

Spring 2012

## Skunk River Review 2012, vol 24

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### Recommended Citation

Algreen, Megan; Ferguson, Megan; Owen, Karen; Frey, Elliott James; Lynch, Jacob; Meyer, Gary; McCarl, Coy; Gates, Tim; Collier, Garfield M.; Williams, Leticia; McCarthy, Zachary; Fees, Jessica; Stevens, Joshua; Lauer, Sarah; Taylor, Katie; Korth, Crystal; Pueschel, Scott; DuPass, Kyle; Hanrahan, Michael; Kainz, Dan; Hauptert, Amber; Berner, Tiffany; and Doran, Erin, "Skunk River Review 2012, vol 24" (2012). *Skunk River Review*. 15.  
<https://openspace.dmacc.edu/skunkriver/15>

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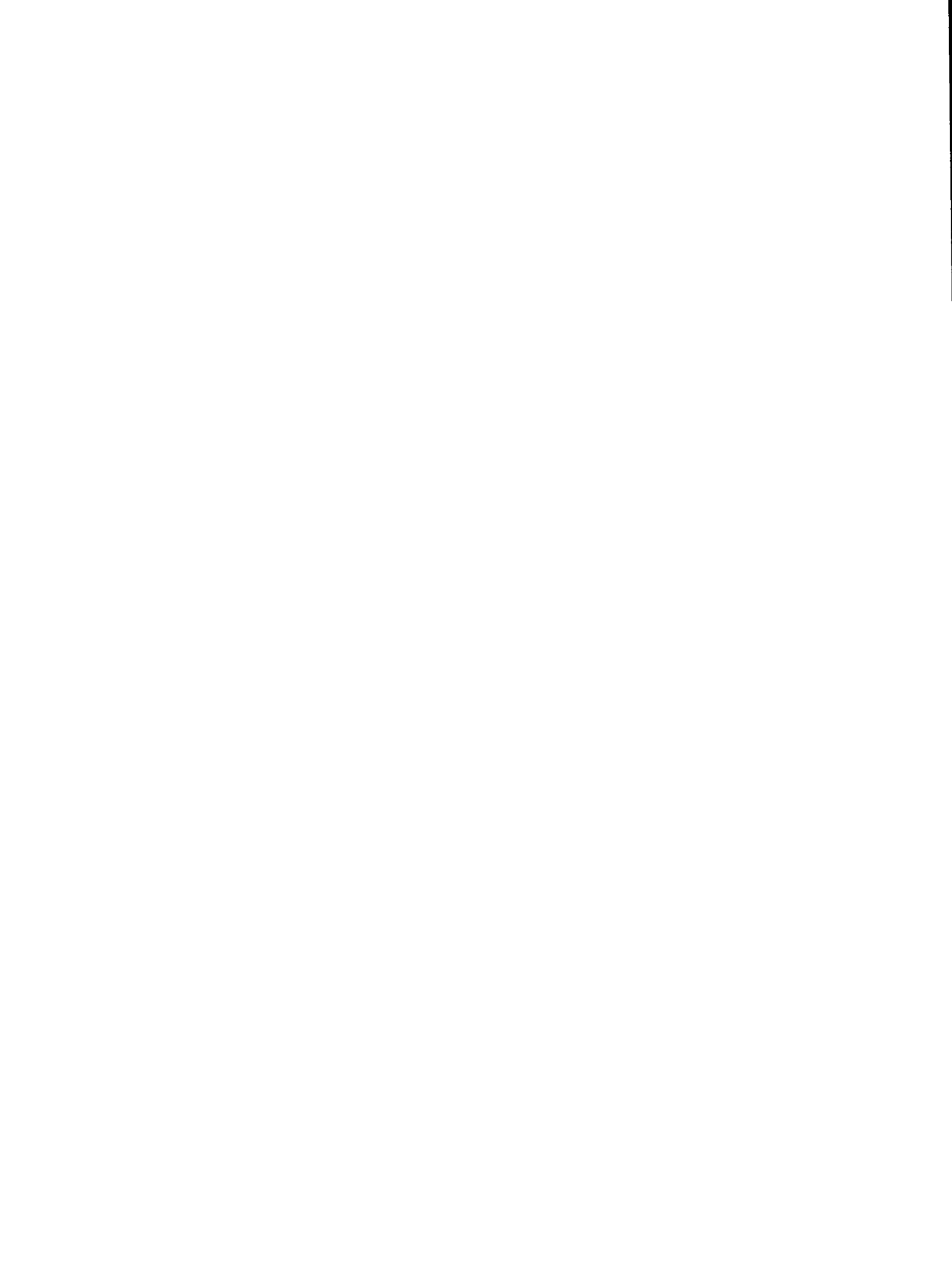


# *Skunk River Review*

*Volume 24*

*Photographed & Designed by Ashley Ramey*





# SKUNK RIVER REVIEW

A MAGAZINE OF STUDENT WRITING

Volume 24



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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE**



# FOREWORD



*The Skunk River Review* is an annual magazine of Des Moines Area Community College student non-fiction essays. All writing was produced for DMACC classes in 2011-2012. The majority of essays were written for Composition I and II, but essays from Literature and College Resource classes are also encouraged.

This publication is representative of the objectives of English 105, which is to find a voice and through research, critical thinking, and the recursive process, create thought-provoking essays; it is also a representation of English 106, which is to master the art of persuasion through writing.

As you peruse this year's edition, you will notice that some essays need editing, or a little more tinkering, but that is why the recursive process is so important. Our writing can *always* be improved. MLA formatting has not been edited for this publication because it is used as a teaching tool in many classrooms.

Des Moines Area Community College would like to thank the students that submitted to this year's publication as well as the instructors that use *The Skunk River Review* in their classrooms and whose contributions make this publication possible.





# CONTENTS

## **ENGLISH 106**

VICTIMS OF BULLYING .....	1
DEMANDING SLEEP .....	6
ANGUISHED ADOLESCENCE: A LESSON FROM GRANDPA .....	11
THE ARGUMENT SURROUNDING RED LIGHT AND SPEED CAMERAS .....	15
POPULAR CULTURE AND NARCISSISM: SOCIETY'S UNFLATTERING REFLECTION.....	21
WHERE DID WE COME FROM, AND WHY DO WE CARE? .....	26
WALKING IN THEIR SHOES .....	30
IMPLICATIONS OF INTERNET OVERUSE ISSUE .....	34
A BIRTHDAY TO REMEMBER.....	40

## **ENGLISH 105**

BLUEPRINTS OF ME .....	43
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND.....	45
FROM A HOSPITAL BED TO THE BATHROOM FLOOR.....	51
ARTIFICIAL SUGARS: THE NOT-SO-SWEET TRUTH .....	55
THE EMPTY LOCKER.....	59
WHY ALL CATS SHOULD ADOPT A HUMAN.....	62
SLEEP AND ITS DISORDERS.....	66
MR. CLEAN .....	69
PRESS ONE FOR ENGLISH: ILLEGAL IMMIGRATIONS'S IMPACT ON AMERCIA.....	73
THE CURSE OF THE BILLY GOAT .....	77
ONCE UPON A TIME.....	81
WHAT TO DO?.....	83
TOO YOUNG TO BE SEXY .....	89

## **ENGLISH 105 and HUMANITIES**

AN ESCAPE TO SALVATION.....	93
A NEW FOUND LAND.....	96





**Megan Algreen** is currently a senior at Earlham High School. She is 17 years old and is planning to attend DMACC in Ankeny in the Fall of 2012. Her intended major is Education and she hopes to coach in the future as well. Megan has taken several courses over the past year at DMACC and is currently enrolled in Western Civilizations and English Composition II at the West Campus. Her hobbies are playing numerous sports for her high school which involved volleyball, basketball, and softball. Other hobbies she enjoys are watching movies with her friends and family, swimming, and reading books!

### *Explaining Opposing Position Essay*

## **VICTIMS OF BULLYING**

Rob was a twelve-year-old, smart, athletic boy growing up. Throughout his life he participated in boy scouts, football, basketball, baseball, and track. He loved being with his family and had a bright future ahead of him. For several weeks Rob's mother, Kim, knew something was not right by the way Rob was acting. Eventually, after a couple of weeks, Kim found out her son was being harassed by bullies because they thought he was gay. Kim was flabbergasted and could not believe her son was going through this. The students would shout to Rob, "You act like a girl, you must be a girl!" Rob told his mother that he wished he never went to this school, and he hated going there every day. His mom always expressed to him, "Just walk away, ignore them. And if worse comes to worse, tell the teachers." Rob tried to ignore the bullies. He would go find a bathroom stall to hide in during lunch so he would not get picked on, but that never worked.

"Robbie, where are you?" exclaimed one of the bullies.

Rob tried to keep as quiet as he could thinking maybe if he did not make a sound, they would leave. The door to the bathroom stall he was in opened so quickly, that he had no time to escape. There was a swarm of bullies all around him, they all pulled down their pants and started peeing on Rob. After they were finished the boys left and walked out the door saying, "Yeah, I hoped you enjoyed that gay boy." Once the incident was over, all Rob did was sit there soaked in urine. He could not handle the

torture anymore. That same day, Rob went home, got a belt and hung himself in his bedroom closet. Rob did not live to see another day.

The definition of bullying, according to the Oxford Dictionary is defined as: “using superior strength or influence to intimidate someone, typically to force him or her to do what one wants” (Bully<sub>1</sub>). Channel 5 ABC News, in Des Moines claims, that “160,000 kids miss school a day because they are afraid of getting bullied” (Cuomo). Bullying has been a part of our world since the beginning of time. People may wonder though, what exactly causes bullying. While some people argue bullying is caused by the school not inflicting enough force on the bully for their acts, other individuals state that bullying is mainly caused by the parents of the bully; however, both sides argue on the fact that bullying is getting out of control and needs to stop for their kids' safety.

