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Skunk River Review September 1993, vol 5

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SKUNK RIVER REVIEW

VOLUME V

SEPTEMBER 1993

Skunk River Review is a collection of student writing published once a year by The Des Moines Area Community College.

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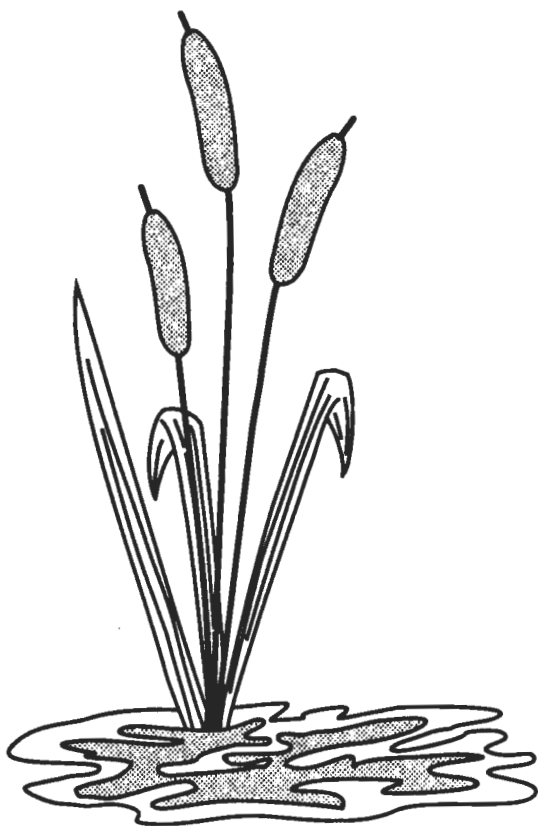
INTRODUCTION

The *Skunk River Review* is a collection of writings by Des Moines Area Community College students enrolled in composition courses at all levels from Basic Writing to Composition II. The selections appearing in this volume were chosen from essays submitted by composition instructors in the 1992-1993 academic year. In making the final selections for publication, we looked at a variety of criteria, including an essay's focus, organization, style and originality. As in past years, the goal was to create a quality publication representative of the student writers at DMACC.

To the student: The essays in the *Skunk River Review* are to be read, analyzed, and enjoyed. Written by your peers, the selections are intended as examples of student writings at all levels and as a backdrop for evaluating your own writing. We hope the subject matter, style and format of the essays will provide material for class discussion and for personal inspiration.

To the instructor: The *Skunk River Review* was created to provide students with a vehicle for sharing their writings with a broader audience. It is most often used as a supplement to the main text of a composition course. Because the selections are written by their peers, students relate easily to the subject matter and enjoy discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the essays. How the *Skunk River Review* is integrated into the course varies from one instructor to another. Some assign the entire volume to be read independently with students responding to essays of their choice in journal form. Others use specific essays as models for writing assignments. The *Skunk River Review* represents a cross-section of teaching methodologies to allow the instructors greater flexibility in its use.

Above all, we hope you enjoy reading Volume Five of *The Skunk River Review*.



Family: A Dramatic Stage

Chuan-Yi Williams
Basic Writing

I have lived two different experiences in two different countries — Taiwan, where I come from, and America, where my husband grew up. In both countries the various lifestyles, the religions, the children's attitudes toward parents, and the marriages all form a dramatic stage for family life. The changes in culture were a big challenge for me, and I am still trying to adjust myself to the differences.

The expression of affections in the Americans' lives is more demonstrative than the Chinese. My first surprise was when I walked into the Des Moines Airport and saw two familiar people standing by the exit to welcome us. With tears on their faces, they came to hug me tightly and said, "Welcome, honey. We knew you all would make it." I had never met my husband's parents but had seen a picture they had sent me. Their heartiest of affections touched my heart, and I knew I was very lucky. In our culture, people are very shy and don't show their love very easily. My parents would never hug me and tell me they loved me, but I knew they loved me in their hearts more than anything. They would only try to make the best decisions for me. As they said, "I walked more bridges than the salt you ate," which meant that they had more experience than me. In fact, this was the way Chinese parents expressed how much they loved you.

From the view point of lifestyle, Chinese people are more industrious. In my childhood, I always saw my mom work from dawn until dusk to try to earn our daily bread. She never spent money on herself but made sure that there was enough food on the table. She never complained, but continued to work hard and didn't expect anything back from us. She only hoped that every one of her children could be proud of what we had. She always said: "Watch every penny you have earned, for it is blood money and hard to come by."

On the other hand, I hear a lot of Americans complaining about how tough their lives are and how hard they work. They never have peace of mind. They also take most things for granted, like having a nice house filled with lots of possessions. Almost anything they ever wanted they can have, and yet they still are not satisfied. Americans are often accused of being materialistic; however, they must work hard for what they have. Hard work and materialism run side by side.

I also see the differences between children's attitudes toward parents. The family I come from was a typical Chinese family. My dad was an old-fashioned man who was always very stern and kept a strict hand over the children. None of the children in our family would ever think of talking back to him. When he got angry, we were taught to be respectful and compliant. It would be very wrong if we didn't listen to our parent's view or tried to make our own decisions without asking for their permission first. For example, when I made up my mind to marry my husband without my father's blessing, my dad relinquished his hold on me. He would never accept that his daughter had chosen to break the bonds of respect.

No longer do most American families live by the rule that the father's word is law. The relationship between parents and children is more of a democracy, which gives children more freedom in their own decision-making. However, the democratic approach to family life does not solve all the problems of a generation gap. Children still have quarrels with their parents and take their attitude and behavior for granted. They are not respectful like I was taught to be when I was a child. Sometimes I cannot understand how my husband can argue loudly with his parents and upset them. I guess Americans often justify their actions toward their family members by the expression, "Blood is thicker than water." Although they may fight, they are still a family.

From the viewpoint of religion, Chinese people are more superstitious than Americans. Most often believing in Buddhism, they usually set religious idols in the houses

to worship and show respect for their ancestors. For instance, my mother prayed morning and evening and never missed a day. On a religious holiday, particularly, she would go to a public temple to worship Buddha. The ancestor-worship has always been Chinese tradition and held as our custom for 5000 years. What is so superstitious? When I was a child, if I were ill, my mom would light the incense and collect the ash in order to pray for me to get better. On the contrary, many Americans believe in God and Christianity, and not superstitions. For them, religion provides personal identity and social contact and important rituals. They will go to church every Sunday morning and get involved in church activities. Some Americans believe in their hearts that God will mend all their problems.

As for marriage, people living together unhappily seems to be the trend of the times. In China, many only stayed joined as a family because they did not wish to get a divorce. With our traditional culture, once you got married you would stay married or the woman would be looked down on and ridiculed. That is why my mother stayed in her unhappy marriage for 20 years. However, no matter how she tried to stop it, her marriage still ended in divorce.

The divorce rate in America has more than doubled compared to Taiwan. With typical American optimism, couples expect a great deal from marriage. They seek physical, emotional, and intellectual compatibility and also to be deeply loved. It is because their expectations are so high that so many of them get divorced. Some Americans prefer no marriage at all to a marriage without love and understanding. But the high risk of divorce doesn't seem to make them afraid to try marriage—again and again. They end a marriage in hopes that the next will be happier.

A common bond exists between us all who play a part in building a family. A family is like a dramatic stage on which all things must function together in order to reach

the goal. No matter where you come from, the goal of a family includes the type of life, the beliefs of religion, the values of a family, and happiness of marriage to be worked out compatibly. All individuals must strive to do their best in order to establish a family built and maintained with perfect love.



Miss Opal 101

*Paula Green
Basic Writing*

I did it! I had my flimsy certificate to prove it. After completing a 120 hour course, I am a certified Nurse's Assistant. I now know how to take blood pressures, temperatures, walk, bathe, feed, lift, roll, dress, shower and shave an elderly person. I have learned about dermis, epidermis, brachia, trachea, abduction, adduction, edema, ventricles and arteries. I am ready, anxious and eager, but nothing in my textbooks or classroom has prepared me for this slight, sharp, knowledgeable 99-year-old woman. She truly made me realize the needs of the elderly. Welcome to Miss Opal's class, 101.

The first day had arrived. I punched in on the employees' time clock and opened the double doors that separated the world from the sleeping. My shiny new shoes squeaked on the highly polished floor as I descended towards the nurses' station. I was met by a very agitated woman walking very fast while saying, "They took my clothes! All of them! They took my clothes!" Sitting outside of a room was another woman in a wheelchair nervously fondling her rosary beads and asking me, "Are you my aide today? Do you know who will take care of me today?" My mind was exploding with doubt and wondering what I had gotten myself into.

In the nurses' station I heard reports of all that happened during the night and was handed the list of residents that were my patients for the day: four baths, three complete bed changes, a urine specimen in 211b, ambulate 206a, 207a, and 211b. We also were to take all the residents down to the dining room for breakfast and lunch, take everyone to the rest room and then after lunch certain people were to lie back down in their beds. My mind was in a whirlwind panic trying to remember how to plan and utilize my day.

Buzz, buzz. "That's Opal. Who has Opal today?" Wearily, I walked down the hall to the blinking light. Knocking on the door and as assuredly and confidently as I could I said, "Good morning. My name is Paula. How may I help you?" The moment I saw her and she turned to look at me, I perceived a very refined, elegant lady. Her mannerisms, though difficult and slight, filled the room with an aura of grandeur. Her appearance could have been comical. She was lying in bed with a white lace bonnet on her head that had twisted and turned during the night. Gray tendrils of hair peeked out around her face, and her glasses had slipped down to the tip of her nose. Yet everything about her demanded respect. Her words were chosen with directness and precision, and like her body, her voice also was suspended in time. The simplest of actions required energy and a struggle to remember, yet she held to her dignity and pride.

I said, "Miss Opal, I'm going to get you ready for breakfast, but first I want to brush your teeth." She watched me as I looked through her things and gathered up all that I needed to complete the task. Her teeth were gummy like cookie dough, spider web mucus formed on her lips and then burst when she spoké, and her lips had difficulty forming around her swollen gums. As I approached her with tooth brush in hand, she looked at me with disdain and dropped her jaw. Suddenly she said, "Leave! I thought you were different, but you're just the same. Leave!" Feeling punished and degraded, I left feeling like a spanked child. Later her buzzer rang again, but this time I entered meekly and ashamed, not knowing what I had done. She apologized to me and said,

"You told me your name, and asked me what I wanted!"

"Yes, yes," I thought, anxiously waiting for her words to be formed. I said, "What did I do wrong, Miss Opal?"

"You didn't ask," she replied.

"Ask what, Miss Opal? What did I forget?"

She stated so matter-of-fact, "If I wear dentures!"

"Dentures! But no one told me you wore dentures!" All I could think was how could her teeth look so bad if someone knew that she wore dentures?

"I'm sorry," I said. "No one told me you wore dentures."

She said, "No one asked; you could have asked, but you assumed. That's the problem; everyone assumes."

Elated with a victory, I ran to tell my charge nurse that all was forgiven and that Miss Opal wore dentures, and that now her smile matched her demure.

"Dentures, I never knew she wore dentures. Is there a denture cup in her room?" I guess we all forgot. Life is so simple. If there is no denture cup, then we can assume there are no dentures.

Categorizations, assumptions, busy schedules and lack of respect are further burdens society has given the elderly to bear. I have spoken the word many times, yet never knew the dynamics such a small word as "ask" could possess. Not only do we fail in asking questions, but so often we fail to answer theirs. How frightening it must feel to be chastised with your memories of how you once were, only to realize what you no longer can do. How fearful to be at the mercy of someone's busy day. For years they have contributed to society, and like this generation, have become set in their ways, yet they now are being asked to conform to ours.

Usually because of medical reasons, many elderly are no longer able to care for themselves. Their families also are no longer able to care for them and meet their growing needs. Nursing homes and health care centers have become a necessary part of society, because our elderly are living longer. Yet so many times once put into a nursing home, they become forgotten. Family forget to visit, and friends have either passed away or, like themselves, the years have taken their toll. People that work in these facilities need to understand the responsibility that has been placed upon them. They no longer are just employees; they become a part of the elderly's existence. Familiarity, trust, assurance and communication become their lifeline.

"You must treat me like a doll," Miss Opal said to me, "I no longer can stand, and I must trust you even though I don't know you. Make me understand what you're going

to do, and tell me what I can do." It becomes so easy in a busy routine to miss, "What can I do?" Many elderly are still capable of doing certain things for themselves, yet for some reason this is forgotten also. They often have spent their whole lives caring for themselves and others. They have had their own homes and families, yet we assume and categorize that they're now incapable of making decisions. The simplicity of asking, "What would you like to wear today?" or "How would you like to wear your hair today?" or other similar questions make a difference in how they accept themselves. Dignity and pride and the ability to maintain some sense of contribution is often the difference between death and the desire to live.

