coming to the topic of works published posthumously by authors’ families. One thing that we touched on rather heavily was the fact that many of these works were published against the authors’ own
wishes. I found myself wondering what kind of story might lie behind such circumstances. Why hadn’t the authors wanted those works published, and what drove their families to deny their wishes? In life, there’s a story behind everything you hear about, and every dry obituary you read in the paper is the period closing the sentence of someone’s earthly tale. At that time, I was dwelling on the story that lay behind the facts in such cases.

Suddenly, I had an idea. What if there was a compelling reason behind one such author’s desire? What if there was a book kept unpublished because its secrets were better left buried in a desk in a dusty empty room? And what if the act of publishing this book brought forth terrible vengeance? I followed the thread of this sudden flash of inspiration, and at the end I found a story.

After I left the table, I sat on our couch for a while, thinking this idea through and arranging my thoughts. Then I went to my room and began to write, but not the story on my mind; not yet. I wrote character descriptions, plot outlines, and ideas, and drew sketches and family trees. If I was going to do this, I was going to do it right.

Early in this planning process, I discovered that inspiration didn’t solve all of my problems, or even any of them; it simply opened a door. After all, inspiration doesn’t write books; authors do. Even when the Author of Life Inspired our forefathers to scribe His Word, He used the innate talents within them to shape it. No more was this story going to write itself. In order to give it life, I had to reach deep within and far without, drawing on my own experiences where I could, and relying on my knowledge and imagination where I could not. In this way, even as I shaped my work, I was shaped by it. As I drew on my experience, bits and pieces of me inevitably found their way into the characters, setting, and plot both intentionally and subconsciously. Viewing my family as of utmost importance apart from God himself led me to make familial relations the driving emotional force behind the plot, and elements of my relationships with my own family members manifested themselves in the relations between the characters. In order to do this similarity justice, I had to consider on an even deeper level how I felt about my family and how I would react in certain situations involving them. Other comparable parallels sprang up throughout the plans. Since I grew up in isolation, I placed the setting of the
story and its background in isolation as well in order to be better able to understand my characters, and in turn had to peer into the core of my being to identify the ways in which isolation had molded me. Aspects of my own personality found their way into the personalities of the characters; I was artistic and intellectual, therefore so was the protagonist. In this I had to strike a balance between creating my characters in my image and not making them into replicas of myself. They had to have a shadow of who I was within them so that I could associate with them in order to write their story, but at the same time, they needed to be their own unique selves, separate and different from my own nature, in order to truly come to life within the pages. After I had identified the ways in which they corresponded to and diverged from me, I had to look at myself and ask several difficult questions. What really matters to me? What motivates me? How do I feel about this topic? How would I react in this situation? What, in the end, really makes me who I am? Only when I answered these questions and many more like them could I start from the traits I had given my characters and have them answer the same questions through my work.

Planning that story was exhausting, time-consuming, and a powerful learning experience for me. Finally, though, I thought I was ready. I was wrong.

It turned out that the planning process had just been a pale shadow of what was to come. I had a full plan for the story before I set the first word down; by the end of the first chapter, it had changed to some extent. By the end of the third chapter, I had revised it significantly. By the end of the fifth chapter, I had discarded most of the second half and started over. Sometimes I would write entire chapters at a time, and others I would go for over a month without writing a single word. Even the end result was far from satisfactory. I was continually revising parts and even rewriting them altogether, trying to improve on the inherent flaws that were so obvious once I went back and looked them over. In addition, the story as a whole was rife with problems that couldn’t be easily fixed. By its very nature, it was slow-paced and reflective to an extent that made it difficult for people to enjoy it. As my mother said once after I gave her a part of it to read, “This is good, but there is an awful lot of small talk. Maybe you could try to make it more streamlined?” At the time, reluctant to change something I had already worked so hard on, I responded,
“All of this ‘small talk’ is actually necessary foreshadowing for later in the plot.” Of course, reviewing it later, I discovered that it was not. For all its failings, though, this story was undeniably mine. It was a tree that grew in its own right from my idea, with roots running deep into the soil of my experience, a far cry from the rootless sawdust tree-sculptures I had made before. Out of this story I gained a style and a tale that I could rightly call my own, at least far more so than what I had before. I had taken one small step, by the grace of God, towards originality.

In the two years since I started to write that story, I have found several more stories to call my own, but that one will always hold a special place inside of me. It is about two-thirds finished at the time of this writing, as life and other such matters have interfered, but I thoroughly intend to complete it someday. God willing, I may even finish several more like it, but with better execution and hopefully more originality. Maybe they will even, in some small way, come to properly convey what I wish them to.

I would like to say that I am growing closer to my goal, but if anything, I’ve just begun to realize how far away from it I really am. The simple truth of the matter is that my stories still are not really original. Likely, I will face this endless quest until I lay down my pen for the final time or lie down for the final time. I understand that humans as finite, created beings can never attain true originality; we can never truly create something new. However, as we strive towards the Original, the Author of creativity, perhaps we can grow ever so slightly closer to true originality ourselves. We can never reach the summit, but that really only means that no matter how high we get, we can always strive to climb a little higher. Though that is by no means an original thought, I don’t believe it’s a bad one.
My Journey to Know the Love of God

Timothy Cannata

The smell of popcorn filled the air. My mom and I had just arrived at the movie theatre to see “Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen”. Just before we walked into the theatre, I caught a glimpse of a “2012” movie poster which sparked something in my mind that would change my life forever. The thought of the world ending kept growing in my mind. Then fear began to spread like cancer through my heart. I began to lose control, and this marked the beginning of my first panic attack. Immense fear swelled into my heart while my surroundings became a blur. My mouth dried up as my heart pounded in my chest. I could feel my body trembling, and I didn’t know what to do. I whispered to my mom that we need to leave. I fled my surroundings, but the suffocating fear followed. I could barely breathe as sweat poured down my face. I could not think rationally; there was no hope in my mind, only terror.

I stumbled out of the theatre following closely behind my mom. The warm summer wind rushed around me, drying the sweat on my forehead. I crawled into the car and fell onto the backseat. I heard my mom mutter “hang in there sweetie, I am going to call dad.” I moaned “what is going on?” She told me “we are going to go the hospital to figure that out.” I cried out “make it stop!” My mom looked at me, unable to bare the sight of seeing me in so much emotional pain. My mom got off the phone and in a hopeful voice told me, “Dad is going to meet us at the hospital after he picks up your sister.” The pain grew as the fear overtook my mind. The outside world disappeared around me as I was sucked into my thoughts. I was alone and powerless in the back of my car, left to the mercies of my mind. I was alone and weak in a raging ocean of fear, alone and weak. I violently shook, hopelessly trying to get rid of the terror. I cried out “roll the windows down,” desperately hoping this would take away the fear. Alone and helpless, I stopped fighting and started to cry. The paralyzing fear left me hopeless. In the midst of this fear,
life became simple. My only goal was to make the anxiety stop. We made it to the hospital and got admitted. I laid on the hard rubber of the bed feeling trapped in the small room. My mom reached over and grabbed my hand and gave me a reassuring smile.

My father and sister finally arrived at the hospital to see what was happening. I said with a shaking voice, “I don’t know, just make it stop.” The doctors came back and told us there was nothing physically wrong with me. They did not know what was going on and told us we should see a mental health doctor. My family began to make desperate attempts to make this pain go away. My sister tried quoting scripture, but it didn’t get rid of the feeling. Then my dad started reading a Christian book. He read it out loud for several minutes. I did not understand what he was saying, but it calmed me down. The steady, deep voice of my father soothed my thoughts, and I felt less alone. After an agonizing three hours, the fear receded and left me feeling defeated and scared.

I later discovered that what I had experienced at the movie theatre was a panic attack. The doctors eventually diagnosed me with a panic disorder and prescribed me medicine to lessen the strength of the anxiety, so I could get to the point of controlling it. I was desperate to find this point and stop the anxiety from ever coming back. My dad pointed me to God and told me He was allowing this stuff to happen to draw me to Him. Through these experiences, I started to look to God in order to get rid of the attacks. I was baptized a few months after my first panic attack and I began to run after Jesus Christ. A couple years after I was baptized, an intense panic attack about my faith shook my heart. It sparked a fire in my heart, and then I pursued God with a renewed passion. Then at the start of my junior year of high school, my panic attacks left. The fear that attacked my mind had been defeated, leaving me with deep emotional scars and a feeling of emptiness. Once the anxiety left, I walked away from my pursuit of God and, my goal was to keep it from ever coming back. I realized that love is a very powerful emotion. If I could find love, then the panic attacks would never come back. This was when I started my quest to find what love truly is.

It was my senior year of high school. Every year the Bellbrook High School marching band competes at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indiana in the Bands of America Grand National Championship.
Senior year was supposed to be the best year, but it wasn’t for me, not even close.

I put my suitcase away and walked into the cold dark bus. After an emotional three days, it was finally time to leave. I was part of the Bellbrook High School marching band, and we had just finished performing. I sat in a seat alone looking out at Lucas Oil Stadium. A flood of tears welled up behind my eyes. My girlfriend had just broken up with me and said that we were no longer friends. We had dated for almost two months and had been close friends for over a year. We were such close friends, and I didn’t want to lose that. Looking out into the sea of people, I felt alone. I pressed my head against the cold glass of the window and looked out over the winter night. I saw friends laughing, couples holding hands, and people putting their stuff away. As I looked at all these people I could not shake the feeling of being alone. I put my headphones in and retreated into my thoughts.

My thoughts raced across my mind: “what went wrong? I tried everything. I talked to her in the hotel lobby and I said all the right things, but she still told me to leave her alone. Why is this happening? Why can’t I be happy? I just wanted to meet someone that I could be happy with. I wanted someone who would challenge me to be a better person. Someone who would fulfill me. I just wanted to find someone to love. I wanted to discover what love was. Was that too much to ask for? I just wanted a relationship to last. This was my fifth failed relationship. How could I screw up five relationships? I just don’t want to be alone anymore. I want this quest to find love to be over. I just want somebody to hold. I just want somebody to love. I just don’t want to be alone anymore. Why is God letting this happen? Where is God? Why won’t He provide the right girl? Why did He let me experience my anxiety? Why did He let all this happen? Does God even love me?” I snapped back to reality when the lights of the bus came on. I took my earbuds out and listened to attendance. Once announcements ended, the lights turned off. I put my headphones back in my ears and retreated back into my thoughts. The bus drove into the darkness of the winter night as I sat in my seat alone on a bus full of people.

I gave up on high school relationships and decided to wait until college. The summer was over, and I was excited to begin a new chapter in my life. The first week at Cedarville University changed
my life. During the first week of school, Cedarville held their fall Bible conference, with messages every morning and night. This year, Clayton King spoke, and God used these messages in a big way. I decided to rededicate my life to Christ. I was excited to trust God with my life again. Then, three weeks into the semester I received the news that would shake my world.

One Saturday, my sister and I decided to hang out in the HSC and do homework together. After an hour my dad asked us if we could Skype with him. When I saw his face, I could tell something was wrong. My dad told us in a shaky voice, “Grandpa had a stroke and the doctors don’t think he will be able to recover.” My face dropped, and I stared at the ground paralyzed by the news. He told us he would keep us updated on how he was doing. Eight days later I went to church with two of my friends. When I got back from church, my sister texted me to meet her at her dorm. I walked over and saw my sister, mom, and dad in the parking lot. My sister told me in a quiet voice, “Grandpa had just passed away.” I opened my mouth to say something but couldn’t find the words to speak. I hugged my parents, and we all went to Young’s Dairy to talk about the situation.

The funeral was in Florida and was happening the following weekend. My sister and I wanted to go, but my sister had to stay in Ohio to take care of my grandma. Although my sister had to stay, my parents said I could go. We were leaving Wednesday to travel so I only had three short days to prepare for the trip.

I told my RA, Rodrigo and some of my friends who lived in my unit that my grandpa had passed away and I was leaving to go to Florida in three days. I told my friend Alex this, and I also said that we are making the trip on a shoestring. The day before I left for the trip I found a thirty-dollar gift card on my desk. I didn’t know how to respond to this act of love. All my life when I experienced hard times I felt alone; this time it was different.

I met with Rodrigo the day before I left, and he talked with me about the situation. It was difficult to talk about my grandpa’s funeral plans, and I couldn’t explain how I felt about everything without crying. Then he asked to pray with me said, “Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for being so good to us and being our God. I thank you for Timmy. Thank you for blessing him into our lives. We come to you today with heavy hearts. You know all that has happened...
with Timmy’s family, and I pray that you’re with him through this time. I pray that you draw him closer to you through this time and help him to know that you’re with him and working in his life. I pray that you are with him and his family as they drive down to Florida, that they have a safe drive and that they stay focused on you. I know Timmy has a lot of homework, so help him to get that done when he is able. Help him to mourn when it’s time to mourn and focus when it’s time to focus. Please use this trip to bring peace into his heart and into the hearts of his family. May your will be carried out on this trip, in his life, and in his family’s life. In Jesus name, amen.”

I looked up, wiped the tears from my eyes, and hugged him. Before I left he showed me a picture of his grandma holding him when he was a baby. He told me that she passed away his freshman year of college here and it was four weeks into the semester when that happened. He told me he knew how I felt, and that comforted me. He also told me to take these three days as rest. He knew I had homework, but said, “Be with your family the three days you’re there and do your homework on the traveling days.” After I left his room, I said bye to him. Kenton, my mentor, prayed with me and told me if I ever needed someone to talk to he would be there for me. I talked with a few more people before I left and they were all praying for me. This time around I didn’t feel alone.

We traveled for a day and a half. Thursday evening was the visitation. I got a text from a few of my friends that day saying they were praying for me. I saw a lot of family I didn’t know I had and family I rarely get to see. The visitation was challenging, but having family there made it easier. The next day was the ceremony. It was very tough, and I cried a lot through it, but a feeling of peace began to grow in my heart. On the way back home, I got a text from Adam, one of the guys in my unit, who said he was praying for me. At this moment, I prayed to God. I was going through so much, but I finally had peace. I was not alone, but God was with me.

I came back to Cedarville refreshed and at peace. Two days later, I got a text from my sister saying Belle had died. Belle was my dog who my family has had for twelve years. That hurt so much. I went for a jog around the lake. After my jog, I sat by the lake and started crying. The next night I was sitting in bed at midnight when I had a panic attack. I hit rock bottom. I felt alone and afraid sitting in my bed. I jumped out of bed praying for a way out. Then I saw
Alex studying in the hall. I went over to him and told him that I was having a panic attack. He prayed with me and then just listened. After about ten minutes I went back to bed and lay there.

Right before I fell asleep, it finally occurred to me that I was never alone. God was always there, but I had never run to him. I knew I wasn’t alone, and it was in that moment that I realized my satisfaction and my love is found in Jesus Christ. He is the perfect standard of love. He loves us with a perfect love. I had finally found what I had been chasing, and finally recognized what it was. It was in that moment that I came to know the love of God.
Moved to Mourning

Miranda Dyson

My hand reached for the remote to turn the channel. “Another shooting, how depressing,” I thought. Not long after I removed CNN from my sight, I removed mourning for a killed man from my agenda. My kneejerk response to the killings of African American citizens, such as the victims of the shooting in Charleston, has been to cover or ignore the wound of racial tension in our society. I was often able to justify pushing this uncomfortable topic out of sight. This desire to put aside mourning and ignore the struggles black communities endure is one that poet and Professor Claudia Rankine addresses in her article: “The Condition of Black Life is one of Mourning” in the New York Times Magazine. Overall, I didn’t feel like I could relate to most of what she depicted as a “black life”; however, I gained insight into how some African Americans view life, and I was saddened to read of the despair they feel, yet I now better understand and appreciate the Black Lives Matter movement.

Rankine, a poet and professor at Pomona College, wrote her article shortly after the shooting in Charleston. Rankine writes about how African Americans have a constant feeling of being stuck—trapped—in their own country. She talks about the fear and mourning that black citizens constantly experience that white Americans cannot totally empathize with. Furthermore, Rankine states that America has become saturated in anti-black racism and views the death of black Americans as common. She states that Americans can be in the midst of death yet choose ignorance over recognition. She reviews the history of several black deaths in America, such as the death of Emmitt Till, and points out that including mourning in everyday life can leave a lasting positive impression on society as it sees truth. Rankine states that the Black Lives Matter movement agrees with this logic and is therefore devoted to keeping the mourning of African Americans on the forefront of our minds. In closing she states, “A sustained state of national mourning for black lives is called for…” In addition, she says
that with the Black Lives Matter movement we have a way to interrupt our daily routine for the better. Rankine ends by saying that grief for the dead could be part of the solution to harmony with the living.

By reading this article I gained insight into how some African Americans view life. For example, Rankine opens by quoting an African American woman’s reaction to her son’s birth: “When she gave birth to her son...her first thought was, ‘I have to get him out of this country.’” The reason behind this person’s sarcastic statement was because she didn’t see America as having a place for her son. I was shocked to read such a frank statement because I, as a biracial American with an African American parent, don’t see America as a place of bondage as this statement implies. I suppose my view comes from growing up looking forward to what America has to offer and from seeing people, of many ethnicities around me, love this country. My initial feelings towards America aren’t hostility and resentment. This article gave me insight to many African Americans’ view life as I’ve never had the self-consciousness about my ethnicity which some African Americans bear. My parents never emphasized my ethnic difference or taught me that my chances to be “free” were limited because of my race. I wasn’t taught to fear people in higher authority, nor did I see my father, an African American fearing the police. Throughout my childhood years, I was surrounded and befriended by people of Chinese, African, Hispanic, and Caucasian ethnicities. None of those relationships were strained because of my race. Since I wasn’t immersed in a “black” culture and none of my African American friends complained of racism or struggles related to their race, I never learned to see my skin as part of my identity.

Therefore, I was enlightened further when Rankine’s article states that many African Americans would say that their ethnicity carries significant weight. A woman quoted in Rankine’s article who was asked what it’s like being the mother of a black son says, “The condition of black life is one of mourning.” Initially, I felt like this point of view was cynical, even though I know that viewpoint is a reality for many, because I haven’t lived a life with violence and death as common in my community. All my life I’ve lived in relatively calm neighborhoods where I never saw my ethnicity was never cause to be afraid. I was never in fear for my life when a white
officer would cruise on the street where I lived. I’ve never had the experience of mourning a loved one killed by unjust means. Race-related death has never affected me personally, so I don’t have fuel for the thought pattern of seeing black lives in a state of constant mourning. Despite my initial thoughts, Rankine is actually giving the appropriate amount of weight to a subject that I’d previously thought disproportionate. Through the description of African American killings, I was shown that cynicism isn’t what fuels these movements. Unfortunately, many of the despairing feelings African Americans hold are completely realistic.

In addition, I was saddened to read of the despair that some African Americans feel. In this article, Rankine talks about how she and her friend feel about their position in America saying, “Ours was the laughter of vulnerability, fear, recognition and absurd stuckness.” Although I don’t feel “stuck” as a biracial American, I was saddened to read that some people live with that constant weight. As far as I know, I’ve never experienced racism so I don’t feel “stuck” in my society. I haven’t been inhibited from attending the University of my choice, receiving equal pay as my Caucasian co-workers, or pursuing happiness because of my race, so I don’t feel limited in my opportunity at success. In my own life, I know several black Americans who are successful in society and I can’t recall any who are burdened by their ethnicity. My father did endure racism in his life, but he was never deterred from his aspirations, and I’ve only ever seen him as successful in every line of work he’s pursued. Though I’m sure his racist encounters greatly affected him, I never witnessed the direct effect they had on him. My aunt, who is also African American, worked at CNN for over thirty years where, from what I could tell, she was well respected and successful. Now that I’ve been exposed to several racist issues Americans face that I wasn’t aware of, I’m more open to asking questions of my family in order to rid myself of other racial blind spots I may have. I was always told, from both sides of my family, that I could do whatever I wanted in life. Although cliché, it’s a thought that doesn’t transcend every culture.

Furthermore, as if constantly feeling stuck weren’t bad enough, Rankine also writes about black Americans’ continuous mourning, saying, “For African American families, this living in a state of mourning and fear remains commonplace.” It’s sad for me
to think that mourning for loved ones’ lives could be commonplace especially since I’ve never had to live in that state. The thought that young black American men and women aren’t surprised when they hear the news reports of killings appalls me. I’m overwhelmed thinking about the constant anxiety that some African Americans face just leaving their homes or watching their children walk to school. My parents have natural fears when my siblings and I aren’t with them, but they aren’t obsessed about our interactions with officers while we’re out of the house.

Therefore, I benefitted from reading Rankine’s article because I better understood and appreciated the “Black Lives Matter” movement, an organization dedicated to continuing the mourning process in America. I sometimes ignore movements that arise after shootings because they’re sometimes led with reckless and bitter motivation. However, this movement is anything but bitter and has an admirable goal in mind. Rankin writes, “The Black Lives Matter movement can be read as an attempt to keep mourning an open dynamic in our culture...” I can’t count how many times and how easily I’ve dismissed the turmoil shown in the news simply by changing channels. I put my personal desire to be comfortable under the guise of being optimistic. If I feel overburdened with bad news, there’s little motivation to keep watching. I believe that too often people choose to close off mourning because it’s such an exhausting process. Denial—a state that many Americans are in concerning racial tensions—also smothers the effects of mourning. Black Lives Matter believes in the value of mourning.

Rankine further gives understanding about the Black Lives Matter movement when she tells the story of Emmitt Till, a murdered African American killed in 1955, and his mother, Mamie Till Mobley. Emmitt Till’s body was beaten beyond recognition as the result of racist motivation. Mobley made the decision to have an open casket funeral for her son. She said she wanted to “let the people see what I see.” She, like those in the Black Lives Matter movement, valued mourning and wanted others to mourn with her. Rankine says, “Mobley’s refusal to keep grief private allowed a body that meant nothing to the criminal-justice system to stand as evidence.” Mobley’s courage overwhelmed me. She didn’t just see the injustice done to her son, but also an opportunity to bring a racist justice system into light. I think it’s a great pity to see a mother’s source of mourning turned into a national piece of evidence.
Rankine’s article calls her readers to action: Not to dismiss black communities’ complaints as dramatized, to understand another culture’s viewpoint, and not to walk over dead men without giving them a second thought. Since I didn’t feel like I could relate to most of what she depicted as a black life, this article gave me insight into how some African Americans view life. I was saddened to read of the despair that they feel, yet I now better understand and appreciate the Black Lives Matter movement and the value of mourning. Articles like this one help me to value analyzing the effect of racial tensions in American society. Although it’s still painful to watch and read of injustices, acknowledging that there is an issue doesn’t have to be simply depressing; mourning is a way to value lives in our country. I look forward to the day where killings don’t feel commonplace in African American communities and when those deaths move our society to mourn.

Work Cited

Tap. Tap. Tap. My sneaker breaks the silence in the room I sit. The only color on the grey walls is the bright cartoonish posters talking about respect and character. Down the hallway the sound of Katy Perry’s “Roar” tickles my ear.

I look again at the flier that says, “YMCA Youth and Government;” it was a random flier that my mom was about to throw away before I snatched it from her. I wasn’t here to have fun. I wasn’t here to learn about government. I was here to put this on my college application.

The door started to creak open, and a short, brunette girl with greasy hair in a hoody appeared. “Hey, you here for YAG?” she asked.

“Yeah, my name’s Katelyn. What’s yours?”
“I’m Erin and this is my 5th year. I don’t know who’s coming, so it might just be us.”

Ten minutes later I was staring at a mismatched group of people around a table. There was designer-decked sisters Raissat and Rayma, fresh-faced Carson, Erin, and me. We all eventually started to stare at Erin, the only veteran in the room.

“Now I’m not going to lie. This is a hard club. Do I love it? Yes. Will this be tough? You bet, but if we work together we can get this done,” she said. That would set the tone for the rest of our time together.

The most fundamental part of Youth and Government is writing a bill. It is the requirement of everyone in the program. You might decide to be a lawyer, lobbyist, or judge in the program, but you will write a bill. Only a week into the program and I heard, “So now we’re going to talk about bills. You have to write one just like you would if you were in Congress right now. It needs to have a detailed plan with a clear way to pay for your bill, a start date, and penalties to enforce infractions,” Erin said. This is exactly what I didn’t want to hear. I was a junior in high school who didn’t want to waste the time; I had bigger things to handle.
After the meeting I talked to Erin as we walked outside of the YMCA. “Do we really have to make bills as good as ‘real’ bills?” I asked.

“Katelyn, this isn’t a joke. We’re going to be spending four days in Harrisburg conducting a mock government. This is a rare opportunity. As a representative, if you want to embarrass yourself, and our group, by having a poorly written bill – that’s on you. But really, find something you’re passionate and work for that. It’ll get easier.”

Now I sat at my desk. The white pages were all over, only allowing the dark desk to be seen in snippets or corners. Papers were shoved into shelving, placed under books, crumpled up and dismissed. If anything, this desk was a trash can. Forgotten ideas, broken pens, and empty soda cans were hiding throughout the mounds of paper. Paper that together created a monster. It consumed everything, the desk, the room. I spent most of the time “thinking of topics,” but really looking out of the window.

If anything was an escape from writing, Facebook was such an easy one. As I was aimlessly scrolling past the “If you love Satan scroll by, but if you love the Lord hit the like button,” I saw a post about anti-vaccinations and how it’s so important to vaccinate. Intrigued, I started researching vaccinations. In my research I learned that the study that anti-vaccine believers use was debunked and rejected by the medical world. Having spent a year and a half working in a hospital, I knew that I wanted to write a bill to protect these young children.

The next two weeks I spent endlessly researching for my bill, constructing a compelling argument and pouring over documents. The bright light of my computer screen and I were the only things awake at that time of night. I never liked writing, but here my writing had actual purpose. No longer was this an essay about a book I disliked or an assigned research topic. My words finally had power.

A month into the program I presented the rough draft of my bill. Every word painstakingly chosen; every comma a child. “Wow Katelyn! This is pretty good. I mean, you need to revise, but it’s nice,” Erin said. Now I was one step closer to making change. Harrisburg here I come!

So I went back to the drawing board to craft my masterpiece.
“Ring, Rinnnng,” would go the doorbell, but I had to say “No” to hanging out. I was dead-set on getting this right. Hunched over my desk I stayed. Researching through Pennsylvania’s view of vaccinations, other states’ laws, and any legal laws that would interfere and invalidate my bill.

Finally the day had arrived. Everyone was packed for the next four days and ready to take over the government. I had spent the past three months crafting my speech that I would give to my committee and then hopefully the house. My bill was printed in the massive bill book of over six hundred pages. I was ready to conquer.

“Bill #394, Mandatory Vaccinations for School Children by delegate Katelyn Whalen,” the committee secretary said. My moment had arrived. I stood up, approached the podium, and began my two minute speech. Looking at the faces of strangers around me, I was filled with an overwhelming feeling of awe. I knew none of these delegates. We were from around the state, and here we came together. The speech I wrote was my vehicle to convince them of the importance of my bill.

“Parents want to do everything possible to make sure their children are healthy and protected from preventable diseases. Vaccination is the best way to do that.

Vaccination protects children from serious illness and complications of vaccine-preventable diseases

Vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, mumps, and whooping cough, are still a threat. They continue to infect U.S. children, resulting in hospitalizations and deaths every year.

Though vaccination has led to a dramatic decline in the number of U.S. cases of several infectious diseases, some of these diseases are quite common in other countries and are brought to the U.S. by international travelers. If children are not vaccinated, they could easily get one of these diseases from a traveler or while traveling themselves.

Outbreaks of preventable diseases occur when many parents decide not to vaccinate their children.

Vaccination is safe and effective. All vaccines undergo long and careful review by scientists, doctors, and the federal government to make sure they are safe.

Organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the Centers for
Disease Control and Prevention all strongly support protecting children with recommended vaccinations.

Vaccination protects others you care about, including family members, friends, and grandparents.

If children aren't vaccinated, they can spread disease to other children who are too young to be vaccinated or to people with weakened immune systems, such as transplant recipients and people with cancer. This could result in long-term complications and even death for these vulnerable people.

We all have a public health commitment to our communities to protect each other and each other's children by vaccinating our own family members.”

As I sat down, there was nothing left that I could do. I had pleaded my case. Now it was time for pro and con debate, where it would now be up to the strength of my bill.

My bill was passed by the committee, the house, and then finally I had to stand by as my senator counterpart Erin presented my bill to the senate. She didn’t deliver the speech like I would, but that didn’t matter. No one would remember any of the speeches delivered today. The words in the bill were what mattered. Bills that are passed in YAG have an effect on actual state legislation. Many times bills passed in YAG become actual bills several years later. My bill would go on record for years to come. Nothing I said could change the outcome. The written words stood alone.

The pro and con debate waged on. “Mr. President, I don’t think we should force our citizens to vaccinate their children. That is entirely within their ability to decide. It’s not the government’s job to be a parent,” said one delegate.

“Mr. President, I disagree with the prior delegate. As a state, we have a commitment to all of our citizens’ health. These citizens are our future entrepreneurs, doctors, and teachers. We need to protect our citizens’ futures,” said another.

Back and forth it went. Every line of the bill was explored until finally it was time to vote. Months of work, hours of research, and it all came down to this.

“When your name is called please say “Aye” or “Nay” to decide on Bill #394, Mandatory Vaccinations for School Children,” said Mr. President.

The “Ayes” and “Nays” started to blend together.
“Aye.”
“Nay.”
“Nay.”
“Aye.”

Later I was standing on the mezzanine overlooking the entrances to the House and Senate. The hustle and bustle of the people faded as the sound of polite clapping was heard. I stood beside the YAG Governor and her administration as she signed my bill into law. In a daze I shook her hand. “I’m proud to have this as one of the bills passed this year. Thank you,” she said.

As I walked away to meet with friends, I couldn’t help but notice the history around me. The walls were filled with portraits of instrumental figures in state and national history. The ceilings were vaulted and painted with murals reminiscent of the ancient Greeks. I was surrounded by a rushing current of men and women in suits. Some were state congressmen, some lobbyists, others part of the administration. As much as passion and drive can get you there, I was hit with the fact that those people were in Harrisburg because of words. All the laws of our government are written words that someone wrote. What’s the point of an idea if it cannot be communicated?

Words are the way our world works. At the end of the day, it was my bill that got me here. Each word played a part and was important. I left the Youth and Government with a reverence for writing and its power. Words don’t just fill entertaining books and boring school essays. Words have the ability to shape and to build the world around us. And because of a flyer my Mom did not throw away, I now know that my own words, my own writing, may change the world.
My 104,000-Dollar Summer

Gregg Mendel

“Pencils down!” yelled the test instructor. I had just finished the math portion of the ACT, and I had no idea how I had done. “Hope that was good enough” I said to myself as I crammed a granola bar in my mouth. That was my lunch for the day, since the ACT only allows 5 minute breaks in their 3-hour test. I can’t say I wasn’t nervous for this test, since my whole future relied on getting a good score. Reaching this point had been one of the hardest things I have ever done. What I had learned and how it had changed me was amazing, but I had no time to think about that; the English section was up next. “Pencils up!”

Two years ago I wouldn’t have known the difference between the ACT test and the second ACT of a play, and I couldn’t care less. Back then I possessed absolutely no work effort and had no love for studying. I didn’t acquire this attitude from my family, since all of them are extremely hard workers, and they love to learn. For example, my sister is so dyslexic that doctors thought she wouldn’t be able to walk, let alone read. But through hard work and even harder studying, she is now top in her business class. My Dad is the only member of his large family to go to college, mainly because he was the only one in his house that studied hard enough to go. My mother came from a family that were servants to an extremely wealthy couple. By hard work and hard studying, she now has the highest degree for aquatic environmental entomologist out there. And then there was me, the one who didn’t want to work hard at anything. Studying was easy; I could get away without preparing for tests and still ace them. Work around the house wasn’t too hard, and I didn’t have a job because that would require a lot of effort. My walk with the Lord was faltering, but that didn’t matter as long as my life was going well, right? I saw no problems on the horizon.

I guess I didn’t look at the horizon carefully, because a huge problem soon appeared. As a child, money is never an issue that comes to mind. But as I entered my junior year of high school,
things began to change. It became evident that my parents were not as rich as I had once thought. It was not because they weren't hard workers, or that my father gambled all our money away. It was because my parent’s jobs did not pay well, and because they had given up many work hours to spend time with me and my siblings. They were already supporting my sister in college, so there was little chance I would get any help financially. And since I had little money of my own, it looked like I would not be going to college.

“Have you started preparing for the ACT?” my mom asked out of the blue one day. “The what?” I replied. “It’s a test that you need to take to get into colleges” she said. “But I’m not going to college” I said. “If you get a high enough score, you can get a full ride” she replied. “I don’t know, that sounds like a lot of work” I said. “If you want to go to college, you have to get a scholarship.” I decided I might as well give it a shot. Pencils up.

It was harder than I thought. Studying for a three-hour test was not first on my list of fun things to do. When my friends were done with school for the day, they would hangout, play video games, or go outside and kick the soccer ball around. When I was done with school for the day, I would sit at my desk and start working on the ACT. I thought it was a waste of my time. So did my friends. “Stop being such a try-hard and come play some soccer” my buddies would say. Every atom in my body wanted to put my pencil down, stand up, throw my ACT Prep books into the nearest trash can, and follow their advice. But I didn’t. I kept working through my practice tests and exams, through all the math calculations and graphs, until I noticed something about me starting to change.

I started to realize how selfish I was for wasting my time and my talents that God had given me. God had given me a good brain, and all I used it for was to beat the next level of some video game. Over the next few months I started to gain a work ethic that I had never had before. I started to love studying. It was fun to learn new facts and ideas, and I looked forward to the challenges that the difficult subjects presented. I still enjoyed soccer and video games and all that stuff, but the joy of learning started to overshadow those things. I stopped caring that my friends thought I was a nerd for working hard.
This love of studying I was getting from the ACT preparation started to leak into other parts of my life. My school subjects, from English to Entomology, started to seem more interesting, and putting more time into doing my chores seemed like no big deal. The biggest improvement was not in academics though, but in my walk with the Lord. Devotions used to be something that took too much effort and time to seem worthwhile. But when I developed my love of studying, the Bible didn’t appear as such a daunting task anymore. I began to really study the great book, and was surprised to learn how much I grew as a Christian because of it. Learning to study is one of the best things that ever happened to me.

But even with this newfound work effort, I still was not going to college. My friends kept telling that I shouldn’t worry about the ACT and be happy with whatever score I got, but they didn’t have worry because their parents were paying all their college tuition, and all they had to do was get an above the 50 percentile. I, on the other hand, needed a 31 on my ACT to get the scholarship I needed; 26,000 dollars a year, or 104,000 dollars in total. This meant that if I wanted a score of 31, I had to be better than 97 percent of the students that took the test. I had two chances to take it, and if I didn’t get a 31 or above on either of those, I was not going to college.

“Name?” “Gregg Mendel.” “You’ll be in room 247.” The receptionist at the ACT center walked me to my room. As we walked I passed room after room of teenagers just like me; sitting at desks waiting to start their test. Room 247 was at the very end of the hall way. When I got in there, I noticed it was far less packed then the other rooms. And then I noticed something else. There were no desks, only chairs. “Is this a waiting room?” I asked the receptionist. She merely grunted as she closed the door behind me. The next three hours were terrible. Through some horrible mix-up, the center had put me and a couple of other students in a room that wasn’t meant for testing. I had to balance the text booklet on the right arm of my chair, hold my scantron with my left, and balance my calculator in my lap. Needless to say I did not get the 31 that was required. Pencils down.

A month passed, and my final chance to take the ACT had arrived. I arrived at Granville high school early in the morning to make sure I got a seat with an actual desk. As I sat in my chair, I started to get a little nervous. After this test, my life would go one
of two directions, towards college or towards some job like burger flipping. “I can't believe we are required to take this stupid test to go to college” the girl next to me said. “Yea” everyone but me mumbled back. It felt like I was the only one in the room whose future depended on this test. Everybody else was only taking the ACT to get it out of the way as a requirement. The instructor walked in, looking board out of his brains, and told us we would have 60 minutes to answer 60 math questions, 45 minutes to answer 120 English related questions, 35 minutes for 40 science questions, and 35 minutes for 40 reading questions. “Last chance” I thought to myself. “Good luck” the instructor said. He started the timer. “Pencils up!”

A few weeks later as I was finishing my last semester of high school, I got a letter in the mail from the American College Testing program. I opened it slowly for fear of what might be inside. I saw my score; I had gotten a 31. Pencils down.
Falling in Love with a New Found Land

Kyle Spencer

Now that I was above the tree line, my only shelter became small boulders, not exactly ideal. Nevertheless, I knelt beside a boulder and began to examine my situation. My first step was tearing off the wet masses of cloth that were once my gloves. This action revealed my hands to be like a bunch of raisins, soaked in water, and stuck in a forty-degree cooler for an hour. Not my idea of a comfortable vacation trip. I moved around the rock until a diagonal force of cold rain pierced through my soaked jeans and sent shivers through my body. Whoosh-swoosh. Moving back into the previous position, the gravity of my position sunk in. The weather was driving rain so diagonally that, if I placed myself on the right side of the boulder, the rain would fly right over my head. Today, when I hear the sound of wind, whoosh, and rain, swoosh, memories pour in of that boulder and those conditions piercing through my clothes. I reached for sustenance but the rain got there first. The roast moose sandwich I had been eagerly awaiting looked and tasted like gravy, bread, and meat after a long bath. Not my idea of food. After wallowing in self-pity for fifteen minutes, the only other person as crazy as me to be out in such awful conditions staggered up to the boulder, my grandfather.

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The sea looked on us with its ever-present unblinking eye as we, my brother and my eighteen-year old self, carried its victim, driftwood, across the rocky beach. We could see our grandfather starting a fire down the beach. If the World’s Most Interesting Man had a brother, my grandfather would fit the description. When a person meets him, besides his lack of hearing accompanied by the shrill shrieking of his hearing aids, they discover just how different he is from every other eighty-year old American Caucasian male. One of these quirks is a place. Instead of trekking south with the rest of his generation, he flies, to this date, probably more than fifteen
times, to a cold island in the Canadian North Atlantic, the province of Newfoundland. Of these fifteen trips, I have gone on five. This was my fifth trip and we were visiting one of our favorite spots on that island, a driftwood shelter. Driftwood is wooden debris that strong waves snatched from coastline forests, whoosh, and, during a storm thrust to shore, swoosh. While in the sea, the salt water pierces the wood hardening and bleaching it. In Newfoundland, the sea covers whole beaches with this debris. On one particular beach, fifteen years ago, my grandfather piled some of this driftwood against a cold cliff side and started a shelter. I saw this shelter during my first visit to Newfoundland in 2003. Unfortunately, in a large storm, the sea claimed it. Without hesitating my grandfather constructed another shelter in the same location only to have the sea take it as well. Not an ideal situation but he persevered and pioneered a new location for the shelter to be located.

Now, during this last trip to Newfoundland in 2015, my brother and I were carrying a large piece of driftwood towards the third shelter. The salty air scent touched my nose and I thought of all the sea had done against not only that piece of wood but also the other shelters my grandfather had erected. We stopped to look upon his creation a scattering of loose tree limbs, lobster traps, and rope. It is not, by any means, a beach resort. It does not fully keep the rain out nor does it provide great seating inside its wet, mossy interior. Nevertheless, its value, like Newfoundland itself, does not rely upon its amenities; it is about its meaning to him and the rest of my family. It is a sign of his love for that island in Canada. I climb up the face of the shelter with one part of the beam in my hand and the other in my brother’s hand. The beam makes several loud clunks on the rocks below but I continue to hoist one side while my brother supports the other. It takes a while but we finally lift it above the structure and send it straight through the driftwood below. We are building a roof for the second floor of the shelter and that piece will serve as a support. As my brother and I set the beam in place, my grandfather stands back from his fire and admires our engineering feat. I also like to think that he was proudly thinking about how we will continue on his love for the shelter and, more importantly, the island of Newfoundland.
My family began to leave as my six-year old self sat in the tall grass by a little red and white lighthouse. My love for Newfoundland began during my first trip to Newfoundland in 2003. As I sat there in the grass, my mom walked up and sat by me. We looked and waited together. The date was September 2003, my first trip to Newfoundland. As a six-year old boy my biggest obsession was whales. I remember measuring the lengths of whales in my backyard and reading every whale book and diagram in my library. “If I could only see a real, live whale,” I thought. The chance came when my parents announced that we were traveling to an odd island in Canada that, apparently, someone had newly found, Newfoundland. Now here I was sitting in a location where locals, from time to time, spot whales off-shore. My mom and I knelt to pray for a sighting as the rest of my family waited to leave. Looking out again I could see a fishing boat hauling in its catch with seagulls communicating in loud shrieks above. No whale. I squeezed my eyes shut to pray again. Suddenly, my mom exclaimed, “What was that? I think I saw something!” My eyes opened as if my alarm had gone off for wedding day. “Whale! Where?” “Oh, sorry Kyle, I was just seeing things.” That’s when it happened. Without a doubt, a whale surfaced. That was the time a miracle happened and God clearly answered my prayer. Whoosh-swoosh, the whale surfaced and blew a blast of water out its blowhole. Thirteen years later, that moment by the little red and white lighthouse continues to penetrate my heart.

Twelve years after the miracle by the little lighthouse, it was late May and snow had yet to release its grip from the land. The trail up the mountain was no exception. After passing the base camp, a two-mile hike, my brother and my eighteen-year-old self decided to continue our climb around the back edge of the mountain. By this time, despite the appearance of our surroundings, we were so hot that we decided to go shirtless. In hindsight, a bit more sunscreen should have accompanied our decision. Furthermore, due to constantly stepping on wet snow, swhoosh-swoosh, our shoes, socks, and lower jeans were soaked. The worst part would be the occasional misguided step when my leg would crash through several feet of snow. Not pleasant.
A force of nature sits on the western edge of Newfoundland called Gros Morne Mountain. While its name, translated from French, means Lonely Mountain a better translation would be Gross Mountain since, to the casual observer, it looks like a gigantic pile of gravel. All of my past three visits have included a trip up this pile of rocks to its beautiful panoramic view. My last visit in 2015 however, involved several complications such as snow and sunburns along with a special furry surprise. “Woah! Moose!” I exclaimed. My brother and I had just run into a full-grown moose, fifteen feet away! Now, to a normal person, this would be grounds for turning around. Not for us. With our steps, despite our pace, still creating sound in the snow we cautiously walked around it. The moose calmly sat in the snow like a large, furry cow and gave no heed to our presence. Turning around, with the moose still in sight, a majestic view of snow-covered mountains and a scent of snow melting off pine trees hit me. Times like that have defined my experience in Newfoundland. My jeans and boots were soaked to the core and my skin was forming a painful sunburn but those hindrances were part of the experience. My brother and I were far away from any notable civilization with the only other human life being a few hikers. A moose lounged in the snow before us and a gravel mountain lay behind us. All the imperfections like our sunburns and wet feet only acted to make the moment more genuine. In fact, that is what makes Newfoundland special. Newfoundland is raw, beautiful and does not cover its harsh edges. None of my five trips went without wet boots and bitingly cold weather but it is because of those things that I have developed a genuine love for that island in the North Atlantic.

As my grandfather staggered up to the boulder, my thoughts were not on my love for Newfoundland, probably the opposite, but it takes those hard times to develop a true relationship. Newfoundland has little to offer. There are no casinos, amusement parks, warm beaches, or large ski resorts. The weather is cold most of the year and the elements are unforgiving. However, instead of those things being a drawback, they have increased my love for the Newfoundland outdoors. Rested, I summoned my determination and continued on my way with the wind, whoosh, driving rain, swoosh, straight into my back. With a glimmer of inspiration, I
propped my umbrella behind my back. This worked to keep the elements away for a little while but I soon lost grip of my umbrella and watched it glide along the ground into a ditch. I chased it like a wild man. Luckily, no one was crazy enough to be out there to watch as I ran. Finally, after I stepped into a large, muddy puddle it was time to turn around. “Bapa!” I called back to my grandfather, the shock of our situation showing in my voice, “I think it’s time to turn around.” He resolutely nodded. To this day, I wonder whether, if I had not mentioned it, he would have continued to the end of the trail.

By the time I reached the car, I was completely soaked. Thirty-minutes later, my grandfather arrived. My grandfather proceeded to change all his clothes in a nearby porta-potty throwing the wet ones straight into the trash can! Shivering, we blasted the heat all the way back to hot soup and a warm cabin. The car smelled like soaked feet and my hands were still regaining their normal shape but my love for the land was still there. In fact, like love between humans, that hardship deepened my love for Newfoundland. During that moment it was as if when the wind and rain, whoosh-swoosh, pierced my clothes, Newfoundland was also piercing my heart, claiming a part of it.
Brick by Brick

Matthew Beal

Cook-A-Doodle-Doo—that’s the title of it. It was my first true love in reading, a masterpiece of childhood literature. Oh, you should have seen the colors of each page. Flashes of green and red highlighted the rooster’s body, and the other animals flourished in their respective shades and hues of blue, pink, yellow, and red. That wasn’t the only thing that made it so enjoyable, though. The story was well-written for my developing mind. One farm of animals embarked on a quest to craft a thing of glory, the one and only strawberry shortcake. And there sat Grandma in our lazy boy chair reading it to me, her ball of white hair topping a body that had probably eaten one too many shortcakes. That didn’t matter, though, because no one read it like Grandma did. She possessed every inflection and voice with perfect artistry, and she knew which line to emphasize above all. ‘Twas the line that evoked, without fail, a delighted laughter to accompany my young smile. After Hog’s premature consumption of the shortcake and suggestion of a new food dish, Iguana turned to him and said, “Yeah...how about a plump, juicy roast pig?”

With stories of this nature, I grew to love reading. My dear mother and I used to trek down to the public library and return with stacks of books. Sometimes, we checked out so many books that we found it challenging to get them all home in one trip, my mother being a petite woman, and I being four years old. Nevertheless, our dedication to an avid consumption of literature was not to be impeded by our wanting of size. We were a team on a mission—to search out new stories, to make contact with the great characters of prose, and to boldly read what no child had read before (contrary to the suggestion, though, I had no knowledge of Star Trek at the time as my introduction to it would come a few years later at the hands of my phaser-beam-loving father).

Now it was one thing to be a child with no cares in the world except to snuggle up with a parent on our plaid couch and follow the
whimsical journey of a prince and princess or the always entertaining conundrum of an animal. It was quite another thing when I first stepped into elementary and began to assemble the literary bricks constructed in my preschool years. I was no longer concerned with the band of misfit mammals searching for some insignificant trinket. No sir, it was time to read of daring escapes, lost treasure, and the quest of the amateur sleuth. None exemplified these traits better than the Hardy Boys. Now possessing the traits needed for reading on my own, I began a crusade of conquering one book after another. The lazy boy chair that used to hold my grandma became my own little world of mystery and intrigue.

“Chet, one your bills is a counterfeit.”

“Counterfeit? That’s impossible?” I wondered. “No way Chet’s bill is fake. Where did it come from? How did he have it? Was it the man they ran into earlier? It had to have been him.”

Through each installation of the Hardy Boys, I found myself immersed in the dimly lit caves, I could hear the thief searching for the lads as they held their collective breath, and I felt the angst of their dire circumstances.

Middle school, by contrast, was uninteresting concerning reading, and that’s speaking in kind terms. Yes, I read, but nothing grand stuck out to me like Cook-A-Doodle-Doo had before school or Hardy Boys had in elementary. It was just average, ordinary reading that simply didn’t do it for me. Though I panned the shelves of our middle school selections looking hopefully for something to break the tedium, my endeavors were for naught. All that was available was a repetitious assemblage of prosaic, banal literature that had swiftly perished upon its entry into the literary world. One particularly droll literary indiscretion came in the form of a book called Mystery at Inn Number 31, New Inn, though the true mystery was how the publisher thought it well and good to release such a lackluster, monotonous work as this. “In the form of Sherlock Holmes,” the review read. Realistically, a better summary would have been, “Dr. Jekyll Takes a Sedative,” or “Ennui and Insouciance.” Had the author thought it best to prep his readers for a real literary treat only to craft a sleeping aide? After several muddled paragraphs of mundane medical malpractice, I found myself reaching for a copy of my father’s quarterly statistical reports in order to spice up the reading for a spell. A typical reading of New Inn followed a general form:
“For several hours, we discussed the various aspects of the patient’s health including various prescriptions he had been required to take from Dr. Johnston. I sat reciting all the medications I had given to him, including the three and one-quarter cups of coffee he ingested about twelfth hour of the houfk and litng in the hof stetle fan of glop kin asj……. …….zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz 

As you may ascertain, I was not amused.

If anything would have struck my joy of reading dead without any remorse or regretful feelings it would have been middle school. But, by the grace of God, my reading career did not end with middle school. Grudgingly, I pulled myself into high school assuming a repeat was in order. “Bring me your junk, your poorly written, your novels laced with the rejected material of postulants who can but dream of being authors,” I thought.

But my fears failed to bloom into reality. Miss Lindwall, my English teacher and the resuscitator of my literary career, had no intentions of letting the drudgery of middle school carry over to high school. Small in stature, the dark-haired Baptist with an easily triggered sense of humor guided me to my first book of high school, The Orient Express. “My stars, this is fantastic,” I thought to myself as I raced through the pages. Hercule Poirot was a fascinating, little Belgian. His methods were brilliant, and his French-peppered speech drew my undivided attention. With every stroke of his mustache, I saw him rationalize and resolve his mystery without so much as stressing his “little gray cells.” Honestly, I could have stayed with Poirot through all high school, but something else drew my attention and focus—a challenge in the form of David Copperfield. Through Miss Lindwall’s twenty-year teaching career, only seven people in her class had ever read the entirety of David Copperfield. The Dickens masterpiece is a monstrous work of prose. In small print, the book stretches over 700 pages, while larger printings span upwards of 900-1000 pages. But I was determined, by any means necessary, to read them all. A short library checkout later, I was chest-deep in the story of young David. I say this for two reasons. First, I found myself enraptured by David, his mother, Mr. Murdstone, the Peggotty clan, and all of the perfectly caricatured characters. Likewise, the storyline commanded my attention at every turn. I commiserated with David through his childhood, celebrated when
he escaped to his aunt, and breathed a sigh of relief when he landed his job with Mr. Wickfield. The other reason I was chest-deep is because 700+ pages is a lot of reading, and Victorian-style language can be...shall we say dry at times. When the plot lulled, I found myself reverting to middle school again. But such was my ambition, my interminable drive to be the eighth to finish David Copperfield, that I pushed forward. I read in the lazy boy, in the dining room, in the kitchen, at school, during my breaks at work, on the way to soccer games, and anywhere else that I could with proper concentration. As our team was traveling one sunny day, I sat in the back of the van plugging away at this bastille of a book on my Nexus 7. I swiped to the next page to find it much shorter than the rest. “Could it be?” I wondered. Deep in my heart, a little flame of hope was lit. Another swipe confirmed my elated expectation. Across the screen read the words, “You’ve completed this book!”

That was two and a half years ago when I saw that beautiful phrase materialize on the screen of my Nexus. Now I read the works of the Founding Fathers, John Locke, and Adam Smith with the same enthusiasm I had for Cook-A-Doodle-Doo. The lofty prose that once repelled me now draws and fascinates my senses, though it’s not the only literature I read. I’ve flipped through the pages of World War 2, gripped by the timeless heroics contained within it; I’ve found the world of fiction to be just as gripping. Atlas Shrugged has become a recent quest of mine due in no small part to my aunt’s and mother’s insistence on reading it. My appreciation for having read Copperfield is enlarged with every page I turn.

In a way, David Copperfield was a right of passage for me. I was a good reader before Copperfield, but I never challenged myself (which had stagnated my reading skills). Copperfield developed my vocabulary, expanded my appreciation for fine literature, and worked every literary muscle I had. As I sit writing now, I look back on it as the true turning point in my journey of literacy. Do you know what I started doing after reading David Copperfield? I started using a thesaurus. I began to appreciate complex words and phrasings that added meat and zest to my writing. Since then, few things in writing have so consistently delighted my mind as the moment in time when a well-worded sentence and its proper placing lock eyes for the first time.

I won’t say that I would be an illiterate mess without reading
David Copperfield, but I do wonder what would be different. Would I appreciate word choices as much? Would I love reading as much as I do now? What would my essays have looked like otherwise? I could question on to exhaustion. But now my word count runs long, and I have typed far into the evening. With that homage to Dickens, this narrative I close having now realized how great a number of persons and proceedings have added to my literary journey and being eternally grateful for such a contribution as they have made.
Analysis & Response
Racism in the 1960s: America’s Great Failure

*William Tomlinson*

We often feel assured that our nation will perform its duties and protect us from harm. Yet, through history we realize that the United States has not always fulfilled this role. One particular area of failure is civil rights. The exhibits in the John E. Fleming Gallery of the National Afro-American Museum in Wilberforce, Ohio bring to light much of America’s failures to protect both past and present civil rights. The gallery features silhouettes of black victims from the 1960s, to present day standing side by side. By showing these victims of racism together, the gallery effectively connects the issues of the past with the present. To illustrate the struggle for civil rights, the museum displays several photographs from that time period echoing the message of African Americans. One photograph, a 1965 archival print in the John E. Fleming Gallery, portrays America’s failure to protect civil rights and the hopeless plight of the black life through an effective setting, evocative text, and a powerful appeal to pathos.

The photograph depicts five black women picketing in front of the White House. Despite peacefully standing there, their signs scream a message louder than they could ever vocalize. The signs read, “Negroes are Americans too, Protect them”, “Stop Brutality in Alabama” and, “Mr. President, How many must die before you act?” In addition to the disheartening messages, the photograph’s setting induces a sense of solemn hopelessness. Though the photograph is black and white, it captures the bleak feeling of a harsh winter day. Adding to this impression, the photograph captures one of the women walking away as though she has given up on her leader. Behind the women, stands the White House arrayed in all its glory, with the American flag flying high above the protestors. These women who face the photographer send a message: “Mr. President, do your duty.”

The photograph’s layout effectively amplifies the women’s
message. Because they are standing in front of the White House, the photographer captures an effective setting. Due to the symbolism of both the White House and the American flag, the setting appears ironic. While the White House symbolizes strength and power, these women protest inaction and weakness. While the American flag symbolizes freedom and equality, these women protest brutality and discrimination. The perspective of the photograph gives the impression that although the viewer wishes to view the beauty and symbolism of the White House and the flag, she must first confront the image of these women standing resolutely in front of the White House protesting inequality. Because the American flag is so high in the sky and the White House so lofty, they almost appear inauthentic compared to the visceral display below.

Though the angle of the photograph is powerful, its influence would be lost without the evocative text. The photograph’s text compels the viewer towards empathy for the women’s plight. The women portrayed hold three different signs that produce a unique effect. The sign, “Negroes are Americans too, Protect them” evokes sadness within the viewer. He realizes the failure of the American President to recognize these black individuals as Americans. “Stop Brutality in Alabama” not only causes sadness but also stirs up anger on behalf of these women. The last sign climaxes the viewer’s emotions with a powerful message to the President: “Mr. President, how many must die before you act?” In addition to encompassing grief, sorrow, and anger, this last message fully forces the viewer’s world into perspective. Any American would have declared inaction to be scandalous after September eleventh, yet the photograph informs the viewer that back in the 1960s, Americans were murdered and the President did nothing. Though the women stand silent, their signs carry messages louder than they could ever scream.