First, those who believe bullying is caused by the schools have various reasons to back up their opinions. An article titled *School Bullies and Bullying at School* implies how countless schools involve the teachers to get multiple tasks accomplished which simply means they do not have the time to punish the bully so they either “ignore the problem, punish the bully, punish the target of bullying when they stand up for themselves, or expel the bullying pupil” (Bullying).

Secondly, not only do the teachers have to be more aware of what is going on in the school, the school needs to be able to create an environment where all the individuals feel safe. The kids who start going to school need to be able to know that aggressive behaviors are not tolerated no matter what the situation may be. The school needs to enforce rules that everyone can follow and have some sort of consequence if they do not own up to the rules. If an aggressive attack does occur, then those kids need to learn to be taught that it is not okay to do.

In an interview with Dave Wempen, the principal of Earlham High School, he was asked what action the schools should take in regards to bullying. Wempen responded, “Our policy at Earlham High School is prohibiting harassment as much as possible. If a student is being bullied, the student needs to tell a faculty member immediately if it gets out of hand. Now, in most cases the bullies tell the victims of the situation that they will threaten them even more if they tell someone. That is not the case, the bully can be suspended or even worse, expelled from the school. We have seen more cases of bullying this year than ever before, it is time our school does something about it.” (Wempen).

In the same way, individuals who say bullying is caused by the parents of the bully agree bullying needs to be pushed more in schools to have people apprehend as it is taking multiple kids lives away every day. This group believes the parents are at fault because their child has not grown up in the safest environment (or so they think). Mark DiNino expressed, "In many cases, kids become bullies because of what they have learned from their parents. Parents have to take a close look at their own behavior. Parental behavior can create both bullies and targets depending on the family dynamic and the personalities of the children" (DiNino). Even gossiping is a simple form of bullying. Parents need to be more aware of what they are saying around their children because it can have a huge impact on them whether they know it or not.

Not only does gossiping have a huge impact on bullying, but social networking sites do as well. Being able to access all of these social internet sites nowadays, has increased the level of bullying to more than there has been in the past. Channel 5 ABC News, in Des Moines implies that the "internet has made bullying easier and harsher than it has ever been before" (Cuomo). Kids are getting Facebooks, Twitters, MySpaces, etcetera, all at a younger age which can set them up to being harassed. These sites are making it easier for harassment to occur and helps the bully because it is not going on during school hours. If harassment is going on to a victim, then the parents need to learn to take control of the situation because their child can not handle it alone.

First, being able to be there for their children is an important factor parents need to consider doing more. Bullies tend to harass other kids because they want to higher their self-esteem. Maybe they have not had the best support system at home and so beating up on kids could help their self-esteem rise. Parents need to be aware of what their child is up to and how to prevent bullying from happening. Being kind is not stressed enough in households when it should be. Parents are no longer teaching their kids how to act, they just let them go and something needs to change about this.

Secondly, an essay named, *Are Parents the Cause of Bullying?*, expresses the ideas on parents being at fault for bullying. In most cases, kids become bullies because of what they have learned from their parents (AKKA). The parents are not realizing how much their behavior effects their kids. Also, a parent who gets pushed around easily can have their child take advantage of them which leads to bullying in the long run. The parents need to be able to establish a good relationship with their child so it does not lead them to think that making fun of other people will higher their self-esteem.

Most people can at least agree that bullying is a serious issue at hand and needs to be expressed all around the world that kids are taking their lives because of it. One group believes the school is at fault for all of this bullying occurring because they are not taking charge to stop it. An essay about school shootings expresses how “nearly seventy percent of students feel their school does not handle bullying in the correct manner” (School). Their hope is that one day the staff members will open their eyes and realize they need to take bullying more serious. It is not just something they can brush off their shoulders.

In an essay titled, “School Shooting: Who's Really at Fault?,” goes through multiple cases in which school shootings have occurred because the school is not taking care of the bullying problems going on in the school. In 1997, Evan Ramsey came to his Alaska high school carrying a gun with him. He killed one student and the principal. He is now serving an extensive time at his local prison. When asked why he committed the crime, Ramsey stated, “he was sick of being picked on in school” (School).

Evan was looking for a way out. A way out of being tortured all the time at school, a way out of no one ever listening to him, and a way out of never seeing the bullies at school ever again. No one could stop what he did. He was set in his own ways and knew what he was getting himself into when he brought the gun to school. This is one of the numerous stories in which school bullying has been taken to another level.

Bullying is happening everywhere and some people may not even notice it. It exists everyday and more than ever, people are taking their lives because they are tired of being tortured all the time. In an interview, Alan Algreen was asked multiple questions about bullying, he expressed, “Bullying is never going to end. No one is ever going to settle on what causes it, but the affects of bullying need to be expressed by both the school and the parents”(Algreen). Whether people think bullying is caused by the schools or even the bullies parents, they both agree on that bullying needs to end because it is getting way to out of hand. Helping spread the word can help more than people know. It can open peoples eyes and make them see bullying is not worth it in the end.

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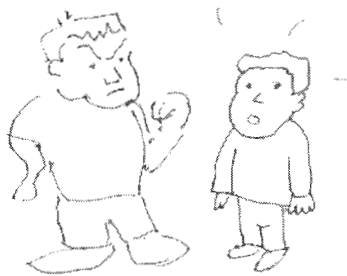
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**Megan Ferguson** is studying Biochemistry at DMACC. She loves to be outside and spends most of her free time doing outdoor sports like running, hiking, and ultimate frisbee. Megan has moved quite a bit, and she even lived in Rome, Italy. She has traveled to thirty countries and she wishes to add to that list by studying abroad her junior year. Megan plans to attend the University of Iowa after DMACC.

### *Claim of Policy Essay*

## **DEMANDING SLEEP**

Teenagers seem to be constantly eating or sleeping and can never seem to get enough. Although teens may no longer act like kids, their bodies are still growing and have several demands to be met. For example, adolescents require the same amount of sleep as children where the “optimal sleep need is 9¼ hours” (Carskadon 23). As if it weren’t hard enough to get the recommended amount of sleep, high school students have very busy schedules that consist of school, work, sports, volunteer work, extracurricular activities, and of course homework. A student-athlete may have to stay up until 1 a.m. to finish a paper and then get up for a 5:30 morning practice. The athlete would have to get ready at school, eat breakfast, attend a full day of classes, and then have an afternoon practice until 5:30 p.m. A student athlete could spend 12 hours at school and the day only continues at home where the student-athlete would need to shower, eat dinner, and finally start on homework around 7 p.m. Getting up at 5 and going to bed at 11 is a long day for any age, but only having four hours of sleep is not enough to fuel the needs of students’ daily routine.

Teenagers are getting way less sleep than what is needed; in fact, a study by Wolfson and Carskadon found that “26 percent of high school students routinely sleep less than 6.5 hours on school nights, and only 15 percent sleep 8.5 hours or more” (Carpenter 218). The more sleep students lose, the more they grow consistently tired. The body, no matter what age, cannot handle loss of sleep and it keeps a sleep debt where every hour of sleep lost must be eventually made up in extra sleep (Lamberg 241). Therefore, high school students become sleep deprived and it “does not mean

[they] pulled an all-nighter . . . [it's] building a cumulative sleep debt" over time (National Sleep Foundation, "Sleep and Sports" 237). Sleep deprivation has many negative consequences that affect every aspect of teenagers' lives.

A leading cause for adolescent sleep deprivation is the body's natural sleep time, which does not correspond with school starting times. Mary A. Carskadon, a professor at Brown University School of Medicine and director of sleep and chronobiology research at E.P. Bradley Hospital, has researched teenagers' body clocks by measuring melatonin levels, which is a hormone that is "regulated by the circadian timing system," and she found that teenagers' natural "bedtime and rising time both [occur] at later hours" (12-17). Researchers found these results consistent across the world, meaning that this sleep shift is an "intrinsic developmental change" (Carskadon 15) and not a cultural norm. Due to this innate body clock, it is "hard for most teens to fall asleep before 11 p.m." (Epstein and Mardon 2); however, they usually have to get up around 6 a.m. for a school starting time around 7:30. With schools starting so early and students unable to go to bed at a time that would provide them with enough sleep, teens are only adding to their sleep debt, which causes them to be more and more sleep deprived. An article entitled "Backgrounder: Later Start Times" by the National Sleep Foundation, reports that teens with sleep deprivation are "at significant risk for fall[ing] asleep; automobile crashes; emotional and behavioral problems such as irritability, depression, poor impulse control, and violence; health complaints; tobacco and alcohol use; impaired cognitive function and decision-making; and lower overall performance from academics to athletics" (274). How can teenagers be expected to get up so early when their bodies make them stay up late? In order for teenagers to get the right amount of sleep needed to succeed in athletics and academics, and to maintain overall health, it would be extremely beneficial to delay the starting times of high schools in America.

One reason, and a rather important one, to push back the start times of high schools is for teens to be alert in school and excel academically. Sleep deprivation can affect adolescents' success in school, and Wolfson and Carskadon found "that students who reported they were getting Cs, Ds, and Fs in school obtained about 25 minutes less sleep and went to bed about 40 minutes later than students who reported they were getting As and Bs" (Carpenter 216). A teacher from a Manhattan high school reported that "her first-period class has the lowest average of all the classes she teaches" (Kirtchuk et al. 3). High school dropout rates may also be attributed, in part, to the lack of sleep among students, and a study found that dropouts "are often students who have insufficient credits for graduation because they have missed too many first- and second-hour classes" (Wahlstrom 3). Some high schools have delayed their school

starting times to experiment with the results and they have found that “grades have gone up, and attendance and dropout rates have improved” (Kirtchuk et al. 2). With the right amount of sleep, students are more alert during classes, which equates to retaining more information. High school students can do homework more efficiently while well rested, rather than having to keep on rereading passages because they were zoning out or dozing off.