Time spent with Miss Opal for me was like a symphony, an orchestra of knowledge unfolding with the things that she shared. I learned a lot about people from her and about the many fears of growing old and being dependent on others. Her desire was to die, yet she was afraid because this is the only world she had known. She wondered if tomorrow she would still be capable of doing what she could yesterday, and she forever was saying, "I know my daughter will surely come today." A smile, the warmth expressed by pressing your warm cheek against theirs, a touch on the hand or shoulder or a short visit can mean so much.

Miss Opal has now passed away, but I will always remember her. She contributed so much in my learning to ask and not to assume. You can learn much from someone beyond your years. Sometimes you just need to ask.

I'm now forgotten,
like the first winters snow.
But I did have a family
once to show.
My skin is transparent
and I move so slow.
Ask me a question,
I'll tell you no lies.
You look so young and pretty,
Before my eyes.



Wanted: One Good Man

Jeannie Hutzel
Basic Writing

You see it in the want ads every day: People advertising and selling their souls in the hopes of connecting with the one they can hopefully spend the rest of their lives. Although most of us singles do not all take finding mates to that extreme, I think we can relate to their probable feelings of hopelessness after years of searching for that one special person. Society has taught us that to be single by choice, there must be something wrong with us. So thus, our race to the finish begins.

As for me, I feel I can relate to their insanity. I am a romantic at heart who believes in love at first sight, cries over romantic movies, and keeps my dream alive that some day my prince will come just like in the story of Cinderella. I believe that love will find me — it is just a matter of being in the right place at the right time. Maybe that explains the reason why, after almost 27 years, I still am not married. It's not that I never look, but when I do I always seem to find the ones who are not quite ready for a permanent relationship.

Singles' clubs are not my style, and I have never advertised in the want ads or gone on the *Love Connection*. But for those who have had success in finding a mate that way, I say more power to them. We all, at some point in our lives, grow tired of the singles' scene and long to find the one perfect mate we can ride off into the sunset with. We all have our own checklist of what the perfect mate must be like. Although none of us are perfect, some imperfections we can overlook, while others we cannot.

What is my definition of the ideal marriage partner?

He must be somewhat good-looking, but I have found from past experience that the best-looking ones can sometimes be more interested in looking in a mirror than at me. Therefore, what is most important to me is what is on the inside. If he treats me well, that is all that really matters.

Like the old saying goes, "Don't judge a book by its cover;" while he may not be the best-looking, he may have a true heart of gold.

He must have pride but not be proud enough to admit when he is wrong. He should know what he wants out of life and be ready to take control when any situation calls for it. He should be hard-working, dependable, and stable enough in himself to let his guard down once in a while to do the woman's job if he has to. A man who can change a baby's diapers without feeling he is risking his masculinity sounds pretty grand to me. He can be strong, yet gentle at just the right times.

He must like romance and spontaneity and be ready to do things on the spur of the moment. He would have to be a man who enjoys long walks in the country, holding hands, snuggling by the fire, and watching the stars as they fade into the night. These things are special and I feel can only enhance the relationship. But most importantly, he should make it a point to never forget our wedding anniversary or the day we first met.

Someone who can accept me for who I am without trying to change me would be terrific also. So many couples today think that after they are married, they can make their partner change for their benefit, which can only lead to resentment and despair. He must be willing to share his innermost feelings because I believe communication is the key to building any lasting relationship. Any problems we may have, big or small, we should be able to bring to each other to work out with love and understanding.

A good sense of humor always works wonders, too. If he can see the funny side of a bad situation or cheer me up after a stressful day of PMS or fights with the kids, he will know how to win me over. Anyone who can save me when I've reached the end of my rope is indeed the man I am looking for. After all, laughter is the best medicine.

Will I ever find my perfect match to live happily ever after with? Or will I just spend lots of time scrubbing the castle floors? The answer to that question will be left to my fate and to the draw of the cards. But until my prince does

come, I guess I may just end up kissing a lot of toads. On second thought ... maybe putting an ad in the paper would not be such a bad idea after all.



Modified Dreams

Barbara M. Johnson
Writing Skills Review

Our son, at two years old, spoke many words and phrases but all without articulation. Being the blonde, blue-eyed little imp he was, he could communicate well with people most familiar with his jargon. He used every part of his being to communicate, but that just wasn't good enough in our world!

Bryce was already in a special education preschool program, hyperactive, easily distracted, and not making the progress we expected. As concerned parents, we spent the next three years consulting education and medical experts, and diagnoses from allergies to nerve deafness were eliminated. Before each trip for an evaluation, our anxiety level rose as we invested emotionally in the hope we would find the cause of his problems. Each time, we came home with no answers, feeling drained, discouraged, and ripped apart.

Coping with the frustration of no insight into his speech delay and other problems meant stepping back, taking a deep breath, and simply enjoying our young son with his idiosyncracies and trying to be a "normal" family. Once revived, we would then suit up in armor and start searching again, prepared for battle against an unknown enemy.

The quest brought us to yet another evaluation and our first staffing. After days of testing and what seemed hours of details about Bryce's development, the team concluded he was mentally handicapped, and his development would always be seriously impaired. What a shock! Our life dreams for him were in jeopardy and fear took over. In private, the tears were overwhelming.

For a long time it was difficult to remember what had gone on in that staffing. My mind just wiped the slate clean. I can remember the long, silent drive home to Des Moines, wondering how we would tell our families, and what we were going to do. As we drove, we thought about the dreams we had for Bryce, dreams which had started in

the womb. We had mighty dreams: visions of college, marriage, and happily ever after. These are dreams shared by most parents and you would never expect them to be too much, or too lofty. Memories of the past few years flooded our minds as we tried to cope.

I recalled how we carefully chose his name — one of distinction and one to further his success. We had always discussed higher education for our children as a matter of fact and as part of the success we hoped for them, but the professionals had just told us Bryce's development would be difficult. Now, at the age of five years old, his education and future were in doubt.

It took hours after we got home before we could even formulate a discussion with our parents. What could we say? There were no words with which to explain. The little boy we all loved so much had a problem none of us could fix.

We started our discussions with our seven-year-old daughter who, by this time, was an avid reader. We explained his situation with an example that Bryce wouldn't be able to learn to read. She replied, "Oh, Mom, he'll never be able to go to Narnia." Her statement caught me by surprise, and I pulled her close and cried.

One simple sentence from a child embodied all our grief and despair. We mourned the things he would miss, things which gave us such great pleasure in life. Even relationships would be altered because of his difficulty in communication. There would be no math games, reading books together, or understanding the complexity of a symphony.

The shock and despair finally faded gradually over time when contrasted daily by Bryce's beautiful eyes, warm smile, and undaunted spirit. Looking back, we realize that staffing failed to give us the ever-important dimension in life called hope; we had to find that for ourselves.

As idealists, our world had to change. It has been gradual and very painful at times, but the process will continue over our lifetimes. Through our despair, we've taken a much more rewarding path: reality, love, and acceptance of everyone as they are.

We have learned acceptance from Bryce as each day he enjoys life to the fullest and doesn't sweat his losses. For Bryce, each day exists to be enjoyed and treasured. He has taught us that happiness is the essential ingredient in our lives, and acceptance is sometimes achieved by modifying our dreams.



Snakes Alive!

Barbara M. Johnson
Writing Skills Review

Many a younger brother's purpose in life is the torment and teasing of his older sister. My brother specialized his harassment with the use of snakes, and as a result, my fear of snakes is intact today.

With his curly little carrot-topped head and large ornery smile, my brother would make each session of play on our lawn a test of my nerves. Each time Mom ordered us outside to play, it was a chance for Tom to perfect his art of torment. It seems garter snakes were more prevalent when we were children; he could find a snake almost every day. I wonder now, were they really that plentiful?

Since Tag was our favorite neighborhood game, it was the perfect time to utilize his cunning and speed with a wiggly, writhing garter snake in his hand. Run and scream I did, much to his delight!

Even at the dinner table, he would use Franco American Spaghetti as a vehicle to make me squeal and complain to Mom. Those wiggly, wormy little noodles in red sauce were perfect. Tom would suck them into his mouth and, as the sauce splashed on his face, make sounds of delight. He'd remark about how good and squishy his snakes were today — how tasty, how bloody!

Of course, Mom and Dad found it funny, but tried not to laugh for fear they would egg him on. Most of the taunting was done, naturally, when our parents weren't at the table. The age old pleading, "Mom, make him stop!" never really worked. He'd simply cut the banter and continue in pantomime.

The teasing became more indirect as we grew up. Since I was three years older and girls grow in stature more quickly than boys, it was my job to mow the lawn. Now, in those days, we had a very primitive machine called a reel-type mower. Yes, you can find them in museums, but usually in the section of torture devices. It took lots of

strength to push that thing through our wonderfully thick carpet of grass — an acre of it. Mom would always remind me she was very busy, and convince me that my wimpy little brother was too young to get enough steam up to push the mower.

As I'd mow, the blades would rotate and the sweet smelling grass was thrown back at me covering my shoes and ankles. The lush carpet of grass seemed unending. Thirst was always a chance to take a break, and Tom would use this as yet another opportunity to taunt me.

I'd go to the side of the house to get a drink of cool water from the hose, and Tom would plant a garter snake in the grass. He'd hide, waiting for me to return.

Time and time again, I went back to my task, renewed by the quick drink. Time and time again, I'd hit that snake with the sound of his hilarious laughter in the background. The mower would throw the snake's body up at me, and there would be this thing cut in pieces, guts pouring forth, still wriggling around my feet. I can still hear Tom's laughter as I ran into the house screaming.

Needless to say, to this day, snakes turn me into a wincing, whining, cringing human being. My fear of snakes remains intact, but now I mow my acre of lawn sitting high up on a lawn tractor.

I can still hear the echoes of Tom's laughter as the sweet smelling grass is clipped far below me. The memory of the good 'ole days plays in my head, but the grin is now on my face!



Benevolent Betrayal

Dan Small
Composition I

One cool, crisp, Saturday morning last fall, I had the opportunity to spend some time in my wife's office. With my coffee in front of me, I began to scan some periodicals and relish the comfortable quiet. Suddenly, the drone of muted conversation among the patients was excitedly broken by my wife's nurse.

"Doctor Small!" she bellowed, "There's a man in the parking lot having a heart attack!"

This exclamation set into motion a series of actions and events which I observed from a self-imposed safe distance. The doctor was out of the door in a New York second. Through the large clinic window I could see the victim slumped over his steering wheel. I watched as the doctor removed him from his car and began CPR. In a few minutes a policeman arrived and began assisting with chest compressions. Moments later, an ambulance arrived. The paramedics came out of the vehicle as if ejected by some explosive force. The entire crew, now assembled, began to work in unison responding to the commands of the doctor. Intravenous lines were initiated, medicine was pushed into the victim's veins, and electric shock was administered to stimulate the heart. After about 45 minutes, the patient was revived, stabilized, and transported to the hospital. The random and spontaneous life support team had been successful. But, I mused, what if the outcome had been different? As I pondered the ramifications of a split-second of indecision or a simple mistake, my mind drifted back to an article I had just read.

The article described an automobile accident where the driver was trapped in his vehicle. It went on to tell of a passing motorist who stopped, pulled the driver from the flaming wreckage, and dragged him to safety. For his heroic effort, this good Samaritan was promptly sued and

his insurance company was ordered to pay a five figure damage settlement.

It seems so ludicrous to me. Have we become a society so detached from one another that we are like mad dogs, snapping at the caretaker's hand? It concerns me that our basic, almost instinctual, desire to help those in need is in danger of becoming disabled by our fear of retribution. It angers me that these lawsuits and subsequent settlement payments continue to drive our insurance and health care costs upward. Is it any wonder that people die in burning automobiles while able-bodied persons observe without attempting to assist? Is it surprising that screaming children can be abducted in full view of a paralyzed public? Is it not frightening that people can suffer and die in Florida's emergency rooms while doctors are forced to do nothing, handcuffed by the unaffordable luxury of malpractice insurance?

As I watched the team of trained professionals restoring life to a stranger, it became obvious to me that they were acting on his behalf without concern for personal liability or risk. Their motivation reached beyond the fulfillment of their job descriptions and their pursuit of financial security. I believe they pushed themselves to their physical and emotional limits in honor of an unwritten agreement which we share with one another as members of our societal family: the agreement to treat others as we would like to be treated.