Because of the effective layout and compelling text, the photograph powerfully appeals to pathos—the emotion or humanity of a person. Specifically, the photograph forces the viewer to reflect on his responses and apply them to life. In addition to the printed signs, the women in the photograph tell a story. They tell a story of grief, anger, and hopelessness. One of the women is shown walking out of the photograph, away from the White House. The photograph that freezes the woman mid-walk makes her seem without hope, without purpose, and without options. Though she once stood for equality,
she now walks in grief, realizing no one will help. Because of the layout of the picture, the scene forces us to reflect on the failures of America. Coupling the layout with the text, the photograph elicits a powerful and uniquely American desire to help African-Americans in their plight.

Through an ironic setting, a memorable message, and a powerful emotional appeal, the photograph engraves itself on the viewers mind. The layout, incorporating the symbolism of the White House and the American flag, urges the viewer to consider the failures of America through the desolate scene below. The signs, protesting the racial discrimination in the United States, compel the viewer to empathize with the predicament of the five black women. The actions of the women, the layout of the photograph, and the text on the signs, masterfully appeal to the viewer’s humanity and emotion, triggering an eagerness to help. While the story ends there for many tourists, the impassioned American can glean much more. Because of the context of the photograph in the John E. Fleming gallery, the exhibit makes a point: Racism is alive and well. The silhouettes of victims past and present side by side require us to ponder how we will respond. Will we be the next President failing to protect our fellow Americans? Or will we have the courage to stand up and fight for what we know is right?
Imagine combining music into sculpture. Michael Jerome Bashaw brilliantly intertwines these two elements in his unique masterpiece, Music Grove, featured at the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center in Wilberforce, Ohio. Bashaw’s sculpture, created with bamboo and musical instruments, immediately catches your attention as you walk into the front lobby of the museum. The museum not only encapsulates the lives of African-Americans but also showcases African-American art. Michael Jerome Bashaw’s sculpture Music Grove brilliantly incorporates sound and music through the masterful use of unique natural elements, diverse textures, and interactive instruments.

Music Grove truly illustrates the beauty of combining music and sculpture. The sculpture’s main structural component is bamboo rods, connected with zip-ties, housing a variety of musical instruments. As one enters the museum, the sculpture virtually spans the entire lobby. Viewers weave their way through the expansive sculpture, stopping at each “station” to play the musical instruments and watch art come to life. Michael Bashaw not only uses ordinary musical instruments such as gongs and a xylophone, but he also creates natural instruments out of aluminum cans and metal funnels. One of the main instruments, housed in the center of the sculpture, is a sizable hand-made drum with beads inside. By tilting the drum in any direction, the beads rush to the sides, creating the sound of crashing waves on the seashore. The large metal funnels serve as rain-making devices. At the bottom of the funnel, a large piece of copper foil is stretched across the bottom. When water is poured down the funnel, it races down the basin, onto the copper foil, creating the sound of pouring rain.

Michael Bashaw incorporates several unique elements using natural lighting and organic materials, allowing him to remain faithful to the rustic feel he achieves. The natural sunlight in the front lobby of the museum highlights the sculpture and immediately
captures the viewer’s attention, whereas artificial light would remove the natural element from the sculpture. Bashaw uses a variety of raw materials to create the sculpture such as bamboo, water, and wood. The bamboo serves not only as the main structural component, but it also serves as a musical instrument viewers can play by tapping or rubbing thin wooden sticks up and down the bamboo. Another element of the sculpture, water, creates the gentle sound of rain. Wood is yet another significant natural component. One of the main sculpture instruments is a large xylophone, comprised almost solely of wood. In addition, Bashaw also incorporates natural sounds which promote the organic feel of the piece. He achieves sounds such as “thunder” emanating from the drum, rain resonating from the metal funnels, and perhaps, using one’s imagination, even woodpeckers pecking on trees by striking the bamboo with wooden sticks. Bashaw skillfully highlights the world’s beauty through his use of unique, natural elements.

Bashaw further enhances the piece by using diverse natural and man-made textures. Not only are these textures aesthetically appealing, but each texture also plays an important role in the instruments and specific sounds. The predominant element of the piece, bamboo, contains two different textures. The main section is smooth. The bamboo joints create a ribbed texture. Various sounds emanate as wooden sticks run across the smooth bamboo surface and then abruptly strike the rough edges of the bamboo joints. Gongs are also highlighted in the sculpture. Each gong produces a different sound and tone when struck. Some of the gongs are smooth while others have shallow to deep ridges. The ridges significantly affect the tone produced. In addition, Bashaw incorporates aluminum cans into the sculpture. A portion of the can is smooth while the other portion is ribbed. The predominant sound associated with the aluminum cans is harsh and piercing. The harsh sounds of the cans may be associated with the harsh sounds found in nature such as thunder.

Bashaw brilliantly incorporates music into art using interactive instruments made from natural and man-made materials. The xylophone, a featured instrument, is crafted almost completely out of wood. Not only is its size remarkable, but the various pitches
emanating from it are pleasing to the ear and showcase Bashaw’s remarkable musical talent. Large, hand-made mallets allow the viewer to interact and play with the xylophone. On one end of the xylophone, the pitches are high and soft, while the pitches on the other end are low and resonate. Located behind the xylophone, the metal gongs possess texture and size variations. Observers play the gongs by pulling back and releasing tennis balls attached to a thin, elastic line. Sound and tone not only vary as a result of the textural differences but also vary because of the force of the tennis balls. Another showcased instrument is a rain-making device made completely out of metal. When the observer pours water into the basins, the water hits the copper foil and produces the sound of pouring rain.

Michael Bashaw’s true talent shines through in Music Grove. Only a skilled artist and musician could create such a stunning and thoughtful piece. Bashaw emphasizes the organic feel of the piece by using predominantly natural elements. His frequent use of varying textures adds not only depth and interest to the piece, but he also creates diverse sounds emanating from the interactive instruments. The sculpture allows the viewer to actively interact with the instruments, truly bringing the sculpture to life. Music Grove is one of many fascinating exhibits in the museum. The National-Afro American Museum beautifully highlights Music Grove by featuring it in the front lobby of the museum. Interactive sculptures are a rarity and many viewers will thoroughly enjoy this piece. One may never again have the opportunity to experience a musical sculpture. Experience for yourself the marvels of sculpture and music.
The Blessing of Pain

Gregg Mendel

Coming across friends is hard when someone lives in the country. That’s why I valued my friend Nate so much. He was the only kid I liked, or liked me, for miles around (in fact, he was the only kid for miles around). Nate and I grew to be very strong friends, and our relationship seemed as good and normal as a relationship could be, till the last winter before I left for college. Nate starting acting a little strange, like hiding from his parents and other people at random times, or zoning out in the middle of a conversation, but I didn’t think that much about it. Until he tried to commit suicide. I learned that Nate had developed depression and slight schizophrenia. He was immediately taken away from his family and put in a psych ward, and even after he got better, authorities kept him away from his parents for almost a year. The aching and loneliness I, Nate, and his family experienced was terrible. But one of the worst parts of this trial was wondering why God, who always wants the best for us, allowed us to go through this pain.

The problem of pain has always bothered Christians. For non-believers, pain is just something that everyone has to deal with and can’t do anything about; it’s just part of nature. But Christians see pain differently. God loves and cares for mankind more than we could ever imagine, but He also allows us to experience pain. C.S. Lewis’s aptly named book The Problem of Pain talks about this conundrum (89-109). When most people would think of pain as a curse, Lewis sees it as a necessity, and I couldn’t agree with him more. But I think I must take it one step further. Pain is not only a necessity but also a blessing, because it warns us, corrects us, guides us, and brings us to Jesus.

Pain can be a blessing in many different ways, and the first is as a warning system. When a person stubs his or her toe, it obviously does not feel good. This is because God designed the body so it could experience pain. But hundreds of people in hospitals and emergency rooms around the world ask themselves, “wouldn’t life
be better if we never had to feel a cut on our leg or the excruciating pain of an exploded appendix?” The answer is no, life wouldn’t be better. The pain sourcebook, a guide to how pain works, states that when a person get injured, the nerves in the body start signaling the brain that something is wrong, and the pain felt is the body’s way of informing that person of the problem (Shannon 6-7). But this is not an unnecessary action, it is protection. Leprosy is an excellent example of why people should be thankful for pain. Shumet, Demissie, and Bekele describe leprosy in their article on the disease as a bacterial infection that stops the ability to feel pain (313-314). People with leprosy are usually missing fingers because they couldn’t feel the difference between cutting vegetables and cutting digits off. They have burn marks all over their bodies from when they leaned against a stove and couldn’t tell that their hand was on fire. Many graves are filled by people with the disease who didn’t know that their appendix had burst because they felt no discomfort, and therefore did nothing about it. Their world is a dangerous place. Dr. Paul Brand talks about his surgical work with lepers in his book The Gift Nobody Wants. He witnessed firsthand what it is like to go through life without pain, and he saw how the painless life of his patients slowly destroyed them, as they lost fingers limbs, and eventually their lives. When his first grandson was born, he remembers thanking God that the child cried after being pricked in the finger, showing that he felt the jab of the needle (196-197). This baby had the gift nobody wanted; pain.

Pain that comes from punishment can be a blessing too, because it keeps us from sin. Punishment is one of the best ways for humans learn their lessons, as is seen throughout many passages in the bible, like Zacharias who lost his speech for doubting God. Many people, like authors Straus, Douglas, and Medeiros who wrote the book The Primordial Violence, believe that punishment does not help people learn lessons but instead makes them more violent and rebellious (81-92). But common sense can prove their belief wrong. If a parent sits a child down and tells him all the reasons why painting the living room in chocolate was a bad thing to do, but does not punish them, the child will see that they can get away with it and will do it again when their parents are gone. But if a parent sits a child down, not on the coach for a talk, but instead on their knee to have a spanking, that kid will think twice about
being artistic with chocolate sauce. In the same way God uses pain as a punishment to reinforce right from wrong. If the Lord wrote in the Bible that adultery was bad, but didn't punish anyone who slept around, no one would follow his commandments, because there would be no immediate consequences. But when God adds pain, like a man losing the respect of his wife after being caught cheating, we listen to Him more than if there was no punishment at all. I'm not saying that people are always punished for adultery, like with the woman caught in adultery in John 8 (King James Version), but enough people are punished to scare us away from this sin. 1 Thessalonians 5:22 commands “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (KJV). And because punishment keeps us away from sin and evil, I would count it as a blessing.

Another reason pain is a blessing is that it not only corrects us but can be used to guide us. I know a student that came to college set on being an engineer. He had always gotten good grades in high school, and was ready to do the same in the next step of his education. But things didn’t go as planned. He started having trouble in many of his science classes, and didn’t feel drawn to anything he was leaning about. He started praying and asking God what he was supposed to do. The Lord eventually began calling him to ministry, and that’s his major today. The emotional pain he went through, like disappointing grades and the feeling of losing his love for what he had wanted to do since he was a kid, eventually showed him what God wanted in his life. Sometimes people must endure a little pain before they can see the Lord’s will.

Even pain that doesn’t warn, guide, or punish is both a necessity and a blessing. Let’s focus first on why this “random pain” is a necessity. It is necessary because we rebelled against God. When Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden, God promised that if they rebelled against him there would be consequences, like pain and death. We defied Him anyway and our world fell apart. This is why things like Central Pain Syndrome exist. This syndrome is caused by damage to the central nervous system, usually by stroke. It tops the charts for the worst physical pain humans can endure and it is described as feeling like the body is on fire all day long, and walking in the wind is like walking through razor blades. It is the feeling of a dentist jabbing a tooth nerve, except that pain is everywhere in the body. Many people say that it doesn’t seem right
that a kind, innocent mother has to go through useless pain like this. In the same way, they say it seems like a hardworking man shouldn't have to go through the pain of losing everything he has worked for, or parents have to go through the searing loss of their child. To many it feels like in these moments God is just throwing around pain for no particular reason. But what we all must realize is that the innocent mother with Central pain syndrome is not really innocent. As much as I hate to say it, she deserves what she is getting. As I mentioned earlier, when mankind rebelled against the Lord, they brought sin and death upon themselves. That mother doesn’t just deserve Central Pain Syndrome, she also deserves hell, just the way I do. No one likes to think of pain this way, but it’s true. The agony parents feel when their child is injured may not be a direct punishment for a particular sin, but it is still necessary because God promised there would be pain if we turned against Him, and the Lord can’t go back on His promises.

The pain of this fallen world is also a blessing because it brings us to Jesus. If the world contained no discomfort, everything would seem perfect. No one would get sick, hungry, sad, or frustrated. We would live out our happy lives, and then one-day die peacefully in our sleep. This sounds perfect, but in reality it’s a horror story. Without pain, people would soon forget about God, because people wouldn’t need Him, just the way the rich man in the bible “didn’t need Jesus”. Matthew 19:24 says “And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (King James Version). Tremper Longman’s biblical commentary The Expositors Bible Commentary talks about how it nearly impossible for a rich man to enter into heaven; he sees no reason to worry about his eternal future because he has no problems in the present (Longman 480). This is how people would feel without pain. They wouldn’t be scared of hell because they wouldn’t know what agony was. Everyone would die thinking all is well, and wake up in eternal torment. This is where pain comes in. When we are broken, lonely, terrified, and sad we realize that we live in a fallen world. We recognize our sin, and hopefully come running to the Lord.

As for my friend Nate, that suicide attempt was the best thing that ever happened to him. On his way to the correctional facility, two police officers led him to Christ. Everyone, including myself,
thought that he was saved. He could have gone through life relatively painless, died a quiet death, and gone straight to hell. Comfort would have doomed him, but pain brought him to accept Jesus. Thank God for pain, the most hated blessing of all time.

Works Cited

Prices and Patriotism: Restoring Lost Value

Peter Kennel

In the article “The Real Value of Higher Education,” Tom Ross, president of the University of North Carolina System, calls North Carolina and the nation as a whole to invest more time, thought, and resources in higher education. Ross asserts that America is becoming too focused on the professional world and has lost sight of the true value of education (2). While acknowledging the importance of the professional sphere, he contends that focusing more on education would lead to far-reaching benefits to society and the economy.

To support his claim, Ross attributes a number of specific benefits to universities, claiming that they have historically been regarded as “places of big discoveries and bigger dreams,” places where America has solved many of its most difficult problems, and places where “generations of students have learned to think for themselves and how to work collaboratively with others” (2-3). Ross then contrasts this view of universities with how he claims America views them today. He states that they are increasingly regarded as “factories” where people are trained as efficiently as possible to enter the workforce (3).

Ross opposes this new definition of higher education with a warning that too much focus on the workforce and extreme operational efficiency puts the benefits he has attributed to the former definition at risk. He asserts that America has been great because its system of higher education “has been the best in the world,” claiming that universities have been foundational to America’s “democratic society” by developing the talents of communication and critical thought (4). Continuing from this claim, Ross warns that America is losing this commitment to higher education and now spends about 30% less per college or university student that it did 25 years ago (4). He claims that America is “beginning to pay the price” of defunding
education, and while other nations are investing increasing amounts in their higher education systems, American students are finding it increasingly difficult to afford tuition and are incurring significant debts (4-5). Ross claims that this is “a dangerous trend,” and that he is convinced America is headed down the wrong road with regard to the funding of higher education (5, 7).

To illustrate this principle and the challenges that arise from it, Ross turns to his own UNC System as an example. He provides statistics about its size and role in the North Carolina economy, claiming that UNC enrolls 220,000 students from around the nation and the globe, has 60,000 employees (which he claims is more than any private enterprise in the state), has a budget of over 9 billion dollars, and has the impact of generating 426,000 new jobs and 6.4 percent of the state’s annual GDP (5-6). In spite of these numbers, Ross asserts that his administration is “operating in an environment of shrinking resources” (6). He cites decreased state investment as the cause of a number of problems for his university, including increased tuition, dropping enrollment, loss of faculty, and shrinking funding for on-campus research (6-14). Ross provides a number of statistics and examples to support his assertion; in one particular example, he attempts to demonstrate that a loss of faculty, which he claims results from decreasing state dollars, has caused a drop in enrollment (12-13). Ross claims, however, that his administration is taking steps to address these issues and increase operational efficiency. He calls America as a whole to become involved in this process as well, suggesting several possible solutions to the issues he has brought up, including renewed state funding for public universities, better incentives for qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession, and increased funding for research (6-14).

Ross contends that more of this kind of investment in higher education and the subsequent development of mental talents would lead to great benefits in both the public and private spheres. From the public perspective, he states that it would make America more competitive in the global economy, strengthen the domestic economy, give rise to stronger communities, lead to greater political participation among the citizenry, lower demand for social services,
lessen poverty, and reduce crime; from the private perspective, he asserts that it would lead to greater health, higher chances of employment, and a better standard of life. In light of these stated benefits, he calls Americans to invest in the future of their posterity by reestablishing higher standards of educational attainment.

Ross has effectively designed his argument to appeal to the concerns of the contemporary American citizen; in a reasonable yet impassioned and urgent tone, he connects greater investment in higher education with achieving the foremost goals of today’s social and political scene to create a powerful pathos, backing his claim with a large body of first-hand evidence, which forms a solid ethos and provides just the right amount of logos to make his argument seem reasonable. Ross shows an impressive understanding of the contemporary political discourse in how he exploits it to form his pathos; he draws his audience to his side of the debate by appealing to their sense of national pride and their concerns about the current state and future of the country. Though his argument is unlikely to firmly convince a scholarly audience due to scarcity of outside references and general failure to cite sources of information, it is well designed to accomplish its intended purpose.

Ross’s tone is especially well-suited to add subconscious credibility to his argument, subtly creating both ethos and pathos. By using qualifiers such as “in some significant measure” and limiting the scope of his claims, he presents his argument in an informative and reasonable light yet speaks with a great deal of urgency and strength of purpose; this works to pacify and gain the interest of the audience, though they may not initially agree with him, making them willing to listen to what he has to say (4). After he has gained their attention, Ross focuses every word and the entire structure of his argument on creating the impression of patriotism and a genuine interest for the common good. He refers to America with terms such as “democratic” and “great” on multiple occasions and draws on a vocabulary of social progress and consequences, using positive terms such as “better” and “stronger” to refer to the results of his proposed investment and negative terms such as “dangerous” and “disaster” to refer to the status quo of decreasing emphasis on higher education (4, 5, 8, 13, 15). In addition to creating an appeal to the audience’s patriotism, this serves to polarize the issue in favor of his perspective. His use of we to refer to both himself
and the audience throughout the article serves to create a sense of camaraderie, indicating that he and the audience are both seeking the same goal as Americans.

Building on this image of civic concern, Ross begins weaving the threads of his pathos. By focusing on the benefits higher education can provide to America and its citizens, Ross creates a powerful appeal to his audience’s sense of civic duty. Ross exploits contemporary domestic concerns to solicit a positive emotional response by asserting that higher educational attainment would lead to various societal benefits such as reduced crime and poverty (7, 8, 15). By referring to universities in glowing terms such as “the foundation of our democratic society” and calling education, among other things, “the great equalizer” and “the pathway to opportunity,” he recruits the positive reaction evoked by these expressions to support his cause (4, 15). Also, he repeatedly exploits concern over America’s narrowing lead in the world marketplace by equating better education with the ability to compete in the global scene and implying that other nations are beginning to overtake America because they are investing more in education while America is investing less (4, 7, 13). This focus on global competition becomes the source of Ross’s major rebuttal to those who think America already produces too many college graduates, when he states the special talent endowed by higher education “will provide the competitive edge of the future” (7).

Through these factors, Ross associates investing in higher education with multiple grails of contemporary American thought to create the core of his pathos. By equating his goal with progress towards higher standards of life, lower crime rates, less unemployment, greater economic security, stronger communities, better health, and political participation, Ross equates the current trend away from higher education with the reverse, effectively placing his opposition at direct odds with the American dream. He draws on every hope, dream, aspiration, and fear of the typical contemporary American mind and ties them together in a complex, strongly worded, and seemingly reasonable rope of emotional appeal which he uses to connect his argument to his audience. By the time he is finished, the audience is practically forced to agree with him, or risk the label of “unpatriotic.”
Ross also supports his argument with a great deal of statistical information on the subject, most of it from his own administration and therefore firsthand. These specific details, such as his claim that his university system enrolls 220,000 students and creates the equivalent of 426,000 new jobs, help to add ethos to his argument, especially those concerning the scale and contributions of his own university system (5-6). In providing an impressive set of numbers concerning the operation of the UNC System, Ross establishes himself as an authority on his subject. He uses shock and awe tactics, claiming, for instance, that UNC employs more people in the state than private businesses such as Walmart, to forcefully demonstrate why his audience should listen to his views (5-6). He also provides a large amount of specific detail about the challenges his administration faces and what they are doing to address them, including efforts to increase operational efficiency and improve methods of instruction (9-10). This helps to establish his integrity as someone who is actively involved in the issue that he is calling others to become involved in. In a particularly effective set of examples pertaining to on-campus research, Ross brings his discussion of the benefits provided by universities directly into the lives of his audience by citing ways in which the research at UNC has affected them personally and will continue to do so, namely by the development of fruit preservatives, removal of allergens from peanuts, and the creation of medical nanotechnology (11, 12).

These statistics, in addition to providing ethos, help to ground Ross’s argument in the real world by providing solid numeric illustrations for the various points of his rhetoric to create logos for his claim. Due to his knowledge of his audience, Ross is careful not to overuse this aspect of his data, but instead creates a balance between sounding informed and not losing the attention of the crowd by inundating them with technical details. Generally, he uses his logos as a logical framework for his pathos, powerfully combining well-targeted emotional appeal seemingly solid reasoning and numbers. One excellent example of this can be found when he concludes from the state’s reduced spending per student that America is “disinvesting in higher education, and … beginning to pay the price” (4). This statement serves as an emotionally driven rebuttal to those that believe America cannot afford to invest more in higher education. Through the statement, Ross not only outlines the issue
of declining investment, but also asserts that America cannot afford to not invest more resources in education; there is a greater price to be paid for its failure to do so. Supporting this claim is an earlier citation by Ross of a quote from New York Times columnist Frank Bruni: “It’s impossible to put a dollar value on a nimble, adaptable intellect…” (3). As Ross has already established this quality as one of the products of higher education, he invites the audience to refer back to this link and transfer the stated value to higher education itself.

In Ross’s logos, we find one of the greatest weaknesses of his argument, namely the fact that his logical support structure is largely internalized. With a few minor exceptions, Ross relies on the strength of his own reason. Also, he draws data almost exclusively from his own UNC System to convince the audience of his claim, neglecting to provide outside support for his argument. This is most likely due to his attempts to portray himself as an ultimate authority on the subject, but will leave many of the critical thinkers he discusses wondering about how much stock they can put in an argument that contains little reference for further research, seems to summarily dismiss the opposition without bothering to deal with it specifically, and fails to provide any information about where its data came from. For instance, Ross generally fails to support his core premise that higher education cultivates critical thought, instead asking the audience to simply take his word for it by stating “universities have long been known… as places of ideas and debate…” (2). This statement begs the question of, “who has known this?” By excluding outside references, he calls the credibility of the data behind his argument into question and risks losing the ears of the more analytical members of the audience. At the extreme, this issue could actually engender a negative response, raising the question of why the author seems to think he is the only authority worth hearing on the subject.

Despite a general lack of outside support, Tom Ross creates a convincing picture of his vision of the benefits of increased educational investment and attainment through a blend of carefully crafted appeals to the values of contemporary America, impressive statistics, and first-hand data and examples effectively designed to recruit the average American to his position. His careful control over the mood of the audience helps him communicate his point as effectively as possible. As a result, Ross makes a compelling call to restore the educational values he argues that America is losing.
Good Grief!

Cat Clemons

Grief has a way of grabbing the attention, chiseling at every other aspect of life until nothing seems as important as that grief. Important issues melt away as pain drills for the center of every situation. Is grief important in the journey of life? While grief is natural, certainly, what lessons can be gleaned? In a Christian’s life, there are many counterintuitive situations which have the unique ability to produce fruit. In the same way, grief holds an unexpected present for Christians. In a grieving C.S. Lewis’ journal, A Grief Observed, Logos, Pathos, and Ethos work together to successfully convey the idea that there is no sanctification without grief.

The process of grief must include the realization that the loved one no longer exists in the way that they did on earth. While it is tempting to set up a shrine in the mind to someone who is dead, it should not happen. C. S. Lewis appeals to Logos when he states, “But don’t come talking to me about the consolations of religion or I shall suspect you do not understand” (Lewis 25). Here he is referring to the argument of his friends and acquaintances and even family who were saying that H., Lewis’ late wife, was safe and much happier in her heavenly home. Lewis declares this brings little comfort to the grieving. He declares the idea that he ought to rejoice in his wife’s new situation for the sake of religion implausible and discouraging. Religion cannot comfort him because he cannot see what it has done to H.. He believes that she is living in another world, another time, another place. However, he does not know what he believes is true; his lament echoes that she will never again be what she was on earth. In her book The Truth About Grief, Ruth Davis Konigsburg discusses how people radically change their mindset about their loved one and how they themselves change through the process of grieving. They must create a new normal for themselves (Konigsburg 170-175). Lewis knows especially that “the specific maternal happiness must be written off. Never, in any place or time, will she have a son on her knees, or bathe him, or tell him a story, or plan for his future,
or see her grandchild” (Lewis 26-27). Lewis claims that he doesn’t know how H. exists anymore and his warrant is the great mystery of death. The data supplied is that no one truly knows for sure what is on the other side of death or the capacity in which souls exist; indisputable evidence. He despairs over this because it is so hard for him to acknowledge that his beloved wife doesn’t exist in the same way that he knew her. In this Logos argument, Lewis must accept his wife’s new identity. A mark of sanctification is letting go of everything save God.

Grief unveils new, mortal human beings who suddenly wonder what kind of other horrors life holds for them once a loved one is ripped away. Ethos is introduced almost from the very beginning of Lewis’ writing. The raw levels of emotion that he uses in describing his very first reactions to the death of H. are painfully accurate to anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one. He describes the experience as being “concussed” (Lewis 3), a feeling that is too accurate for those who cannot quite grasp what they know is true. He uses the feelings and thoughts that race through a victim’s mind as data to warrant his claim of truly knowing and understanding what it means to lose a loved one. In this way, his audience can believe him to be credible when he uses something they have potentially felt themselves. Charles M. Sell writes in his book Transitions Through Adult Life, “Since grief is normal, it is not an enemy to be attacked with Scripture verses and sweet-sounding phrases. Grief is a tunnel to go through, not a fly over.” (Sell 179) A Grief Observed is credible in its portrayal of not knowing how to properly grieve with one another. Sell says exactly what Lewis alluded to: his grief is being attacked by well-meaning friends, as though it is unnatural. Sell acknowledges a concept that most would not want recognized: grief will never fully be worked through. It lingers. It is uncomfortable for those who know the griever, but it is harder for the bereaved to know their own pain as well as the discomfort caused to those around them. The process of sanctification also involves, as Lewis points out, a journey. Grief is not the enemy, but a natural part of life. Grief employs the use of long-suffering, perseverance, and the process of a journey. In many ways, grief is a parallel and a prerequisite to sanctification.
Seeking answers from God is important to how Believers view grief. Employed in Lewis’ own raw grief, pathos finds its place. In his apt words, “If she was in God’s hands all the time, I have seen what they did to her here. Do they suddenly become gentler to us the moment we are out of the body? And if so, why?” (Lewis 27) In his unexplainable pain, Lewis allows himself something that many Christians perceive as the ultimate sin: he questions God. Yet as much as this is frowned upon in Christian society, Lewis connects with his audience in a feeling that many have been shared when experiencing loss. Did God make a mistake? How could He choose to wound so deeply? Lewis continues: “If God’s goodness is inconsistent with hurting us, then either God is not good or there is no God: for in the only life we know He hurts us beyond our worst fears and beyond all we can imagine” (Lewis 27-28). Lewis expresses accurately how a grieving mind might perceive all sorts of “godly comfort” and how each of them ultimately fall short. The biggest point that Lewis appears to drive at is the helplessness of the bereaved and those who surround them. Lewis even dares to asks the hard question: How is God good when He has allowed something clearly bad to happen? In his book The Problem of Pain, Lewis writes, “If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both. This is the problem of pain, in its simplest form” (Lewis 12). Here, Lewis uses the claim that if God is good, He shouldn’t hurt us. His warrant for his claim is that no one who claims to hold His child in the palm of His hand would intentionally inflict that person who is trusting Him. Just as a relationship between two people has little chance of growing if there is absolutely no conflict, so a Christian’s trust and growth in Christ will not progress unless there are periods of time where everything is falling apart. There must be conflict and adversity to have sanctification. Otherwise, there would be no need for sanctification itself.