By getting more sleep, not only will students’ health improve, but also their behaviors. Some people argue that students would simply stay up later if school started later; however, due to the circadian rhythms of teenagers, melatonin kicks in around 10 p.m., which causes them to go to bed around 11 p.m., and therefore allowing them to gain an extra hour of sleep in the morning. In fact, a school district that delayed its starting time found that the “high school students get five more hours of sleep per week than peers in schools that start earlier in the day” (Wahlstrom 3). Anybody who gets the right amount of sleep is generally happier overall and can maintain health more readily. Teenagers would be less likely to be drowsy while driving if school times were delayed and this premise is supported by the fact that “car crashes involving teen drivers fell 15 percent when high schools in Fayette County, Ky., [sic] switched the high school start time from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m.” (Epstein and Mardon 2). Edina County also switched its start times to a later hour and had “findings . . . that reported markedly improved student behavior, as evidenced by quieter behavior in the hallways between classes and less lunchroom misbehavior” (Kubow, Wahlstrom, and Bemis 63). The results show that high schools could have a better environment for the students and the faculty by addressing the sleep needs of the students.

Another reason to delay high school start times is to enhance the performance of teenagers in sports and extracurricular activities. Getting the right amount of sleep can give student-athletes an edge over their competition. Sleep deprivation can lead to “reduced endurance . . . , mental functioning . . . , [and] cardiovascular performance . . . [as well as] delayed visual [and] . . . auditory reaction times” (National Sleep Foundation, “Sleep and Sports” 239). Indeed, the act of sleeping helps with athletic skills as “motor skills continue to be learned as you sleep [and] . . . sleep builds procedural memory, so you’ll remember the plays you trained for” (National Sleep Foundation, “Sleep and Sports” 239). Some people think that there will be less time for after school activities if the school day is pushed back, but “Edina teachers did not notice any appreciable decrease in student involvement in extracurricular activities” (Kubow, Wahlstrom, and Bemis 64), and athletic performance should increase with more sleep. When teenagers are well rested they are more likely to memorize their

lines more easily, be in a better mood to volunteer, and be at their peak athletic performance. What school or student would not enjoy state titles and better attitudes?

Because the significant benefits far outnumber the insignificant disadvantages to delaying the start times of high school, adopting later start times should be considered for the entire nation. The Department of Education should only allow high schools to start after elementary and middle schools have started. Just this small change could make so many differences that could forever change the lives of the younger generations for the better. Greater academic and athletic success due to sufficient sleep could change teenagers' testing scores and enhance their chances to get into colleges. By simply adding an hour of sleep each night to adolescents' daily routines can change their attitude and behavior entirely, which will result in less violence, fewer car crashes, and a better high school experience. So many advantages accompany later high school start times it would be foolish not to make such a simple change that results in such a drastic, positive difference.

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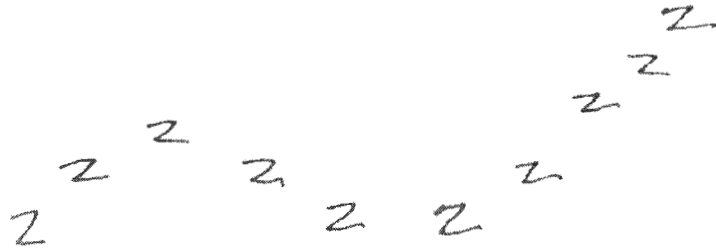
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### *Narrative Essay*

## **ANGUISHED ADOLESCENCE: A LESSON FROM GRANDPA**

It was my first day of junior high. I was wearing my new skirt, which my Grandmother had made and so painstakingly, turning the pleats to a knife point, and the delicate yellow lace blouse she had so lovingly sewn for me. The day was bright and sunny with just a hint of the fall that was soon to come. There was a gentle breeze, rustling the leaves on the trees, and the aroma of clipped grass permeated through the air. Yellow buses lined the curb with a never ending supply of kids spilling out. Everywhere there were groups of kids clustered together and talking excitedly to one another. I was overwhelmed with the anticipation of meeting new people, finding my locker and classrooms, and assuming this new found mantle of adulthood I felt I had since I was now in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Little did I know that the important lessons to be learned in this new school were not going to be taught in the classroom.

I managed to find all my morning classes and make it all the way to the lunch bell without too much trouble. The cafeteria was much like the grounds of the school that morning. Kids were grouped together in their own little cliques and the volume of voices and slamming of lunch trays on tables was almost deafening. The smells of overcooked food infused the air overwhelmingly. I waited my turn patiently in the lunch line and handed my ticket over to be punched by the intimidating lady lunch monitor.

As I was heading to find a seat I heard a voice behind me that said, "Look, she's got a red lunch ticket! And her clothes look homemade." Followed by the sound of several girls laughing.

I turned to look at who had said this and cringed inside when I saw that they were pointing at me.

The other girl who I knew to be one of the most popular in school said, "My mom said her mom's on welfare and she doesn't have a dad."

I hurried away, as fast as my legs would carry me, to the sounds of their laughter ringing in my ears. Suddenly my appetite was gone, leaving nausea in its place. I discarded my lunch and left the cafeteria to look for a place to be alone where no one would laugh at me. I was utterly humiliated and fighting desperately to hold back tears. Needless to say, I didn't enter the cafeteria again that week, skipping the midday meal despite the protests of my stomach.

That weekend I went to visit my grandparents at their farm. As soon as I got there, I headed down to my grandfather's fishing hole to mope about my miserable state. It was a peaceful place. The water in the pond was so clear you could see all the way to the bottom. Even on the hottest days, you could always count on that water to be cool and refreshing.

As I sat there on the bank, leaning up against the giant oak tree and hiccupping through my tears, my grandfather suddenly appeared. He sat down next to me and didn't say anything for the longest time.

Finally he said, "Why don't you tell me what's wrong?"

My first inclination was to tell him nothing, but the compassionate look in his clear blue eyes made me spill out the entire torrid story.

He took a few moments to digest what I'd said. Speaking very softly he said, "You know, sweetie, it's not your fault that your dad left. Your mom does the best she can but her job doesn't pay very much, that's why she gets some additional help. It's wrong that the school should give you a lunch ticket that makes you seem different from the others. Unfortunately, you can't help that either but maybe I can. As for your clothes, I remember how much fun you and your Grandma had going through magazines to look at all the pretty clothes so you could pick out patterns to match the

outfits you liked and you two spent whole days picking out just the right fabric to make them. When you modeled all the new clothes Grandma made for you, I thought you looked beautiful. No matter what those girls said, the fact is you are a very special and pretty little girl."

At that moment, I didn't feel very grown up anymore. I felt exactly like the little girl who rode shotgun in his panel truck to check out the fence lines. I thought about what he said and realized that he was right. The clothes Grandma made for me were beautiful and because they were made with love I knew that reflected through to my appearance. Not to mention that they fit perfectly. The more I thought about it, my clothes were not only as good as the other girls, they were better!

"You're right Grandpa. But why would they make fun of me over these things? You said I can't help it and I can't. How can I ever face them when I know what they think of me?"

Again, Grandpa took a few moments before answering, "You know, I can't really speak for them, but I do know you. You are the kindest, gentlest little girl I have ever met. Just keep your head up high and tell yourself that you are just as good as they are. If they say anything, just smile."

That Monday, I again headed out to school. When I got there, to my surprise, there was my Grandpa standing at the corner. In his hand was a brown bag. I ran up to him and gave him the biggest hug he had ever gotten. He handed me the bag, smiled, patted me on the head, and got into his truck and left without saying a word.

That day I proudly sat in the cafeteria and ate my brown bag lunch. Another girl sat down and introduced herself by saying, "That's a really cute outfit."

"My Grandmother made it for me," I said proudly.

"Wow, you're really lucky. I wish I had someone who could make great clothes for me. Your outfit looks just like one I saw in a magazine that I wished I could have," she said with an admiring look.

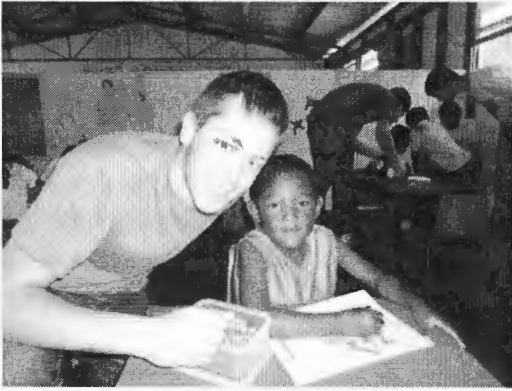
That day I made a new friend. She didn't see me any differently because my clothes were homemade. She seemed to like me just as I was. As the year wore on, I made several new friends. They didn't think any less of me because of my mother's



financial status or my lack of a father. Grandpa continued to make sure I never had to carry that hated red lunch ticket again.

That day, on the bank of the fishing hole, my Grandfather gave me the most important advice I have ever received. Since then, no matter what, I have always held my head up proudly with a smile, never to be ashamed of things I have no control over. He taught me that the only words that can hurt me are those that I let hurt me. He made me realize that there is no way to conceptualize why another person speaks hurtfully, just that they will sometimes. Because of his wise advice, I have been spared the sting of other people's thoughtless remarks. All I have to do is hold my head up, smile, and continue to move on. He also made me realize how important memories are. Through our memories, we can relive events that we cherish no matter how much time has passed. And remembering those days that Grandma and I made my homemade clothes are some of the best recollections I have!