As I type this conclusion, it occurs to me that there is little I can do to change our increasingly litigious behavior. I have no grandiose plan that will inspire people to care more about others. I do, however, have hope. It is a very self-serving and compelling hope that, should I fall victim to some tragedy, there will be someone to assist me, someone who is not inhibited by concerns that I may betray their benevolence by filing a lawsuit against him, someone with enough reckless disregard for his own well-being that he will help me. After all, I would do the same for him, wouldn't I?



An Analysis of Garrison Keillor's Humor

Mary A. Jardine
Composition I

It's a wonderful experience to sit back, relax and have someone tell you a funny story. Garrison Keillor is a talented humorist who tells stories on public radio about Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, a mythical town where the women are strong, the men are good looking, and the children above average. Keillor has a low, resonant voice and speaks in a monotone that does not lend itself to wide emotional expression, but he can rivet attention with soft whispers and long pauses that build anticipation in his audience. His understated style is almost like a newscaster reporting events of interest. He talks in a friendly, almost gossipy, fashion. "Bruno the Fishing Dog" is one of his stories.

By the end of the piece, Keillor has adroitly led us through several situations, called up our emotions by personifying Bruno and exposed our frailties through the actions of Bruno's owner and his caretaker. The road Keillor has us travel is light-hearted and easy to follow, but there is a more sober side too. Keillor uses his humor to encourage his listeners to appreciate one another a little better.

Keillor draws us in with absurdity. He would have us believe that a dog from Minneapolis yearns to go fishing in northern Minnesota hoping to recapture the glory he felt when, as a one-year-old pup, he had caught a six pound walleye. Keillor has fun giving the dog human qualities of pride, coyness, diligence, ambition, judgement and remorse. At one point Keillor says the dog was on the verge of speech.

Bruno is owned by Bob and Merlette Johnson. They are financially successful and live in Minneapolis. Bob's mother, Lena, who lives in Lake Wobegon, takes Bruno into her home each summer so Bruno can fish.

Keillor strikes what may be familiar feelings in his audience when he refers to the hostility felt between Merlette and Lena. Merlette refuses to spend the night in Lena's home. She tells Bob she'll be in court in the fall if he insists on staying over. Merlette says she'll either be suing for divorce or defending herself in a homicide trial; she isn't sure which avenue to choose. Keillor doesn't reveal the cause of this hostility, only that trouble will result if Merlette and Lena spend too much time together.

Lena, seventy-five-years old and very independent, is proud of her son for his success, but she resents Bob butting into her life by encouraging her to sell her house and move into a retirement home. Lena overcompensates in trying to demonstrate her capabilities when she prepares a huge amount of food and ends up hurting herself physically. This strains the relationship further as Bob and Merlette become exasperated with Lena's stubbornness. Keillor elicits sympathy for Lena by telling this part of the story from her point of view. The humor of Bruno's fishing escapades is heightened by the sharp contrast to Lena's more serious story.

The story has its climax at a formal, catered baptismal reception held at Bob and Merlette's grand house, when Bruno at last catches the big fish he's been yearning for and Lena saves the day with her homemade jello dessert.

I think Keillor's greatest appeal is to an audience thirty years and older because these are the people he talks about. These are the people who are struggling with life's tough problems like raising kids, earning a living and growing older. Keillor takes his listeners to a fantasy town where the same basic problems exist, and he reports how these mythical people are getting along. In this piece Keillor touches our common ground feelings. His point seems to be that success and money don't matter so much if we can't appreciate one another, especially our families. He acknowledges and validates some feelings it may be more comfortable to keep hidden. He says, without malice, young people are sometimes selfish and hurtful and older people are sometimes foolish.

I think we define ourselves, in part, by how we can laugh at ourselves. Our faults are not so terrible when we can expose them to a little ridicule and perhaps come out a little wiser. People can identify with the frustration that plagued Bruno and Lena. Pride, whether experienced by dog or person, can be destructive if misused. Keillor is trusted by his listeners to treat these types of feelings with humor and kindness.



Immigration

*Renate Hippen
Composition I*

After a seven hour flight from Vienna, Austria, our plane finally touched down at JFK Airport in New York City. It seemed that we taxied for the longest time. What a relief it was when the "fasten seat belt" sign went off and I could get up and head out of the plane down the corridor towards immigration.

People were rushing by. Everyone was in an obvious hurry. There was a heavy smell of airplane fuel in the air and strange sounds coming from all over, The advertisements on the wall showed me a new lifestyle. Pictures of luxurious hotels, speedy looking rental cars and beautiful models gave me directions to New York's fancy department stores. This was no dream anymore. This was the country where some of my favorite movies were made.

Immigration pulled me back to reality. Everyone who departed the plane and was not in possession of an American passport had to line up in front of a booth. There was a long line of booths, out of which stern looking officials conducted their interviews with the arriving passengers, deciding if they were legal visa holders or not. Their aura was almighty. The yellow line that was drawn in front of every booth signaled the entrance to the interview. To be or not to be accepted. I could feel the tension of the people behind me. Eavesdropping on the interview that was in progress made it even worse. The young girl struggled with a language that obviously wasn't her native one, and suddenly I felt that my school English wouldn't be sufficient enough to deal with a situation like the one I would encounter in a few minutes. I stepped forward a couple more inches, hoping I could understand some of the questions.

Out of nowhere a man in uniform appeared, angrily talking to me and pointing at the yellow line. I could only guess that he was annoyed with me because I had tres-

passed. I hadn't been invited into the no man's land yet. My heart sank, and my knees started to feel like Jello.

"This could be the reason the official personality will not let me enter the country," shot through my mind. To cross that yellow line must have been the ultimate transgression.

"NEXT," called the immigration officer. It was my turn. I handed over my passport and page by page the officer inspected the document. As he studied my face, I hoped that in the five years since that picture had been taken, I hadn't changed too much. The computer screen in the corner of the booth didn't seem to reveal any significant data about me, and the cross-examination began.

"What on earth is he talking about?" I wondered, not understanding what I was asked. My English teacher at home in Austria didn't talk like that. All the English I had ever heard was very distinctive. I was totally overwhelmed by the speed in which the words now came shooting towards me. With all my courage, I got out the address of where I was going to stay.

"Central College, Pella, Iowa," I replied, hoping this was the answer to at least one of the questions the officer had asked.

There wasn't the slightest indication that my statement had been received at the other end. A feeling of total helplessness started to overpower me. My hands were starting to feel sweaty, and it was hard to hang on to my heavy carry-on luggage. The officer indicated his interest in that bag. Eager to please him and show my respect, I immediately opened it. But before I could present all the innocent possessions I carried with me, I heard the rubber-stamp of the immigration go down on my papers and my passport and visa were handed over to me.

"NEXT," was the last thing I heard out of the little booth. I had made it! A sigh of relief! My knees regained some of their original strength and my confidence got an enormous boost. I was accepted as a legal alien into the United States of America. A whole year of adventure lay ahead, and there wasn't an obstacle in the way.



Demon

Matt J. Bowersox
Composition I

In my platoon we would run. Now when I say run, we would not just run down the street and around the block like most people do; we would run far, fast. It was a ritual. This ritual was something that very few people enjoyed, but it was not like we had a choice. The whole platoon would rise early in the morning cursing, complaining, and reeking of alcohol from good times past.

This type of ritual was not comfortable or easy; you needed to push yourself the entire time, and your body was just not designed to perform like that, but we had an edge. This edge was named Staff Sergeant Boucard, a very evil and heartless man.

Staff Sergeant Boucard was a highly motivated individual. Why he was this way created much controversy among the platoon. Some believed that this large, cruel demon liked to inflict needless pain and suffering on lesser human beings because his mother hated him and his father scorned him. Some even suspected that his own country, Trinidad, completely disowned him. At 37 years old and with a body like an anatomy chart, he was an imposing figure. He would push us until we collapsed, sweaty and begging for mercy, then demand more. He would walk up to us when we thought that we could take no more and say, "Get off the freaking ground and quit wallowing around like a bunch of diseased, old freakin' ladies!" Staff sergeant really had a way of butchering the English language and peppering it with colorful curses. He was the only one with enough stripes that allowed him to have an attitude.

One hot, muggy morning, Staff Sergeant decided to try and run us into the ground. He was not hesitant to let us know about it either. He strutted right up to the front of the platoon and said "Today you are going to freakin' die." Not being happy with this, I decided to share with him my feelings on this matter.

"Staff Sergeant, you're old. I don't know just how much more punishment you can take from us," I said jokingly.

"He can't beat me," I thought to myself; "I'm young and fast."

"Yeah, you're freakin' brilliant Bowersox, but we'll see," he replied sarcastically. The scowl on his face made me immediately regret opening my mouth.

We ran hard and long, but it was not until the last mile that the prince of punishment put me to the test. He ran up to my rank and said, "Waiting on you, Bowersox," and took off at a sprint ahead of the platoon. Asking myself what I had gotten myself into, I sprinted after him.

Once I had reached him, my breath was puffing out in ragged gasps, but I was driven by the confidence of an easy victory. I was sadly mistaken. Every time I tried to pull out ahead of him, he kept right beside me, taunting me like a school yard bully.

"You're doing all right Bowersox, but do you think you're really going to beat me?" he said nonchalantly, seemingly unaffected by the exertion. I had no breath to taunt back.

I was giving all I had at a pace that would kill a thoroughbred race horse. My steps pounded on the pavement, in a steady rhythm. All the while, I was frantically asking myself if this demon beside me would ever quit and just let me beat him. I knew he was hurting because his bullying had long since ceased. "I can't go on much further," I thought.

Oblivious to everything, we kept running neck and neck, pushing with everything we had, hot breath and spit flying out of our mouths in an orchestrated frenzy, timed by our pounding feet. We were bathed in sweat, but he would not quit.

My body, pushed to the point of collapse, finally gave out and I started to slow. Sensing this, he, too, started to slow, like a child's toy low on batteries, jerking and drained. It was over.

We were doubled over in the road, dripping sweat, not speaking or looking at each other, trying to re-oxygenate

platoon to catch up. As I stood there on that road with that man, I felt a mutual respect that people feel when they compete, pushing themselves to the limit, not quitting or giving an inch. I realized then that I didn't beat the demon, but he damn well knows what I am.



Conquering The Fear

Sally Sparks
Composition I

We do not live in a perfect world. Children are dying at the hands of their abusive parents, drug use is invading the elementary schools, and there is still no cure for most types of cancer. One of the the worst problems we face as a nation is what to do about the problem of AIDS. Every seven minutes a person in this country dies from this incurable, deadly disease. Millions of dollars are spent each year in the search for a cure, but we still have yet to conquer the worst aspect of AIDS: the irrational fear of contracting the disease and fear of the people who are infected with it.

Scientists have yet to prove where AIDS originated. In the early 80's, when AIDS was first publicly noticed, it was believed to be restricted to people who engaged in homosexual intercourse. Religious leaders were quick to tag this disease as "God's punishment" for such immoral acts. Soon, though, the AIDS virus infiltrated the heterosexual community.

Evidence surfaced that proved intravenous drug users were also being infected by AIDS. The public was temporarily pacified by this new finding because this was yet another section of society that was "getting what it deserved." The average American still didn't worry about getting the disease, that is, until cases of heterosexual, non-drug using, red-blooded Americans contracting AIDS hit the media. A shock wave of fear went through society. America was subject to a collective epiphany as people realized that this could happen to anyone. This is where the general public found its irrational fear of the people who are living with AIDS.

I was once like this. I have a friend who is living with AIDS. When Max first told me, I was scared to be in the same room with him. I thought that AIDS was like some invisible cootie floating around the person who had the

disease. Because of my fears, I even went so far as to have a blood test done to find out if I was infected also. Before I was allowed to have the results of the test, I was counseled on how AIDS is transmitted. It was an enlightening experience. I felt ashamed of my actions, and I vowed not to let misinformation keep me living in constant fear of something like AIDS.

No longer am I so quick to stereotype people who are living with the disease. Through scientific information, I found that AIDS is transmitted by the exchange of body fluids from an infected person to a healthy person. An exchange of fluids occurs during sex (without the use of a condom), blood transfusions, contact through an open wound, and the use of a needle more than once.

Even today, I get angry when people showcase ignorance about AIDS. The information is out there, but people are afraid to hear it. The average American still doesn't want to believe that we are all at risk when it come to getting AIDS. It's disheartening to hear people talk about marking AIDS infected citizens with a symbol that will easily identify them. Of course, this would be for the public's welfare. Funny, I seem to recall Adolf Hitler justifying the marking, segregation, and eventual destruction of millions of Jews with the very same argument.

Each year, millions of dollars are spent on research in the hopes of discovering a cure for AIDS. This is important, but we cannot ignore the fact that there are citizens of this country who are still uneducated about AIDS. Ignorance of how AIDS is transmitted leads to unwise decisions. These decisions could be anything from promiscuity and unsafe sex to discrimination or blatant fear of the people who are living with AIDS. AIDS patients are not the only "victims." People who cling to irrational fears about the disease are falling victim to it too.