Ultimately, Lewis draws in Logos, Pathos, and Ethos to convey a compelling argument that many do not want to consider. Sanctification, not a simple process, uses uncomfortable methods to get attention. Acknowledging who God is before everyone and everything else is essential in sanctification. How would we walk closer if we were not driven closer by the storms of life? The idea that
God is not good is false even when grief makes it seem plausible. Yet, questioning God is not wrong. These three new concepts, brought into light by Lewis, are difficult to accept. But once they are acknowledged, the process of sanctification is made clearer to the blind mourner. When we cannot see what is good through the pain of loss, God is the ultimate good. Only His path can lead us to sanctification. And if His path brings us through the valley of grief, He is still desirable above all else. Good grief! Is this true?

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Is It Fair to be Fair?

Gregg Mendel

The Iraqi government executed Saddam Hussein on December 30th, 2006. It was a day many people had looked forward to. Saddam Hussein had killed thousands of civilians with gas attacks and tortured hundreds of citizens and journalist. When it came time for him to be executed, no one felt sorry for Hussein. His execution was the epitome of justice; he got what he deserved. But justice is not always this clean cut. Imagine a poor man living in Afghanistan, desperately trying to feed his starving family. He has tried everything. Almost everything. Stealing food is the one option left, so he tries to take some bread from a local vendor. He is caught, and by law, the merchant saws off the poor man’s right arm on the spot. I would argue that this is equally as just as Saddam Hussein’s execution. How could this be? It is because of the simple (yet surprising) fact that justice is not the same as fairness. Fairness is attempting to make everyone equal and giving the less fortunate the upper hand. Justice is the opposite; giving what is deserved, no matter how unfair it might seem. It is never based on feelings. Fairness and justice are never the same.

Even though justice is never the same as fairness, that doesn’t mean an outcome can’t be both just and fair. This coincidence of justice and fairness overlapping is illustrated excellently by the odd story of silicon and germanium. Renowned science author Sam Kean relates in his book The Disappearing Spoon about the battle between these two elements, and the sad fate of germanium. Back in 1945, Bell labs in New Jersey invented the first semiconductor. This was a colossal step for science, opening the door for numerous electrical devices, such as the computer and calculator. Semiconductors had one major problem though. These mechanisms could only work in a tube completely emptied of all air, called a vacuum. This made semiconductors somewhat impractical and a bother to work with. Most scientists agreed that lugging a giant, cumbersome, breakable, glass tube around with their computer was no easy feat (Kean 41).

Then in 1947, two scientists, Bardeen and Brattain, utilized
the previously useless element germanium and made the first solid state (non-vacuum) semiconductor. The two inventors had helped realize the dream of a small, mobile computer, since vacuum tubes would no longer be needed. But why does no one know about or even recognize element 32 and the scientists who used it so cleverly? Simply because silicon stole the show. Silicon is almost as good of a semiconductor as germanium and much cheaper. People recognized this quickly and replaced germanium with silicon in all semiconductors (Kean 47). Silicon is now the most beloved element to scientists and anyone who loves computers, and it even has a valley named after it. But the creators of the first solid state semiconductor and their beloved element have been all but forgotten. This is an excellent example of justice and fairness overlapping. It would be just to give these scientists recognition because they were the ones to discover the non-vacuum semiconductor. Without Bardeen, Brattain, and germanium I would not be typing this sentence. It would also be the fair thing to do, because giving them credit would be helping the less fortunate. History must do the just and fair thing and recognize these important contributors to science.

But most times, justice and fairness are nowhere close to each other. Going back to the man in Afghanistan, isn’t amputating the starving man’s arm a case of injustice? Absolutely not. Amputation for theft is a law in the middle east. This man knew before he committed the act that if he failed he would lose an arm. This law is very clear, and he knew the consequences. Even though this seems extremely unfair, because the man is starving and needed to feed his family, it is completely just. In fact, letting him go free would be an act of injustice, since he would not be receiving the punishment required.

Many people wrongly assume that justice and fairness are the same thing. This leads them to follow the path that appears “right,” even though it is really the path that is fair, not just. In Catharine Sedgwick’s book A New-England Tale she describes the story of a girl named Jane and her encounter with a poor woman. The poor woman had traveled hundreds of miles and lost a child on the way to see Jane and her relatives. She trekked this great distance to collect 100 dollars (a large sum back then) that Jane’s father owed
her (Sedgwick 73). The only problem was that Jane’s father was dead. But this does not stop Jane from showing kindness and giving the poor woman the 100 dollars. Sedgwick pities the misfortunate lady and says it was the just thing for Jane to do, and in the end, all seems fair. After all, the poor woman was not being selfish in asking for the money, she was only trying to feed her starving children. So it would be fair to give her the sum owed by the father. But this is not justice. By law Jane did not owe this lady money, because debts cannot be passed from parent to child. The poor woman had no right to the money she received, and therefore she got the money in an unjust way. Justice is not always what we picture it to be.

The bottom line is this: fairness is based on how we feel, but justice is not. Justice is an unwavering truth that holds steady whether desirable or not, or whether it is the kind thing to do or not. Many things that people think of as unjust are actually the opposite. Nicholas Wolterstorff assumes in his book Justice: Rights and Wrongs that he does not need to explain to his audience that betraying someone’s trust is wrong because everyone already knows it’s wrong (295). But betraying someone’s trust can actually be a very just thing to do. For example, what if a friend strutted up to me and said “I swiped that lady’s wallet while she wasn’t looking, but don’t tell anyone.” According to Wolterstorff’s thinking, I should let him get away with this crime because betraying his trust would be wrong. So some actions that seem obviously wrong might actually be the right thing to do. Another example of how justice cannot be based on feeling is the death penalty. In Evan Mandery’s book A Wild Justice: The Death and Resurrection of Capital Punishment in America, he sympathizes with those trying to abolish capital punishment. His book follows the Furman vs. Georgia case which caused the death penalty to be obliterated in 1972. In a 5-4 decision, the supreme court ruled that death was a “cruel and unusual punishment” (236). Many people agreed that the death penalty was too harsh, and that they would not want to be put to death if they had committed a crime, and that they feel this is unfair. Stop right there. As soon as humans take their own considerations into account, the death penalty switches from a discussion of what’s just to a discussion of what’s fair. Whether the death penalty is right or wrong, opinions must be left out of the discussion. Feelings must never be considered when dealing with justice.

Justice can never coexist with fairness, except by coincidence. But justice and mercy can. 1 Corinthians 15:3 says “Christ died for
our sins according to the scriptures” (King James Version). This is the paramount example of justice and mercy coinciding. When man first sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, we were immediately doomed to an eternity in hell. God had warned us that sin would bring both physical and spiritual death. But just like the starving man in Afghanistan, mankind chose to ignore the warnings and commit the sin. The fact that sin must be paid for is undeniable and unescapable, because God cannot break his promise of punishing wrong doings. Thankfully, the Lord provided an option for everyone, and that was his son, Jesus. He died on the cross to take away all people’s sin, even though he had never done any wrong. In this way, justice was fulfilled by punishment of sin, and mercy was given in the form of a second chance and a second choice. Just like Adam and Eve had a choice of whether or not to follow God, the entire world now has the choice to accept and embrace Jesus or reject his gift of salvation.

It should be evident by now that justice is not and never will be the same as fairness. Justice is putting a poor family in jail for not paying their taxes, hanging a soldier for falling asleep at his post, and exporting illegal aliens even when they have no life in their home country. It is giving the gold mettle to the competitor no one likes, and spanking a child for lying. Justice is sending me to hell for stealing a peanut. But thank the Lord that justice and mercy can be used together, or we could all be going to hell with no one to blame but ourselves and a piece of fruit.

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Research Writing
An Overview of Second Language Acquisition

Adam Rinehart, J.D. Lewis, Sara Passamonte, and Matthew Beal

Summary

What are the traits of successful second language acquisition, and what causes difficulty in acquiring a second language? These are questions that students at Cedarville University explore in LING 3080 (Linguistics for Language Learning). In LING 3080, students determine how much of a language can be acquired within a semester through trial and error. During this process, students track their progress and determine the factors that lead to the success or failure of acquiring a second language. Working in groups of two or more, students are given a high degree of freedom regarding the methods they use and are free to choose the language they wish to study. Additionally, they aim to become as fluent as possible in that language during the semester (approximately four months).

There are several stated reasons for desiring to acquire a second language. The writer of essay 15 mentions studying Arabic out of an interest in Middle Eastern countries with a highlighted need for missions work. Some drew their enthusiasm from a previous experience with second language acquisition. The author of essay 9 writes, “From seventh to twelfth grade I had learned Spanish and thought it fairly easy to learn (Essay 9, pg. 2).” Most writers, however, base a majority of their decisions on a keen interest in the culture associated with their chosen language. The writer of essay 10 tells of having an interest in Russia’s history and architecture, while the author of essay 14 wishes to use American Sign Language to effectively communicate with people afflicted by hearing impairments.

Some common threads exist among the writers of these essays. First, all the writers have previous experiences with learning new
languages. Many of the authors state that they took some Spanish in high school, and all report some knowledge of another language. This being the case, most of the second languages known to the authors are based off the Latin alphabet. Another common thread is the mood of the authors. The authors report that they held a high level of enthusiasm at the outset of the project and were pleased with their attempts to pick up the second language at the end.

However, the authors frequently write of the many struggles they encounter in their attempts. These struggles can be grouped into three categories: motivation, time, and learning environment. Each essay discusses the deficiencies within these categories that plagued the writers. Several of them state that, should these deficiencies be rectified, there would be substantial improvement in the acquisition of the second language. Therefore, a critical analysis of these essays shows that proper motivation, adequate time, and a structured learning environment are necessary and effective tools for second-language acquisition.

Of Motivation

A lack of proper motivation, as the authors uniformly admit, is an obvious and prevalent issue. Two types of motivation are regularly mentioned in the essays—integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation stems from the desire to gain knowledge and become involved with a culture (Essay 13). Conversely, instrumental motivation results from the projected benefits of an action (Essay 13). Both types of motivation are present in the essays.

Despite the typically strong zeal among the writers at the outset of the course, various complications arose throughout the process of learning that negatively affected the authors’ motivation. One basic complication was a lack of effort on the part of the authors. The writer of essay 10 admits that a pure lack of effort caused failure on his or her part, and the author of essay 13 reports a failure to be “proactive (Essay 13, pg. 5).” Several of the authors report that, after the first month or two, their original motivation was either dead or fading fast. Understandably, the author of essay 14 discloses that additional school and work loads began to abate the desire to study the second language.

The use of accountability partners yielded mixed results. The author of essay 15 reports that, occasionally, neither partner was
able to assist the other due to a lack of motivation. For others, the accountability partners were a major asset. For instance, the author of essay 9 writes that most of his or her group meetings proved to be successful. These meetings resulted in successful vocabulary and pronunciation review. Ultimately, most of the writers benefitted from having a partner or two but found it difficult to establish meeting times.

One recurring issue that appears in the essays regards those who worked with a language not based off the Latin alphabet. Alphabetic problems complicated the issues of those who were already struggling with poor motivation. For example, the author of essay 15 writes that he or she found the Arabic alphabet to be painfully different from the Latin alphabet. The writers of essays 10, 13, 14, and 15 all report struggles with learning a new alphabet. In a nice summary of the general attitude towards the new alphabets, the author of essay 10 writes, “If anything, this experience has given me a desire to learn every language that DOES share a Latin alphabet with English (Essay 10, pg. 2).” Overall, the motivation of the students contributed heavily to the success or failure of their second language acquisition.

Of Time

As the writers attempted to overcome falling levels of motivation, a lack of time to study further strained the authors. From this lack of time, a plethora of problems arose. A consistent, pronounced issue was the authors’ failure to set effective and realistic goals. The authors of essays 13 and 15 mention a lack of planning, which led to inconsistent, fruitless meetings.

Several authors write that they had trouble meeting with their partners and/or getting any fruitful results from the meetings. Specifically, the author of essay 13 writes that he or she failed to meet with his or her partner as many times as originally planned because no set number of meetings was required. The author of essay 15 states that he or she met with his or her partner infrequently, which became a factor that contributed to poor meeting results. Similarly, a serious problem arose in the inability of some authors to find time to meet with their partners. Such was the case with the author of essay 10. At times, even the best meeting plans came to ruin. The author of essay 12 states that, despite having prepared opportunities
to meet, he or she was unable to meet with his or her partner as many times as planned.

Other time-related problems existed as well. The writers of essays 13, 14, and 15 state that they did not have enough time to absorb the language and found themselves misusing what little time they had. The author of essay 15 states that he or she would become frustrated with the Arabic alphabet and fail to work on it for weeks at a time. The lack and mismanagement of time bedeviled the authors and stifled their efforts to effectively acquire their second languages.

Of a Structured Learning Environment

The final hindrance to second language acquisition results from a loosely structured learning environment. This seems surprising at first, but it’s shown in the essays to be a frustrating impediment. The author of essay 10 identifies closely with this problem and determines that he or she lacked the self-discipline needed to make satisfactory progress. Likewise, the author of essay 9 states, “Not having a structured classroom and teacher hindered my learning and caused frustration (Essay 9, pg. 3).” Even the use of online programs failed to provide any sort of structured learning environment.

Another side effect of lacking a structured learning environment was the absence of a teacher to instruct the students in their respective languages. Already facing a lack of resources, the author of essay 15 desired the help of a teacher. Without a proficient teacher, he or she was uncertain of the correct usage for different aspects of Arabic.

Conversely, some were able to supplement this lack of a structured learning environment to a degree. The author of essay 12 had female roommates who spoke Portuguese. Through them, she was able to fill some of the gaps of not having a classroom setting, but she still struggled to develop the non-oral parts of the language. In general, the lack of a structured learning environment negatively affected motivation and frustrated the efforts of the writers.

Conclusion

The essays provide solutions to the complications found in the language learning project. Pertaining to motivation, success results from attaining both integrative and instrumental motivation and having helpful accountability partners. Pertaining to time, it is necessary to utilize it properly and to have an ample supply of it.
Regarding the learning environment, it is uniformly expressed that structure is needed. Where structure exists, results are markedly better. This analysis communicates that proper motivation, adequate time, and a structured learning environment are necessary and effective tools for second-language acquisition. The elements of successful second-language acquisition are evident in the essays, and all three should be followed to maximize efficiency while acquiring a second language.
The teacher gently touches the student’s shoulder, and almost immediately, the student jumps as if he had been stung by a bee, covers his ears with his hands, and begins to rock back and forth. Quickly, the teacher is reminded that this particular student is autistic and does not like to be touched unless he initiates the touch. To calm down, the student begins to recite: “Mariah Carey, Lady Gaga, Toby Mac, John Legend….” The teacher is again amazed at this child’s incredible ability to memorize anything related to music. She knows that the student spends hours each day reciting hundreds of musical artists, hit songs, album release dates, and concert venues. This child is incredibly bright, and he has outstanding memory capabilities. The teacher sighs in frustration, “What can I do with a child who is so incredibly bright, yet cannot understand what is happening when I read a simple story or present basic literature concepts?” This is the question that many teachers ask in the education system today: “How do I effectively teach literacy skills to children with autism, and what tools might I use to get there?”

Generally speaking, children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) struggle to some degree with reading and/or language deficiencies, and they often have difficulty interpreting texts (Whalon & Hart 243). Consequently, teachers have a great need for techniques that will help them meet the individual needs of their students with ASD. The purpose of this essay is to explore the struggles that children with ASD face regarding literacy, and to present different teaching techniques designed to help children affected by ASD improve their reading comprehension and language abilities.

Children with ASD experience a wide range of literacy struggles that can be related to different experiences or based on the symptoms of ASD. To understand these literacy struggles, Autism Spectrum Disorder and reading comprehension must be defined. Additionally, the relationship between ASD and reading
comprehension as well as the cognitive profiles of individuals with ASDs should be explored.

Autism can be defined as a developmental disorder that results in poor social and communication skills and repetitive behavior patterns. Asperger’s syndrome (AS) is a form of autism in which individuals have better communication abilities (Randi et al 893). Even though individuals with High Functioning Autism (HFA) and AS show similar cognitive and behavioral profiles, people with HFA are generally more delayed than people with AS, because they are not as imaginative or communicative (893). Since there is such a wide range of abilities within ASD, it is hard to establish the individual abilities of students with autism (893). According to another source, people with ASD vary greatly in their expressive and communicative abilities, which makes it difficult to define the reading abilities of the population as a whole (Fleury et al 275). Additionally, children with ASD find it difficult to interact with peers and adults through expressive and receptive language, nonverbal gestures, and the social aspect of language (275).

After exploring the different aspects of autism, another issue must be addressed: reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is a common issue in the United States that affects a wide range of individuals. In the article “Linking Cognition and Literacy in Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder,” reading comprehension is defined as the ability to decode words and understand what those words mean (Carnahan et al 54). Another article suggests that reading comprehension is more than just word recognition; rather, it involves knowing the meaning of words, analyzing word combinations, interacting with the topic based on personal knowledge and experience, and drawing conclusions based on evidence and reasoning (Randi et al 891). This article also mentions that as readers become more accomplished at word recognition, their cognitive resources focus more on comprehension, and they eventually become just as good at understanding written language as they are at understanding spoken language (892). Now that both autism and reading comprehension have been defined separately, a connection can be made between the two.

The article “Linking Cognition and Literacy in Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder” presents three theories that explain
how the characteristics of ASD influence comprehension. The Theory of Mind suggests that, because students with ASD have difficulty understanding other people’s thoughts and feelings, it is extremely hard for them to comprehend the perspectives of literary characters (Carnahan et al 56). Second, executive function (the idea that organizing, planning, and self-monitoring help eliminate distractions when completing a task) is difficult for students with ASD because they often times continue reading even when their thoughts about the text do not make sense (57). Finally, weak central coherence (focusing on details rather than the big picture) is something that autistic children struggle with because they get excited about the little details and never combine them into a logical whole (57). The article “Teaching Children with Autism to Read for Meaning: Challenges and Possibilities” also mentions weak central coherence, and describes it as the reluctance of children with ASDs to combine parts of stories into a coherent whole (Randi et al 894). Similar to the Theory of Mind, this article suggests that narrative text is difficult for students with ASD to comprehend because they have difficulty determining the emotions and intentions of others (895). Even though the afore-mentioned struggles seem like difficult challenges, Randi et al suggests that it is possible to teach children with ASDs by focusing on their strengths to accomplish literary tasks. Examples of this include: guided instruction that keeps students focused on the things that matter, and instruction that prompts students to focus on the possible causes of literary characters’ mental states (895-6). Since there are many correlations between ASD and reading comprehension, different teaching techniques have been developed that are designed to help students with autism learn inclusively, efficiently, and effectively.

Many different teaching techniques and ideas exist that attempt to promote language learning and reading comprehension among children with ASD. One of these techniques is the TECH method which discusses how to effectively integrate technology into teaching students with disabilities. TECH consists of four main steps: Target students’ needs, Examine the technology choices, Create ways to incorporate technology with other activities, and Handle the implementation of technology and its impact on the students’ learning (King-Sears et al 570). In order to target students’ needs, the article suggests that students have different learning styles that must
be matched to what they are learning. Furthermore, the article says that examining technology choices is important because technology is constantly changing, and therefore, all options must be weighed. Creating ways to incorporate technology with other instruction activities is considered useful because it can be damaging to use technology as a stand-alone activity. Finally, the article suggests that handling the implementation of technology and its impact on the students is important in making sure that technology is actually being used to impact the students’ learning. (571-2) Overall, this article promotes the idea of teachers embracing current technology and using it for instructional purposes in the classroom.

The article entitled “Special Education versus Inclusive Education: the Role of the TEACCH Program” discusses a study that was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the TEACCH program, which is a program designed to use structured interventions and environmental adaptations to teach children with autism (Panerai et al 875). The results of the study confirmed TEACCH to be an effective program, producing positive results in both natural and inclusive settings (880). “TEACCH stresses the importance of an appropriate environmental organization and the use of clear visual cues to circumvent communication difficulties” (879). In other words, the goal of TEACCH is to cater to the individual needs of autistic children, and to provide a setting that promotes ease of communication. Moreover, the program promotes the collaboration of parents and teachers. This collaboration creates shared objectives and ultimately helps the program become a natural part of the child’s life (879).

Whalon and Hart, in their study on elementary inclusive settings, observe three students who receive instruction in a classroom setting in order to determine how students with ASD engage in reading instruction and respond to different teaching strategies. Overall, Whalon and Hart determine that students in the study showed strengths in decoding but struggled with reading comprehension, and they conclude that children with ASD require teaching strategies that focus mainly on text comprehension (Whalon and Hart 253). The authors also say, “Implementing strategies to enhance the reading and language development of all students, but in particular those with ASD, will require collaboration between general and special educators” (253). They suggest a reading comprehension
strategy that addresses how to interact with text and about text. Another strategy is a questioning strategy that promotes students’ abilities to form and ask questions (254). The following article also discusses reading comprehensions and presents its own strategies for comprehension instruction.

The authors of “Teaching Children with Autism to Read for Meaning: Challenges and Possibilities” provide some reading comprehension interventions for children with ASDs. This article argues that reading comprehension instruction has, in general, been neglected in schools (Randi et al 897). To teach reading comprehension, teachers can benefit from using direct instruction, using authentic materials and rewards in natural settings, peer-mediated instruction, and computer-assisted instruction. The article promotes the idea of teaching students with ASD in a social setting by the use of peer-tutoring, interactive practicing, and games. In addition, the authors express that direct instruction is an effective way to teach oral language skills, and that it can help students with ASD increase their expressive language skills (899). Direct instruction, according to this article, is also helpful in improving reading comprehension skills because it teaches students to independently work on skills such as statement inference and using facts and analogies (899). At the end of the article, the authors present the growing need for researches to come up with new interventions to meet the needs of children with ASD (900). While this article focuses on multiple types of reading comprehension techniques, the following focuses on one specific technique: dialogic reading.

Dialogic reading involves adults asking questions that encourage children to think critically and talk about books. Specifically, the authors of this article state, “Dialogic reading is a particular method of shared story reading in which the adult uses specific question prompts to encourage children to talk during book readings” (Fleury et al 240). This article observes a study that was conducted to determine whether children with ASD benefit more from standard book reading or dialogic reading. Because children are required to answer questions posed by adults in dialogic reading, they are given the opportunity to hear language and practice using it. The study concluded that children with ASD talked more during interactive dialogic reading than during baseline reading sessions with minimal initiated conversation (281). Children also participated
for a longer amount of time in the dialogic reading sessions than in the standard reading sessions (282-3). The authors conclude that dialogic is a simple yet effective way for adults to engage children book reading that elicits verbal participation and critical thinking (284).

The final article, “Linking Cognition and Literacy in Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder,” provides steps for supporting reading comprehension for students with ASD. Organizing the learning environment and materials is important, according to the article, because it helps students understand daily routines and activities and can keep them more focused and organized (Carnahan et al 58). Beginning with students’ special interests and gradually building on them can help students with ASD stay engaged for longer periods of time; additionally, linking teaching materials to students’ background knowledge can help them understand what information is relevant versus what is unrelated to the topic at hand (59). Presenting texts using alternative mediums is useful for adapting the text to meet the needs of the students, and teaching specific strategies such as summarizing identifying the main idea can help students increase comprehension. Finally, the authors believe that providing a variety of techniques is useful—especially techniques that make use of both group instruction and individualized instruction (60).

This essay explores the struggles that children with ASD face regarding literacy, and presents different teaching techniques designed to help children affected by ASD improve their reading comprehension and language abilities. Though the articles used for this paper differ in style and in content, it is obvious that there is a general need for teaching techniques designed to help students with autism. Autism has become a prevalent issue in society, and these articles express that need in their own unique ways. The articles also outline the fact that children with autism are intelligent and therefore, research should be conducted that promotes different techniques and interventions for autism and literacy.

Annotated Bibliography

This article discusses ideas about reading comprehension for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Specifically, the article presents a series of vignettes about a boy with ASD regarding three different theories explaining cognitive processes: Theory of Mind, Weak Central Coherence, and Executive Function. The authors eventually provide an overview discussing how individuals with ASD relate to the rules and meaning of language as well as vocabulary. The authors effectively present different solutions or options for helping students with ASD improve their reading comprehension, and each solution includes a small example that can help with practical application. Overall, the authors argue that increasing reading comprehension for children with ASD is a big commitment that requires an understanding of the cognitive profiles of students with ASD.

Many of the ideas and suggestions presented in this article could be used to support and expository essay that discusses literacy and its effects on special education and autism. Moreover, the information regarding linking language to comprehension and the application suggestions for helping students with ASD improve reading comprehension is especially useful for discussing special education techniques.


Fleury’s article offers the idea that active participation is overall better than passive participation when interacting with children with ASD through book reading. Taking a structural approach, Fleury and the other authors discuss the aspects of dialogic reading (adults asking intentional questions to encourage children to talk about books), then they discuss children
with ASD and their struggles with literacy, then provide an overview of a study conducted to prove the validity of dialogic reading, and finally the implications of the final results. This article provides a unique technique for helping to improve the literacy of young individuals with ASD through the means of active participation in book reading. It is practical, mainly easy to understand, and well-formatted. This article can be useful for the expository essay because it provides another concrete technique for improving literacy among individuals with ASD and it is backed by viable evidence, data, and explanation. Any teacher or parent trying to discover different ways to approach literacy for ASD would find this article interesting and appealing.


The four authors involved in writing this article present a mnemonic device called TECH (Target, Examine, Create, Handle) which describes a framework that teachers can use to decide what technology can be used in the classroom to improve the learning environment for students with disabilities. After describing the different aspects of TECH, the article presents to different scenarios regarding a student with a learning disability and a student with ASD. The framework provided for how to choose technology based on the needs of the students is useful and is presented in a well thought-out argument. The scenarios provide great practical application and allow the reader to imagine him/herself going through the actual process. This article provides another unique topic that is still related to the overall topic of special education and literacy, and it can be used to add yet another dynamic of information to the expository essay. Many teachers would find this article quite useful for the technology-based decisions that they must face in the ever-increasing realm of technology.

In this largely analytical article, the authors advocate for the validity of the TEACCH program which is a program designed for children with autism that attempts to minimize the struggles these children experience related to literacy. The article overviews a study conducted in three different educational settings and approaches, and then discusses the validity or lack-thereof in each approach. Each setting presented different challenges based on the environment, and provide detailed analysis of each. The information on each setting is fairly understandable and well-presented, and the procedures are seemingly effective. The facts in the article make it a great source for logos information. In the expository essay, this article will provide yet another teaching technique that could prove useful for anyone in the field of education or even a parent seeking out options to help his/her child with autism. This source can be a great opportunity to provide logos, and thus build up more credibility with the reader.