**Elliott James Frey**

### *Explaining Opposing Positions*

#### **THE ARGUMENT SURROUNDING RED LIGHT AND SPEED CAMERAS**

In today's world, everyone is always in a rush: Whether they are headed to work, a sporting event, or even to school. Not only are people often running late, they tend to speed and drive recklessly when headed to some sort of an event. Each and every day in the United States, according to [trafficticketsecrets.com](http://trafficticketsecrets.com), 100,000 people will receive speeding tickets, resulting in almost \$6,150,000,000 in speeding fines alone per year. As crazy as these numbers are, they prove that the United States has an issue when it comes to keeping its drivers safe on the roads, and something is needed to fix this issue. Red light and speed cameras are being used around the country, especially in Iowa, to help solve this problem of cracking down on reckless drivers as law enforcement officers are not able to watch every street, intersection, and corner in the state. Proponents of red light and speed cameras in Des Moines would say that these tools have caused a significant decrease in "careless driving" while those against them would say not only can these cameras be dangerous, but they are taking away from possible jobs that law enforcement officers used to have for themselves; however, both sides would most likely agree that reckless driving is a problem, and it needs to come to an end.

According to Jason Noble, a writer for the Des Moines Register, 50% of respondents to a recent poll regarding red light cameras would favor a bill that would ban them (1A). At the same time, there are those in favor of the red light cameras too. In response to another poll, 51% of respondents said they would favor a bill that would ban cameras from taking pictures of speeders (Noble 1A). Noble states "Although at

least half of Iowans support banning the traffic enforcement cameras that have cropped up on roads and at intersections across the state, the margins are narrow, underscoring the divisive nature of the issue" (Noble 1A). Although there are many other issues in Iowa such as abortion laws, gay-marriage amendments, internet gambling, nuclear power plants, hunting regulations, spending limits, and the "Occupy Iowa" movement, nothing seems to size up to the issue of traffic enforcement cameras at this given time. Many people in the state of Iowa have formed an opinion around this issue, and it is obvious that a solution is needed to end careless driving in this state.

First off, many people, ranging from typical Iowa residents to Iowa legislators, are in favor of both the red light and speed cameras for many different reasons. The first reason many people state as to why they are in favor of these cameras involves the idea that if someone is speeding, they should pay a penalty. As we all know, police officers do their fair share of pulling people onto the side of the road and giving away tickets for those speeding over the maximum limit. The issue with police officers doing so is that they simply cannot patrol every street, intersection, and corner throughout a given city or state. Those in favor of these cameras would argue that the cameras will aid officers in tracking down those who are continually breaking the law when they are on the road. In the minds of the proponents, the goal would be to get rid of speeding altogether, and one way would be to continually charge speeders money until they realized the need to slow down and follow the law.

Next, many people are in favor of the traffic enforcement cameras because of the revenue that they bring in for the state of Iowa on a daily basis. Traffic enforcement camera proponent Jeff Forrest, a union representative from Urbandale, Iowa, says "If they (the state) want to generate some cash for their cities, go for it, man" (qtd. in Noble 1A). This statement proves yet another reason for supporting these cameras may be because of the revenue they bring in for a state that is deeply in debt. According to USdebtclock.org, the state of Iowa is currently in debt by about \$16,002,153,715. This means that of the 3,055,653 people living in the state, each person would be considered in debt by about \$5,300. As the state continues to make an effort to find ways to create revenue and to cut back on spending, the traffic enforcement cameras may be at least a short-term, if not a long-term solution to bringing the debt down in Iowa. The only question surrounding this is whether or not cutting down on speeding is just an excuse for the state of Iowa to make money off of its tax-paying residents. This is an issue that stirs up plenty of controversy within those against the cameras, as they believe in having a justified reason behind handing out hundreds of tickets every day.

Third of all, proponents of the red light and speed cameras say that many people do not even realize when they are speeding, so activating the cameras will make them more cautious as to how they drive in general. According to [whotv.com](http://whotv.com), the website for a Des Moines local news station, Tim Robinson, a Des Moines native, simply does not go over 60 miles per hour on I-235 anymore (Kacner). But Robinson is not the only one who is driving tentatively because of the new cameras. In the same article from [whotv.com](http://whotv.com), Shirley Brown is quoted "I have a tendency to be a little heavy footed sometimes. So I think now that I know they're out there I am going to be very cautious about passing that area, and maybe it will carry on to my destination" (qtd. in Kacner). If the cameras are kept on, it seems as if most, if not all drivers in the state of Iowa, will be aware of where the cameras are placed. Because of that, drivers will most likely take extreme caution when passing through "camera zones" in order to spare the possibility of receiving either a \$65 fine for going 11-15 miles per hour over the speed limit, or a \$75 ticket for going 16-20 miles per hour over the speed limit (Kacner).

The final reason as to why many people support traffic enforcement cameras and red light cameras in particular is because they could potentially save lives. How often do you turn on the news and hear that someone was killed in an accident in which someone illegally ran a red light? The answer to that question is: Too often. If red light cameras are kept activated in Iowa or even in the United States as a whole, proponents say that people will be too concerned about getting a ticket to risk running a red light. Would this save lives? This question would be answered over statistical research in time, but until then, proponents suggest that these cameras are an answer to ending careless driving.

While there are many legitimate reasons as to why there are proponents of red light and speed cameras, there are also many reasons as to why some people are opposed to them. The first reason that some Iowa residents opposed to traffic enforcement cameras has to do with the issue of protecting an offender's privacy. When someone violates a traffic law and is caught by a camera, not only is a picture taken of their car for review by law enforcement, but a complete video is taken of them from the time they start an illegal move until the finish it. In Jason Noble's article, he interviewed LeeAnn Hildenbrand, a Des Moines area resident that has never received a ticket from either a cop or a camera. "Don't get me wrong, if you speed and you get caught, you're responsible, but I've always had the feeling that that's just an invasion of privacy," stated Hildenbrand (qtd. in Noble 1A). This shows that proponents of these cameras understand the need for a consequence for those breaking the law, but they do not think it should happen through cameras on the interstate or at random

intersections in Iowa. Hildenbrand went on to say "Cameras are more 'invasive' than a police officer shooting radar or monitoring an intersection" (qtd. in Noble 1A).

The second reason there are people opposed to traffic enforcement cameras deals with the idea that the cameras do not make the roads a safer place, but they actually make it more dangerous. Through hearing an interview with Michael Frey, one would understand why these cameras could be extremely dangerous as they were a possible reason as to why he was involved in an accident at the intersection of Hickman Road and 156<sup>th</sup> Street in Clive, Iowa. "My personal belief is that the cameras can cause people to do things or cause people to drive much differently than they would normally drive, even when exercising safe driving practices" Frey says . In December of 2009, Michael was involved in an accident as he approached a stoplight in which a lady in front of him slammed on the breaks with little notice, all in order to avoid a traffic light ticket. According to Michael, "I was waiting behind another vehicle to make a left hand turn onto Hickman Road, and as the intersection cleared, the person in front of me accelerated to make the turn, and just as she did, the light turned yellow. In my personal judgment, the vehicle in front of me had plenty of time to 'clear' the intersection, but instead, the driver slammed on their breaks and came to an immediate stop" (Frey). *As you may have guessed, Michael rear-ended the vehicle in front of him, and although he admits he was at fault, he felt that the person in front of him would have approached the intersection differently had there not been a camera at this particular location. While those against traffic enforcement cameras have become sick over stories like this, proponents may suggest that stories such as this one have no relevance to the issue, but rather that they are just cases of bad driving in Iowa.*

The third and final reason why there are people against both red light and speed cameras has to do with the thought that the cameras are possibly being used for the wrong reasons. Many who are against these cameras would say that the lights are not actually for making the roads safer, but they are actually helping the government bring in more money on top of what citizens are already paying in taxes. In regards to this topic, LeeAnn Hildenbrand showed concern when saying the cameras "Give the impression that cities are more interested in raising revenues than ensuring safety" (qtd. in Noble 1A). This statement is an example of the concern many people have when it comes to the government trying to take even more money from their tax payers, but this is just a "covered-up" way of doing so. In regards to this argument, proponents of red light and speed cameras would possibly argue that the extra revenue is just another benefit to using these cameras in the state of Iowa, but it is not the driving force or reason as to why the state has decided to use them.

As you can see, the current debate over these traffic cameras, both red light and speed cameras, has become a testy debate with good reasoning coming from both sides of the argument. Those that support these cameras do so because of a couple of reasons. First off, advocates think that those that are speeding should pay a penalty for doing so. Secondly, proponents believe in the extra benefit of traffic enforcement cameras, which involves the extra revenue that cameras have brought into the state of Iowa. In addition, these proponents believe in the ability of the traffic enforcement cameras to make drivers more cautious and to force them to “wake-up” when behind the wheel. Finally, the camera supporters want to save lives by working to avoid “careless driving accidents,” and believe the cameras have the potential to slow drivers down and help avoid these accidents.

In opposition to the proponents of these traffic enforcement cameras, there are also those who are clearly opposed to them and would promote a bill to ban them. Opponents of the cameras stand behind a couple of reasons like the proponents. First of all, they are believed to be an extreme invasion of the privacy of those that are caught breaking the law. Next, the traffic enforcement cameras may be at fault for some odd accidents, and opponents argue that red light and speed cameras possibly make the roads more dangerous. Finally, opponents cite the idea of cities using traffic enforcement cameras for the wrong reasons as they may be activated as a cheap way for the government to rake in a little more money.

As one might understand, this debate will not come to an end anytime soon as both sides are developing new reasoning every day. Not only is it highly unlikely that both sides will be satisfied with any definite decision that will be made, but both sides have arguments that make one choice or the other very imperfect. One of the most interesting parts to this entire discussion has to do with the fact that one side promotes the cameras because they bring in revenue, while the other side is against the cameras for the same reason. As the debate continues, politicians, lobbyists, and Iowa residents will have to come to a decision as to whether revenue from the traffic enforcement cameras should have anything to do with whether cameras are kept on or turned off. While the cameras have proven to be a great source of income for the state of Iowa, many are concerned that as a state, we are no longer worried about the safety of our drivers, but rather the aspect of the revenue that is coming in.