Vicarious Victim

Dan Small
Composition I

Blood trickles from the jagged opening in his head. The wound is slightly above and behind his eyebrow on the orbital bone. Although it is not bleeding profusely, it is a nasty gash approximately three centimeters in length. It is spread open and a tallow substance, the subcutaneous tissue, billows from the cut in small globules. The patient, John, a well nourished three-year-old boy, exhibits courage which belies his age. Although he is nervous and diaphoretic, he whimpers only slightly as he awaits the doctor.

The medical emergency procedures room is meticulously clean. It is obviously sterile in all senses of the word. The walls are sparkling white and the fluorescent ceiling lights cast a cool blue-white hue to the room. The cabinets on the wall have glass fronts and are filled with medical paraphernalia and supplies. The patient gurney is made of tubular stainless steel with wheels on each of its four legs. The mattress is upholstered with black vinyl and is draped with sterile white paper.

Sharon, the nurse, is preparing the stainless steel suture tray. She works near a small sink where a basin of hastily prepared betadine solution stands ready. The pungent odor of this disinfectant permeates the air.

John's mother and father have taken up their stations at the side of the gurney and are each holding one of John's hands. Sara, John's two-year-old sister, stands near her father, embracing his leg. There is little dialogue, and I can sense the nervous tension in the room. It reminds me of a movie set, each of us in our place awaiting instructions from the director: "Lights, camera, action."

As the doctor enters the room, I sense an immediate reduction in the airborne tension. With a confident smile she greets John first, then his parents.

"Hello, I'm Doctor Small."

These words seem to set everything in motion. Sharon begins to remove the sterilized tools from their packages and replace them on the tray. The doctor puts on a semi-impermeable gown, rubber surgical gloves, and protective eyewear. John's mother and father now begin to smile and issue words of comfort. They move to the foot of the gurney to make room for the doctor and the nurse. Sara, being much smaller and somewhat befuddled, moves toward me and puts her arm around my leg.

"Is anyone here needle squeamish?" asks the doctor.

"Just me," I think to myself as I watch her draw xylocaine from its vial into a syringe. She snaps the syringe a couple of times to remove any air bubbles. She then exchanges the large drawing needle with a much smaller injection needle.

"Honey," she says as she turns toward John, "I'm going to fix your owie now, okay?"

John says nothing. The sweat on his brow and his nervously clenched fists speak loudly.

The doctor moves to the side of the table. With her nurse gently holding John's head, she begins to inject the anesthetic. The needle is inserted into the open edge of the wound and pressure is applied to the plunger. The skin around the needle bulges up as the medication infiltrates the tissue. John says nothing! The doctor repeats this procedure several times around the entire perimeter of the wound. With every injection I feel John's pain. As the mixture of anesthetic and blood flows from the cut, I begin to feel nauseous. As I step away to take some deep breaths, Sharon is aggressively scrubbing the anesthetized wound with betadine.

"Sharon," says the doctor, "Let's isolate this area with a fenestrated drape."

The nurse removes a blue paper drape from its package. It has a hole through it, approximately in the center. It is placed over John's face, so that only the wound is visible.

"Let's use 5-0 ethilon suture on a small cutting needle." The doctor continues to speak with quiet confidence.

"I'll need the small suture holder and some pickups without teeth."

Gripping the curved needle with the suture holder, Dr. Small pushes the needle down through the skin just outside the wound at its center. Then, rotating her wrist, she moves the needle through the subcutaneous tissue to the opposite side of the cut. She must now force the needle back up through the skin. As she increases the pressure on the needle, the skin begins to bulge upward. Suddenly, with an almost inaudible "pop" the needle appears from beneath the surface. Moving her clamp from the back of the needle to the front of the needle, she wraps the jaws of the clamp with the suture. As she pulls the needle up through the coils of thread, a knot appears. The first stitch is in place, and the wound is closed at its center.

This procedure is repeated six more times. With each stitch I become more nauseated; I continue to feel John's pain. The doctor, however, continues to exhibit a calm professional approach. She places each stitch carefully much like a skilled quilter to ensure the quality of the finished product.

"Pickups please," requests the doctor as she clips the needle free from the final knot. She then uses the pickups, which resemble a large tweezer, to pull the hairs of the eyebrow from beneath the stitches.

"Wash the wound down with peroxide and put a sterile Band-Aid on it please," the doctor instructs the nurse.

"Good job, buddy," she says as she taps her patient on the arm.

"At last," I think to myself, "the procedure is finished."

Sharon has begun to scrub the tools and package them for their trip to the autoclave for sterilization. Dr. Small has given a list of discharge instructions to John's parents and has gone to her office. John, Sara, Mom, and Dad are talking and laughing as they walk down the corridor, turn the corner, and disappear from view. As I leave the exam room, Sharon is putting clean paper on the gurney. I am sweating, and my stomach is upset. I cannot help but think of John; I'm sure he feels better than I.

I step into Dr. Small's office to thank her for her courtesy, and I am compelled to ask her a final question.

"Dr. Small," I query, "Doesn't the pain and emotional trauma that your patients experience ever get you down?"

"You know," she replies, "Empathy and control are taught continuously throughout med school. In order to provide good patient care we must heal the pain, not feel the pain."

As I head down the hall to go home, badly in need of a break from my vicarious discomfort, I hear Sharon's voice.

"Dr. Small, your next patient is ready."



My Parents

Laura Aust
Composition I

My mother was forty when I was born; my dad was forty-four. They had already raised their family of three boys, with the youngest being twelve at the time of my birth. My parents welcomed me into their lives and included me in everything they did.

I never even stayed with a babysitter when I was little. My mom figured that I could go anywhere that she went. I accompanied Mom to the grocery store, church meetings, funerals and visits at her friends' homes. I do remember being threatened with getting left at home "the next time," but I always ended up going.

My dad is a collector. He doesn't really limit himself as to what he collects, though. He will go to auctions and flea markets and bring home some of the strangest things I have ever seen. His real passion, though, is barbed wire and old tools. He retired from the National Animal Disease Laboratory in Ames a couple of years after I graduated from high school. My family always joked that Dad would have to retire early because he never had time to work. He now spends his days in search of the perfect antiques to stock his hand-built, full-sized ghost town main street. On Sundays, he volunteers at the Iowa State Historical Building at the information desk.

When I was young, we would spend our vacations, Mom, Dad and me (my brothers had moved out by this time), roaming the United States in pursuit of the best museum or biggest flea market. We traveled to California one year, by way of Texas, just to look for the "World's Largest Flea Market." We didn't find it. When I was small, these vacations were great adventures — I loved the doll and toy museums and was delightedly scared by the life-like mannequins in so many of the displays. As I grew older, the trips sometimes dragged on and on; a teen-aged girl just doesn't care much for a multi-acre building filled

with restored cars or yet another roadside antique shop. However, I still enjoyed the scenery, the zoos, and the outdoor displays of many of the museums. I was fascinated by the demonstrations of primitive skills and pastimes.

Much to my husband's dismay, I, too, am a collector. My dad taught me to look for the beauty, usefulness, rarity and worth in other people's trash. I love flea markets and rummage sales. I even enjoy a good museum.

Dad passed on to me the desire to see that the past is preserved and maintained for future generations. My mom recently went through some "junk" she had in a box in the back of the closet. I came away with a wonderful array of treasures. The dish my grandmother used to serve pickles in every Sunday for dinner, an art deco dish that had belonged to another grandmother, and a pair of sunflower figurines with smiling faces that were originally yet another grandmother's, but for as long as I can remember, were displayed on my mother's knick-knack shelf.

In sharp contrast to the antiques that my dad collects, my mom spends her time creating beautiful new things. Mom is a crafter, a seamstress, a quilter. She has many rooms filled with material, patterns and magazines: most bought at rummage sales or thrift shops. She has always sewn for her family and for herself. I loved going to school in new clothes. Someone, usually an adult, would compliment me on them. I would beam proudly and inform them that my mother had made my stunning new clothing. This always resulted in a closer inspection by the admiring adult. Even now, though I have been married for more than six years, I still manage to get handmade clothes on occasion. I still get a feeling of tremendous pride from telling people that Mom made my gorgeous new dress.

My mom always took the time to show me how to do everything that she did. I remember learning how to sew, cook, garden, crochet — all at my "mother's knee." She was a great instructor and had tremendous patience with

me which resulted in my learning quickly and instilled in me a great love of handwork and art of all forms.

My mother's love of handwork taught me to appreciate the beauty and love in a handmade gift. Crafting is something that I can share with my mother now, and then pass on to my children. I think one of the most beautiful things in the world is seeing the finished product of someone's trials and errors and eventual success with a handwork or sewing project.

My parents are not perfect, but they're close enough for me. They have always been there for me and supported me in everything I have done. My husband and I got married when we were nineteen. I think that my parents and his parents were the only people who did not tell us that we were too young. I am thankful that they did not intervene with unwanted advice but were there if I had needed them.

I am sure that my parents probably wondered what they were going to do with this little girl who was born so late in their lives. My mom has said it was a good excuse to make doll clothes, and my dad finally had a girl to over-protect and cater to. I feel that they have wonderful values and have passed these onto me. I may not always agree with my parents, but they have taught me to speak up on things I don't agree with and to stand up for what I believe in.

In 1990, my parents celebrated their fortieth anniversary. I got the family to each create a quilt block for me to sew together as a show of our love for them. The square that my brother Doug made is an air-brushed picture of the farm house that Mom and Dad bought thirty years ago and still live in today. My Aunt Edna appliqued a farm scene complete with a red barn and a black and white flowered cow. Aunt Alice's painted garden scene reflects my mother's love of flowers. The center of my block says, simply, "thank you for showing me the beautiful things in life." They have done just that.



Work Matters

*Paula Green
Composition I*

"Twenty-five cents a bag! That's right, I will pay you twenty-five cents a bag for every grocery bag full of dandelions that you dig." The deal was made. My father and I shook on it, each walking away knowing we would keep our part of the bargain.

I was only nine, but with my dandelion picker and brown bag clutched in my hands, I walked into the midst of those dandelions feeling like I had entered Dorothy's poppy field on the Wizard of Oz. I looked for a starting point. From that point I would mentally draw lines diagonally to an end point and then picture that area free of dandelions. I had to be able to "see" accomplishment along the way, so I wouldn't fall into self-pity and defeat.

As the day wore on and the sun beat down, I could almost feel the freckles popping on my face. The work was hard and nearly spirit breaking, but I kept thinking about all the Mary Poppins records I was going to buy. At fifty-eight cents a record, I had problems counting that additional eight cents and how many eight cents were in twenty-five, but it didn't matter. Eventually I could stand and see that my "design" was now free of dandelions. I also knew as I kept singing the song, "Just a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down," that the record would soon be mine.

That night as I sat on my bed alone in my room, I kept counting my dollar and twenty-five cents in child-like fashion. Finally I tucked it away securely in my little green felt box. I kept thinking about how good it felt to have my father's arm on my shoulder as we stood and looked at that now pure green flowing grass.

As senseless as dandelions were to a nine-year-old girl, other than to tease the boys by holding a bright yellow flower under their chins to see if they liked butter, their

absence now certainly held meaning and pride for my father.

I found myself sharing the pride he felt as I looked upon that green flowing grass. I felt warm inside knowing I had made Dad happy. It didn't matter if I thought it was stupid to dig dandelions because they always come back. He knew they would be back. But they were gone now, and that mattered. What also mattered was the way he looked at me and said "Good job. . . I knew you could do it."

My dandelion story took place thirty years ago, yet the values and meaning that I learned then have been an influential internal focus that has shaped much of my life. My father taught me how to work, along with the value and pride that goes with it. But the most important thing I learned was that no matter what the job is, the work is important to someone and sometimes its value cannot be measured by money, but by the pride that comes from within.

As the years went by, I became a woman of the seventies fighting the ignorance of men who said I didn't really have a job because I was "just a housewife." I would jump on my bandwagon pointing out what it would cost to replace me, stating my work was important to me and that's what mattered!

During the eighties I joined the work force beside my husband in owning our own business. I had been out of the work force for a number of years only to learn that I hadn't a clue of the world beyond my own environment.

Being an employer, I came to understand that not all people grew up with a father like mine, nor shared the same ethics and morals that I lived by. As I remembered my dandelion story I came to realize that for some employees the work would have been too great a burden and worth more than twice the agreed upon pay. The responsibility of my being an employer to unmotivated employees left me drained and unfulfilled.

My job became empty to me, yet truth prevailed. What had become insensible to me held value to others, and we sold the business.