The three authors of this article focus on providing a review of the challenges children with autism face regarding literacy, focusing mainly on reading comprehension, and some solutions and ideas related to improving reading comprehension. A general overview of the requirements for reading comprehension is provided and then applied to children with ASD. Next, the authors present instructional interventions for children with ASDs. The interventions provided
revolve around teaching reading comprehension and vocabulary. Finally, a strong conclusion is provided that wraps up the article and presents a call to action for researchers to spend more time researching in order to provide more interventions for teaching comprehension to children with ASDs. The provision of multiple interventions in this article as well as the overview of challenges for children with ASD and literacy make the article easy to include in the expository essay.


This article explores a study conducted on three elementary school students with ASD that focuses on how the individual students engage in daily reading and respond to the strategies of their teachers. The authors describe the intricate method that was used to carry out the study, and then the results of the study were presented in a detailed manner. Each child used for the study is given an individual section that discusses their individual successes and struggles. The authors continue and provide a discussion combining the studies conducted on the three children, and emphasize the specific strategies that can be used for improvement within the educational system. Overall, the content of the article is useful, well-formatted, and adequately sourced. The article can be useful for the expository essay as it presents different strategies for providing literacy instruction to children with autism. Furthermore, the studies of the three different children can be used for practical examples within the essay.
Our day-to-day interactions are quickly progressing from textbook tradition and to time-cutting textese. People are communicating more than ever by phone. Many people have been and are being drawn towards the language of textese. Text messages are typically comprised of abbreviated words and phrases, lack of punctuation, and emoticons. Emoticons are symbolic representations of faces which are usually constructed from typed characters to produce a visual image. These emoticons, “incorrect” spellings, and abbreviations are called “textisms.” Textisms make up the language of textese. The main idea behind the language of textese is to provide a means of communication that can be written and understood by almost everyone, but is also quick to compose. To allow everyone be able to easily and efficiently use textese, there are little to no rules associated with it. The only “rule” is, the reader must be able to understand what is trying to be communicated by the author. But, the author is also trying to save as much time as possible while writing. Usually, a balance of these two seemingly opposite goals, is achieved by utilizing emoticons, creating phonetically correct words, and/or omitting some letters in words or abbreviating common phrases.

Some say that texting is too random and unruly, and is causing an overall decline in the literacy of children and adults alike, while others believe that instant messaging may actually help improve literacy ability. Studies show that due to many other factors in an individual’s life, texting is mostly a reflection of one’s literacy ability, but at times, may also support the growth of literacy creativity. Of course, as every person is an individual with different personalities and learning styles, texting and instant messaging will have slightly different effects on each individual’s literacy ability. Many diverse studies have been completed regarding the effects, if any, texting and instant messaging have on one’s literacy, and although there are slight
variations in results, there are some common themes that surface. Texting and instant messaging is a reflection of the literacy ability in adults, and has an overall positive effect on children’s literacy. A “positive effect” simply means that there is some sort of effect from texting that is beneficial to one’s literacy, whereas a “negative effect” would be an effect that is detrimental to someone’s literacy.

Texting has an assumed negative effect on literacy. Many people believe that texting and instant messaging do not have a beneficial place in the world of literacy, but many of them either do not have sufficient evidence, or the evidence they do have is outdated. There is a significantly larger amount of evidence to support the idea that texting has a positive to no effect on literacy, than there is for a negative effect. This does not mean that the data to support a negative correlation is illogical or absurd, but that there is simply more evidence to suggest a positive correlation. L. Verheijen completed the course English Language and Culture at the Radboud University Nijmegen with his/her first thesis “The Development of Syntactic Structures in Advanced Dutch EFL Writing”, and graduated summa cum laude with a second thesis, “The Language of Quoting in Academic Writing”. He/She now works as a Ph.D. student at the Department of Dutch Language and the Research Centre for Language Studies. Verheijen conducts research under Professor Dr. Wilbert Spooren, on modern communication methods such as texting (Radboud University, 2013). In one of his/her publications, Verheijen discusses a large variety of studies conducted on the effects of texting and textese on literacy. He/
she presents five studies concluding a positive effect, nine mixed or inconclusive results, but only two that found a negative effect (Verheijen, 2013, p. 588-595). Often, because technology evolves so rapidly, data and results become outdated and no longer significant. For example, according to K. Bostley, the author of the article “Is Texting Hurting Us Academically?” texting originally had a character limit of only 160 words per text. This would encourage the use of shortened phrases and words, and consequently, could cause a decline in literacy. Even though this information may have been relevant a few years ago, this data would now be considered outdated and no longer valid, because the majority of today’s phones have an extremely large to no character limit for texting and instant messaging. Result relativity and quantity is an important factor to be considered, but does this mean that we should conservatively limit ourselves and our children from texting and instant messaging? Will textese actually decrease our literacy and ultimately make us less functional in society? The answer is not as black and white as one might expect.

Instant messaging effects literacy differently for every person. There are many different factors in life that determine our literacy ability, such as, parental relationships, schooling opportunities, racial influences, and class of wealth. For example, an individual who is living in an impoverished area with high-school educated adults, will have different opportunities as compared to someone who has been raised with wealth and lives in communities where higher-education is expected. This is not to say one situation will produce a better individual than the other, but simply that there will be different opportunities for different people. Similarly, studies have shown that adults’ literacy is affected by texting differently than children’s literacy (Grace, Kemp, Martin, & Parrila, 2014). For children, textism use can encourage creative thought, and in adults,
textism use is a direct reflection of one’s literacy ability.

N. Kemp is a senior lecturer in phycology for the University of Tasmania in Australia. He/She participates in researching acquisition, development, and use of spoken and written language with A. Grace. Kemp also maintains the position of associate editor for the Journal of Research in Reading (University of Tasmania, 2005). F. Martin and R. Parrila are both professors of psychology at the University of Newcastle, Australia and University of Alberta, Canada, respectively. Martin has completed a Ph.D. in Visual Processes in Dyslexia, and currently conducts research in the area of Word Recognition and, specifically, Phonological Processes in Reading Development (University of Newcastle, 2012). Parrila has earned a Ph.D. from University of Alberta with a specialization in Learning and Development, and currently researches a variety of linguistic factors, such as Reading Acquisition and different types of dyslexia (University of Alberta, n.d.).

In studies completed by Grace, Kemp, Martin, and Parrila, the pattern appeared that textese use can actually encourage creative thought in those who are younger than 18 years old. According to them, higher literacy skill has been consistently and positively linked to a higher use of textisms (Grace et al., 2014, p. 868). This can be logically explained. When a child attempts to express emotion through written language, he/she must figure out how to convey emotion to the reader without being able to use facial expression, voice tones, eye contact, or gestures. Dr. Albert Mehrabian, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at University of California, Los Angeles, has completed a study in which he learned that communication is 93% non-verbal. This statistic has been widely accepted and is well known in the world of communication.

If communication is 93% non-verbal, then expressing emotion and the correct message, is a difficult task for texting. When children morph words into textese, they are engaging in a written language that was created for simplicity. This requires the child to utilize a new way of thinking to express
a desired tone or emotion. The child may choose to use emoticons to show how the writers face would look, or stretch out vowels to mimic how someone might express sarcasm. Because textese has no real restrictions or rules, some textisms may have never been encountered before. Consequently, the child must creatively figure out a way to manipulate letters and words to express emotion to, but without confusing, the reader. This process requires creative stimulation of brain which could easily carry over to literacy, problem-solving, and other creative aspects of life.

Some may argue that because of all the short-hand textese that is used in instant messaging, children are inclined to use textese in school and daily communication. To address these concerns, D. Wray conducted a study in which he received 27 volunteer teachers to participate in a questionnaire. D. Wray is a Professor of Literacy Education at the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom, and has published over 50 books pertaining to different aspects of literacy in his/her ten years of teaching (Green, 2014). Out of the teachers presented in Wray’s study, the majority of these teachers claimed that they, personally, did not see a negative effect on their students’ literacy from texting. One teacher said, “…even as children they are aware that text abbreviated language isn’t the way to write in their school work. I haven’t ever seen it come up in their literacy.” (Wray, 2015, p. 275) The first-hand experiences of these teachers, combined with the many more positively linked studies referenced by L. Verheijen, indicate that although there seems to be a logical train of thought for both opposing viewpoints, there is a lack of statistical evidence for texting being negatively linked to children’s literacy. Since children are likely to develop better creativity and problem-solving from the use of textese, would adults have similar results?

By the time someone is 18 years or older, their literacy skill is already well established. Because of this, texting will not have the same effect on them as someone younger whose literacy skill may not be as established. Grace, Kemp, Martin, and Parrila noted that “… our [their] results suggest that rather than textism use endangering literacy scores, textism use relies on a range of literacy skills that colour the relationship between textism use and literacy, just as early literacy experiences are related to current literacy skill,” (Grace et al., 2014, p. 869). In adults, literacy level is actually reflected through the use of textisms, and not affected by them. It is a direct reflection of many different literacy-influencing factors.
present throughout the person’s life. When someone writes a book or a paper, the reader observes the author’s voice. “Voice” is the style, tone, or feel that impresses itself upon the reader, and is what causes people to have favorite authors. Just like the author’s voice controls the feel of the written work, and not the other way around, it would make sense that the texter’s voice, or literacy ability, would control the feel of the text; the message does not change the texter’s literacy.

Textese has, if any, a positive effect on literacy. According to the teachers interviewed by D. Wray, the students’ are smart enough to correctly distinguish when it is and is not appropriate to use textese. Some teachers mentioned that children with a lower literacy level may have more textese appear in their school work, but this is actually another example of textese being a reflection of one’s literacy. It would make logical sense that if children are struggling with literacy, they may interject textisms to better express themselves. For example, if a child is unsure of how to spell a word, but his/her brain is used to phonetically sounding out and creating textese, he/she may resort to a phonetic spelling of the word. Although this might seem detrimental, it is actually beneficial. Even though the child may have spelled the word incorrectly, they did not give up. They tried to express their point through use of creativity. I asked a few classmates how they felt texting has affected their literacy. One said that he feels his literacy has been improving because of it. He discussed that texting is almost like writing miniature quick-response essays, and this has improved his communication skills because he must quickly choose words to specifically articulate his responses and ideas. This exercises his vocabulary and quick-thinking which also translates to face-to-face interaction. Another stated that he has always had trouble with spelling. But now, when texting, auto-correct, a program that automatically corrects spelling errors, gives him instant feedback about his spelling. He said that he feels his spelling has improved because of it. Although currently, our standardized languages do not allow textisms to be used, we should still promote the use of texting and instant messaging. We should also encourage the professional world to begin recognizing textese as an appropriate form of communication, as it saves time and is easy to use.

Literacy is affected by so much more than just texting and instant messaging. Grace, Kemp, Martin, and Parrila determined that the use of textisms by an individual is a direct representation of a variety of linguistic, social, and technological factors that were present when the individual was introduced to textese (Grace et al., 2014, p.
Others have determined that with children, there is a positive link between textese and literacy. L. Verheijen quotes “experience with textese can reflect or even enhance children’s traditional literacy abilities”, (Verheijen, 2013, p. 590). A. Campbell suggests that because texting and instant messaging are becoming more and more popular, textisms may no longer be thought of as improper in the future (Campbell, 2014, p. 1 & 3). This would mean that being fluent in textese may actually save people the time and frustration they currently experience when dealing with “proper” language. There are around 775 million adults who are not completely literate. This translates to about one in every five adults being illiterate (Statistics on Literacy, n.d.). But even though these people cannot properly read or write, it does not mean they lack revolutionary ideas. Textese can allow lower level literates to freely express their ideas that could progress our world. Texting and instant messaging are mediums we can use to allow more ideas and concepts to shape our society. As technology progresses, more and more people are embracing instant messaging as a new form of communication. They are observing that there could be a linguistic benefit to texting as well as opening new paths to our futures. Texting and instant messaging will be something our children experience. Let us properly use this piece of technology to encourage our youth to be creative in their language and explore new ways of communicating. Communication is the key to successfulness. If we want our children to be successful, if we want our children to be those who propel the world into the future, let us encourage them to explore new options and think outside of the box. They need to have a medium over which to communicate their fresh ideas to peers and like it or not, this medium is changing from text-book tradition to time-saving textese. Will we try to stick to the old ways of “proper” language, or will we embrace the change, and produce new ways for people to more easily communicate and, consequently, open up our world to new ideas and concepts that have never before been heard?

Works Cited


In 1962, an economist named Milton Friedman published a book called Capitalism and Freedom in which he elaborated on how economic capitalism should work in a society increasingly controlled by government bureaucracy. Friedman proposed several ideas on how to cut back on government meddling in the lives of individuals and return the freedom and power to choose back to individuals. Upon reaching chapter six, Friedman (1962) talked about the role of government in education. Although his proposal was not technically new, it was an idea that had received scant discussion for several years. Friedman had proposed the modern concept of free choice in education. Several years later, his ideas are now heated points of debate in the realm of education.

Two things should be noted here before a discussion on free choice in education can be had, the first of which is the fundamental question: What is meant by “free choice”? The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice (FFEC) identifies four ways that this concept is implemented in the modern sense. Classically, the basic school voucher (Method #1) is a portion of public funding given to students and their parents that is to be used to send students to private schools (FFEC, 2016). Currently, the classic voucher is the most popular method followed closely by tax credit scholarships (Method #2) given to taxpayers who donate to nonprofits offering private school scholarships (FFEC, 2016). More recently, however, two more methods have gained traction. An Educational Savings Account (ESA) (Method #3) receives funding in the same manner as a voucher, but the funds can be used for substantially more than just school choice. Funds from an ESA can be used on private schooling, tutoring, entry-level college courses, textbooks, online programs, educational therapy, and other education resources (FFEC, 2016). Finally, there are individual tax credits and deductions (Method #4). Tax credits lower the tax burden, tax deductions reduce the
taxable income, and both provide monetary relief for the purpose of funding education. Together, these four methods comprise the modern free choice based education system ("Fast Facts on School Choice", 2016).

The second notable point to be made when discussing free choice is that it is a fiercely polarizing topic. This great divide is merely aggravated by the fact that the split opinions typically fall within the opposing ideologies of modern liberalism and modern conservatism. On the liberal side are organizations such as the National Education Association (NEA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the American Society for the Separation of Church and State (ASSCS), all of whom contend that free choice is a grave mistake and should be avoided. Chuck Schumer, a US senator from New York encapsulates this position with his statement, “I’m totally opposed to vouchers. I will fight them tooth and nail” (“Chuck Schumer Quotes at BrainyQuote.com”, 2016). Meanwhile, conservative groups such as the FFEC, the National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA), and the American Civil Rights Institute (ACRI) promote free choice in any of its various incarnations. One of the foremost proponents of free choice was Milton Friedman, given his aforementioned reintroduction of the idea and his founding of the FFEC. Given these two sides, the logical question becomes: Who’s right?

I will not attempt to hide the fact that (a) I am a fiscal and social conservative, (b) I consider Milton Friedman to be one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century, and (c) I believe we should implement a free choice based education system. To do so would serve me no purpose. However, no set of ideas is above the scrutinizing eye of a rational and logical discussion, and a free choice based education system has a few points on which to be contested, specifically in regard to its fiscal and academic improvements. I aim to sufficiently answer those contested points and justify the validity, efficacy, and necessity of a free choice based education system. Ultimately, I believe that, based upon careful examination of the facts and proper application of logic, free choice in education should be permitted and funded in the United States because it is a financially viable option that promotes both higher literacy rates among school-age persons and a higher standard of education among schools.
The Fiscal Impact of Free Choice Education

Essentially, the fiscal argument against free choice boils down to two points of contention: finances and fraud. The first main point that opponents of free choice have is that it, at a minimum, will have no financial benefits and, at worst, will create an even greater educational disparity between high and low income families. The AFT presents a few pieces of evidence where the implementation of voucher systems had led to serious problems. In Milwaukee, 42% of voucher schools offered no viable method for special needs children (AFT, 2006). Washington D.C. found that only three private schools were able to be attended with the funds provided by the voucher system, and the Department of Education found that 70-85% of schools were unwilling to become voucher schools if they were required to accept special needs children into their enrollment (AFT, 2006). Distress over the financial impact, however, does not end just with the individual but extends to the state as well. According to the AFT (2006), costs for voucher schools were almost $1000 higher than public schools in Milwaukee, and Florida public schools were considered to be nearly $1600 cheaper than voucher schools. By contrast, the AFT (2006) claims that diverting these resources into the public school system would be substantially more effective. An example offered by them pertains to funneling the resources from corporate vouchers into a public school reading program. By doing this, the AFT (2006) says that a $3500 voucher normally offered to one student could be used to fund about nine public school students for merely $400 per pupil.

The second point of contention offered over the fiscal aspect of free choice education is that of fraud. The AFT (2006) along with other liberal groups are concerned that a free choice system, “can be fertile breeding ground for ‘fly-by-night’ schools run by uncredentialed entrepreneurs” (pg. 2). Three stories are presented the AFT (2006) of how voucher money has been misused. In one instance, $350,000 of corporate voucher money was given to an Islamic University that had connections to the terrorist organization Islamic Jihad (AFT, 2006). Another story found that, for several years, Wisconsin was unable to shut down a Milwaukee voucher school that was headed by a convicted felon and run by staff members who used illicit drugs on school property (AFT, 2006). A final story told of $168,000 that was
given to a Florida voucher school that was also run by a convicted felon and may have never used the money for actual school purposes (AFT, 2006). The AFT seems to raise some valid concerns over free choice in education.

To first address the issue of fraud, I will admit that it is a travesty to have stories of fraud and abuse come from voucher schools. But then again, it’s a travesty to have fraud and abuse in any educational facility, and I believe that free choice best stifles the likelihood that fraud will exist. Milton Friedman (1975) provided the basis for this line of logic:

How can one assure that the voucher is spent for schooling not diverted to other family expenses? The answer is that the voucher would have to be spent in an approved school or teaching establishment. True, this does mean some government regulation of the schools, but of course private schools are regulated to an extent now, to assure that attendance at them satisfies compulsory schooling requirements. Compared to current regulation of public schools, the government requirements in a voucher plan would be a mere trifle. (Point #3)

Friedman’s remarks are not only a commendation of free choice but also an indictment against the governmental control of schools. The AFT, in its reporting, makes a logical slip by assuming that public schools do not suffer from mishaps related to fraud. In his book Hostile Takeover, Matt Kibbe outlines some issues of fraud and abuse that exist in the public school system, many of which are connected to teacher tenure. The issue is not necessarily that teachers are tenured, but rather that this tenure, coupled with government bureaucracy, makes the removal of poor teachers nearly impossible. In New Jersey, four years time and $283,000 were spent trying to fire a public school teacher who physically abused students (Kibbe, 2012). A New York City public school teacher who sent sexually explicit emails to a sixteen-year-old student was fired only after a six year wait was completed and $350,000 was paid to him (Kibbe, 2012). In total, New York City taxpayers spend nearly $20 million per year trying to fire poor teachers from the public school system while they sit in “rubber rooms” and collect full salary for not teaching (Kibbe, 2012). I could wax eloquent about this point, but the fact is that fraud and abuse are part of any system, even those in education.
Turning now to the issue of finances in the voucher system, I believe the AFT is simply wrong on their claim that free choice is not cost-effective. Any system that is poorly implemented, as has been the case with their highlighted examples, runs the risk of being a financial woe. When free choice is properly implemented, however, the results are fiscally beneficial to both the individual and the state. A work done by Dr. John Merrifield and Dr. Michael R. Ford (2015) showed that adjustments as simple as eliminating waste and expanding participation in the Milwaukee voucher system has led to over 4 billion dollars in state savings and $200 more in per pupil funding. Additionally, even when vouchers don’t cover the full cost of tuition, people still tend to sign up for them. In Washington D.C., during 1997, vouchers only covered $1700 of a $4000 private school tuition (Cordell, 1998). Regardless of this, even low-income families took advantage of the opportunity to remove their children from failing schools in order to send them to more than 70 different schools that offered better education (Cordell, 1998). Milton Friedman (1975) showed that free choice was economically viable for three reasons. First, funding for public schools only benefits those parents who send their children there, but parents who send their children to private schools are essentially paying twice for education via taxes for public schools and tuition for private schools. Changing this method of payment to a free choice-based system eliminates this inequality. Second, opening the schools up to the free market would drive down the cost of tuition since there is no longer a need to compete against the government (an objective that has a historically poor win-loss ratio). Finally, as shown earlier, many parents are willing to accept a temporarily higher cost of education for the purpose of securing a better education for their children (Friedman, 1975). The facts show that free choice in education is financially viable and offers a better way of controlling fraud.

The Academic Impact of Free Choice Education

The NEA and AFT have made it very clear that they do not support vouchers not only for financial reasons but also for academic reasons. They postulate that either free choice fails to increase the academic successes of students, or it ends up actually hurting the academic results of students. The NEA cites a study done by the
United States General Accounting Office (2001) that shows only minimal improvements in reading and writing scores between voucher schools and public schools. Haggai Kupermintz (2002) argues in his work that external variables not related to the voucher system produced the gains shown in the Florida system around the time when vouchers were implemented. The AFT (2006) states that a 2001 study done by Jay P. Greene on Florida’s A-Plus voucher program was discounted by Gregory Camilli and Katrina Bulkley in another 2001 study, and that his findings on the effectiveness of vouchers on education were invalid.

The evidence presented by the opposition is not necessarily wrong, but I do believe that it is premature. A more recent study by Greg Forster and Christian D’Andrea (2009) took a second look at Florida’s version of free choice education (via tax credit scholarships). The results, collected by a random assignment telephone survey with a 3.5% margin of error, were an overwhelming endorsement of the program. In the areas of individual attention, academic progress, teacher quality, school responsiveness, and student behavior; roughly 95-97% of respondents were at least “satisfied” with the scholarship program, with an average of 75% being “very satisfied” (Forster & Andrea, 2009). Comparatively, only an average of 43% had been at least “satisfied” with the public school equivalents, with an average of a mere 4.4% being “very satisfied” (Forster & Andrea, 2009). The results appear even more impressive when it is considered that most of the respondents are low-income, minority individuals (Forster & Andrea, 2009). It should come as no surprise that 100% of the respondents in the Florida study favored a renewal of the scholarship program (Forster & Andrea). In other states, academic improvements are also being found. Matt Kibbe (2012) shows in his work that district scores for standardized tests in Louisiana have risen by 24 percent since 2005, around the time when free choice began to make headway there. Interestingly, a large part of Louisiana’s program was simply the decision to let parents choose which public schools they wanted to send their children to instead of having it be assigned to them by district boundaries. Simply allowing individual choice to flourish sparked a growth of literacy. In Washington D.C., Jason Richwine (2010) conducted a study of the congressional voucher program using a lottery system to determine his respondents (a technique often

Research Writing 135
referred to as the gold standard in controlling for external variables such as race, economic status, and parental education). His study found that 91% of voucher students graduated high school compared to 70% of non-voucher schools (Richwine, 2010). Not only were graduation rates higher in voucher schools, but students in these institutions averaged a nineteen month reading advantage compared to their public school peers (Richwine, 2010).

It should be noted that most of the research against free choice often comes very close to its inception, and research in favor of it often comes after it has existed for several years. This is hardly a surprising conclusion; any new system will take time to start showing results, and it’s foolish to declare it inefficient before it has a chance to lift itself off the ground. Over time, though, it appears that the freedom to choose grants the ability to flourish.

**Concluding Remarks**

Free choice in education should be permitted and funded in the United States because it is a financially viable option that promotes both higher literacy rates among school-age persons and a higher standard of education among schools. Statistically, the gains of free choice education can be seen fairly easily. Likewise, it’s just as easy to see the benefits from a philosophical perspective. Opening up schools to choices of individuals brings competition, and competition is what advances and betters the state of any institution. Competition gets a bad reputation from those who portray it as a vicious entity where the biggest and meanest institutions end up winning, but that’s not its objective. When schools are allowed to compete it puts the students back at the center of attention. Currently, the schools cater to the government for better districting and funding; the consumers, students and parents, are left out of the picture much of the time. But with free choice given back to parents and students, schools now shift their focus back to the consumers. What happens as a result? Schools seek to attract new students through lower tuition costs, quality facilities, and academically excellent programs. No government intervention and meddling is needed to force these to happen because the freedom to choose inspires this naturally. Moreover, there is an ingrained system of checks against poor quality in free choice education. Parents and students are the ones who daily interact with their schools, and they
will be able to recognize a failing one faster than any government institution can. Underperforming and corrupt schools will find it difficult to survive when the power of choice is returned to parents and students. Adam Smith (1776), the Scottish philosopher and author of The Wealth of Nations, eloquently said it best:

Were there no public institutions for education, no system, no science would be taught for which there was not some demand, or which the circumstances of the times did not render it either necessary, or convenient, or at least fashionable, to learn. A private teacher could never find his account in teaching either an exploded and antiquated system of a science acknowledged to be useful, or a science universally believed to be a mere useless and pedantic heap of sophistry and nonsense. Such systems, such sciences, can subsist nowhere, but in those incorporated societies for education whose prosperity and revenue are in a great measure independent of their reputation and altogether independent of their industry. Were there no public institutions for education, a gentleman, after going through with application and abilities the most complete course of education which the circumstances of the times were supposed to afford, could not come into the world completely ignorant of everything which is the common subject of conversation among gentlemen and men of the world. (p. 602)

Smith’s point comes down to one phrase: Free to choose. Free the education system and let the public decide what public education should really be. Nothing about free choice says that students have to go to a certain school or use a particular service, and that’s the whole point. Parents and students are free to make wise, informed decisions based on their individual circumstances to fit respective educational needs. The main force blocking this liberation is the existence of organizations like the ATF and the NEA. Albert Shanker, a former president of the ATF said, “When schoolchildren start paying union dues, that’s when I’ll start representing the interests of schoolchildren” (Kibbe, 2012). Former top officials of the NEA have said, “The NEA has been the single biggest obstacle to education reform in this country. We know because we worked
for the NEA” (Kibbe, 2012). It is reprehensible that this is the reality our schools have to face right now, but it doesn’t have to remain this way. Freeing up the educational system leads to the amelioration of literacy rates, the enrichment of resources, and the advancement of student excellence. As Matt Kibbe (2012) puts it, “... freedom works” (p.333).

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De Facto Segregation in Schools

William Tomlinson

Despite the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision ending legal racial segregation in educational institutions, the “separate but equal” ideology still permeates the education system. This phenomenon, known as “white flight”, occurs without Jim Crow laws or racial oppression. Because of the freedoms that Americans have to choose their educational institutions, de facto segregation has occurred, where white families flee schools heavily populated by African-Americans. David Sikkink and Michael Emerson, Allison Roda and Amy Wells, and Kelly Rapp and Suzanne Eckes all address the issue of “white flight” in their articles: “School Choice And Racial Segregation In US Schools: The Role Of Parents’ Education”, “School Choice Policies And Racial Segregation: Where White Parents’ Good Intentions, Anxiety, And Privilege Collide”, and “Dispelling The Myth Of ‘White Flight’: An Examination Of Minority Enrollment In Charter Schools” respectively. Though all authors agree that de facto segregation occurs in the educational system, they disagree on the manifestation, motive, and solution.