All in all, there is clearly one issue at hand more important than any argument regarding revenue, privacy, or even the law. Life is something precious, and as people wake up every morning and start their daily routines by getting in the car to drive to school, work, or someplace else, they should not have to worry about being safe on

Iowa's roads. The question regarding these traffic enforcement cameras is legitimate, and most would agree that if the cameras prove their ability to reduce reckless driving and accidents, than they should be kept activated in this state, along with the other states in this country. Despite the supported arguments coming from each side of the issue, one idea will most likely rise above the others in this debate. What will keep our drivers safe? Should the government continue to use activated traffic enforcement cameras, or should the cameras be deactivated immediately? This is the question that will be answered, and both sides can only hope in finding the right answer.

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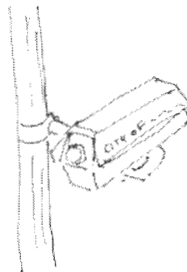
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**Jacob Lynch** is a young writer who maintains his position that staring at a blank page for extended amounts of time is a vital step in his writing process. Mr. Lynch firmly believes that no good ever came out of turning down a shot of Jagermesiter, and doesn't trust those who would. He questions the gall of Hollywood in even attempting to release another film after the comedic dream team of Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn in *Wedding Crashers*. His favorite human beings include Hunter S. Thompson, Jon Stewart, any player on the Chicago Cubs, and Batman.

### *Popular Culture Essay*

## **POPULAR CULTURE AND NARCISSISM: SOCIETY'S UNFLATTERING REFLECTION**

It has been said that popular culture is a mirror of society. By definition, a mirror is an object that produces a reflection of the image which is placed in front of it. So now, society looks to popular culture only to see themselves gawking back. Is it possible that society has spent *too* much time looking in the mirror? Advertisements in popular culture cater to our most selfish and primitive needs, everybody receives their fifteen minutes of fame on reality TV, and thanks to social media, we all have hundreds of "friends" just waiting to hear about our day, who we were with and what we are doing at that very moment. *We* are the focus of our own attention; popular culture revolves around *us*. Popular culture is responsible for society's increasing narcissism.

Advertising is everywhere, there is no escape from it, and it is awakening and often creating characteristics of a potential narcissist in all of us. But, what is narcissism, and what traits does one exhibit when plagued by the disorder? According to the staff of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, narcissism is ". . . a mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance and a deep need for admiration. . . behind this mask of confidence lies a fragile self-esteem, vulnerable to the slightest criticism," (MayoClinic.com). Individuals afflicted with narcissistic personality disorder feel the need to be recognized; the individual feels quite important and they desire recognition and reaffirmation of that perceived importance from others, who they believe to be inferior. In the essay *Advertising's*



*Fifteen Basic Appeals*, by Jib Fowles, a list compiled by psychologist Henry A. Murray, on what needs and desires advertisements appeal to in people, is examined and explained. On this list of appeals, the "Need for prominence" and the "Need for attention" appear back to back. According to Fowles, the need for prominence is, ". . . the need to be admired and respected. . ." (Fowles 81). The next appeal of advertising is the need for attention. Fowles maintains that this is the need ". . . to be *looked at*," (Fowles 81). Advertisements appealing to these particular needs in individuals are reflective of typical traits in a narcissist. While simply advertising with those appeals in mind, advertisers may not directly be creating narcissists, but they are amplifying unhealthy traits, and creating potential for anybody to develop the disorder. In agreement with Fowles is Adbuster media Foundation founder and advertising's greatest critic, Kalle Lasn. In his essay, *The Cult You're In*, Lasn describes a child's temporary satisfaction at fulfilling desires amplified by advertising when he writes, "For a few moments *you* are the center of attention. *You* call the shots. People smile and scurry around serving *you*," (Lasn 52). In addition, one could argue that advertising creates a void in people that won't be filled. Advertisers are constantly trying to persuade people in order to be truly happy and content with life, they must buy this particular brand of shoe, or the newest high definition TV. This constant bombardment of "*You will never be happy without...*" creates a longing for fulfillment that can never be fully satisfied, lower self-esteem and a certain vulnerability; all of which are characteristics attributed to narcissistic personality disorder. With Americans being exposed to an average of 500 ads daily, it is reasonable to infer that the overwhelming advertising prevalent in popular culture comes with a mental toll on individuals exposed to it.

The reality of living in this modern society and owning a TV is this: whether an individual likes it or not, they will be exposed to reality TV in one way or another. However, many people enjoy reality TV and watch it regularly. One appealing aspect of this television genre is that the contestants or "stars" on the shows are seemingly normal. While their behavior may sometimes be defined as amoral and over the top, they do not possess any special skills or talents so to speak, that would place them in the category of other celebrities, such as professional athletes, musicians, actors and actresses. Perhaps this is appealing to other "average people", who can see themselves in the characters on the shows. Two popular shows that fall under this "reality" category are *Jersey Shore* and *Keeping up with the Kardashians*. Neither of these shows qualifies as competitions, offers cash prizes, or anything of the sort. Cameras simply follow around the stars of the show in their day-to-day lives. So, one might ask, what is the purpose of starring in a show such as this, where there is no ultimate goal or purpose? The answer may be that these individuals are simply content with pursuing and obtaining fame simply for the sake of having it. While that theory may sound harsh,

there is strong evidence suggesting truth in the “fame-seeking” notion. Researchers Mark Young and Drew Pinsky conducted a study in which they sampled 200 celebrities and 200 MBA students using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) to assess levels of narcissism in both groups. Not surprisingly, the group of celebrities were found to have had much higher levels of narcissism than the MBA students. Out of the four different categories of celebrity, reality TV stars, musicians, actors and comedians, reality TV stars held the highest scores for levels of narcissism (like golf, you do not want a high score on a NPI) (Pinsky & Young 5). So, why is this a problem? Many viewers of reality TV understand that the people on the shows do not exactly meet the definition of role-model. However, this genre of TV is just as, if not more popular with younger viewers. The younger viewers are looking for people to mold themselves after, individuals to emulate. Naturally, they want to be “cool”, and popular. To these children, the reality TV stars meet that definition, and they’ve found some highly unfortunate role-models to begin cloning themselves after; the role-models with the highest levels of narcissism. Additionally, reality TV is sending out the message that we are all celebrities who deserve constant attention from camera crews and gossip columnists. This creates a sense of entitlement and superiority as well as an over-inflated ego and sense of self. If these grandiose and unrealistic emotions are not reigned in and properly tamed, they could very well lead to narcissism.

Social media is, without a doubt, the best example of society’s ever increasing interest in, well, itself. It is undeniably popular on a global scale throughout various cultures, races and religious denominations. Narcissism knows no limits. Facebook, currently the world’s most popular social media site, has an astounding 800 million registered users (Facebook.com). Users of these sites are encouraged to upload pictures and videos of themselves, “check in” (let everybody know exactly where they’re at, and who they’re with), and let other users know “what’s on [their] mind”. Every update provides a potential for a “fifteen minutes of fame” moment. In a recent study by researchers at Western Illinois University, 294 Facebook users were measured for narcissistic tendencies in their use of social media. Results revealed a positive correlation between number of friends and updates an individual had and their level of narcissistic tendencies (Guardian.Co.Uk). An argument could be made that Facebook and social media does not create narcissists, instead it merely attracts them. While this is undoubtedly true in at least some cases, social media does encourage narcissistic traits. Social media allows its users to contact any one of its millions of other users with the click of a mouse and the press of a just a few buttons. However, despite this effortless ability to get in touch with and remain connected to people, social media is increasing loneliness and breeding shallow, fleeting friendships. According to an article from the online publication of *The Atlantic*, “. . . roughly 20 percent of Americans---

about 60 million people---are unhappy with their lives because of loneliness" (Marche). In this same article, the author states that medical professionals have begun speaking openly about "an epidemic of loneliness," (Marche). Two lesser known characteristics of narcissists include loneliness having unfulfilling relationships and friendships with those around them. Social media increases the likelihood of having both of those. While a user may have hundreds of "friends", they are never able to make a legitimate connection with those individuals; it is limited to pixelated images and plain text on a dull, digitalized screen. Therefore, those so-called friendships are quite unfulfilling. If the root cause of this loneliness and inability to gain fulfillment from relationships goes unnoticed, it could lead to increased social media usage to eliminate the problem, all the while the user never realizes the problem is in fact the social media itself. Social media amplifies and often times causes the same character flaws present in those afflicted with narcissistic personality disorder.

Popular culture exists not only for the obvious reasons of entertainment and escapism, but also to act as a reflection of the society that created that culture initially, the very same society that is now in return being shaped by the popular culture. Undoubtedly many modern Americans are living in a "me first" society. This society has caught a glimpse of itself in the mirror, and now, like Narcissus, cannot look away. Everybody is eager and willing to have their primitive needs catered to by advertisers. We're all ready for our Hollywood debut on TV's next hottest reality show, and we are certainly enjoying providing the World Wide Web with constant streams of information regarding our most trivial activities. Like one trying to avoid their own reflection, it is difficult to miss the image of an increasingly narcissistic society due to advertising, TV and online social media.

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**Gary Meyer** is a “nontraditional” student at the DMACC Boone campus. After finding himself unemployed in August of 2010, he decided to tend to some unfinished business from forty years ago; getting some kind of college degree before re-entering the workforce at age 59. He is married with three children, ages 9, 12 and 17. As evidenced by his writing, he is a somewhat stuck-in-the-past redneck. During his time at DMACC his message to anybody that will listen is “It’s never too late to get your education, but don’t take the path that I have. Get it done now because, even though it is never too late, circumstances may not allow you the opportunity later.”