By the early nineties I felt a hollowness within. I no longer had a focus. I reflected on what I had learned about myself, and past work experiences. My comfort and happiness on the job comes from positive emotions when someone recognizes accomplishments along with my achieving something meaningful. I have a love for people and their welfare, so I decided to utilize my abilities by continuing my education to become a nurse.

As a student I feel as though I'm making the full circle. I'm back in Dorothy's poppy field but instead of digging for dandelions, I'm digging in text books and lectures for knowledge.

I found the starting point, and I'm once again drawing my lines to see a "design" of accomplishment. My sense of self cannot be measured by money, but by my inner pride in what I'm learning, and that matters! Little did I know as I attempted to sing "supercalifragilisticexpialadocius" back when I was nine that it would be a premonition to the words of knowledge I'm learning today.



Jack's Chance

Lori Stuart
Composition I

Jacklight, a pretty chestnut weanling foal named for the huge star on his forehead, is standing in the opposite corner of the stall with his face to the wall and his butt aimed at my sister Deb. He's so nervous and scared that he's quivering. His normally big, soft, brown eyes are ringed with white, clearly saying to her in colt language, "I'm scared, stay back!"

Poor Jack has no way of knowing that if he wins for himself a few more of these battles, odds are that he'll seal his doom in the war. If Deb can't win his trust and get him tamed down, like it or not she'll end up "playing God." Jack's judgment day will be the day she gives up and hauls him to the horse sale.

As I step closer to the scene going on inside the big, metal pole barn at the farm where I live, the rainy cold fall weather, the dogs at my heels, the sweet smelling bales of hay, and the hundred other things that normally hold my attention all seem to dissolve. What does rivet my attention is the potentially dangerous situation Deb is in because of the colt. I can see that Deb is outside of the immediate range of Jack's volatile heels, so I ease on up to lean on the fence. They've both seen my approach, but knowing that Jack is terrified of humans, I give him a few seconds to decide that at least for now I'm probably not going to hurt, kill, or eat him, before I go ahead and speak.

"Who's winning today?" I ask, grinning at Deb.

She just rolls her eyes at me, well aware of the risky situation she's in, and probably thinks of past instances when it was me in hot water with a horse, and she was the one in a safe position with the advantage of being able to kick back and watch the scene play itself out.

Jack is the one who makes the next move, deciding it would be prudent to reposition himself in order to clearly see both of us nasty humans. He quickly turns himself

around so that he's now midway between us, facing forward.

Now we can all relax a little. The front end of Jack can't kick as far or with as much accuracy as his backside.

"I don't know about him," says Deb, noticeably relieved. "Even Rem tamed down faster." (Rem is a wild mustang filly that Deb "adopted" last year.)

"When he was born, he wanted to be friendly," she says with a frustrated sigh. "He would even let me pet him. But then his mama got real protective of him and started positioning herself between him and any people; we were low on hay about then, so we turned the mares and foals out into the timber. I didn't get to win him over, but she sure did."

"Remember last week when we put the babies together in the lot to wean them? Within a couple of days I noticed he wasn't getting any braver or friendlier to any of us. That's why I put him in here by himself. I figured in a couple of days he'd get bored and lonely and work up his courage. He's not dumb; he wants to try, but he's just so spooky."

I can see she's pretty worried. The other three weanlings are already halter broke and have turned into oversized pests, each demanding a scratch on their tails, neck rubs, any attention. They swarm anyone who ventures into their lot.

"Well, he needs to figure it out, or else we should take him to the sale." I say, thinking out loud, "He can be Alpo or someone else's problem! There are too many good ones to risk a bad one."

Damn! Why did I say that out loud, I think to myself.

Deb flashes me a "Damn you" look that melts into a knowing, worried, sad one.

I know she's going to plead his case, and she knows that I know it. We both have histories of being suckers for the underdog, especially if it's a baby.

"I've been making him eat out my hand any corn he gets or sitting on his bale of hay while he eats so that he's forced to control his fear and get close to me," she explains. "One

time he does pretty good, even lets me pet him, but the next time his eyes glaze over and he jerks away—you know fight or flight. It wouldn't be so bad if he would at least face me when he spooks, but he's just as apt to turn his butt and threaten me. He's even half-assed kicked out at me a few times. What about when you've been in here with him?"

"Me too," I admit. "The other night while I was in the stall filling his water barrel, one of the dogs jumped in between the rails and just barely dodged those hooves in time. He just panicked and kicked before he even tried to think."

With yet another frustrated frown, Deb reminds me about his mama's disposition. She's antisocial and spooky too, another nearly ruined product of a previous owner's apparent lack of good sense and excess of quick tempered punishments. She explains that her boyfriend, Bill, bought the lucky wild-eyed mare years ago at a horse sale, partly because someone dared him to take on the challenge and partly out of pity.

"Hey," I say to Deb, "We still have enough hay and some time to give him. There's always another sale if he doesn't come around, but if you do decide to keep him, I believe I'll pass on being the one to take that first ride."

While we've been talking, Deb has been once again slowly, deliberately, edging closer to the colt. Jack, bless him, works up the nerve to hold his ground without flinching away. Deb tentatively reaches out her hand; Jack follows suit with his soft little nose. They touch.

As I turn to leave, I hear her say in a soothing voice, "Want another bite of corn Jack? You give us a chance and we'll give you one, but you've got to decide."



Author's note: Since the writing of this story Jack did make his decision. He is now working on being an even bigger attention hog than the rest of the babies.

Sgt. Santa

*Casey Collins
Composition 1*

Christmas day most families are gathered in family rooms, near Christmas trees, eager to find out what they got and what their loved ones think of the gifts that they were given. Mom and Dad sit in their favorite chairs, as the children sit on the floor surrounded by mountains of presents. Everybody smiles and laughs, and the house is filled with gleeful activities.

This tranquil family room scene is far removed from another hideous reality: Marine Corps Bootcamp. I have found nothing more frightening than to be in bootcamp at Christmas.

Christmas morning we were awakened by the crashing sound of a garbage can lid hitting and sliding on the cement floor. The sky was still dark, and we were up and running, trying to dress ourselves, make our bunks, and put on our boots within seven minutes. At the same time, we were dodging assorted items Sgt. Williams was throwing about the room. Sgt. Williams, a short stocky black man, enjoyed his little sadistic ways of treating people. His most annoying habit was to peck at the ridge of a recruit's nose with the brim of his Smokey the Bear hat.

After seven minutes, we were ordered to bend over and touch our toes after we shouted out our designated number. As the line of soldiers began to bend down, I could see the Christmas tree at the front of the squadbay. There it stood, held up by a combat boot that we "borrowed" from a Drill Instructor of another platoon and decorated with cards we had received from our families and friends. We used bootlaces for tinsel. Instead of an angel, on top of our tree was a canteen with a picture of Chesty Puller, a marine corps hero, pasted to it.

Once we had finished roll call, the Senior Drill Instructor entered the room. He was a tall, thin black man whose administrative duties involved taking care of records and

seeing that we completed assigned tests to graduate. He slowly walked down the squadbay inspecting his troops. He didn't speak or smile; he just glared at us. When he reached the end of the room where Sgt. Williams was standing, he turned to the Sgt. and asked, "Have the privates received their X-mas gifts yet?"

"No, Gunny." Sgt. Williams said. "We haven't got that far yet."

"Not yet!" He shouted. "Not yet? If you think," he said in a normal voice, "If you think that this damned X-mas day is going to save you from doing any military duties, let me assure you that you could not be any more wrong."

He turned to Sgt. Williams and requested him to have the men remove their presents from the stockings, which were our own green socks that we had been ordered to hang at the head of our beds. Then the Senior Drill Instructor ran over to one recruit who was looking around the room. "Then do it!" he screamed as he headed straight for the unsuspecting private. "You first, scum," he said to the now shaking young man. "I want to see what Sgt. Santa gave you."

The gunny's face was inches from the boy's face. The soldier reached behind himself and tugged at the sock tied to his bed. "What's wrong with you, private? It's X-mas. You're supposed to be happy! Aren't you happy?"

"No, Sir. . . Yes, Sir." stammered the young man, now nearly in tears. He then spun around quickly to better see what he was doing. Once his sock was free, he turned back around to see Sgt. Williams now standing in front of him.

"What'd ya get, huh?" The gunny asked in a sarcastic voice.

"A note, Sir." The soldier stated with a relieved sound in his voice. "The private got a note."

"Well, what does it say?" asked Sgt. Williams.

"It says, 'the Private gets punched in the stomach until the private falls down'. . . sir, or until Sgt. Williams gets tired, whichever comes first.'" The soldier's face dropped as he lowered the note and looked at the smiling drill

instructor in front of him. Sgt. Williams was at least a foot shorter but 20 pounds heavier than his victim.

In a quiet voice the soldier said, "The private is ready for the private's X-mas present, Sir."

Then he closed his eyes. Sgt. Williams pulled his fist and struck the private in the midsection. It took several blows before the recruit fell to the floor. The Sgt. moved on to the next soldier in line and repeated the routine. I just stood there near the end of the line, waiting, the sickening sensation in my stomach growing greater as each private fell to the cold cement floor. Then Sgt. Williams was standing right in front of me. My knees wobbled like thin twigs blowing in the wind. He looked me in the eye and said, "You, Collins, I'm gonna enjoy this one the most."

I looked straight into his eyes. There was no way I was going to look away or close my eyes like other privates. I wanted to watch his face as he struck me. He did, twelve times before I too met the floor with a resounding thud.

The rest of the day was a normal bootcamp day: nothing but trouble.



How to Survive the Teenage Years And Maintain Your Sanity

Karen Leonard
Composition I

"Your days are coming," my friend Berthaline said to me in 1979. Poor Bert; I always felt sorry for her, but knew my angelic toddler sons would *never* grow up and behave as her teenage son did. She was going through a pretty hellish time. Her son was always skipping school, getting bad grades, hanging out with friends that did not meet her approval. Bert had a new horror story every week. What else was I supposed to think; she was obviously not doing her job correctly. Surely, if parents raise their children the "right" way, the teenage years should be a breeze.

The big question is — what is the "right" way? The instant you leave your freedom behind and become a parent, the doubts begin. No matter how many Dr. Spock books you read, or how much education you have in child development, you will always be confronted with a few surprises as you travel the long road from infancy to adulthood with your children.

I just knew I was going to be the perfect mom, the most loving, the most patient. I thought I had all the answers to any problems that would cross my path. I think I did a good job of raising my sons. We had a typical four person family. We were a family unit with both parents intact. We read all the good books to our sons, limited their television time, were involved with them in school and sports. We attended church as a family, even sent our sons to a small, private school so they could get the best education. We were a picture of the perfect, loving, middle class family. And then it happened! The teenage years!

No one could ever be fully prepared for the changes that hit a child when those teen hormones start kicking in. The experts call it puberty — I call it hell. My sweet innocent, pliable son became a thirteen year old monster. It started

with an embarrassment on his part when Mom or Dad wanted to give him a hug. He started locking the bathroom door and became a recluse in his bedroom at odd hours of the day. My bright, talented and gifted student started getting bad grades. He did not want to wear what Mom bought him; he wanted to shop for his own clothes. And echoes of my dear friend, Bert: I did not approve of some of his friends!

Eric and I started battling with each other constantly. Everything he did was wrong; everything I said was tempered with frustration. I started losing sleep and yelling at the rest of my family. My work was suffering and I was constantly on edge. The worst part was that Eric was getting into more and more trouble. He was really drifting away from his family and following his friends into whatever troublesome tunnel they led him.

Eric was almost fifteen and my younger son, Sean, had already reached the pubescent age of thirteen when I came to the realization that something had to change. I am not sure what it was, because I did not read any books or talk to any child psychologists about our problems. I just finally came to understand that the life we were living was not good for any of us. I knew I could not change my sons. They had their individual personalities and nothing could be done to change them. My husband and I did the best we could during their formative years. It was time for me to change.

The first thing I had to do was learn to keep quiet when I really wanted to scream. The best thing parents of a teenager can do is to keep most of their opinions to themselves. It is not easy, but when you realize your son's friend has been picked up by the police for stealing you have to hold your tongue and hope your child has enough morals to realize how wrong it is. The lecture you want to give has to be kept to yourself. Take a walk, read a book, go for a ride; do anything to calm yourself before you lash out at your teenager. He will just become defensive of his friend and turn away from you and toward him.

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The first time you see that bad report card, it is again important not to lash out with the first thing that comes to mind. The most important thing you can do is offer your help and support. Do not force yourself on your child. Let him know you are there if needed, but do not step in if you feel resentment on your child's part. If left on his own, he will usually see the right way and straighten himself out.

