

STUDENT WORK SECTION

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Editor's Note: The Journal will regularly feature samples of student work of a nature different from that traditionally expected in college courses. Students frequently become more engaged in the study of mathematics and science when they are given the opportunity and encouragement to place the mathematics or science that they are studying into a broader context, and to bring to bear their individual outside interests and abilities. Such is certainly the case in Contemporary Mathematics, a course designed for non-science majors - particularly prospective K-8 teachers - and currently being developed/refined by the Virginia Collaborative for Excellence in Teacher Preparation. In addition to completing traditional hour exams and quizzes, all 850 students currently enrolled in sections of this course are expected to complete two large projects and complete a substantial number of writing assignments, including two major papers in which they are required to describe the mathematics that they have studied to a non-technical reader.

The following student paper is an example of such a paper; it accounted for 5% of the grade in the course. The author was a freshman Humanities and Science major who was, in our view, able to combine her interest in fictional writing with a clear exposition of the mathematics that she has learned.

SOLVING PROBLEMS INVOLVING HAMILTON CIRCUITS

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With a disturbing look of confusion, he sits at his desk, contemplating over the trip he must soon take. "Where do I start?" he questions himself. Sipping on a stale cup of black coffee, he looks down his nose through his glasses at the map resting upon the hard oak. Gray smoke rolls from his mouth, dissipating into the late night air after each drag of his cigarette.