The concept of racial bias is not an old one. Racial prejudice will survive throughout all humanity, despite what well meaning, moral individuals attempt to extinguish it. Sikkink and Emerson, Roda and Wells, and Rapp and Eckes all realize that racial prejudice plays a role in education. Furthermore, all authors agree that, due to the actions of privileged, white families, segregation has taken root in education. However, Sikkink and Emerson and Roda and Wells disagree with Rapp and Eckes as to the method of segregation.

Sikkink and Emerson base their hypothesis on the assumption that schools are generally segregated. They claim, “Whites in general will be more likely to select alternative schooling for their children in areas with a higher percentage black” (Sikkink and Emerson 277). Thus, Sikkink and Emerson ultimately conclude that segregation occurs when white parents choose alternative (i.e., charter) schools to escape heavily populated African-American public schools. Roda
and Wells reach much of the same conclusions. They explain that white parents, because they dominate the educational institutions, will always have the ability to enroll their children in schools with good standing (Roda and Wells 264). Roda and Wells claim that much of this happens by the ability to found charter schools (264). Furthermore, they claim that although some schools may be integrated in enrollment they are still segregated across classrooms. Because of the variety of AP classes and special courses, Roda and Wells claim that even racially integrated schools face classroom segregation (266).

Rapp and Eckes, despite agreeing with the generalized hypothesis of de facto segregation, believe it occurs in a much different way. Rapp and Eckes refute the idea that the minority population remains in the public school system while privileged whites flee to charter schools. In fact, they conclude that in many states, there was almost no difference between the racial composition of public schools and charter schools (Rapp and Eckes 618). Furthermore, in some areas Rapp and Eckes reviewed studies from Green and the National Center for Educational Statistics and concluded, “On the contrary, many charter schools have disproportionately high percentages of racial minorities. For example, charter school data reveal that the percentage of Black students in charter schools is 20% higher than in traditional public schools” (617). Thus, Rapp and Eckes show that charter schools are not the vehicle for segregation. Despite these findings, they still conclude that white families avoid schools with a high percentage of African Americans (Rapp and Eckes 621). Finally, Rapp and Eckes reconcile these two facts with the assertion that white families opt for public education if charter schools contain a large minority population (621). Rapp and Eckes claim that although whites and blacks equally attend charter and public schools in the national sphere, segregation still occurs on a school-by-school basis.

Despite the author’s universal belief that schools are segregated, Sikkink and Emerson, Roda and Wells, and Rapp and Eckes fail to concur which motive drives segregation. Sikkink and Emerson take a more direct view of de facto segregation by claiming racial profiling fuels segregation. Sikkink and Emerson believe that racial
composition of schools shape the perception of those schools (271). They maintain that despite the actual quality of the school, heavily populated African-American schools receive a poor reputation because whites assume violence, drugs, and poor discipline prevail (Sikkink and Emerson 271). Sikkink and Emerson hold that these assumptions are especially prevalent among highly educated whites (277). Sikkink and Emerson claim that because highly educated whites want their children to have the best circumstances, they choose the schools that, in their view, provide the best education (270). Because of the false perception that heavily black schools inherently face discipline and drug problems, parents choose alternative schooling. Arguing for a slightly different motive, Roda and Wells affirm that although parents aspire for racially integrated schools, they naturally gravitate towards highly white and socioeconomically advantaged schools (266). Thus, while both sources claim race shapes individual’s perceptions of schools, Sikkink and Emerson believe that people gravitate away from disproportionately African-American schools because of negative perceptions, and Roda and Wells maintain that individuals gravitate towards white, wealthy schools because of positive associations. Though Sikkink and Emerson and Roda and Wells support their view in slightly different ways, they both hold the foundational view that racial stereotypes shape perceptions of educational institutions.

Rapp and Eckes believe that academic quality is the driving motive behind racial segregation in education (620). However, they found that “socioeconomic status, race, and distance from home had powerful effects on parents’ choices” (Rapp and Eckes 260). Unique to their article, Rapp and Eckes also take into account the geographic location of schools. Thus, Rapp and Eckes claim that the discrepancy of minority enrollment in different schools may be because of a geographical divide (620). Consequently, the driving force behind educational segregation is racially motivated housing choices, not school enrollment.

Though Sikkink and Emerson and Roda and Wells have largely been in agreement up to this point, they diverge on the solution of de facto segregation. First, Sikkink and Emerson and Rapp and Eckes share a passive view in dealing with racial segregation. Sikkink and Emerson do not doubt that school
choice policies in recent decades have allowed racial segregation to reemerge. Sikkink and Emerson conclude from data gathered by Orfield and Eaton, “Court decisions that open the door to greater segregation and grass roots efforts to reconnect schools and (highly segregated) neighbourhoods have opened the door to more segregated schools” (269). However, due to the alternative focus of their study, Sikkink and Emerson do not provide a solution for segregation. Rapp and Eckes largely agree with Sikkink and Emerson and actually claim that integration policies discourage true reconciliation. Rapp and Eckes point out that in twelve states without integration statutes, there was only a 3% difference in racial composition than in seven states with integration statutes (624). Concurring with Green, Rapp and Eckes point out that integration statutes might actually discourage the founding of charter schools, which could serve the need for minority students and ultimately enable further integration (623).

On the contrary, Roda and Wells believe the government should take a more active role in preventing racial segregation. Roda and Wells believe that “colorblind” policies, policies that promote competition between schools as opposed to racial integration, are to blame for segregation. According to Roda and Wells, such policies, many of which take funding away from the public school system and encourage the founding charter schools, are counterproductive and correlate with increased racial segregation in schools (262). To solve segregation, Roda and Wells advocate for school policies that specifically promote racial integration (261).

Sikkink and Emerson, Roda and Wells, and Rapp and Eckes lay out logical explanations as to how and why racial segregation occurs in the educational system. While Sikkink and Emerson do not present a solution to segregation, both Rapp and Eckes and Roda and Wells provide legitimate reasoning to support their solutions to segregation. While all the authors disagree on some level, they all provide excellent insight into the problem of racial segregation. The most important point of agreement between all three authors lies in the acknowledgement of racial suppression and segregation. Regardless of how or why it occurs, the acknowledgement of racial segregation is crucial to healing the divide between blacks and whites.
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The American Educational System: Inequitable and Unjust

Kristen Cochran

The end of African American slavery marked the beginning of immense challenges in African American education. Studies reveal African Americans remain remarkably less likely to hold higher education degrees than Caucasians. A study conducted by authors Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown reveals, “13.7% of the Black population 25 years and older hold a baccalaureate degree; and 7.5% hold an advanced degree” (528). A study of the same age groups in the white population reveals the following: “22.5% a baccalaureate degree and 12.5% an advanced degree” (528). The difference is dramatically clear. Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown’s article, “Inequality: Underrepresentation of African American Males in U.S. Higher Education”; Whaley and Noël’s article, “Sociocultural Theories, Academic Achievement, and African American Adolescents in a Multicultural Context: A Review of the Cultural Compatibility Perspective”; and Lynn’s article, “Race, Culture, and the Education of African Americans” reveal the considerable research detailing the challenges African Americans face to receive superb educations. While Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol and Brown; Whaley and Noël; and Lynn agree that poverty and the African American culture play an imperative role in African American achievement, each study proposes various solutions to remedy the current depressed state of African American education.

Each study acknowledges poverty’s detrimental role in African American education, but only Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown offer potential solutions for poverty’s effects. The authors believe poverty directly relates to degree attainment. They provide a startling statistic: “Students from upper income families are nine times more likely to graduate from college than students from lower income families” (qtd. in Mortenson 245; Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown 524).

First, Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown suggest low-income
students do not often attend academically rigorous institutions. Some specifically prestigious institutions subtly discriminate against low-income families, predominantly accepting students from wealthy backgrounds (Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown 530). This factor alone deters bright, high-achieving African American students from attending academically rigorous institutions. Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown observe African Americans primarily attend community colleges because of lower tuition and less minority discrimination, in general, than prestigious universities (530). In addition, community colleges do not hold the same standards as prestigious and private universities. The authors also contribute low African American college graduation rates to a lack of family income, not intelligence (Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown 524). Students lack the monetary resources to complete degrees; thus, African Americans hold fewer degrees than Caucasians. The authors also note that higher education levels increase employability. Theoretically, increased education promotes personal economic stability.

In addition, Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown argue that improved education and socioeconomic status will challenge the public’s faulty, stereotyped view of African Americans as impoverished. In the authors’ opinion, if more African Americans attain college degrees, improved job opportunities and enhanced community socioeconomic standings would occur. Finally, the writers offer potential solutions to limit poverty’s academic effects on African Americans. Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown propose that Congress forbid discriminatory university practices against minority or low-income students. In addition, Congress must “regulate pricing practices”, ensuring African-Americans do not adversely affect low-income minorities (Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown 533). In doing so, greater access to higher education for African Americans will ensue.

On the other hand, Whaley and Noël do not make significant contributions regarding poverty’s role in education; however, they suggest students from low-income families are less likely to attend college simply because of economic status. They also agree that higher levels of education directly improve employment rates. Likewise, Lynn also does not make significant remarks regarding the link between poverty and education. He does, however, disagree with Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown because he does not believe
degree attainment or increased employment will positively impact the public’s view of African Americans. He contends stereotypes of African Americans are too deeply entrenched in America to overcome simply by changing the curriculum (118-119).

In addition to poverty, all sources agree that African American culture is critical to academic achievement, but the authors differ on culture’s positive or negative academic influence. Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown do not believe African American culture significantly impacts academic achievement. They only suggest schools subtly discriminate against African American culture through “procedural rules and policies set up in areas of college access and admissions, affordability, and attainment...” that have detrimental effects on college attendance (525). Whaley and Noël, however, believe African American culture positively affects achievement because it provides African American students with a sense of community (33-34). They propose three possible solutions to continually promote positive cultural influence on educational performance. First, they call for increased community involvement among African Americans through service learning projects, strengthening ties with fellow African Americans (Whaley and Noël 34). Second, to challenge African American stereotypes, they recommend schools host minority college fairs and highlight “gifted” African American students who reside in low-income, segregated neighborhoods (Whaley and Noël 34). Finally, Whaley and Noël urge parental involvement, noting its positive link to higher academic achievement among African American students (34). Marvin Lynn, however, disagrees that African American culture positively affects students. He suggests minority groups believe every school is racist in some regard (Lynn 109). Lynn, the only author who believes necessary change is not only limited to curriculum, believes change must extend to society. (118). He remarks schools cannot simply implement curriculum changes without acknowledging society’s role in racism, stereotypes, and discrimination in African American academic achievement (Lynn 118).

While all of the authors agree significant curriculum changes are necessary in the U.S. educational system, Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown offer the least detailed solution of the authors. They call for school mentoring programs that mentor African American
students throughout their college decision-making process and college (Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown 533). The improvement of Advanced Placement course availability to minority students is their only curriculum solution (Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown 533). Whaley and Noël, however, further expound their solutions by urging for better teacher training detailing African American culture and recognizing racism's effects on African American students (35). They also call for cultural curriculum improvements promoting great achievements of African Americans, instead of slavery. Furthermore, they propose improved school policies involving the family and community, promoting academic achievement (Whaley and Noel 34).

Marvin Lynn offers the most in-depth solution, offering a different perspective. Lynn provides the most detailed exposition of curriculum changes. He disagrees with Whaley and Noël regarding the simple addition of cultural courses to school curriculum. Lynn believes the United States should implement the Critical Race Theory (CRT), a highly detailed curriculum discussing racism and discrimination's various forms. CRT defines racism as natural in a predominantly white society (qtd. in Calmore 25-82; Lynn 116). Lynn notes, “The educational system becomes one of the chief means through which the system of white supremacy regenerates and renews itself” (117). He contends the principal aim of American curriculum is the promotion of Euro-American culture and the negation of African-American culture. He also suggests that schools never desired true academic achievement among African American students and that the Critical Race Theory will potentially offset the white supremacy that is so prevalent in American schools (Lynn 117). Lynn also suggests that research conducted regarding curriculum changes should take into account African Americans heartbreaking history. He comments, “...research on African Americans that fails to take into account the impact of African Americans’ history as a people forcibly ripped away from their native homeland and forced to endure centuries of socially sanctioned torture not only does an injustice to African Americans, but it also does an injustice to our society” (Lynn 119).

All three articles challenge the current method of African American education. The authors agree that change is indispensable to limit racism in schools. Schools must promote and encourage,
not hinder African American educational achievement. The authors’ extensive research concludes that poverty and culture are critical factors in African American academic success, although there is some disagreement to the extent of its influence. While Marvin Lynn believes in the necessity of broader societal changes, the authors agree on crucial curriculum changes, necessary for African American educational equality in the United States.

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Knowing the Audience, Understanding the Culture, Pursuing the Lord

Aogu Suzuki

It is very awkward when a Chinese person comes up to me and says, “Ni hao!” I am Japanese. I would not be able to communicate with him or her because I am not Chinese, and I do not understand the language either. Knowing the audience is very important for anyone who desires to communicate well, and knowing their language is just a part of it. Jennifer Jegerson, a professor at Biola University, comments on this and says that the communicators need to know the audience and their communicational culture (Jegerson, 259). She talks about the communicational cultures and states that there are “literate cultures” and “oral cultures.” A “literate culture” focuses on communicating primarily through reading and writing, and an “oral culture” focuses on communicating through listening, speaking, and memorizing. Jagerson contrasts those two and says, “Oral people groups are not simply those that lack the skills of literacy, they are understood to have their own complex ways of communicating and storing knowledge that are critical and valuable aspects of their culture” (261). Being able to figure out which culture the audience belong a person to be an effective communicator.

Communicational cultures have influences on every aspect of people’s lives, and one of them is religion. This essay specifically focuses on Christianity in those two cultures, and contrasts how people become Christians, become more devoted Christians, and start telling others about Christ in different ways.

Understanding differences between those two cultures is critical for Christians as they aim to faithfully fulfill the Great Commission, which is in Matthew 28:19-20. In this passage, Jesus says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Warren
Wiersbe comments on this verse and says, “The only command in the entire Great Commission is ‘make disciples’” (87). Webster Dictionary defines disciple as “someone who accepts and helps to spread the teachings of a famous person (in this case, Jesus Christ).” So the process of making disciples starts by telling the teaching of Jesus so that people can become Christians. In literate culture, literacy plays a big role regarding conversion. Behind almost all the evangelistic events are counselors, youth leaders, preachers and faithful Christians, who, with worn-out Bibles in their hands, go through the Bible so that non-believers can understand what Jesus has done for them. If they do not have an opportunity to go to one of those events, they can go to the bookstore and buy the Bible or even Google “Who is Jesus?” Grant Lovejoy points out how Western way of evangelism is very centered on literacy and says, “From the time of the Gutenberg Bible, Christianity ‘has walked on literate feet’ and has directly or indirectly required literacy of others” (7). Lovejoy then focuses on oral culture and says that “70% of all people in the world are oral communicators • those who can’t, don’t, or won’t learn through literate means” (7). Research shows that 5.7 billion people are currently oral learners, and 90% of Christian workers are using literate methods to proclaim the Gospel (Lovejoy, 12). As missiologists and missionaries work together to reach every people group with the gospel, “it has become clear that there has been a deficit in overall strategy because of a strong dependancy on literate methods for evangelism and discipleship” (Jagerson, 260). Jagerson says, “It is not sufficient to simply take literate material and read it orally. It requires a fundamental shift away from the use of propositional arguments, linear thinking, and abstract conceptualizations” (262). The message needs to be “presented in a manner that honors oral ways of processing information, the work will likely produce exponentially more successful outcomes, such as a greater capacity for new believers to grasp meaning, and respond to the message of the gospel with saving faith” (262). In oral culture, people become Christians by hearing what Jesus Christ has done for them. Lovejoy says that telling Gospel as a story is a powerful way to evangelize in an oral culture (8).
Communicational cultures certainly affect the way people understand the Gospel, but all Christians believe one same thing that Jesus died for their sins and rose from the dead. And after getting saved, All of them, regardless of communicational background, have one goal: to become more like Jesus Christ. Those who live in literate cultures aim to grow by studying the Word of God, reading books written by men and women of God, doing daily devotionals, keeping journals, and so on. Literacy plays a huge role in the area of growth. Some might even learn Hebrew and Greek in order to gain more knowledge.

Christians in oral communities, on the other hand, grow mainly by hearing the Word of God and listening to the teaching. Lovejoy mentions the power of narrative stories in oral cultures and says, “It was only through a chronological presentation of God’s word, Old Testament and on to the Gospels, story by story, that they were able to vividly portray the holy nature and character of God, the sinful condition of man, the grip that Satan has on this world and the redeeming solution to man’s predicament found in Jesus Christ” (8). Oral cultures Walter Ong points out the change in the oral cultures. He says, “I style the orality of a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print, ‘primary orality’. It is ‘primary’ by contrast with the ‘secondary orality’ of present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print” (10). There are new technologies that can be utilized for oral Christians. Jagerson says, “A number of scholars, such as James Miles Foley, Tom Pettitt, and Lars Ole Sauerberg, suggest that the phenol of new technologies is going to lead to a revolution that will be on par with the Gutenberg Press” (269). People have been working on capturing the Bible in the media form. When the media content is a full New Testament or full Bible, “it becomes an accurate and complete presentation of biblical truth for the oral learner” (Swarr and Koch, 87). Lovejoy calls this the “oral Bible” and refers to it as a new powerful tool (7). Swarr and Koch say that there is an additional advantage in using an oral Bible. They say, “It becomes an unchangeable and exhaustive source for oral learners to refer back to time and time again” (88).

According to Jegerson, “secondary oral” learners exist in literate cultures, too (269). Lovejoy and Claydon say that secondary
oral learners include those “who have the ability to read and write, but they prefer to learn or process information by oral, rather than written, means, aided by electronic audio and visual communications” (63–64). W. Jay Moon says, “53.5 % of seminary students preferred oral learning compared to print learning” (55). Linda Labbo says that “students who sometimes struggle with school literacy are able to engage in highly complex electronic communications” (8).

In his book “Winning Story Wars,” Jonah Sachs called these secondary oral learners “digitoral learners.” He says, “The oral tradition that dominated human experience for all but the last few hundred years is returning with a vengeance. It’s a monumental, epoch-making, totally unforeseen turn of events . . . our new digital culture of information sharing has so rejected the broadcast style and embraced key elements of oral traditions, that we might meaningfully call whatever’s coming next the digitoral era” (20). Jagerson says, “Perhaps the oral strategies such as the use of narrative for evangelism and discipleship on the mission field are particularly well sited to help support and recalibrate the efforts of Christian education in the West” (273).

Literate cultures and oral cultures differ in their ways to reach the same goal to be like Christ, but Jagerson, Lovejoy, Claydon and Ong all point out that those two cultures can make positive impact on each other in order to more effectively seek Jesus Christ.

Communicational cultures have huge influence on the style that people use to pursue the goal of becoming like Christ. Jergerson says that literate learners “tend to be more individualistic in how they understand personal time and space and in their learning patterns” (Jagerson, 261). People living in literate cultures prefer topical studies, verse by verse expositions, and personal time with God (Jegerson, 261). For oral communicators, on the other hand, “Knowledge and communication tends to be directly relational between people and about people in the context of real life circumstances rather than about linear concepts that have been abstracted from relationships and circumstances. Oral learners tend to make decisions as a group and interpret what matters as an individual in terms of what it means for their role in the group” (Jagerson, 261). Lovejoy explains why it is important to use tools that is focused on the community or the audience, focusing on evangelism and multiplication. He
says, “Oral strategies provide multiple ways for effectively engaging a people group to readily involve oral communicators in efforts to reach their own people group and others with the gospel. Storying is one reproducible evangelistic and church-planting approach – new believers can readily share the gospel, plant new churches and disciple new believers in the same way that they themselves were reached and discipled.”

There are differences in methods, but every single Christian who lived in the past, living now, and will live, have one desire that God will be glorified. When the history of human being started, human race only had oral culture. Literate culture started slowly coming in, and Gutenberg radically changed the way people here the Gospel, and the way Christians pursue Jesus. Now, because of the new technologies, two cultures are getting blended.

Lovejoy leaves a challenge for churches and Christians and says organizations are to “ride the next wave of Kingdom advancement by developing and implementing methods for effective oral strategies. Partners, networks, seminaries, mission agencies, conference and workshop leaders, as well as other Christian influencers are called upon to recognize the issues of orality in the world around them. We all need to become intentional in making disciples of oral learners. We need to raise awareness, initiate oral communication projects and train missionaries and local leaders in chronological Bible storying as an effective church-planting strategy.”

Thus, it is important for Christians to not only focus on literacy, but also to focus on orality. Christians are to utilize both of them wisely, and effectively reach out, disciple, and expand the Kingdom of God for the glory of God.

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Literacy and Criminality

*Nathan Shinabarger*

When the prisons across the United States are surveyed, a common theme emerges. It transcends race, gender, age, and is perhaps the strongest common thread between the majority of criminals: a lack of literacy. Some argue this lack of literacy leads to high rates of recidivism, and increased crime instead of being able to help rehabilitate an offender. Recidivism, or the tendency of a criminal to reoffend or relapse into crime, places a huge burden on the Criminal Justice System. Crime is estimated to cost the United States over $1 trillion each year (Anderson, 1999), and recidivism is a massive part of what causes such a heavy burden on all taxpayers financially. Perhaps the even greater burden is the communities that must suffer through criminals who continually reoffend, stirring up disorder and unrest. Once recognizing the link between illiteracy and crime, the impacts of literacy programs in correctional facilities become significant and the implementation of such programs becomes clear.

Researchers have long suspected that youth in the criminal justice system display a significant link between criminality and illiteracy. Evaluating this link, the Criminal Justice Initiative (1997) noted that “young people who … exhibit poor literacy skills are disproportionately found within the criminal justice system.” The problem is not solely in the fact that youth often lack proper literacy when entering the criminal justice system, but that their education, and thereby their literacy, rarely improves when they are released, predisposing them to more crime. The Criminal Justice Initiative (1997) also notes this saying, “In most cases, once juveniles are incarcerated, even for a short time, their line to education is forever broken. Most juvenile offenders aged 16 and older do not return to school upon release or graduate from high school.” Ultimately, they conclude that “there is a strong link between low levels of education and high rates of criminal activity, and one of the best predictors of adult criminal behavior is involvement with the criminal justice
system as a juvenile.” The system is so broken, many juvenile offenders remain criminals even as they continue their adult lives. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that a link between adult literacy and criminality also exists. Research estimates vary, largely because of varying definitions of literacy, but Haigler, et. al (1994) notes that of adult offenders, roughly 35% fall into level 1 (out of 5) and another 35% fall into level 2. These numbers demonstrate an astounding high rate of low literacy of criminals, showing a clear link between crime and literacy, although different studies have produced some varying results. The Criminal Justice Initiative (1997) finds in its research that the number of functionally illiterate is roughly 40%, but despite the slight controversy Shutay, et. al (2010) note that “what is known is that educational attainment and literacy of inmates tends to be lower than that of the population at large.” This conclusion is what shows the correlation between illiteracy and crime so strongly, that criminals have a significantly lower average literacy than the normal population. Like the correlation identified in youth, all professionals identify a correlation between adult criminality and literacy. Kidder (1990) even argues, “Illiteracy is perhaps the strongest common denominator among individuals in corrections.” While this correlation is disturbing, the true problem lies in the recidivism some argue this illiteracy causes.

Recidivism in the United States is incredibly high. Sources from the Federal Sentencing Reporter (2002) show that within the first three years of release, approximately 67.5% of prisoners were arrested, at least once. While this number references the number of arrests, not the number of offenders that were re-incarcerated, it still represents a disturbing trend of high crime even after a life within correctional facilities. The Criminal Justice Initiative (1997) also notes that the “reported rates of recidivism for adult offenders in the United States are extraordinarily high, ranging from 41% to 60%.” Given this rampant recidivism, professionals have tried to determine if literacy can reduce recidivism through literacy or educational correctional programs.

Before analyzing the effect of literacy on recidivism, it is important to observe that often educational programs within prisons are synonymous with literacy programs, or have a direct
correlation upon literacy. Haigler, et. al (1994) notes this, saying that “educational achievement [in correctional facilities] is highly related to literacy proficiency.” This strong correlation is particularly important because many studies only focus precisely on the effect of educational programs, but their findings still offer merit with this correlation. Once again, the research regarding the impact of literacy on recidivism is easily split between the impact of programs on youth, and its impact on adults.

Professionals agree that the impact of programs on youth are deep and significant and can bring change to a juveniles life that gives them an opportunity outside of a life of crime, which can reduce recidivism. O’Cummings, et al (2010) believe the academic outcomes within incarceration can impact a youth after release and reduce recidivism. Similarly Music (2011) notes that “decreasing illiteracy rates among juvenile delinquents is the key to reducing recidivism rates in the United States.” While the professionals agree on the impact, the immediate concern then becomes the time and money it takes. Music (2011) notes however that juveniles may be taught to read at an age appropriate reading level in just 30 to 50 hours, using certain programs. Thus, while this concern with time and money is valid, juveniles may be taught literacy in a relatively small amount of time, with proper instruction.

Just as professionals found literacy programs impactful to youth, they also concur that they are impactful for older generations. Measurements vary, but all research points to a reduction in recidivism. Music (2011) found that inmates only have a 16% chance of returning to prison if they are given literacy help, but inmates with no such help have a 70% chance. The Federal Bureau of Prisons (1994) asserts different rates, claiming 36% recidivism for those receiving educational help, and 44 percent recidivism for others. The Bureau also notes however that the more programs an offender completed in a month, the less likely their recidivism. The Alabama State Board of Education (Criminal Justice Initiative, 1997) when evaluating this program wrote that “correctional education appears to be the number one factor in reducing recidivism rates nationwide.” With most professionals claiming these programs so clearly reduce recidivism, it is important to look the few arguments against the programs.

While the majority of professionals advocate for literacy programs, a handful instead argue that such programs are ineffective.
Allen (2006) in An Economic Analysis of Prison Education Programs and Recidivism for Emory University presents perhaps the strongest arguments against such programs effectiveness. He notes that some variables such as risk-aversion which may predispose a prisoner to take a course may also predispose them to not recidivate. Allen attempted to remove biases and testing errors he noted in data collection, and found that “after performing these regressions, we find no evidence that educational or vocational programs significantly reduce recidivism.” So while most evidence points to decreased recidivism with such programs, Allen finds flaws in the research methods, and instead argues these studies do not show any decrease in recidivism.

Allen (2006) also explores economic theory, or the theory that criminals only commit crime because of the costs and benefits in their situation. He argues that even if recidivism does decrease, literacy programs cause a lower cost of crime, encouraging others to commit crime. He claims that “such courses may reduce inmates’ incentives to recidivate by expanding their legitimate employment options, thereby increasing the opportunity cost of crime.” If the world did strictly model economic theory, what Allen is saying would hold much larger significance, but regardless, what he is saying does offer some merit. When crime is treated with education, crime can become a means to free education, which can make crime more appealing. Further exploring economic theory, Allen argues that “if inmates enjoy educational programs ... each unit of time spent in prison will have less of a deterrent effect on crime. Since the cost of crime will be lower, recidivism should theoretically increase.” While to a degree this argument makes sense, others argue that education is inherently different. Other professionals argue that education provides an enabling experience allowing someone to not pursue a life of crime because of an innate desire to be a functioning member of society.

If such programs actually do not impact recidivism, it becomes necessary to consider what policy changes this would require. Allen (2006) concludes that “neither educational programs nor vocational programs produce a statistically significant reduction in recidivism ... completing a course actually makes an inmate more likely to return to crime.” These findings directly contradict many others findings, but are important to consider. Allen concludes by
suggesting how his findings impact policymakers. “If policymakers’ ultimate goal is to reduce crime, the lack of a statistically significant relationship between prison courses and recidivism show that supporting educational and vocational programs is inefficient. Resources would be more wisely transferred to reducing crime in other fashions.” While this policy shift flows naturally from Allen’s research, it also disagrees with most other professional research.