The best thing you can do for your teenager is give him his freedom. This does not mean to give him the car keys at age thirteen. If you have built a solid foundation you can begin the solidifying of the teenage years brick by brick. With each positive step in your child's life you can add a brick of freedom and responsibility. This can be something as small as a good grade being rewarded by an extra hour past curfew time. Keep calm and cool about the negative times, and be assured there will be some. Take away an hour with friends, but do not scream and yell and threaten to keep him away altogether. Something I have learned to live with is Eric's messy room. I used to be frustrated every time I saw the room. In my frustration I would yell and harangue him for being so messy and disorganized. Now I just swallow the pride I have in my clean house and make sure his door is kept closed. We both have a more peaceful existence this way.

I am not a child psychologist or an expert on the teenager. I just know that when I learned to accept some things about my sons I did not like, and support them in their quest for freedom, my life became a lot more serene. Always remember the pressure your teenager has from forces outside the family. Deal with them as positively as you can. Use positive reinforcement to build your teenager's self esteem. Keep the negativity on a small scale. If you are still having trouble maintaining your sanity, remember these words, again from my friend Berthaline, "The teenage years are God's way of making parents want to cut those apron strings." One day your teenager will be an adult and miraculously you will have survived the terrible teens!



The Ideal Mother: Do You Measure Up?

Lisa Carpenter
Composition I

What is a mother? We all have expectations of what the ideal mother should be. These ideals have been developing since birth. They are determined by a combination of influences. Some of these influences may be our own mothers, the ideal television mother, or perhaps the mother of a close friend or relative. Another strong influence on our expectations is how our society portrays the ideal mother. This is often reflected through advertisements.

How do advertisements portray mothers in our society? I began my research by selecting magazines that focus on women, particularly mothers. I gathered sample ads from magazines such as *Working Mother*, *Parent*, *Child*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Redbook*. There was an abundance of ads directed towards mothers. In no time I had gathered more than fifteen. As I thumbed through the magazines, it was very obvious, even without reading them, that the ads were intended for mothers. Many pictured children in the ads, a dead giveaway of their intentions. Others were ads for food products, medicines, and cleansers, items typically associated with a mother's role. Though it is obvious that the ads are aimed at mothers, the question is, what messages are they conveying?

The first ad I selected was for Gerber Baby Formula. The bulk of this ad is a photograph of a baby's hand reaching up and taking hold of a woman's hand. This creates a very gentle mood and generates an emotional response. It is a very intimate moment, a moment of bonding between mother and child. The woman's hand looks very natural, no noticeable fingernail polish or jewelry. The ad begins "He reaches to you." In a script print there are phrases set off to the right that state "For safety. For warmth. For nutrition. You can trust Gerber. Ask your doctor." These are the key words in this ad. Towards the bottom of the ad

is the Gerber baby symbol, one very familiar to most mothers.

This ad assumes that women are nurturers and attempts to appeal to those feelings. It says that your baby counts on you for the things he needs. It also generates feelings of guilt by stating, "If it doesn't come from you, shouldn't it come from Gerber?" This implies that if you cannot breast feed your child, then the least that you can do is give him the next best thing. By telling you to "Ask your doctor." the advertisers are also assuming that a doctor is an authority figure that you trust. As evidenced, this ad depends strongly on a woman's maternal instincts.

The next ad again generates an emotional response. The ad shows an enlarged picture of a baby. The baby is very cute and seems to symbolize the cultural idea of what a baby should look like. This, in itself, is setting expectations for mothers of how their children are supposed to be. This baby has big eyes, long eyelashes, and plump cheeks. The baby has his hand on his cheek and has bath bubbles on his arm and shoulder. The ad is for Johnson's Baby Bath. In large bold letters it states "Improved baby bath. Delicate cleaning for your finest washable."

The mood of this ad is light and happy. It seems to generate a smile from the reader. There is a hint of humor to the ad, as it compares the baby to fine-washable clothing. The ad implies that like your clothing, your baby needs a special cleanser. This ad reflects the belief that babies are very delicate and require special care. It tells mothers that we desire the things that are best for our children. It is our maternal responsibility to provide these things.

The third ad I selected is for Beech-Nut baby food. This ad is very formal and simple. It compares two brands of baby foods. One jar of baby food is placed on the top half of the ad, the other on the bottom half. There is a great deal of white space used to make the jars stand out and almost seem separated from each other. The top jar is Gerber peaches and it has a spoon of sugar laying across the top of the jar. Above it in large bold print are the words

"GERBER ADDS SUGAR". The lighting on the Gerber jar has been strategically placed so that there is a shadow on the left side of the jar that almost completely covers the cute, well-known Gerber baby symbol and the picture of peaches on the label. The jar is also a nontraditional one, as it narrows towards the top.

The bottom jar is the Beech-Nut jar. It is pictured with a fresh peach slice to the side. The light is brighter and the jar is the traditional shape typically associated with baby food. Above it in large bold print are the words **"BEECH-NUT DOESN'T."** Its sweetness comes from **"only fruit and fruit juices"**. This ad clearly implies that Beech-Nut is all natural, and that natural, of course, means better. The assumption made is that mothers prefer products with only natural ingredients. The ad supports the cultural belief that we strive to provide our children with the best, and when it comes to nutrition, that means natural. Although they are clearly aimed at mothers, the last two ads I've chosen are different from the first three. While the first three ads tend to appeal to a mother's maternal, emotional side, these next two ads focus more on the mother's role as protector and defender of her children.

The first ad is for Clorox Bleach, typically thought of as a laundry product. This is a large ad that covers two full pages. Above the ad in large bold letters it says, **"One Weapon Against Colds And Flu Isn't in Your Medicine Cabinet."** The word **"Weapon"** creates a militaristic metaphor which implies that mothers are warriors fighting in the war against germs. The ad seems like a collage of baby items placed around a large bottle of Clorox Bleach. Next to each picture are instructions on how bleach can be used on that particular item to prevent the spread of germs.

This ad is very busy and full, much like the life of a mother. The children's items are scattered all across the ad, a very familiar sight for most mothers. The ad is very factual and informative. White space is used around each item to make it stand out on the page. The ad gives many different uses for the traditional laundry product. It also assumes that it is the mother's responsibility to protect her children from dangers such as germs.

The last ad that I've selected is an ad for Children's NyQuil. This ad is very formal and precise, and uses a lot of white space. It pictures the back of a bottle of Children's NyQuil so that the label is clearly visible. The central message is printed in large bold letters across the page, partially covering the bottle. This implies that the printed message has priority over the pictured one. The printed message reads "**Required reading for any caring parent**". This message provokes an emotional response: the reader immediately becomes defensive. We all consider ourselves to be caring parents; therefore, we must read on. Most of us will probably only read the large red print on the label, but that will be enough. We now have the "Required" information: "**No Alcohol, No Aspirin**".

This ad assumes that we are, or want to be, caring parents, and that any caring parent knows what is in, or not in, the medicine they give to their children. We infer from this ad that alcohol and aspirin are substances that are not good for our children. Again, this ad relies on guilt. If you do not read labels and monitor what your children take, then you are not a good, caring parent. However, if you do, then you will realize that this product is clearly superior. This ad places mothers in the role of caretakers who protect their children from things that are not good for them.

These ads say a lot about the expectations that society places on mothers. All of them imply that the mother is the primary parent, the one who feeds, bathes, cares for, and protects their children. This is best illustrated in the Gerber Formula ad. The baby is reaching for the mother's hand, not the father's. The ads rely on the fact that mothers will have emotional responses to subjects relating to their children. Mothers are expected to protect and defend children like warriors, yet still remain sensitive to their needs. They want only the best for them and prefer those things that are natural. Overall, they imply that a mother's top priority is her children, a fairly accurate portrayal in my opinion.



The Hunt Is On

Sally Sparks
Composition I

I had practiced with my new hunting bow all summer. Upon receiving my license for deer hunting in the fall, I was more than prepared to spend a chilly autumn morning sitting in a tree stand waiting for the perfect shot at a trophy buck or good-sized doe. I wanted to kill a deer so I would be able to grasp the thrill of the hunt so many other people, including several members of my family, enjoyed.

Perched high above the ground, I patiently waited for any hint of animal life in the area. Before long, I detected the sound of footsteps approaching from the cornfield behind me. Slowly I nocked the arrow. The deer was directly below me as I stood and prepared to take aim. As the doe gracefully sauntered into my field of vision, I was paralyzed by one thought: I was about to rob this beautiful creature of its very existence. I couldn't bring myself to kill her.

Even though I could not take that animal's precious life, I am not entirely against hunting. I have made a personal choice by deciding to let my fellow dwellers on this earth enjoy their existence without undue interference. To a certain extent, though, hunting does serve a purpose to man and beast. One "benefit" of hunting is population control. Without it, animals would starve to death or overcrowd what little living space humans have left for them. In addition, a responsible hunter will consume the meat of the animal that is killed, and some go as far as using the skins for clothing.

Unfortunately, not all hunters are so responsible. For instance, poaching has become a serious problem in this country. Poachers are people who hunt animals out of season, without a license, beyond legal limits, or kill animals of a protected species. These criminals kill an animal for the thrill of it. Once the animal is slaughtered, the poacher will leave the carcass to decompose. Even

worse, if the poacher wounds an animal, he won't track the creature and put it mercifully out of its misery. Instead, he leaves the animal to suffer an agonizing death. In either instance, the animal's life is wasted.

Another abomination concerning irresponsible hunting is people who are indiscriminate hunters. This is the type of hunter who hunts for the "sport" of it. This type of callous hunter will buy a license for every season available and search for the legal maximum limit. This may not seem too vile when taken at face value. Some responsible hunters do this, too. The difference is, however, the insensitive hunters don't want to acquire their prey for meat or clothing. An animal is only a trophy to them. To the heartless hunter, an animal's value is determined by size, rarity, and overall difficulty in capture and kill.

Some rural property owners have gone as far as converting crop land into game reserves. These are areas where the owner of the land will have exotic, trophy animals shipped in from all over the United States. For a fee, a hunter will be allowed to take whatever animal he wishes. Not only is the animal removed from its natural habitat, it is also denied a fair chance in the hunt itself because the land where animals are imprisoned is fenced. There is no opportunity of escape for these unfortunate creatures. If that isn't gruesome enough, for a few extra dollars, visiting hunters can go as far as having the animals driven, like sheep to the slaughter, right past them by employees of the land owner. These are the same sportsmen who want legislation that will allow for the use of automatic weapons in hunting. With an automatic vessel of death, the indiscriminate hunter will be able to score his prize in a quicker and more efficient manner.

The most frightening aspect of careless hunting is the people who do it. These so-called sportsmen are so hyped up by the very thought of trophies to brag about, they dismiss safety to the point of lunacy. Boredom or impatience overwhelms the hunter as he sits or walks around the hunting area. Before long, the temptation to shoot anything that moves is too great. In case you ever won-

dered why deer hunters are required by law to wear blaze orange clothing, it is for the protection of the hunters against their worst enemy: other hunters. Deer are color blind; therefore, they can only detect a human by scent or movement. Blaze orange makes the hunter stand out against the scenery. By being more visible, the hunter is less likely to be shot by a fellow sportsman who is bored.

I know I will never be able to climb a tree stand again with a weapon in my hand. I still "hunt" but now I do it with a camera instead of a bow and arrow. I cannot personally justify playing God while watching a creature pass by me. I do know that hunting does have a time and place in society right now. But somewhere in the future there will come a time when hunting of any kind will not be "necessary."



Christmas Extreme

Dan J. Small
Composition I

It is cold today; perhaps the coldest day I can remember. At eight years of age, I really shouldn't notice such things. After all, winter is exciting: sledding, skating, and the like. I shuffle through the snow alone, across the block-long open field to the school. It is mid-December, and I am to begin my second day of classes in this dreadful new place. As I enter the old institutional-looking building, I am, for lack of familiar faces, reminded that I am a stranger here: the new kid.

The classroom is a sterile place. The walls are adorned with the usual maps and placards. The windows are large and multi-paned. As I watch the unfamiliar faces smiling, laughing, and talking, I am overcome by a wave of childhood paranoia.

"They are talking about me," I think. "They are laughing at the patches on my jeans."

It is at this moment that I become aware of the only familiar and friendly element in the room: the Christmas tree.

I can recall a brief sense of comfort and warmth in the homemade ornaments and colored lights. For a moment the tree — I'm sure it's 20 feet tall — stands as a giant friend, but as quickly as it has befriended me, it too, seems compelled to remind me that this Christmas will be different. There are no gifts for me; there are no ornaments bearing my name. I sit gazing at the colored lights. They begin to blur, and I am transported by my thoughts back to last night's conversation with my mother.

"Danny," she begins, "this Christmas will be quite different."