### *Problem/Solution Essay*

## **WHERE DID WE COME FROM, AND WHY DO WE CARE?**

Everywhere I look, I see evidence that we are not the nation we once were. Over the years I have seen a decline in personal responsibility and work ethic. Not so many years ago, when I was in middle school, my day started at 4:45 doing farm chores. Once the chores were done, my brother and I needed to be ready to catch the bus for school. When the bus brought us home in the afternoon, we changed clothes and did the chores again. We didn’t think anything of it because many of our friends worked harder than we did and we were, after all, being paid \$25 per month.

During wrestling or football season the school bus dropped me off at the end of our road, and I walked the quarter-mile home no matter what the weather was. Now I pick my kids up from school no matter what the weather is, and it is only four blocks away. And they think they have done a day’s work if they pick up their room or take the trash out. I don’t know when or how this happened but it certainly wasn’t how I was raised.

It isn’t only me and my kids. A manager at a local grocery store recently told me that when scheduling high school and college students for weekend shifts, he needs to

schedule two more people per shift than he needs because two won't show up. They don't even call in. I was part owner in a business a number of years ago that was open Thanksgiving evening and had an employee call in full. He had eaten too much for dinner and didn't think he could work. We don't need to go back to the days of horse and buggy, but perhaps a stronger connection to the past would keep us mindful of the virtues that built this country.

How do we stay connected to the past? One simple way is to keep reminders such as family heirlooms or pictures on the wall. Susan Church remembers a picture hanging in her parents' home of her and her three siblings posing in front of an old travel trailer that was very much a part of the family's past. Not only was it used for countless family vacations, but her father lived in it when he had a job 70 miles from home, as did she during college to save money. Several years ago she noticed that the picture was missing. The next time she goes home for the holidays she is going to ask for the photo. Church writes, "Some things are too important to forget. It's time to put that picture back on the wall" (9).

We have an aerial picture in our home of the farm I grew up on. My kids can point to buildings such as the hay barn, the cattle barn and the turkey barn in the picture and tell you what each of the buildings was used for in the farming operation, and what chores I was responsible for on different parts of the farm. What they don't care for is being reminded of how little they are asked to do in comparison. Just like all of us, they tire of hearing about the old days, but still speak with a certain pride in their voices when they recant to their friends how their dad grew up.

Another way to stay connected to our past is through family traditions. Until the time my parents passed away, my eight siblings and I gathered, with our families, at their house for Christmas. Even though we have been scattered through as many as five states, we always find a way for most to make it each year, and usually all of us do. My parents have been gone a number of years, but we still hold the annual gathering. This is it a great opportunity for us to catch up on what's going on with each other, and always includes reminiscing about our days growing up on the farm and recounting stories about each other that we may have forgotten or tried to forget.

The strongest connection we can develop to our past is through genealogy or family history research. I have done a little basic research into my family's past and with very little effort found some interesting information. My great-grandfather changed his last name from Meyers to Meyer at some point in time. He was an advance scout in the Civil War and was shot in the leg. He died at age 47. Even though this is interesting

information to me, it would be even more interesting to know why he changed the spelling of his last name, how he died, and more information about when he served in the war. Had I developed an interest in my past sooner, I would have had great resources at my fingertips. The community I grew up in was less than 100 people and we were related to most of them. I can only imagine the amount of information I could have gleaned from the older generation in that little town. Most of them are gone now.

“Relatively speaking”, offers author Emily Anne Croom in a book on genealogy, “we have plenty of time to search for the distant past, but preserving the more recent past, the last 80 to 100 years, should take place while the best sources are available: the family members and friends who experienced those years, who knew the great- or great-great grandparents, who can relate a treasury of family stories and describe the family homes and weddings and Christmas celebrations” (5-6).

Professor Bruce Kelly of the DMACC Boone campus advises, “Be careful about the sources you use when gathering your information.” He went on to explain, “Some of the information out there isn’t reliable and can cost you a lot of money.” Kelly has done a lot of genealogy work as a hobby and has put together a proposal for a course on genealogy and family history research methods. Research of this kind is something that can be passed on and added to by future generations.

We should all try to connect to our past because it is a large part of who we are. We can also look for guidance from past generations that grew this great country through hard work and virtue. As Benjamin Franklin once stated, “Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom” (5).

This winter my kids will be walking home from school because I have classes every afternoon except Friday. I bet it won’t hurt them a bit.

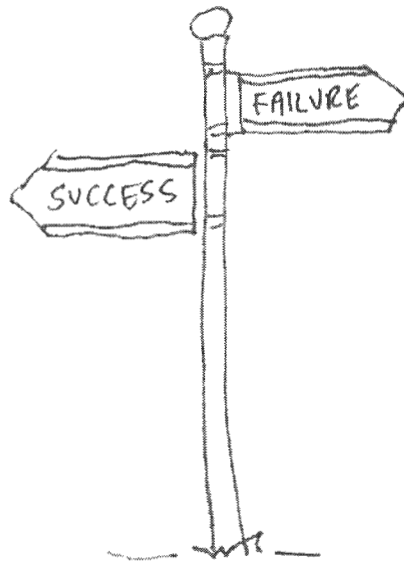
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**Coy McCarl** was a Pharmacy Technician for eight years before deciding to change direction in her career. She enrolled in the Legal Assistant program at DMACC in the fall of 2010. She knew it had been thirty-eight years since graduating high school, and this would be like starting kindergarten all over. She was terrified her first semester, but persevered and will be graduating this December. She has never written for fun, but found during this semester in Comp. II that it's a challenge she enjoys and has found therapeutic.

Coy's first husband, the father of her two sons, died from lung cancer nine years ago. She has remarried and gained a wonderful new family. She and her husband now have six adult children and eleven grandchildren between them. She feels

certain that she will be able to draw many stories from her life experiences, along with her large and extended families.

### *Remembering an Event Essay*

## **WALKING IN THEIR SHOES**

Coming to America—or any new country—can be a tremendously long wait, an extremely fearful time, and a most desired dream for millions of immigrants on any given day. If they're entering our country legally or illegally, their reasons are numerous: fear, family, life, love, money, or war. Only they know the true reason. On the other hand, have you ever taken flight from America for any of those same reasons? I have.

You do a lot of stupid stuff and make some big mistakes when you're 18, newly married, and have a new baby. In an odd sort of way it's a newfound freedom. You're not your parents' child anymore. You're out of school. You're not working. You have your own '67 GTO, with a 4 in the floor, and 400 horses of power under the hood, 'faunching at the bit' to jump the corral and head for open country. You have a built in babysitter because you're still living with your parents, or you can snatch your little sister-in-law. Ahh, the undeniable, carry-you-away fountain of life that you never drank from before is here, and you're havin' a hell of a great time livin' it!

After always feeling like a wallflower in school, this is like getting drunk or high on something you've never tasted. All the guys think you're cool now and want to race the 'Goat' through the quarter mile, especially your younger brother-in-law who wants to trade with you for Granddad's rusty old red pickup truck. But you're strong-minded enough to show them that you can drive that team of horses, hooves squealing and burning into the pavement, as hard and fast as the guys can. Even the girls who ignored or snubbed you want to be your friends now. One night, you and a group of them climb to the top of the high school entrance, that's about three stories tall, now the problem is figuring out how to get down.

Three or four months later, you come to your senses and frantically try to slow those horses down. You become conscious that this new freedom is destroying what you want, need, and desire. It's stealing the new life of vows you took a mere 15 months before; vows given to you by your grandpa, in front of both your families. You write the one who stood beside you, the one who took those same vows, a pleading letter. You can't call, you can't e-mail, and you can't Skype because the latter two don't exist yet. The letter is your cry for help. It's practically an ultimatum: "If you love and want to keep me, then you must get me out of here and into your protective arms."

Can you envision the excruciating hurt, pain, and wonder you're causing to that person halfway around the world? He responds with a harried and distressed phone call, and tells you what needs to be done to get you and his baby prepared for the move of a lifetime. He manages to get a month of leave to come home and help you. Now that it's really going to happen, you're violently scared. Still, you have that strong-minded will to get you through the next month before you and baby embark on a welcoming, though terrifying adventure you have created for yourself.

That last long and slow month has vanished. You're even wondering now if this is a dumb idea. It's time to make your parents' fears stream down their faces. Crying as much as they are, you tell them good-bye, with one last kiss. Now you swallow your fear and summon all the courage in the universe to bravely carry yourself, a heavy purse, an overstuffed diaper bag, and your twenty-five pound toddler through that wide open metal mouth of the plane. The stewardess shows you how to strap baby and yourself in, with a hint for baby to suck on his bottle to help with the air pressure. You know you have to survive this; you will survive this, to reach the ultimate destination you desire.

You landed first in LAX (Los Angeles Airport) that's larger than your home town. Still carrying the purse, bag, and baby, (which seem to have doubled in weight), you

urgently try to find the next terminal and power walk what must be fifty miles away. You eventually make it-and on time. Your next destination is Hawaii. Your fear subsides mildly as you look out to see the crystal clear blue-green ocean below, something you've never seen before. You try to rest because you're body has been on fast-forward since before dawn, central time, but in the blink of an eye the plane has landed again.

You're greeted with a lei dropped gently around your necks while breathing in the luscious warm air and all its exotic smells. You have only half an hour to get on the next plane to take you even farther away out of America. Still, you have to experience the most you can of this beautiful island in 20 to 30 minutes. You go up onto a balcony full of glass doors, no signs warning you that you can't get back in through them. You thrust the door open; you feel the warm sun on your face, the door quietly closes. You turn around to go back inside but all the doors are locked.