With the benefit in correctional literacy training recognized by most professionals, it becomes important to evaluate the barriers to implementing such programs. Some research shows that institutional staff are excited and willing to implement such programs, but other researchers found that staff were a large barrier to implementation and seemed to fight such programs. Apart from mere attitude, it also becomes important to recognize financially how feasible these programs are, or if their funding would provide too great a barrier.

Perhaps the most important barrier to examine is the view of correctional staff in implementing literacy programs. Vacca (2004) draws attention to the importance of prison administrators, expressing that “program success or failure is hampered, however, by the values and attitudes of those in the authority position.” In looking at these attitudes, The Criminal Justice Initiative (1997) noted that “the vast majority of corrections officials believe that educational programs not only benefit inmates, but also the facility’s administration ... Indeed, 93% of prison wardens ... strongly supported educational and vocational programming in adult correctional facilities.” This quote shows strong support from wardens for implementation of such programs, but it is important to note this study dates in 1993. Drakeford (2002) in the Journal of Correctional Education offered a contrasting opinion stating that, “Some youth correctional officers in key positions believed reading literacy programs interfered with daily operations. Protests were raised over the timing of the sessions ... One major challenge faced by implementers of the study is changing youth correctional officers attitudes towards reading instruction. This will require a shift in institutional culture.” This opinion is more recent, and presents that at least in juvenile systems, many officers resist the training so important to decreasing recidivism. Drakeford (2002) presents the question that must be answered in dealing with this problem,
namely “What are the incentives for correctional administrators to encourage incarcerated youth to improve academically?” The answer to that question is not clear yet, but certainly must be kept in the forefront of the minds of those seeking to implement educational programs in correctional facilities.

While considering barriers to implementation, it also becomes important to evaluate the economical feasibility of implementing these programs. Drakeford (2002) looks at this in the Journal of Correctional Education (2002) explaining that “the expense of providing higher education to inmates is minimal when considering the impact upon rates of recidivism and the future savings of preventing re-arrest and re-imprisonment.” He writes perhaps most importantly, that “of all crime prevention methods, education is the most cost effective.” This statement is quite significant, and counters what Allen had advised to policymakers, because if education is truly the most cost effective means to decrease recidivism, policymakers would want to implement it on a far more widespread basis. Drakeford (2002) also argues that educated inmates immediately have realized benefits as they become working members of society, taxpayers, contribute to the economy, and no longer tax the criminal justice system, or cause harm to victims. Overall, professionals agree that while there is a cost associated with these programs, it is the most cost effective way to reduce recidivism and pays back to society upon inmate’s release.

Across the board, professionals agree that there is a clear link between literacy and criminality. Most professionals and studies exploring this topic have found that literacy educational programs significantly reduce recidivism and enable the offender to more easily become a contributing member to their community upon release. Some argue against the programs on philosophical arguments, but the practicality of these arguments seems to fade away. These programs are cost effective in reducing recidivism, and practical to implement. While the current norm for emerging inmates is low literacy and high rates of recidivism, most research seems to suggest literacy programs could decrease this recidivism helping inmates, taxpayers, the economy, overcrowded prisons, and the society in general.
References

Allen, R. (2006). *An Economic Analysis of Prison Education Programs and Recidivism*. Emory University, Department of Economics

This paper provides a thoroughly different view than the majority opinion regarding literacy programs and recidivism. Looking from a number of different perspectives, it argues that literacy programs actually do not decrease recidivism, and may even increase it. This piece proves to be an immense resource while trying to evaluate both sides of the argument, and not just one side.


This journal article helps evaluate the total financial burden of crime on the United States economy. This helps bring a significant reason for considering the recidivism that is so high within the criminal justice system, because of the excessively large burden crime plays, which is caused so highly by recidivism.


This paper provides a thoroughly discussed breakdown of a family literacy program that allows offenders to read to their children. It argues that these programs provide incentive for good behavior, as well as reducing recidivism and helping with reintegration. The programs also can drastically help motivate offenders’ children to chase literacy, and this helps lower the chance that they also will be an offender in the future. The program presented provides a method the researchers feel provides more quality time for offenders with their children. This piece helps in a unique way by bringing a wide breadth of
programs discussed, and the benefits of such programs.


This article provides an excellent analysis of education in relation to prisoners, and their literacy. It helps explore how both youth and adults demonstrate links between illiteracy and criminality, giving a good portion of statistics, and solid analysis.


This research presents a large number of statistics pointing to illiteracy of incarcerated populations. Based off a similar study in Michigan at a county jail, Drakeford investigates a juvenile detention center in Maryland to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, particularly with youth. This piece also helps look at the importance of attitude and its affect in correctional literacy education. This research looks closely not only at the benefits of these programs, but also at the barriers to implementing these educational programs. Most uniquely, this piece brings an extremely strong opinion for supporting correctional literacy programs, along with large amounts of empirical data to support its claims.


This article looks at literacy as the first step to obtaining further education for offenders, not just as something to decrease recidivism. It points to many offenders having a disbelief that they are smart enough to read, but argues
when they overcome this barrier they often feel more equipped to overcome other educational barriers. The article points to the success of mentors as well as the use of computers to aid the literacy learning of offenders, as computers allow offenders to feel less threatened by the instruction. The article ultimately provides a strong argument that literacy programs for offenders take large strides towards rehabilitation by helping offenders with the tools they need to further advance themselves outside of the correctional facility.


This article tries arguing for parental involvement programs within literacy. It looks particularly at program in Baltimore, and it’s successes. It tries showing such literacy programs help calm the offenders and bring out a more caring side within them, allowing them to be loving parents. It argues that the program is stress reliving for children, and builds positive role models for the children. Mostly, the article focuses on the implementation of the program, so similar ideas may be used in setting up literacy programs elsewhere.


This book provides an immense and thorough background of information and good framework for looking at the state of illiteracy in relation to prisoners. It provides a large number of helpful statistics of varying literacy levels of prisoners using different scales of measurement, and helps demonstrate the clear link between educational programs, and the inmates literacy levels.

of Research and Evaluation.

This report from the Federal Bureau of Prisons help provide official information about recidivism within the federal prison system. Unfortunately this data is from 1987, but the statistics and data is still helpful in analyzing the grave significance of recidivism within the United States.


This article provides a Christian viewpoint regarding education within prisons, arguing strongly that there is a clear link between illiteracy and crime, perhaps being the strongest link between individuals in corrections.


This research provides an excellent big picture view of literacy’s effect on recidivism. It doesn’t focus on a particular study done, but rather more holistically how literacy effects correctional offenders thereby effecting recidivism. This research looks most at youth, claiming that illiterate youth that initially are incarcerated are often the repeat offenders. The study emphasizes the importance of a juvenile’s education continuing after they leave the correctional facility. The study also shows, that while literary training may be intense, it takes relatively little time to begin reading at an appropriate level. The research shows the additional benefits of correctional literacy programs, including lowering costs for taxpayers and building safer communities. Lastly, the piece asks for support from communities, recognizing it is crucial to the building and maintenance of these programs.

This scholarly article provides analysis and statistics from data in 1994 of prisoners and their recidivism to the federal justice system. Unfortunately, this data is from 1994, but the authors recognize this and still draw good analysis and information from the data. It is important to note however, that the recidivism within this article is only federal, but does not account for state or local recidivism.


This brief issue helps give insightful analysis and statistics about youth in the criminal justice system, and the importance of literacy education for them. The brief insightfully argues that literacy education of juvenile offenders can help set them apart from the start to not reoffend or be drawn to crime in the future.


This study looks at a particular jail and seeks to measure its literacy, and contains other useful information about literacy related to incarceration. It argues that the results of literacy education are not quite as clear as many may argue, but have yet to be truly determined. It seeks to show that a lack of quality education, particularly in literacy, may be a contributing factor to a persons’ criminality.


This research shows that literacy programs not only help with recidivism, but also with managing levels of
violence within the prison, leading to a better prison not only for inmates, but staff also. The research pulls from a variety of different locations within the U.S. claiming large drops in recidivism with educational programs in prisons. The research also looks at the two largest barriers to such educational programs. The research tries showing that educational programs, particularly literary, help offenders learn how to appropriately express their emotion, and deal with their problems.
The Test that Changed His Life

Joshua Perez

Introduction

A boy is born with severe cerebral palsy and cannot speak. Many around him, like those surrounding so many other non-vocal children, have initial assumptions that non-vocalism is synonymous with non-literacy. As he grows older it becomes apparent although he is non-vocal, he is far from non-literate. His teachers notice strengths and weaknesses in his literacy, and wish to understand the factors playing into such things, though the published literature regarding this subject only increases their confusion. Phonological tests show his strengths and weaknesses, but find no patterns between said weaknesses and gender, age, education type, years in school, or virtually anything else. It is in this situation, when answers could decide the flourishing (or lack thereof) of this child’s literacy, that his teachers see the pathetic lack of specific tests designed for him. To have a more specifically designed test for people like him could exponentially increase the progress of his literacy, and those like him. Phonological awareness tests specifically designed for non-vocal
children with cerebral palsy are a necessary step in evaluating and developing their literacy skills. This is clear because of the ability for these tests to highlight key issues in the children's literacy, as well as discrepancies correlating to a variety of independent factors.

**A Common Misconception**

Cerebral Palsy, commonly abbreviated as “CP,” refers to a group of disorders affecting a person's ability to move. CP is caused by damage to the developing brain either during pregnancy or shortly after birth. CP affects people in a variety of ways, such as body movement, muscle control, muscle coordination, muscle tone, reflex, posture and balance. Although CP is a permanent condition, some effects can improve or worsen over time. CP has known correlations with visual, learning, hearing, speech, epilepsy and intellectual impairments (What is Cerebral Palsy, 2015).

Though many may be inclined to connect non-vocal children with non-literate children, it is well documented this is a false assumption. Non-vocal children, particularly with cerebral palsy, are commonly spoken to as if they have no perception of spoken word, or mature conversation. Not only would speaking to these children be ironic in the very nature of believing they cannot comprehend such words, but the assumptions of such things are absurd. Numerous studies have been done in order to find any causation or correlation.
between the inability to speak in children with cerebral palsy and literacy. It is well established that children with CP who do not speak still have intact language comprehension, so long as they have no additional cognitive impairments (Bishop & Robson, 1989; Bishop, Byers-Brown, & Robson, 1990; Duffy, 1995). Though there is high correlation between severe cerebral palsy and the presence of other disorders, the inability to speak in a person with CP is usually due solely to motor impairment, hence, having nothing to do with cognitive ability.

Clearly, although it should, at this point, be well established that non-vocalism and non-literacy are different, the idea of literacy playing a role in phonological abilities predicts children with severe CP who cannot speak should have impaired speech perception, since they would have never had the chance to acquire articulatory code (Card & Dodd, 2006, p. 149).

Although numerous studies have been done to evaluate this idea, results are inconsistent with each other. Two large studies, interestingly, contrast in results regarding the phonological awareness abilities of two groups of children with cerebral palsy: those who speak, and those who do not (Card & Dodd, 2006). In one of the studies, Bishop and Robson (1989) found no differences between a child with CP who could or could not speak on measures of rhyme judgement and short term memory. On the other hand, Vandervelden and Seigel (1999) found that nonspeaking children with CP have phonological processing difficulties in multiple tasks.
Multiple studies assume that the connections between understanding and producing speech involve a variety of different abilities. Because of this, a deficit in one area at a given point may affect both input and output functions. This is important because it begs the question if some phonological abilities are gained only through speech. For example, it is clear that Connor can read. This is known because teachers can ask him to read a passage, and then ask him questions about it which he can answer through use of his iPad or various other methods they have developed. However, if Connor’s classmates developed certain aspects of literacy solely from the acquisition of speech, is he less of a “good reader?” Some argue that children with some sort of speech difficulty often have difficulties with associated phonological awareness.

**Inconsistencies**

The mere presence such inconsistencies justifies a need for more specific phonological analysis tests for non-vocal children with CP, who, like Connor, will flourish much more in the classroom if specific strengths and weaknesses can be more objectively addressed.

Unfortunately, inconsistencies and lack of correlative results do not stop at the research mentioned above. Studies show there must be some sort of factors which must be noted in terms of studying literacy in non-vocal children with CP. This is mostly due to the fact that they are not a homogenous group. First, they differ in severity and co-occurrence of other disabilities such as dyspraxia. Additionally, they differ in cognitive abilities, experiences with school, and the type of communication assistance they have or have not been given in the past. Moreover, there could be differences based on age, due to the fact that it correlates with the amount of literacy the children have been presented with. Also, problems occur sometimes in trying to make case studies because comparing children with a motor impairment with children with none makes it difficult to find controls, considering poor motor coordination is relative to those without poor motor coordination. Research shows that chronological age, school experience, gender, social class, and possibly the extent to which the child has motor constraints are of importance.

As time progresses, these various factors become increasingly important when specifying phonological tests further than the
relatively superficial level of any non-vocal child with cerebral palsy. Imagine a database with stored correlations per factor which apply to a specific child. To make this idea more clear, imagine Connor needs to take a phonological test. Instead of the usual case in which a teacher pulls the same exam out for Connor as he or she would for any other child, the teacher goes to an online database uploaded on his or her computer. With simple button clicks, the teacher is able to check through every factor which applies to Connor such as age, gender, severity of CP, etc. Such a database would have the ability to compile an exam specifically designed to test Connor’s needs; clearly a much more fruitful exercise.

Case By Case

In order to conclude whether or not these factors play a role in the abilities of a non-vocal child with CP regarding literacy, they must be studied. One study uses 28 children, 14 Swedish and 14 Irish, who have CP, in order to outline their abilities in different phonological tasks. After studying memory tasks, letter knowledge, reading tasks, and spelling tasks, no large correlations show up. There is large variability in groups in terms of school experience and age. Of all of the tests, phenome blending and deletion seemed to be the easiest. Scores on all of the reading tasks ranged from 0 to 100%. Spelling real words which were spoken orally proved to be the hardest task. Some students scored zero on all of the tasks, while others achieved 100% on every task (Larsson, Sandberg, & Smith, 2010). Although at first it may seem this would imply these factors do not matter, nothing could be further from the truth. Such results conclude the fact that
children, particularly these children with CP, have varying, case by case factors which cannot be limited to looking at one factor at a time. In other words, it may be that the factors play roles in literary ability when mixed with other factors, rather than on their own. Since it would be ridiculous to claim children only have one, single characteristic, pretending so for a series of studies is, expectedly, relatively unfruitful.

It is apparent that results in the multiple case studies reviewed here are largely varying. This does not mean, though, that Connor has a clear advantage for being a good reader (which he is) over other students who are younger, a different sex, or have different educational background. But how? It seems there must be some sort of factors involved in determining literacy levels of these children, many of whom have severe cerebral palsy, like Connor, but are not as good at reading. Another approach is to better understand the possibility of problems with the language comprehension tests used to measure skill level in phonology.

The number of factors contributing to literacy in non-vocal children with CP is a large one. There are two factors which seem notable, in addition to the others. The first is the children’s parents. Due to the overwhelming amount of time someone with severe CP will spend with their parents throughout childhood, the role a parent plays in the children’s lives is vital. More specifically, the attitudes they have towards their child receiving literacy help is important. Connor’s parents have always put an emphasis on education and being a well-rounded person. Connor’s older brother, Liam, is an accomplished student, as is Connor’s sister, Julia, who has autism spectrum disorder. One study shows that in overwhelming conclusion, parents want to help their children, but they need guidance, and usually much more information, as well as technical support for their child in regards to decision making regarding the alternative or assistive communication techniques their child will receive. A clearer understanding of the many factors which go into literacy and their outcomes enables parents to find the best means of educational assistance for their child (Wray et. al., 2014). Unfortunately, many parents do not understand the strengths and weaknesses of their children in the classroom. Specialized phonologic tests are not only productive in the classroom, but are productive in home and family settings.
Additionally, the communication skills of the child is extremely important. Though Connor is extremely vocal in his own ways, he cannot simply list his wants and needs like some other children can. Likewise, he cannot interact in terms of phonological analysis tests the same as child who can speak. Although there are some differences in communication of children with CP, there are strong patterns which emerge in various studies, regardless of age or developmental level. One study looks at various aspects of communication and tests them separately, concluding the strong patterns previously mentioned. The article also provides discussion on the implications of such study results. This article concludes various interventions are necessary in improving interaction patterns with some children, particularly in teaching things such as active participation and communicative interaction (Light & Lund, 2007). It should be noted these interventions are not necessary for all children with severe CP, which adds to the overall point that there are a large number of factors going into all of this. These overarching characteristics may be the best ways to begin phonological tests for non-vocal children with CP, since most of these children share the same issues. Starting with the same fundamental questions which then move towards more specific, case oriented questions may be fruitful.

**The List Goes On**

It is apparent there are a large number of factors in evaluating literacy in non-vocal children with CP. Many studies aiming to evaluate various factors in regards to specific phonological areas contradict each other. Because CP is a muscle and movement disorder, areas of sensorimotor functioning and literary skills are in need of constant study (Obrzut & Straub, 2009). It is clear that there are a seemingly infinite number of factors which are necessary to study in terms of understanding literacy in this setting better and more thoroughly. The reality remains that “non-vocal” and “illiterate” are not synonymous with each other, particularly in children with CP, and because of this truth, mixed with the seemingly infinite amount of factors contributing to the literary abilities of non-vocal children with CP, more specific language tests are absolutely necessary.

According to Geytenbeek et al. (2010) language comprehension tests for children with severe CP are scarce. This is not only important for better understanding the various factors which help determine
literary abilities, but in order to have benchmarks for children in order to help them continue to learn. It is stated “A language comprehension test specifically designed for (young) children with severe CP is therefore warranted” (Geytenbeek et. al., 2010, p. 276).

A Precious Gem

In regards to the strong need for specific, case by case, phonological tests for non-vocal children with CP, it is extremely important to realize how great the gift of literacy is. To a spoken child, literacy is a beautiful means of understanding history, art, science, and day to day life. Although this is true for any child, for one who is spoken, these things are supplemental to the ability to speak, to sing and to present in the ways most accustomed to society. For Connor, literacy may be even more important. Literacy is one of the only means to communicate he has. Literacy is a means for him to tell stories, to share his accomplishments, and to learn and show understanding of an infinite variety of fields. Connor needs tests which can guarantee a fair, proper evaluation of his strengths and weaknesses. These tests may be the best hope for a continued education which allows him to continue doing what he loves. Connor continues to read, and to enjoy it. He continues to be a lover of school, which, regardless to the inability to hear him speak, is readily apparent.
References


Speechless individuals may have individual impairments due to supplemental cognitive issues. In this article, the judgements of memory and rhyme are evaluated through non-speaking individuals.


Non-spoken individuals with Cerebral Palsy may have impairments in language because they cannot develop an articulatory code. In this sense, these individuals have varying perceptions of language, hence, producing a language differing in specific areas than those who can speak.


It is commonly assumed that an inability to speak leaves an inability to comprehend spoken language. Such a theory should predict that non-vocal children with cerebral palsy should have an impaired perception of speech due to the lack of opportunity to learn articulatory code. It has been shown, though, that in the absence of other cognitive impairments, most non-vocal children with cerebral palsy have intact language comprehension. This article presents a study of a range of speakers and non-speakers with cerebral palsy.
should, therefore, conclude whether connections exist between speaking and the emergence of phonological awareness abilities.


Individuals who cannot speak generally use some sort of augmentative and alternative communication techniques in order to learn and produce language and literacy. This article looks specifically at the reading, spelling, and phonological awareness of those individuals.


It is often the case that children and adults using augmentative and alternative communication underachieve in their development of writing and reading skills. Additionally, it seems that their disabilities in these areas are disproportional to other abilities in linguistic functioning. Since reading and writing skills are developmental, combining internal resources the reader carries with him or her, the mere presence of speech issues cannot be the only reason for reading and writing deficits which commonly occur. This paper uncovers relative strengths and weaknesses in children using AAC in a range of areas in order to find correlations between skills and experiences with the children’s learning environments.


This article uncovers the various parts of motor
speech disorders, evaluating aspects from the first steps of recognition and diagnosis, to treatment and management.


This article aims to identify and understand the utility of standardized tests on non-vocal children with cerebral palsy. Because children with severe cerebral palsy have severely limited mobility, impairments in expressive and receptive communication skills are prevalent in children with severe cerebral palsy. This requires an evaluation of comprehension in spoken and written language, particularly in standardized tests. Twelve standardized tests were identified for this experiment, all of which were developed for children without limited mobility. Only one of these tests was revised and used for children with severe cerebral palsy, hence, a language comprehension test specifically designed for these children is necessary.


Because non-spoken individuals may develop articulatory code differently than spoken children, spelling and reading abilities may vary, in addition to possibly delayed onset. This article uncovers such implications in attempt to understand possible mechanisms for spelling and reading issues and probable solutions.

Lund, S., & Light, J. (2007). Long-term outcomes for individuals who use augmentative and alternative communication:
The use of alternative and augmentative communication systems (AAC) has been widely researched. The participants in these various studies are in a wide variety of ages, though patterns show through all of them, particularly, patterns of interaction. This study evaluates the communication skills of seven young adult men who have used AAC systems at least 15 years. The study finds that interventions may be necessary in improving communication abilities with people using AAC systems, particularly in areas of active participation, social interactions, and communication functions.


This article defines cerebral palsy as “a muscle and movement disorder that affects children and is the result of early brain injury.” The causes of these brain injuries may vary greatly, which is why children with cerebral palsy are considered a heterogeneous group. Specific areas of a child’s life is more affected due to the presence and severity of the CP. Specifically, areas of sensorimotor functioning, language and verbal skill, perceptual skill, learning, and memory are inhibited. This article explains the neuropsychology behind many of these issues faced by children with CP, and how they affect everyday life.


This website aims to expose Cerebral Palsy openly in an attempt to have better communication and, decision making, and, most importantly, acceptance.

This article aims to evaluate the phonological abilities of people who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).


This article uses the parents of 32 children with cerebral palsy, ages 5-12, in order to discuss parents’ attitudes towards the use of complementary therapy by their children. Results show that parents want to help their children, but have a lack of information. Additionally, they need guidance and practical support in order to make decisions regarding the use of complementary therapies. A clearer understanding of factors in their children’s situations will assist in the proper decision as to what type of complementary therapy to use.
The Unspoken Speaker: Analyzing Literacy in Non-Vocal Children With Cerebral Palsy

Joshua Perez

Introduction

A non-vocal child can be a speaking child. To go one step further, a non-vocal child can be a literate child. This article is a story of a boy named Connor. Connor is a lover of sports, family, and school, and Connor is non-vocal. How could someone know this? Though non-vocal children do not obtain the ability to communicate through spoken word, they still pose the ability to portray thoughts and emotions. There is plentiful research which attempts to uncover the abilities of children, like Connor, who cannot speak. Connor is only one member of a society filled with sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters who are non-vocal, and because of this, are misunderstood. This article explores the abilities of non-vocal children with cerebral palsy in various aspects of literacy with varying sex, age, and educational background.

Figure 1: Connor, now 15, pictured at age 12

Cerebral Palsy, commonly abbreviated as “CP,” refers to a group of disorders affecting a person’s ability to move. CP is caused by damage
to the developing brain either during pregnancy or shortly after birth. CP affects people in a variety of ways, such as body movement, muscle control, muscle coordination, muscle tone, reflex, posture and balance. Although CP is a permanent condition, some effects can improve or worsen over time. CP has known correlations with visual, learning, hearing, speech, epilepsy and intellectual impairments (What is Cerebral Palsy, 2015).

It is a common assumption that the inability to speak is an inability to comprehend spoken language. This idea predicts, then, that children with severe CP who cannot speak should have impaired speech perception, since they would have never had the chance to acquire articulatory code (Card & Dodd, 2006, p. 149). Numerous studies have been done in order to find any causation or correlation between the inability to speak in children with cerebral palsy and literacy.

**Figure 2: Connor and I at the Special Olympics.**

**Initial Studies**

It is well established that children with CP who do not speak still have intact language comprehension, so long as they have no additional cognitive impairments (Bishop & Robson, 1989; Bishop, Byers-Brown, & Robson, 1990; Duffy, 1995). Though there is high correlation between severe cerebral palsy and the presence of other disorders, the inability to speak in a person with CP is usually due solely to motor impairment, hence, having nothing to do with cognitive ability. On the other hand, many studies show that these children may still be clearly disadvantaged in areas of processing language, both written and spoken (Dahlgren & Sandberg, 2001). Two large studies, interestingly, contrast in results
regarding the phonological awareness abilities of two groups of children with cerebral palsy: those who speak, and those who do not (Card & Dodd, 2006). In one of the studies, Bishop and Robson (1989) found no differences between a child with CP who could or could not speak on measures of rhyme judgement and short term memory. On the other hand, Vandervelden and Seigel (1999) found that nonspeaking children with CP have phonological processing difficulties in multiple tasks.

Multiple studies assume that the connections between understanding and producing speech involve a variety of different abilities. Because of this, a deficit in one area at a given point may affect both input and output functions. This is important because it begs the question as to if some phonological abilities are gained only through speech. For example, it is clear that Connor can read. This is known because teachers can ask him to read a passage, and then ask him questions about it which he can answer through use of his iPad or various other methods they have developed. However, if Connor’s classmates developed certain aspects of literacy solely from the acquisition of speech, is he less of a “good reader?” Some argue that children with some sort of speech difficulty often have difficulties with associated phonological awareness.

**Accounting for Factors**

Clearly the above studies show there must be some sort of factors which must be noted in terms of studying literacy in non-vocal children with CP. This is mostly due to the fact that they are not a homogenous group. First, they differ in severity and co-occurrence of other disabilities such as dyspraxia. Additionally, they differ in cognitive abilities, experiences with school, and the type of communication assistance they have or have not been given in the past. Moreover, there could be differences based on age, due to the fact that it correlates with the amount of literacy the children have been presented with. Also, problems occur sometimes in trying to make case studies because comparing children with a motor impairment with children with none makes it difficult to find controls, considering poor motor coordination is relative to those without poor motor coordination. Research shows that chronological age, school experience, gender, social class, and possibly the extent to which the child has motor constraints are of importance.
Results of Factor Skew

In order to conclude whether or not these factors play a role in the abilities of a non-vocal child with CP regarding literacy, they must be studied. One study uses 28 children, 14 Swedish and 14 Irish, who have CP, in order to outline their abilities in different phonological tasks. After studying memory tasks, letter knowledge, reading tasks, and spelling tasks, no large correlations show up. There is large variability in groups in terms of school experience and age. Of all of the tests, phoneme blending and deletion seemed to be the easiest. Scores on all of the reading tasks ranged from 0 to 100%. Spelling real words which were spoken orally proved to be the hardest task. Some students scored zero on all of the tasks, while others achieved 100% on every task (Larsson, Sandberg, & Smith, 2010).

Comprehension Tests

It is apparent that results in the multiple case studies reviewed here are largely varying. This does not mean, though, that Connor has a clear advantage for being a good reader (which he is) over other students who are younger, a different sex, or have different educational background. But how? It seems there must be some sort of factors involved in determining literacy levels of these children, many of whom have severe cerebral palsy, like Connor, but are not as good at reading. Another approach is to better understand the possibility of problems with the language comprehension tests used.
to measure skill level in phonology.

According to Geytenbeek et. Al. (2010) language comprehension tests for children with severe CP are scarce. This is not only important for better understanding the various factors which help determine literary abilities, but in order to have benchmarks for children in order to help them continue to learn. It is stated “A language comprehension test specifically designed for (young) children with severe CP is therefore warranted” (Geytenbeek et. al., 2010, p. 276).