She doesn't need to remind me of this. The chilly breeze filtering into the living room is reminder enough. The oil stove in the corner is not big enough to compensate for the lack of insulation in the walls. The worn and torn linoleum

floor is evidence of our neediness. The outdoor bathroom is obvious testimony to the fact that money is not in abundance.

"Your father has been very sick," she continues. Once again, she states the obvious. I haven't really seen my father in weeks. He has been in and out of hospitals and treatment centers. He has been between jobs almost as frequently.

"We will have plenty of food, and we will be warm."

As this statement leaves her lips, I notice them quiver. Her voice begins to tremble, and a tear now tracks down her cheek.

"There will be some candy and fruit, but there will be no gifts," she struggles. "There will be no Christmas tree."

The ringing of the telephone interrupts our conversation. Brushing away the tears, she attends it. It is a call from my brothers in California. She visits with both of them and once again tears are visible on her face. I now begin to feel the painful reality that Christmas will not be different. Christmas just will not be.

It is a long school day. However, with our studies now behind us, the classroom is abuzz with discussions of each student's expectations.

"What would you like for Christmas?" the teacher asks.

The replies are many and varied. The bell rings and class is dismissed before she gets to me. I am thankful. Christmas vacation has begun.

The next few days are filled with typical kid things. I have made a couple of friends. We spend our time skating, ice fishing, and sledding. Occasionally, we stop to ponder what treasures will arrive on Christmas morning. This is not a comfortable topic of discussion for me.

It is December twenty-fourth, Christmas Eve! I awake to the smell of cookies baking. Mother is courageously doing what she can to display some normalcy. She is heartbroken, but I am not to know. In what appears to be an effort to entertain me, she sends me to the store for a bottle of vanilla extract. The four block walk to the store goes quickly, but the return trip is filled with diversions. I stop

often to observe the sights and sounds of this small and unfamiliar town. Finally, nearing home, I notice a car parked in front. It's a shiny, but not new, black Ford. Its most conspicuous feature is the evergreen tree protruding from its trunk. "A visitor?" I think, "but who?"

I open the front porch door. It is covered with plastic to stave off winter's chill. As I enter the porch I hear voices: happy voices. I hear mother's laughter. I open the inner door and step into the living room. My brothers are standing arm-in-arm with mother. They look well. They are tan and much bigger than I remember. California has been good to them. Somehow, the house feels much warmer now; the lights seem brighter. I am happy, deeply happy. We spend the remainder of Christmas Eve unloading of the car, trimming the tree, and wrapping gifts. We talk and laugh as if we are all eight years old.

I am in bed. In the minutes that pass before I fall asleep, I reflect on the love and dedication of my brothers. I am euphoric. I spend no time thinking of gifts; they seem insignificant. My thoughts drift back to the classroom. I am anxious to return to school to boast of my brothers' Christmas visit. I pull the covers up around me. I am warm; perhaps as warm as I can remember.



The Shooter

Craig Buscher
Composition I

"The first shot I fired was a warning shot. Nobody in that gang of bikers paid any attention. My second shot carried the heat of the moment. The right knee of the punk was a mass of blood, exposed flesh, and shattered bone." Alan Ditch was describing how he had been pushed to the point where he felt the need to pull the trigger of his .25 caliber automatic to survive.

The Alan I observed working at the Medical Center was always a kind and giving person. He carried himself around the floor with grace and confidence. Now he was uneasy and his body language showed signs of the intensity of his memories. I could hardly believe the incident that Alan was describing.

I had seen others lose Alan's respect after learning what he had done to him. They are no longer trusted coworkers. In a tight situation, he only calls on the ones that he can rely on. Now, sitting back in his chair, Alan continued, "I felt a rage running through my body as I jumped back into my car. The gang of bikers no longer blocked my exit. I quickly drove my girlfriend home."

While we talked, an ex-patient that Alan had cared for stopped by the table; Alan got up and assisted him to the elevator. Upon his return, Alan contemplated the shooting. "That young man's knee, why did he need to get shot? I only wanted to get a couple of guinea grinders and a six pack. The only thing that I heard or read was a small clipping in *Des Moines Register*, "Unknown Black Assailant Shoots and Injures Sam Anders of Des Moines." The article goes on about the location and the night club. As the days passed and the police did not knock my door down, my confidence grew. I have the right to go any place to conduct my business with any restaurant or bar I may choose. Nobody is going to stop me from doing this, not that gang of dirty bikers or anyone else. But the more I

thought about the poor man that I shot, I started to feel pity for him. He was a young man like me; I was 19 years old at the time of the shooting. The victim's right knee was damaged and at the very least it will never be the same."

The recollections went on for what seemed like hours. I was amazed that Alan was capable of using deadly force. I was able to sense that the decision was not made easily. Alan's eyes were filled with pain and his voice was shaky as he told us about the other incident. Alan answered my question, "Was it easier the second time you shot a person?" Alan rubbed his hands together thinking of a good place to start. He looked up at the clock and conveyed: "Yes, it was; I knew the second victim — he was my ex-brother-in-law." He leaned back, almost tipping the chair over. Alan started rubbing his forehead with his left hand. He then continued, "The first time was a hurried, rushed affair. The fact was: shoot or have the life beat out of my soul. The second shooting was my ex-brother-in-law. I knew that sooner or later that our paths were going to cross. This man was known to be using cocaine and was being very abusive to my sister."

"My sister called and wanted me to stop by her house. She said, 'Denny is calling again, he's using.' Close to 5:30 p.m., I stopped by my sister's house and we drank a beer. I told Sis, 'I gotta go, call 911 if he shows up or calls.' I went down to my truck, got in and started to pull out when Denny drove up. I parked my truck and grabbed my .357 Magnum out of the glove box. Sliding it into my right coat pocket, I walked out into the street. Denny was talking loudly, flailing his arms and pointing at me. He approached me until he was about eight feet away. That was the point at which he made a move for what I thought was a gun."

"My first shot sailed past the left side of his head. The second shot bounced off the concrete between his feet, and the third became lodged in his stomach two inches above the belly button. Denny was lucky that I was not going for a head shot. This guy made the dumbest play in the world. Denny didn't have a gun in his pocket, but pulled the old fashioned pocket play on me and got whacked for it. If a

person does not have a gun, then he should not make the play."

I could see that Alan's break was about over. He quietly collected his belongings from the table and started telling us what happened after the shooting. "I walked up and looked at him, then turned and walked away. I calmly drove my truck to my brother's house. Handing my .357 Magnum over to him as I walked through his door, I pleaded with him to drive me to the police station." Alan tossed his head back trying to find the words to fit his feelings. "If a black man shows up at the police station after a shooting he better not be carrying a gun. I was arrested, after turning myself in that evening about 6:30 p.m. on November 1, 1985. What a day!"

Alan's break was over and he had to get back to work. I sat and watched him working with the patients. Could that be the same man that had shot two people at point blank range? It was hard to believe that Alan could have been pushed that far. Is there a breaking point in all of us?

Later Alan stopped me and explained, "Don't get me wrong; I did not enjoy either one of the two shootings. However, I'm the type of person that will not allow anyone to cross me and get away with it. I hope it never comes to that point again, but I would use deadly force if someone were threatening my own or my wife's life. No doubt, if someone were breaking into my house he or she would get popped."

Alan ended the conversation with this statement: "I think every American has the right to own and carry guns. I no longer carry any of my guns with me unless I'm going to the range or hunting. I feel that when using a gun, it must be to defend one's family and self. I can not see any reason for a gun owner to use his weapon in an offensive mode."



Conquering the Fear of Poetry

Judy Sohn
Composition II

I've always loved a good mystery. As a pre-teen I consumed Nancy Drew books at the rate of four a week during my leisure summer days. In retrospect, the scenario was much the same from book to book and not particularly challenging to understand. But they were appropriate for my age group and provided excitement and entertainment.

Eventually I exhausted Carolyn Keene's supply of Nancy Drew adventures and graduated to the Perry Mason mystery series. Author Earle Stanley Gardner presented a more complicated set of clues and incidents to follow, but even with the intricately woven plot, the last chapter of every book always revealed the villain. Discussions between attorney Perry Mason and his co-workers explained the connections and loose ends in case the reader hadn't been detective enough to pick up the clues herself. As in the simplistic Nancy Drew stories, the reader could still count on a neat and tidy ending. Most of the time.

I abandoned the Perry Mason books when I encountered an episode that left me baffled. Even when the connections were explained, I didn't understand. Previously, I had been warned that these books probably would be too complicated for me. So the first time I met with resistance, I quit and went on to other reading.

Poetry represents another type of mystery and is sometimes intimidating. The story line is not always clear, it's not always easy reading, and the outcome is not as predictable as the Nancy Drew tales. Poetry's purpose is not always to entertain. It is sometimes written to enlighten the reader or perhaps as a lament for the author. It often requires a stronger type of reading.

Such is Adrienne Rich's poem "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law." Rich attended college, married and raised her children in the 1950s, a decade known for its woman's-

place-is-in-the-home philosophy. She dutifully complied with society's demands but could not completely suppress her inner turmoil. She wanted to write but family demands left her little time for this creative outlet. "Snapshots" was written over a two year period and was "jotted in fragments during children's naps, brief hours in a library, or at 3:00 A.M. after rising with a wakeful child" (Rich 491). "I was writing very little, partly from fatigue . . . of suppressed anger and loss of contact with my own being" (490). Mindful of her attitude for this time period, it was easy to understand how her poems seem to vent her anger at the oppressive position of women in society. But was our interpretation influenced by knowledge of her frustration and feelings of being confined or had we deduced this from certain words and phrases in her poem?

Stanley Fish, author of "How to Recognize a Poem When You See One," maintains "the act of recognition is triggered by the observable presence of distinguishing features" (182). The distinguishing features pointing to Rich's unhappiness include the line, "Banging the coffee pot into the sink" (Rich 491). This act of anger or temper sets the mood for the remainder of the poem. Several other lines are less clear. Rich writes of hearing angels saying, "Have no patience," "Be insatiable," and "Save yourself; others you cannot save" (Rich 491). Have no patience. A comment from angels? Doesn't a mother need patience when raising a family? Save yourself. From what? Boredom? Does that mean leave her family? While I understand the words, their meanings to Rich are a mystery to me. But is it necessary for me to understand completely? Could it be enough for me to comprehend the general tone of the poem to feel her dissatisfaction with her life?

Rich's poem "Planetarium," written in 1968, presents even more of a challenge to the reader who must become a sleuth to decipher puzzling words and phrases. Here Rich writes of Caroline Herschel, a nineteenth century astronomer who, perhaps because of her gender, has never been given proper recognition for her discoveries.

a woman 'in the snow
among the Clocks and instruments
or measuring the ground with poles' (493)

This particular verse could be said to hold several different meanings interpreted according to what we know of Adrienne Rich or according to how we see the arrangement of words. But which one is right? Which one is what the author intended? The distinguishing features are clear to me, but Fish claims that "readers make meanings" (190) according to the culture of which one is a product. "We . . . are products of social and cultural patterns of thought: (Fish 187). If that is true, then the above verse could refer to Herschel standing in snow using her instruments of astronomy to measure the changing position of the planets. Or it could be interpreted to mean a constellation in the form of a woman seen in the Milky Way. Either version would be correct, depending on the reader's learned pattern of thought. Is it really important to know exactly what the author intended in order for the literary work to have meaning in our own lives? Much of poetry's interpretation is left to readers who "do not decode poems; they make them" (Fish 183). Discouragement in reading and decoding poetry would disappear once the student understood that concept.

Nursery rhymes are the Nancy Drew stories of poetry. They are simple little ditties which leave little doubt as to their meaning.

One fristy frosty morning
when cloudy was the weather,
I chanced to meet an old man
clothed all in leather.

Not much debate needed to interpret that. But part of the attraction to nursery rhymes is the cadence and nonsensical words. If the adult student would approach adult poetry with the same enthusiasm and expectations as children approach nursery rhymes, the world of mysteri-

ous poetry would gain many new devotees. Knowing this, I might even try reading Earle Stanley Gardner again.

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The Exercise Boom

Amanda Svec
Composition II

From jogging and cycling to aerobic dance and weight training, millions of Americans exercise at least three times a week. In 1991, there were more than 12,000 commercial health and athletic clubs and 16.7 millions Americans belong to one. Manufacturers earned \$1.55 billion in wholesale sales of exercise equipment and \$6.4 billion in wholesale sales of adult athletic shoes (The CQ Researcher [TCQR] 955). These statistics show that exercise has become important to many people. Why do such a large number of people exercise? What has brought on this increased interest in being physically fit?

Society plays a large role in the reasons behind the exercise boom. The "thin and trim" body has become the accepted figure according to society. Many people equate exercise with good looks, popularity, and sex appeal. With achieving these qualities as a main motivation, people exercise. The opinion of others is important to many, so when being fit became the accepted look of society, exercise became important to people.