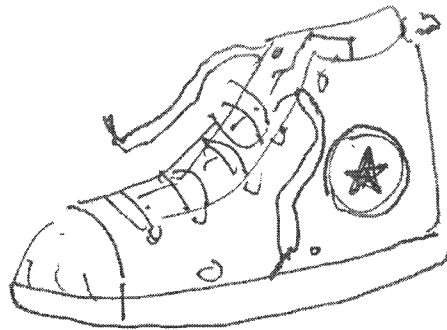
You knock on the glass hoping for someone to hear and come let you in. Some employee at last sees you and comes to your dilemma. But no, you're told, you can't come back in the airport through these doors, you have to come in the door downstairs. Panic mode kicks in; you have a baby, and all that baggage, but that didn't motivate them. So ..., everything in tow, you look down over the railing. You conclude it's your only choice. You drop the purse. You drop the diaper bag. You wrap the baby in a death grip and descend over the railing, hoping you won't break any of your or baby's limbs. You made it, only to find in your path an iron fence that you have to ascend up and over. You gather the purse and bag and toss them over; then scale your way up, still with baby in your arms. You made that hurdle, now its race time to the door and back inside. Breathless, pissed off, horrified, and mortified you make it back with sheer minutes to spare.

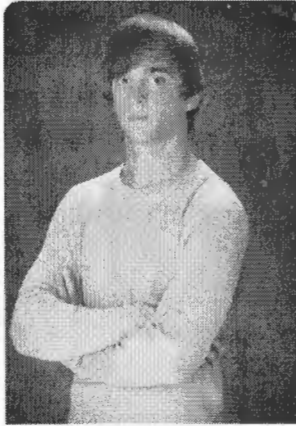
It's night when the plane touches down in Japan. They don't want to let you through customs, for reasons you don't understand. Because you don't speak Japanese and they don't speak English, you assume this must be a nightmare from hell, one in which you'll never see a familiar face again. You have no idea what to do; you keep showing them the passport you worked so inherently to acquire, but all to no avail. Seeing a young girl with a baby and baggage in tow, (tripled in weight now), a seasoned soldier comes to your rescue. You have no idea what he told them, but gratefully you're through customs. You know the layover is all night, so you stay up watching the clock, petrified you won't wake up to catch the shuttle back to the airport for the last leg of your journey. Baby sleeps like a rock. It's finally dawn, you wake baby to feed, change, and cloth him. You're exhausted, but enjoy the open waters below as the plane lifts toward the shining azure sky. This is the shortest part of the trip, but all too endless.

You can see the pristine, aqua marine ocean below you again. You must be circling to land in Korea. You're crying before you even get off the plane, still towing a baby and baggage that now feels four times in weight. You can barely see through your tears all six foot five inches of destination you've desperately yearned for, that you just went through hell for. But first ..., you have to get through those damn customs again. You're through. You've run away from America.

Did you ever take this flight from hell? Did you ever walk in an immigrant's shoes? I did. I grew up faster and stronger because of it. The reason I did it?

I did it for love, I did it for family, and I did it to save my young marriage.





**Tim Gates** is a hard-working student at the DMACC Ankeny Campus. He plans to attain his Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts after the summer semester of 2012 and transfer to the University of Northern Iowa at the following fall semester to study Psychology. The majority of Tim's leisurely writing consists of poetry. His poetic works often evolve into song lyrics that he performs with his band. Tim plans to take his passion for writing with him through his education, musical hobbies, and Psychology career.

### *Problem/Solution Argumentative Essay*

## **IMPLICATIONS OF INTERNET OVERUSE ISSUE**

Since its creation in 1969, the Internet has gradually been climbing in popularity with the government, businesses, and the general public. The birth of the Internet can be traced back to its military roots when the United States Department of Defense commissioned the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) (Marshall "History"). This allowed for the protection of "The flow of information between military installations by creating a network of geographically separated computers that could exchange information via a newly developed protocol" (Bellis "ARPAnet").

1977 was the year that the E-mail burst on the Internet scene. The Internet was then able to be seen as a potentially viable means of communication among the general public. The birth of news groups in 1979 would pose as a model for highly acclaimed modern online discussion groups. To accommodate for rapid user growth, the name server was developed to replace long, number-coded websites in 1983. Commercialization of the Internet began in 1987 as the number of hosts exploded to over 28,000. Two years prior, that number was cracking over the 1,000 mar. Two years after gave way to over 100,000 hosts. (Marshall "History"). With its popularity ever-expanding, nearly one third of the world's population uses the Internet. There are over one million websites with people logging online for an average of 13 hours a week (Whitney "Average").

The overuse of the Internet is a problem in our society. There are social and economic aspects to be examined for this issue. The political attention is minimal for Internet overuse and has only recently been brought to the forefront of the obesity

epidemic in America as one of the main causes. The overuse of the Internet is a problem that must be solved and will hold serious consequences if it remains uncontrolled.

A whole decade passed since its creation until any Internet users were considered to display obsessive patterns of Internet use. Usenet, a worldwide distributed Internet discussion system, was the first to harbor addictive behaviors upon its establishment in 1979. It still thrives today as a host to millions of users. The birth of interactive multiuser sites later in the year (interactive adventure games, board games, and detailed databases) fueled the fire for Internet overuse and would ultimately lead to the "Internet addiction" phenomenon (Marshall "History"). There are several risk factors for Internet addiction that are becoming increasingly common and should be identified as soon as possible. HelpGuide.org describes some risk factors for which to look out to prevent Internet addiction:

You suffer from anxiety. You may use the Internet to distract yourself from your worries and fears. An anxiety disorder like obsessive-compulsive disorder may also contribute to excessive email checking and compulsive Internet use. You are depressed. The Internet can be an escape from feelings of depression, but too much time online can make things worse. Internet addiction further contributes to stress, isolation and loneliness.

You have any other addictions. Many Internet addicts suffer from other addictions, such as drugs, alcohol, gambling, and sex. You lack social support. Internet addicts often use social networking sites, instant messaging, or online gaming as a safe way of establishing new relationships and more confidently relating to others. You're an unhappy teenager. You might be wondering where you fit in and the Internet could feel more comfortable than real-life friends. You are less mobile or socially active than you once were. For example, you may be coping with a new disability that limits your ability to drive. Or you may be parenting very young children, which can make it hard to leave the house or connect with old friends.

You are stressed. While some people use the Internet to relieve stress, it can have a counterproductive effect. The longer you spend online, the higher your stress levels will be. ("Internet Addiction.")

Internet addiction is the result of uncontrolled overuse of the Internet. Addiction is present when these symptoms occur: Constantly thinking about previous online activity or continually looking forward to the next online session; increasing amounts of time spent online to achieve satisfaction; being unable to cut back on Internet use, even after several attempts; feeling restless, moody, depressed, or irritable when attempting to stop or cut down Internet use; jeopardizing a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of Internet use; lying to family members, a therapist, or others to conceal the extent of personal involvement with the Internet; using the Internet as a way to avoid thinking about problems, or to reduce depression or feelings of helplessness; consistently losing a sense of time while online and also experiencing some of the other symptoms on this list (Winer "Internet Addict?"). Even though most Internet users are not logging on at the rate of an addict, there are still negative consequences in place.

The only benefit from the increasing time spent on the Internet is the economic boost to companies that advertise their products on an online interface. However; students, workers, and all age demographics are being negatively affected by Internet overuse. Studies have shown that internet overuse has several indirect costs to society. Sleep deprivation, physical inactivity, and other mental health problems have been linked to the overuse of the Internet. It could even lead to structural brain damage (Freeman "Internet Overuse"). Also, the hottest issue in the media today regarding these symptoms is the rise of obesity in our nation, particularly in children. Physical inactivity has been identified as the largest cause of obesity just ahead of poor dietary choices. In one study measuring some of the negative repercussions of Internet overuse, researchers studied 17 adolescents with Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD). They discovered structural and functional interference in the part of the brain that regulates organization, possibly causing cognitive impairment similar to that caused by gambling and alcoholism. Kate Freeman makes some startling observations of the study:

Overall, our findings indicate that Internet addiction disorder has abnormal white matter integrity in brain regions involved in emotional generation and processing, executive attention, decision making and cognitive control," write the authors. "The results also suggest that IAD may share psychological and neural mechanisms with other types of substance addiction and impulse control disorders. (Freeman "Internet Overuse")

There have been few serious solutions proposed for the issue of Internet overuse. Several unofficial "No Internet Day" attempts have been scattered across our calendars. These failed because they were largely unadvertised (obviously very much so on the Internet) and only reached any level of success for one day out of the year. Michelle Obama has started to directly address the issue for the first time in American politics. Her "Let's Move" initiative is aiming to increase activity levels among our nation's youth by, one of the many aspects being, decreasing their time spent using electronics. It is a start to solving the Internet overuse issue, but it has not successfully solved it. The website for the movement provides startling numbers that desperately need to be tended to and turned around.

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher in African American and Hispanic communities, where nearly 40% of the children are overweight or obese. If we don't solve this problem, one third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives. Many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and asthma. ("Let's Move")

There must be more action taken for any chance of the Internet overuse problem to reach a resolution. My proposed method to put a harness on the use of the Internet would be to implement more Internet guidance by the public school system. Internet access should be available in all public schools so less of children's time on the Internet is spent on mindless surfing at home. A crucial part of this plan is to provide mandatory Internet education classes at the primary and secondary levels. Responsible Internet use and etiquette will be modeled, and children will know how to meet the technological demands of their age without spending inappropriate or unnecessary amounts of time online. Thus, the proposed method is instrumental in the prevention of Internet addiction among school-aged children.

Some may argue that anything implemented in the public school system has no direct control over a child's Internet use at home. This is a valid criticism, but this solution will provide our nation's youth with the tools to use the Internet safely, responsibly, and sparingly. It is partially up to the parenting of the child to supplement this plan and optimize the likelihood of it to be effective.