Additional Factors

The number of factors contributing to literacy in non-vocal children with CP is a large one. There are two additional factors which seem notable, in addition to the others. The first is the childrens’ parents. Due to the overwhelming amount of time someone with severe CP will spend with their parents throughout childhood, the role a parent plays in the children’s lives is vital. More specifically, the attitudes they have towards their child receiving literacy help is important. Connor’s parents have always put an emphasis on education and being a well-rounded person. Connors older brother, Liam, is an accomplished student, as is Connor’s sister, Julia, who has autism spectrum disorder. One study shows that in overwhelming conclusion, parents want to help their children, but they need guidance, and usually much more information, as well as technical support for their child in regards to decision making regarding the alternative or assistive communication techniques their child will receive. A clearer understanding of the many factors which go into literacy and their outcomes enables parents to find the best means of educational assistance for their child (Wray et. al., 2014).

Additionally, the communication skills of the child is extremely important. Though Connor is extremely vocal in his own ways, he cannot simply list his wants and needs like some other children can. Likewise, he cannot interact in terms of phonological analysis tests the same as child who can speak. Although there are some differences in communication of children with CP, there are strong patterns which emerge in various studies, regardless of age or developmental level. One study looks at various aspects of communication and tests them separately, concluding the strong patterns previously mentioned. The article also provides discussion on the implications of such study results. This article concludes various interventions are necessary
in improving interaction patterns with some children, particularly in teaching things such as active participation and communicative interaction (Light & Lund, 2007). It should be noted these interventions are not necessary for all children with severe CP, which adds to the overall point that there are a large number of factors going into all of this.

Conclusions

It is apparent there are a large number of factors in evaluating literacy in non-vocal children with CP. Many studies aiming to evaluate various factors in regards to specific phonological areas contradict each other. Because CP is a muscle and movement disorder, areas of sensorimotor functioning and literary skills are in need of constant study (Obrzut & Straub, 2009). It is clear that there are a seemingly infinite number of factors which are necessary to study in terms of understanding literacy in this setting better and more thoroughly. The reality remains that “non-vocal” and “illiterate” are not synonymous with each other, particularly in children with CP. Connor continues to read, and to enjoy it. He continues to be a lover of school, which, regardless to the inability to hear him speak, is readily apparent.

Figure 4: Connor with his older brother, Liam (left), and twin sister, Julia (right).
Figure 5: Connor, now age 15.
References


Speechless individuals may have individual impairments due to supplemental cognitive issues. In this article, the judgement of memory and rhyme are evaluated through non-speaking individuals.


Non-spoken individuals with Cerebral Palsy may have impairments in language because they cannot develop an articulatory code. In this sense, these individuals have varying perceptions of language, hence, producing a language differing in specific areas than those who can speak.


It is commonly assumed that an inability to speak leaves an inability to comprehend spoken language. Such a theory should predict that non-vocal children with cerebral palsy should have an impaired perception of speech due to the lack of opportunity to learn articulatory code. It has been shown, though, that in the absence of other cognitive impairments, most non-vocal children with cerebral palsy have intact language comprehension. This article presents a study of a range of speakers and non-speakers with cerebral palsy.
should, therefore, conclude whether connections exist between speaking and the emergence of phonological awareness abilities.


Individuals who cannot speak generally use some sort of augmentative and alternative communication techniques in order to learn and produce language and literacy. This article looks specifically at the reading, spelling, and phonological awareness of those individuals.


It is often the case that children and adults using augmentative and alternative communication underachieve in their development of writing and reading skills. Additionally, it seems that their disabilities in these areas are disproportional to other abilities in linguistic functioning. Since reading and writing skills are developmental, combining internal resources the reader carries with him or her, the mere presence of speech issues cannot be the only reason for reading and writing deficits which commonly occur. This paper uncovers relative strengths and weaknesses in children using AAC in a range of areas in order to find correlations between skills and experiences with the children’s learning environments.


This article uncovers the various parts of motor
speech disorders, evaluating aspects from the first steps of recognition and diagnosis, to treatment and management.


This article aims to identify and understand the utility of standardized tests on non-vocal children with cerebral palsy. Because children with severe cerebral palsy have severely limited mobility, impairments in expressive and receptive communication skills are prevalent in children with severe cerebral palsy. This requires an evaluation of comprehension in spoken and written language, particularly in standardized tests. Twelve standardized tests were identified for this experiment, all of which were developed for children without limited mobility. Only one of these tests was revised and used for children with severe cerebral palsy, hence, a language comprehension test specifically designed for these children is necessary.


Because non-spoken individuals may develop articulatory code differently than spoken children, spelling and reading abilities may vary, in addition to possibly delayed onset. This article uncovers such implications in attempt to understand possible mechanisms for spelling and reading issues and probable solutions.

Lund, S., & Light, J. (2007). Long-term outcomes for individuals who use augmentative and alternative communication:

The use of alternative and augmentative communication systems (AAC) has been widely researched. The participants in these various studies are in a wide variety of ages, though patterns show through all of them, particularly, patterns of interaction. This study evaluates the communication skills of seven young adult men who have used AAC systems at least 15 years. The study finds that interventions may be necessary in improving communication abilities with people using AAC systems, particularly in areas of active participation, social interactions, and communication functions.


This article defines cerebral palsy as “a muscle and movement disorder that affects children and is the result of early brain injury.” The causes of these brain injuries may vary greatly, which is why children with cerebral palsy are considered a heterogeneous group. Specific areas of a child’s life is more affected due to the presence and severity of the CP. Specifically, areas of sensorimotor functioning, language and verbal skill, perceptual skill, learning, and memory are inhibited. This article explains the neuropsychology behind many of these issues faced by children with CP, and how they affect everyday life.


This website aims to expose Cerebral Palsy openly in an attempt to have better communication and, decision making, and, most importantly, acceptance.

This article aims to evaluate the phonological abilities of people who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).


This article uses the parents of 32 children with cerebral palsy, ages 5-12, in order to discuss parents’ attitudes towards the use of complementary therapy by their children. Results show that parents want to help their children, but have a lack of information. Additionally, they need guidance and practical support in order to make decisions regarding the use of complementary therapies. A clearer understanding of factors in their children’s situations will assist in the proper decision as to what type of complementary therapy to use.
The Three Faces of Literacy

Matthew Beal

“Occ..Oc-cu...Oc-cu-p...p...”
“Occupation.”
“Occupation.”

That was the fourth time in three sentences he had needed someone to say a word for him. The objective: Read a paragraph from the handbook section we were studying that week. The process: A repetitious struggle in which the eyes, brain, and mouth engaged in discordant dissonance much to the displeasure of the ear. It wasn’t the first time that this problem had arisen in our weekly scout meeting, and he wasn’t the only afflicted person. It seemed that each time an individual strained at the syllables of our selected reading, the act would end in amiable but much needed assistance. The process became so tedious that people began to skip words they didn’t know to avoid bringing the group to another screeching halt.

As I observed the frequent foul-ups over the months, I began to notice a trend in the process. Most of those committing the errors hailed from the public schools, and those who corrected them were home schooled. I don’t say this to vilify public schools but to say that I was genuinely confused by this discovery. Hailing from a private school, I had never observed such issues with pronunciation or reading. Yet here we were at the crossroads of education. Three forms of schooling had converged on page 250 of the Boy Scout Handbook, and the differences appeared to be striking.

I would be remiss, however, to believe that the reading capacities of twelve to fifteen people meeting in the upper-back room of Parkview church in Findlay, Ohio was an accurate representation of three massive bodies of schooling by itself. Merely taking an isolated event and applying it as a universal truth would be foolhardy if not criminal. The schools of the world vary in a multiplicity of ways that affect students individually in all manner
of shape and form. With that being said, it would be equally as erroneous to assume that no difference in literacy exists between these three types of schooling: public, private, and home based. It seems prudent, therefore, to examine these differences in an objective manner that will accurately reflect the reality of literacy among these institutions.

Objectively measuring the literacy of a school body is easier said than done. Numerous variables must be controlled in order to make the comparisons be fair. It would be a mistaken, fruitless endeavor to take a lad from a well-to-do family who is studying at the premier school of his area and compare him with the local Oliver Twist. Religion, ethnicity, wealth, gender, age—these are but a handful of the numerous variables that may affect the literacy of a child. As such, the evidence shown in this paper has, to the utmost of its ability, controlled for these variables so reliable results may be obtained. Controlling for external variables is one part of accurately reflecting literacy in school, but a second part of the equation must be considered—by what standard do we evaluate an individual’s literacy? It must be noted here that it is practically impossible for one statistic to perfectly reflect the literacy of an individual, let alone an entire school body. However, with careful control of external variables and a quality collection of data, an accurate generalization can be reached. That generalization is realized primarily in the form of reading and writing test scores, though other data may be considered to aid the process. This allows for a standard, quantitative method of evaluation, which is an ideal setup for objective comparison. The intention of this essay is not to condone or condemn any form of schooling but to inform and provide facts. It should also be noted that this paper is not primarily concerned with causation (though some factors may be included to offer clarity) but rather the outcomes. Here I offer a statistically-oriented evaluation of national reading and writing literacy rates among private, public, and home schooled individuals among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries with a focus on the United States.

Public and Private School Literacy Rates
Before the outcomes of the public educational system can be considered, there are some statistics that should be observed as a backdrop. For the better part of the United States’s history, public schools experienced an upward trend in enrollment and graduation rates. Available data spanning from 1869-1970 shows public school enrollment jumping from 7.6 million to 45.4 million students, and the same time period saw the number of graduates rise from 22,000 to 2.6 million (NCES, Table 201.10). Perhaps a better reflection, to control for the growth in total population, would be the enrollment as a percent of the total population, which increased from 19.6% to 22.6% during this same span of time (NCES, Table 201.10). To summarize these points of data, public schools experienced generally consistent growth for a period of about one hundred years. However, after 1970, the growth of public schools seems to have stalled in some respects and shrunk in others. While total enrollment has still increased since 1970, it has been at a slower rate than before (NCES, Table 201.10). Additionally, enrollment as a percent of the total population shrunk from 22.6% to 15.9% in 2012, a rate that has not yet been seen in the history of available data (NCES, Table 201.10). Any number of reasons could be the cause of this decline, but the fact remains that, comparatively, fewer students are in the public school today. However, lest these facts be misleading, it should noted that public schools are still by far the largest provider of K4-12th grade education. Even with declining numbers, public schools account for 95.1% of non-homeschool education in the United States and 81.4% among OECD countries.

Purely based on reading and writing scores, public schools tend to have the lower rates of literacy than private schools. In a study comparing private and public schools, Jaap Dronkers and Peter Robert (2003) find that American public schools tend to average scores that are 10% lower than their private school counterparts. Compared to OECD public schools across the world, American public schools are slightly below average, but the difference is a mere 1.59% lower than the OECD average (Dronkers & Robert, 2003). A more recent and tightly focused study on the United States was also conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to evaluate literacy rates. In this study, the NCES focuses on fourth and eighth grade students in both public and private schools. Much like the study conducted by Dronkers and Robert, the NCES study...
finds a significant difference between the average scores of private and public school students. In the fourth grade, students hailing from public schools scored 14.7 points lower than those from the private school (Braun, Jenkins & Grigg, 2006). Similarly, eighth graders from public schools scored 18.1 points lower than their peers in the private schools (Braun, Jenkins & Grigg, 2006). Even when the average mean scores are properly weighted to account for external variables, a significant difference in the favor of private schools still exists.

In many OECD countries such as Belgium and the United Kingdom, the tendency of public schools to have lower literacy rates is similarly pronounced (Dronkers & Robert, 2003). However, this tendency is not a universal reality. In some OECD countries, the public vs. private difference is either erased or reversed. Denmark and Finland, for example, have yielded scores that lack any significant difference (Dronkers & Robert, 2003). Hungary, on the other hand, shows a fairly large difference (21.7%) in favor of public school literacy (Dronkers & Robert, 2003). Moreover, a careful look at the Dronkers & Robert study reveals an interesting find. Countries that primarily speak English are shown to have a high discrepancies between public and private school literacy, with public schools possessing the lower scores (Dronkers & Robert, 2003). By contrast, countries that primarily speak a non-English language are shown to have little to no difference in literacy results or have public schools that outscore the private schools, save for the notable exception of German-speaking countries (Dronkers & Robert, 2003).

**Homeschool Literacy Rates**

Researchers have found the task of measuring literary success among homeschooled students to be challenging in the past. Joseph Murphy (2014), the Frank W. Mayborn Chair at Vanderbilt University, neatly summarizes in the “The Outcomes of Homeschooling” what difficulties have been encountered: “The conclusion at present is that research on the impacts of homeschooling leaves a good deal to be desired...Much of what we do know about homeschooling is anecdotal in nature (Houston 1999)” (p. 247). While some quantitative results have been recorded, there is still a vastly larger body of data and evidence available for public and private school literacy rates than there is for homeschool literacy rates. This is
not to say that the research is inferior or sub-par in its nature, but rather that it is small in its quantity. Regardless of quantity, though, the body of work offered so far provides adequate insights into the literacy rates of home schooled students.

Overall, home schooled students generally have higher rates of literacy than public or private school students. As Murphy (2014) points out, home schooled students tend to score higher than the national norms on their literacy tests. In a 1997 study, home schooled students scored in 87th and 80th percentiles for reading and language, and a 2010 study showed that they had improved to scoring in the 89th and 84th percentiles (Murphy, 2014). Both of these scores are higher than the averages for public and private school students. Concomitantly, a similar trend is seen in SAT critical reading scores. Home schooled students have averaged a score of 568 compared to score of 501 for public school students (Murphy, 2014). Additionally, there is another aspect of literacy proficiency that is found with home schooled students. Generally, the educational development of the parent(s) tends to influence the educational development of the student. According to Murphy (2014), homeschooling tends to lessen the effect that parental education has on the child, even if the parental education is very poor. Statistically, this seems to indicate a higher level of literacy among home schooled students.

However, a question still remains pertaining to the function of home schooled individuals in society. In general, home schooled students will have a lower level of interaction with other persons than a private or public school student will have. Obviously, much of this is due to the nature of each type of schooling. As such, concerns have been raised in the past that this lack of daily, social interaction may prove to be a hindrance to the communication skills of home schooled students. A poor grasp of proper conversation and social norms can be just as damaging to a student’s literacy as a lack of adequate grammar and word knowledge can be. The question becomes: Does such a deficiency exist?

What the evidence shows us is not that a deficiency exists, but that a difference exists. Using the word “deficiency” indicates a lack of sufficiency, which in this case would be an insufficient number of social peers. Homeschooled students do generally have fewer peer contacts (11 compared to 20 for public schools), but this is not an
insufficient number of contacts (Murphy, 2014). Additionally, as Murphy (2014) points out, home schooled students also tend to have a greater diversity (agewise) of contacts than public or private school students. This makes sense due to the fact that home schooled students typically spend more time interacting with their parents and other older individuals as opposed to public and private school students who primarily interact with their own age groups (Murphy, 2014). While the methods of acquiring proper social literacy are different, the results show that home schooled individuals do not suffer from a lack of it.

Conclusion

The raw, statistical data tells us that home schooled students tend to have the highest literacy rates, and public school students tend to have lowest literacy rates. Two points should be made here to offer clarification on the findings of this paper. First, this is not a condemnation or recommendation of any type of schooling. It merely observes the trends in literacy rates among the three institutions of schooling, and its sole aim is to inform the audience of the statistical facts with regard to the three institutions of schooling. Second, these facts do not guarantee a lower literacy rate in a public school student or a higher literacy rate in a home schooled student. External variables such as wealth, gender, age, community, upbringing, and etc. all affect the literacy of an individual student, and the type of school they attend is only a part of the whole picture. As seen earlier, some countries have found public schools to be the most effective institution for promoting literacy among its students. It may also be assumed that, because of the diversity within countries, state or local areas have varying degrees of effectiveness among the three institutions of schooling. While the numbers present the statistical reality of literacy on a national level, students are free to make wise, informed decisions on their choice of school based on their respective situations.

Works Cited

Eczema: The What, the Who, and the How

Kaitlyn Ring

Bug bites. They are annoying, and ceaselessly itchy. Just a couple of those can drive a person nutty. Picture this: a boy whose body is covered with these bites. The undeniable course of action is to scratch them. Now in addition to those intensely itching bites, imagine that his skin is very dry. Dry skin is also itchy. His body itches so badly that he just has to scratch it, and because he scratched it, it is now very sore and raw. Anything that touches it causes pain, yet it still itches. So he scratches. It is an endless cycle. That is what living with eczema is like. Eczema is an autoimmune disease of the skin, and it affects people of all ages; fortunately, there are a multiple treatment options.

Eczema, also known as atopic dermatitis, encompasses several different types of symptoms revolving around skin inflammation. Symptoms vary from person to person, but dry, sensitive skin primarily characterizes eczema (“Eczema”), as well as itchy red or brownish-gray patches, small raised bumps in the affected area, seeping, and possibly “thickened, cracked…scaly skin [or] raw, sensitive, swollen skin from scratching” (Mayo Clinic). Experts scale eczema severity in three levels: mild, moderate, and severe. It also can be either localized in one area, or widespread across the body (Lawton “Managing Difficult and Severe Eczema in Children” 26). Any combination of these symptoms presents varying degrees of severity, although it is unknown if any play a part in the origin of the disease. The exact cause of eczema is unknown, but there are many contributing factors, including environmental and food allergens, as well as Filaggrin proteins. According to Ballardini, genetic Filaggrin (FLG) mutations are possibly major contributors to eczema, though it needs further investigation (588). Filaggrin is a group of proteins that are vital for the skin to work properly (De). It is also becoming more prevalent today, as if one parent has eczema, then their children are fifty percent more likely to manifest
Many people who suffer from eczema may also suffer from asthma, or allergies, also known as hay fever, as these autoimmune diseases are commonly linked together. “Doctors think eczema causes are linked to allergic diseases, such as hay fever or asthma...[they] call this the atopic triad;” up to eighty percent of children with eczema are likely to develop hay fever as well as asthma, if they are not already coping with them (“Eczema”). All these symptoms intensify the degree of severity. The severity of eczema comes and goes in cycles. There are times when symptoms are less severe and more manageable because the skin is less inflamed, thus the person feels better and more normal. Flares are the other side of the cycle. They constitute the skin inflaming and are red, itchy, and painful. As with all symptoms of eczema, it is very individual. Some people are far more uncomfortable than others during flares. Patients with moderate eczema go through about eight flares a year, and each flare lasts for about two weeks; hence “patients spend around a third of the year (113 days) suffering eczema exacerbations” (Greener 438). Sensitivities to allergens most often trigger eczema and flares. According to the National Eczema Association’s article, “Eczema”, these include anything from mold, pollen, pets, soaps and detergents; to food, especially dairy, eggs, nuts, soy, and wheat; in addition to contact with disinfectants or juices from food, especially meats, fruits, and veggies. Krämer and colleagues, as cited by Greener, “examined seasonal changes in 39 children with eczema. Just over half (54%) experienced symptoms predominately during the winter,” and the remainder suffered more in the summer, especially on days with higher counts of grass pollen (438). This evidence reveals that half of people suffering from eczema in this study were more sensitive to indoor allergens, like pets and detergents, while seasonal allergens affected the other half more, such as pollen and mold. Food sensitivities could equally affect both sides of the study.

Eczema symptoms affect people of all ages, but they most often pertain to children. Eczema affects twenty percent of all school age children (Lawton “Managing Difficult and Severe Eczema in Children” 26). While it is most common in children, it affects many adults as well. “One fifth of the population [will deal with eczema] at some point in their life...it affects both sexes and all races (Watkins 322). Hence, the statistics of one exhibiting symptoms of
eczema are quite high. While eczema is physically draining, as the body is constantly reacting to and processing allergens, it also significantly impacts emotional health. As children grow up, they become more conscious of their bodies. Children with eczema are even more painfully aware of theirs. Classmates, and even strangers, are likely to ask why their skin looks like that, or what is wrong with them. This innocent lack of understanding by others can lead to a negative self-image (Lawton “Childhood Atopic Eczema: Adherence to Treatment” 230-231). According to Greener’s article, “Eczema: What Lies Beneath?”, “eczema patients showed worse mental health scores than people with diabetes or hypertension…[as well as] poorer social function scores” (438). This is due to coping with the physicality of eczema, along with the emotional stress of wondering whether something really is wrong with them, which in turn affects their caretakers or parents who have to care for both their children’s physical and emotional needs. Eczema not only affects the patient, but also affects their caretakers. Caring for someone with eczema is “time consuming and exhausting both for…children and their families…conflict over eczema treatments also [may have] a negative effect on family relationships and drained…physical and emotional resources” of the caretakers (Lawton “Childhood Atopic Eczema: Adherence to Treatment” 228). It is vitally important that parents have the support of doctors and specialists to help them walk through this difficult journey (Lawton, “Atopic Eczema: The Current State of Clinical Research” 1062). Parents caring for these children alone with no support can make family life a rough and high-stress environment. Proper treatment can help alleviate some of this stress. There are multiple routes to treating eczema. Lawton claims, “Treatment is multifaceted and requires a comprehensive assessment of the severity and implementation of a management plan;” assessment includes physical and psychological, and the management plan must be tailored to the individual person (“Atopic Eczema: The Current State of Clinical Research” 1064). Emollients, such as moisturizing lotion or Vaseline, are the baseline of treatment. They provide some sort of protection; since eczema is the result of a weakened or damaged skin barrier. “Once the skin barrier is compromised…allergens can enter the body and cause an inflammatory reaction that…stimulates skin cells to grow rapidly, further diminishing the protective function of the skin” (Sutton
Experts stress the importance of creating an artificial barrier to prevent the intake of toxins, in addition to all the other functions the skin performs. While moisturizers are the foundation of eczema treatment, often times it is not enough. Emollients usually must be supplemented with topical steroids, hydrocortisone for example. Doctors prescribe small doses of steroids to begin with, depending on the severity of the symptoms, and then gauge the reaction to treatment. If the starting dose does not improve the symptoms, then a higher dose will be prescribed. Parents often have health concerns of immune suppression and growth failure in relation to topical steroids (Lawton “Childhood Atopic Eczema” 229). While side effects are generally uncommon, topical steroids have a negative connotation that is compounded by reading prescription information on labels (Lawton “Childhood Atopic Eczema” 229). Prescription packaging lists all kinds of side effects, such as mood swings and personality shifts, even if they are not common, and when parents are giving this medication to their children, it can be especially frightening. This fear makes natural remedies much more appealing. Another treatment option is homeopathic remedies. These treatments may include daily baths with vinegar, oil, and salt added to the water, the use of essential oils, targeting healing of the digestive system as a root cause for eczema, avoiding allergen triggers in environment and food, and washing dishes and laundry with non-detergent soaps. Medical doctors advise that patients explore these options cautiously, from a safety standpoint. Many people are willing to take the risk despite this, as they consider homeopathic treatment safer and more natural (Lawton “Childhood Atopic Eczema: Adherence to Treatment” 229). While it may be seen as more ideal, doctors have not yet developed a guaranteed treatment. The root cause of eczema has yet to be discovered, so doctors can only treat what symptoms they understand. This is unfortunate because it leads to the obvious conclusion that there is no cure for eczema. Thankfully, “60-70% of children who have eczema in the first few years of their lives” will grow out of it by the time they turn 11, and those that don’t usually improve with age (Lawton, “Childhood Atopic Eczema: Adherence to Treatment” 228). While eczema may not be curable, there is a very high chance that it will improve in most individuals. Eczema is a widespread autoimmune disease of the skin that affects people of all ages.
ages, but is especially prevalent in children. While it is not curable as of yet, treatment options are readily available to ease symptoms, and aid in making life more enjoyable for both patients and caretakers. Hopefully researchers will soon discover the root cause of eczema. That way patients can stop applying itch cream to the bite, and just prevent the bug from biting them in the first place.

Works Cited


Sutton, Amy L. *Allergies Sourcebook : Basic Consumer Health Information About The Immune System And Allergic Disorders, Including Rhinitis (Hay Fever), Sinusitis, Conjunctivitis, Asthma, Atopic Dermatitis, And Anaphylaxis, And Allergy Research Writing* 203
Triggers Such As Pollen, Mold, Dust Mites, Animal Dander, Chemicals, Foods And Additives, And Medications; Along With Facts About Allergy Diagnosis And Treatment, Tips On Avoiding Triggers And Preventing Symptoms, A Glossary Of Related Terms, And Directories Of Resources For Additional Help And Information. n.p.: Detroit : Omnigraphics, 2011.

Notes
Composition Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of first year composition, students will:

• apply knowledge of conventions through proper formatting, documenting, and structuring of written text, controlling such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation and spelling.
• use technology to locate and evaluate information as well as produce their own writing
• complete each stage of the writing process toward producing a cohesive text
• respond appropriately to various rhetorical situations
• apply critical researching, reading, and writing skills in order to integrate their own ideas with those of others
• display a biblical worldview through written or oral coursework
Grading System

A – Recognizes excellent achievement. It is indicative of superior quality work and reveals a thorough mastery of the subject matter. The student receiving this grade should demonstrate enough interest to do some independent investigation beyond the actual course requirements.

B – Indicates work and achievement that are well above average. The student receiving this grade should be capable of doing advanced work in this field. The quality of the work should be considered better than that achieved by the average student.

C – Indicates average achievement and a satisfactory meeting of requirements.

D – Reveals inferior accomplishment and is generally unsatisfactory from the standpoint of course requirements.

F – Failing grade. It indicates very unsatisfactory work. No course credit is earned.

AU – Given when a course is audited. To receive this notation, the student must attend and participate in the course. No credit is earned.
Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It

What is Plagiarism and Why is it Important?

In college courses, we are continually engaged with other people’s ideas: we read them in texts, hear them in lecture, discuss them in class, and incorporate them into our own writing. As a result, it is very important that we give credit where it is due. Plagiarism is using others’ ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information.

How Can Students Avoid Plagiarism?

• To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use
• another person’s idea, opinion, or theory;
• any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings—any pieces of information—that are not common knowledge;
• quotations of another person’s actual spoken or written words; or
• paraphrase of another person’s spoken or written words.

These guidelines are taken from the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct.
Cedarville University Writing Center

**Director:** Professor Julie Moore
Tyler Digital Communication Center
Room 104
Cedarville University

**Phone:** 937-766-3245

**Email:** The Writing Center

**Mission:** The Cedarville University Writing Center exists to help writers at all levels of proficiency from all academic disciplines develop effective writing skills. This development takes place primarily through one-on-one peer consultations which are adapted to individual writers’ needs. Such consultations will be competent and timely, will occur in a comfortable, non-threatening atmosphere, and will address all writing projects in any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to revision. These consultations focus primarily on the writing at hand, but the long-term goal for every session is to help each tutee become a better writer overall. The center is neither a proofreading service nor a classroom- tutors do not edit or grade. Instead, the center blends service and communication, a blend which at its core is wholly Christian.

### Centennial Library

**Department Contact Numbers**

- Administration: 937-766-7845
- Circulation Desk: 937-766-7840
- Collection Services: 937-766-7844
- Curriculum Materials Center: 937-766-7854
- MediaPLEX: 937-766-7852
- Reference Desk: 937-766-7850
- Office FAX: 937-766-2337
- Public FAX: 937-766-3776

**Hours**

- Monday - Thursday: 7:45 am - 11:30 pm
- Friday: 7:45 am - 7:00 pm
- Saturday: 10:00 am - 7:00 pm
- Sunday: 7:30 pm - 11:30 pm
Anthology Includes

Bean Sprouts and the Root
by Joo Hee Jung

Hughes Hue
by Jean-Luc Schieferstein

The Promise of Sunshine
by Allison White

and 29 other compositions by recent Cedarville composition students.