Advertising has contributed to the creation of the "thin and trim" body image of society. Women are especially prone to the influencing tactics of ads. Jean Kilbourne, Ed.D., a Boston-based media critic, filmmaker, and lecturer, says that no woman is immune from advertising's insidious messages. "Ads tell women how we're supposed to look, dress, wear our hair, act, even think. I'm influenced by ads and I've been studying them for 20 years," she says. "We may be mature enough to realize that the messages are false and arbitrary, but we're so surrounded by them that we come to accept them as logical and natural," she adds (Weider 17). Advertisements showing young, thin, beautiful women make society think that having these characteristics is necessary. Therefore, exer-

cise has become the means for many people in trying to achieve this goal that society has set.

Living a longer, healthier life is also an important factor of the exercise boom. Throughout the years, Americans have emerged as the healthiest people of all time. The average child born in 1984 could expect to live to the age of 74.7, whereas, in 1900, he or she could hope for only 47.3 years (Muro 29). There is a strong relationship between physical fitness and longevity. Exercise plays a large role in preventing heart disease, the nation's number one cause of death, as well as other serious health problems, including obesity and diabetes. The American Heart Association recommends that persons "of all ages should include physical activity in a comprehensive program of health promotion and disease prevention, and should increase their habitual physical activity to a level appropriate to their capacities, needs, and interest" (TCQR 965). With the numerous studies that have proven the fact that exercise can prevent certain diseases and increase life span, people have made exercise an important part of their lives.

In addition to preventing diseases and increasing life span, exercise can slow down the aging process. It has been found that the aging process is not something that happens as a certain age for everyone. Instead, it can be controlled or postponed by eating right and exercising. "All the things traditionally associated with aging — graying hair, reaction time, hearing loss, lung and heart function — turn out to be unrelated to a person's chronological age," said Dr. James Fozard, direction of the National Institute on Aging's Baltimore study. Established in 1958, the study was the first to examine the effects of aging on living people (Kotulak and Gorner 1). Exercise, eating habits, and one's overall lifestyle determines the rate at which one goes through the aging process.

The increase in exercise among Americans has occurred for many different reasons. People have found it beneficial to their health, physical appearance, and overall well-being. With these factors on the minds of many, exercise will continue to be a growing phenomenon among today's society.

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Basketball: What It Takes For Success

Jeanette Peddicord
Composition II

Few things can compare with the excitement felt by avid basketball fans as they watch with anticipation as a shot made from half court goes through the hoop at the same time the final buzzer sounds! As amazing as this feat looks to the average individual, it is no spectacular event to the successful basketball player. Have you ever contemplated what makes one person more successful than another on the basketball court?

Stereotypically, the general public states reasons such as physical size, pure athletic ability and time spent developing skills. In the case of professional basketball players, a stereotypical belief is that they achieve success and stardom as a gift from the media. Personally, I find these remarks very degrading to the intelligent mind. Success on the basketball court is also a result of strong personality traits such as confidence, determination, self-motivation and leadership.

On a recent TV special honoring basketball legend Larry Bird of the Boston Celtics, Quinn Buckner, former professional basketball star stated, "The main similarity I noticed between Larry Bird and Michael Jordan is their confidence. Even if they are only playing a game of tiddledywinks they are confident that they will win." One can infer from this statement that these two super stars are so self-motivated that they can consider nothing less than winning at whatever they might undertake. It is also apparent from this quote that these two individuals are sure of their own abilities — in other words confident.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines confidence as, "self-possession which implies an ease or coolness under stress that reflects perfect self-control and command of one's powers" (237). A prime example of confidence is displayed in the movie *Hoosiers* as Jimmy Chitwood wants the final shot of the game — he knows he

can make it! In real life games, this same situation occurs when the ball is given to a Larry Bird or Magic Johnson to make a clutch shot. Confidence is displayed in other ways on the basketball court too. Former University of Iowa basketball star. B.J. Armstrong was drafted from college basketball to the Chicago Bulls professional basketball team where he has succeeded because he is confident enough in his abilities to play with people who are larger in stature and more experienced than himself. Had B. J. lacked confidence in his own abilities he might easily have been cut from the ranks of professional basketball.

In addition to confidence, it takes strong determination to succeed as a basketball player. Determination is defined by *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* as, "displaying initiative to the point of being non-relinquishing" (310). This type of determination was shown by Iowa State University basketball standout Jeff Hornacek. Jeff came to Iowa State as a walk-on player with no recruitment or scholarship assistance. Through his determination he became a starting guard on the Cyclone basketball team. His continued determination mingled with a lot of self-motivation enabled Jeff to reach a level of basketball performance that is sought by professional teams. Jeff was drafted by the Phoenix Suns professional basketball team directly from college. From Phoenix, Jeff has been traded to the Philadelphia 76ers where he continues to have success. Had it not been for his nonrelenquishing determination to play basketball, Jeff Hornacek might never have become a college basketball star, much less a basketball player of national recognition.

Spud Webb, guard of the Sacramento Kings professional basketball team, is another fine example of the determination required to be a successful basketball player. Here is an athlete, who at only five feet eight inches tall, would be considered by most too small to play professional basketball. However, determination and motivation combined with skill enabled Spud Webb to become airborne long enough to become a "slam dunk" champion at a time when popular belief states that "slam dunk" success belongs to tall men.

How many times have you heard people speak of the pure athletic ability of Michael Jordan? I do not choose to dispute his natural ability. However, natural ability alone did not make Michael Jordan an NBA superstar! In his book entitled *Hang Time*, Michael Jordan relates how disappointed he was to be cut in his sophomore year from the high school team. He was so disappointed that he developed the strength of determination and self-motivation so that he would not have to face such disappointment again (Greene 80). As a result, Michael Jordan fully developed his talent, enabling basketball fans to enjoy this extraordinary person.

Self-motivation, confidence and determination are all part of the larger personality trait of leadership. Leadership, as defined by *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, is "faith in oneself and one's powers without any suggestion of conceit or arrogance" (653). Nowhere in recent basketball performance has this display of leadership been more obvious than in the leadership of Magic Johnson and Larry Bird. It is not as difficult for the fans to show admiration and respect for an athlete as it is for the peers of an athlete to show respect for one of their own. The orchestration of basketball plays by these two floor leaders is not their only evidence of leadership. They know they can make the winning shot; they know when to pass, and they instill confidence and team spirit in their teammates.

The popularity of basketball as a sport has grown rapidly during the past decade as has the number of people who participate in the sport. While we all agree that the sport provides excitement and entertainment for fans, it should be acknowledged that those who successfully play the game of basketball exhibit strength in the personality traits that Americans have always been proud to display. Since young people tend to emulate heroes, especially sports figures, it is important that we recognize that it takes confidence, determination, self-motivation, and leadership as well as talent to succeed as a basketball player!

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Adrienne Rich and Re-Vision

Donna Kellam
Composition II

Society has been and is still being revised twenty-one years after Adrienne Rich wrote "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision." Rich, a published poet and college instructor, promotes more than a revised or modified society. She sees a need for pervasive change through "re-vision the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (483). Rich proposes our imaginations be set free to "transcend and transform experience,... to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives" (490). The freedom experienced through this "awakening consciousness: or awareness of alternatives" "can also be confusing, disorienting, and painful" (483) according to Rich. Times of change are never completely smooth, and the upheaval caused by the revision Rich sees necessary is not over twenty-one years later.

Rich uses her own poems to illustrate her personal revision as an example of the kind of re-vision all of society needs to undergo. She sees herself differently in 1971 than she did in 1951. She is not just older and modified, but different in her core of being. This different view is not a view passively accepted because of the passage of time, but is a view that has been consciously worked out over years and is reflected in her poetry. Rich sees a need for society to consciously work on re-vision so as "not to pass on a tradition [of male oppression] but to break its hold over us" (484). Not only do individual women suffer in a "male-dominated society" (Rich 484), but all of society suffers.

Rich uses her poetry as examples of the changes she sees necessary. "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers," "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law," and "Planetarium" are of varying length, form and content. The key difference in her poems to me is the content or meaning being expressed. The forms also

change significantly between each of the poems, but the changes work to enhance the expression of the content. These poems were written over a period of seventeen years during which Rich experienced a change in her own view of her role as a woman.

In "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" written while Rich was a student in 1951, Rich uses a traditional form of poetry to express a traditional role for women. It is a short, concise poem expressing the limited role available to women at that time. The poem is written in four-line stanzas with two-line couplets. The lines end-stop and each stanza expresses a complete thought. The words used as well as the rhythm of the words set a distinct mood within each stanza.

Aunt Jennifer's tigers stride across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty. (487)

The rhythm of this stanza implies the pacing of the tigers who represent power and fearlessness.

Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand. (487, 488)

The use of "pull" and "wool" (487) slows the pace and the mood of the second stanza. The mood of oppression is further established by the use of "massive weight" and "Uncle's" (488) rather than Aunt Jennifer's when describing the wedding band. The mood lifts again in the last stanza when it is Aunt Jennifer's creativity that will be remembered, not her oppression. "The tigers in the panel that she made / Will go on striding, proud and unafraid" (488).

By "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law," completed in 1960, Rich sees a different role for women. The traditional

role is not gone and neither is her use of traditional four-line stanzas. There is a disorientation and confusion in the roles of women expressed in this poem which Rich conveys in the form she uses as well as the content. The lines no longer rhyme in couplets or in any other pattern. They sometimes end stop, sometimes enjamb, and caesura is used.

Sometimes she'd let the tapstream scald her arm,
a match burn to her thumbnail,

or held her hand above the kettle's snout
right in the woolly steam. They are probably angels,
since nothing hurts her anymore, except
each mornings grit blowing into her eyes. (491, 492)

All of these changes in form work to express the lack of control over her life being expressed by the language of the poem.

"Banging the coffee-pot into the sink" immediately establishes the traditional, subservient role of women as the role of this woman. "She... looks out / past the raked garden" implies the nurturing role of women. The confusion being experienced is expressed in the commands of the voices she hears. "Have no patience." "Be insatiable." "Save yourself; others you cannot save" (491). All of these phrases command her to rebel and concentrate on her own ego. The challenge of blending the traditional role of nurturer with the ego-satisfying role was physically and emotionally exhausting for women. Women, not only Rich, were feeling they must be "ungrateful, insatiable, perhaps a monster" (489) while trying to reconcile these roles. Such physical and emotional exhaustion can bring on the disorientation and numbness to feeling expressed by the following lines.

Sometimes she'd let the tapstream scald her arm,
a match burn to her thumbnail,

or held her hand above the kettle's snout
right in the woolly steam. . . . (491)

"Planetarium," written about 1968, exposes the reader to a freer, more open role for women. Rich uses open form to illustrate this new role. There are no traditional boundaries to this poem just as she sees no valid boundaries or limitations to women as she is "Thinking of Caroline Herschel, 1750-1848, / astronomer, sister of William; and others" (493). The lines are uneven; set only by the individual desires and decisions of the poet. Rich seems to be implying that women's lives should also be set by their own individual desires and decisions. "Planetarium" is still recognizable as poetry just as the individual is recognizable as a woman "whom the moon rules / like us." "Galaxies of women" and "the skies are full of them" (493), tells the reader that there are countless women capable of contributing to society in non-traditional ways. Rich says "I am an instrument in the shape / of a woman" (494) so that the reader will understand that these women are not less womanly for their non-traditional contributions.

Rich has by this time decided on what her role should be. "A light wave could take 15 / years to travel through me" (494) speaks to the length of time it has taken her to achieve her own re-vision.

I am an instrument in the shape
of a woman trying to translate pulsations
into images for the relief of the body
and the reconstruction of the mind. (494)

Rich seems to be saying that she is primarily a poet who just happens to also be a woman trying to express thoughts and feelings into word pictures for emotional release and learning.

Rich's "awakening of consciousness" (494) or awareness of alternatives was not accomplished quickly and neither will society's awakening be accomplished quickly. Twenty-

one years after she wrote "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" there is change, but an awakening is far from complete. Women are still expressing anger at the "boundaries of patriarchy" (Rich 495). There is still much "phallogentric sadism" and "sexual brutality" (Rich 495) expressed in films such as *Basic Instinct* and *Unlawful Entry* in 1992. "Sleepwalkers are coming awake" (Rich 483) alerts readers, both male and female, to the availability of alternative choices in their lives. Males and females are adopting non-traditional roles such as men becoming nurses and females becoming firefighters. These choices require decisions; but decisions can be either passive, made by taking no action, or active. Rich encourages readers, especially women readers, to be active participants in this process of change. However, being active participants requires work. "As women, we have our work cut out for us" (Rich 495).

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