Launching mandatory Internet education classes could potentially create a shift in the educational system. More assignments, tests, and other learning material might be transferred to an online format. If that were to happen, children would have a greater need for Internet use. That may seem to counteract the whole mechanics of the proposed solution, until it is considered that the overuse of the Internet is being attacked at the source; the reasons for being online. Using the Internet for academic purposes is less harmful than other, nonacademic uses, and is less likely to lead to addiction. Positively structuring students' cognitions of Internet use is an efficient way to keep them from developing an overuse problem. Even if the demand for Internet use does not decrease, the responsibility of the user can be improved to prevent problems of overuse.

Alternative proposed solutions should not be overlooked. Another way to solve the problem of Internet overuse in our society is to enforce government restrictions over social networking, gaming sites, etc. (as seen in China). The scope of government control is a hot issue in current politics that has been a significant divider between political ideologies since the founding of our country. However, implementing more Internet guidance by the public school system would be keeping federal Internet restrictions out of the home. Since it is partially up to the parenting of the child to supplement my proposed plan, the accountability of maintaining responsible Internet use at home lies with the parents. Giving the parents freedom to monitor their own kids' Internet activity at home satisfies the urge to be off the leash of government control in that aspect of parenting.

As previously explained, the severe product of Internet overuse known as "Internet addiction" is a growing issue, and it should not be ignored in the fight to solve the Internet overuse problem. Another alternative solution to the overuse of the Internet is to provide more available treatment for Internet addicts. This process would need to start by considering Internet addiction to be a legitimate mental illness in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV). Although the complete prevention of Internet overuse is the ideal way to end the problem, there are addicts that are already past the point of no return. They have an Internet abuse issue that is past the point of being prevented. This is where the treatment of Internet addiction would be useful. The more people become aware of treatment options for the disease, the more people will live a life free from the chains of Internet overuse.

The primary solution to the Internet overuse problem should start with the young generation that is growing up surrounded by the new tools of the technology era. Internet use should be guided by schools so less time is spent aimlessly surfing at

home. Less time will be spent aimlessly surfing the web at home by young students when they learn usage guidelines to follow at their school. Since the use of the Internet is too large of a part of society to be considered avoidable, it should at least be taught how to be used responsibly. Responsible use will also decrease the occurrence of Internet addiction. The Internet can be a wonderful source of information. It can be very helpful in many ways and even help us make friends. It can even cause us physical damage. It does not have to get to that point. Educating our children about Internet safety and responsibility is the best way to target the Internet overuse problem. Placing mandatory Internet education in the public school system will eliminate Internet overuse before it even has a chance to happen. Preventing Internet overuse from an early age will decrease the amount of available Internet addiction treatment needed in our society as a whole. With Internet addiction adequately controlled, federal restrictions would also not be a necessary option. Implementing more Internet guidance by the public school system can solve the overuse of the Internet in our society.

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**Garfield M. Collier** is a single parent with two minor children and an adult son. Born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1962, he was raised in Brooklyn, New York. He has resided in Des Moines, Iowa for the last 20 years.

His academic goals are to gain a degree in creative writing and put into words his life's travels and experiences. He believes his stories could help young people deal with adverse situations, when all inclination is to revert to past failed reactions. He believes his education is paramount to the productive family atmosphere and aspires to teach the younger generation.

### *Remembering an Event Essay*

## **A BIRTHDAY TO REMEMBER**

The evening before the annual picnic lacked any indication as to what the next day activities would hold. Every year, since my family came from Kingston, Jamaica, my fathers' ex-Constabulary friends and families would get together and take a bus ride to Bear Mountain State Park in upstate New York. Two to three hours is the normal time it takes to get there from Brooklyn on the different expressways. Earlier in the evening during dinner, my Dad talked about what we would be eating the following day. "Listen boys, after we eat, go ahead and clean up and you can help me make the deviled eggs." Tony, my older brother by fourteen months, was getting ready to enjoy his 9<sup>th</sup> birthday at the park the next day. "Of course, we can handle that," responded Tony. My mom had made some hearty beef stew along with some dinner rolls, freshly baked from the oven. For the next days' menu, she made jerk chicken, a creamy potato salad, and some sorrel. Sorrel starts as a dehydrated fruit that is transformed into a ginger infused, burgundy-colored beverage that had a way of quenching the summer thirst.

Then there is the youngest sibling, Fitz. Since he was only 4 years old at the time, you would mostly find him following my mom around the house. I would hate to think where he would have ended up if my mom stopped in mid-stride, while he trailed behind her like a shadow. He was around 2 years old when we arrived in New York in 1968. My siblings and I didn't have a clue about what our Dad did for a living. All we saw was him leaving the house saying he was going to work, disappear for a long time,

and then reappear when we awoke in the morning. I would later learn that's why they called it "the graveyard shift." The only people working were the ones at funeral homes at 3am in the morning, according to my 7 year- old reasoning.

As the sun came up the next morning, my parents were already up as I walked to the bathroom to brush my teeth, and put some water on my face to get the sleep out of my eyes. "Hurry up, I got to pee," I heard Tony yell from his bedroom. "Too late, got to wait your turn," I replied. After breakfast we loaded the car and drove about twenty minutes to where the charter bus was scheduled to leave at 10am. A man in a uniform and hat indicated he was going to be our driver. He introduced himself as Earl and had a way of making you feel safe.

As the bus loaded up with passengers and their families, I noticed some sports gear being added to the side of the bus where there was storage space. My dad, an avid cricket player, would find some of his friends, get a team together, and play a test match. The bus ride was filled with all kinds of music. From "three little birds" to Gladys Knight and the Pips could be heard all the way there. Loud laughter and conversations filled the air. I must have dosed off because the smell of pinewood filled my nostrils. I knew we were out of the inner city and into the countryside.

Once the bus arrived in the parking lot of Bear Mountain State Park, we noticed a deer watching us unload the things from the bus. The parents found a site that had about 10 tables to accommodate the large group there. The park was a huge green, tree filled venue. You could play sports, have a picnic, and rent a boat by the lake. After a game of cricket, we had a late lunch. The food made us so full, a long walk was needed. We had a cake for Tony's birthday afterwards. I got up and started heading towards the lake and I noticed Tony following. By the time we got to the lake, we were both tired and noticed a little boat docked at the pier. The boat couldn't have been more than 12 feet. It was held to the dock by a piece of rope. For reasons I know not to this day, my brother Tony unlatched the rope from the pier, put his hands on the boat, as I watched him fall helplessly into the lake. My first thought was to jump in and try to save him. Then I remembered, I can't swim, either!

I took off running to find some grown-ups. I sprinted from the lake towards the picnic area. My lungs burned after about 5 minutes. I passed trees upon trees as I made it to a group of men playing dominoes. "My brother fell in the lake," rushed out my mouth as I tried to catch my breath. Everyone jumped up and asked where at. "Follow me, I know where." I started running back to the spot I hoped Tony would still be. Once we arrived at the lake, I pointed out where Tony fell in. First one, then another, and still

a third man jumped in to find Tony. After about a few minutes, I noticed one of the men hauling Tony over his shoulders and swimming back to the pier. Once there, someone with medical training started performing CPR and pumping his stomach so the water would come up from his lungs. Watching Tony finally cough, I knew he would be alright. This wasn't going to be the day my parents mourned his near drowning. "Arrgh, help me!" was the first words out of Tony's mouth as he attempted to gain air into his saturated lungs.

My parents thanked all who helped in the rescue and as it was getting late we would started back to the city. The sight of Mom running into the lake is memorable enough. The bus ride returning to Brooklyn was one of relief and hope. Relieved my brother Tony didn't drown on his 9<sup>th</sup> birthday and hope I would learn to swim one day.

Twenty years fast forward, I learned to swim.





illustrated in this personal tale of self-awareness and self-growth.

**Leticia Williams** has become a woman of character. Losing her way by focusing on being a single mom of three, she encompasses the beauty in strength and the peace of overcoming. She, like many others who can relate with, outlines her journey of letting her past go, by avoidance and ignorance, and by revelations and acceptance. These many struggles are

### *Narrative Essay*

#### **BLUEPRINTS OF ME**

*"When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be." – Lao Tzu*

A mirror doesn't lie, especially one with a lighted, 9X magnifier purchased for \$56.95. After overcoming ten months of panic attacks, I finally located the courage to take a closer look at who I had become. I was undercover for so long, I did not recognize myself without my disguise. I forgot about that tiny scar, below my right eye, from having my orbital bone shattered by my ex's hands. I pushed aside the bangs that hid the deeply embedded lines in my forehead from years of self-control. My distorted nose, from being broken four times, could not contend with my broken spirit. With almost a decade of camouflaging the abuse with a "Stepford Wives" smile, I attempted to re-introduce an unperfected one: no practice required. I did not consider I would have such an arduous time discovering myself again, after absconding from my past for so long. Despite the difficulty, confronting my past unearthed a conviction to "...become what I might be". I believe my past does not have to define who I choose to be today.

Abused as a child, I thought if I suppressed the guilt and shame, I would not succumb to being just another statistic, just another victim. By focusing on what *not* to be, what *not* to do, ironically, I became what I fought so diligently against: a victim. The very word sickens me! I neglected to see that I became the abused, yet again. Years of self-blame for being a weak and frightened child progressed into denial of the past, as I became a stoic adult. I accepted responsibility for the acts of malevolence that were brought upon me for speaking my mind when it was not asked of me, for laughing aloud when it was not deemed funny, for not having dinner prepared on time.

I became a mannequin, never inclined to feel pain...never inclined to feel anything. This self-contained world spun me into a web of anxiety and panic attacks for ten, incapacitating months. I endured attacks that paralyzed my entire body, caused hyperventilation, and dropped my blood pressure so dangerously low, paramedics barely detected a pulse. I loathed myself for being weak and surrendering to years of repressed emotions. Unknowingly, my past broke me. I allowed it to dictate who I was.

I competed with my past, profoundly focused on not letting it consume me; it won every time, unbeknownst to me. The abuse damaged me, and I chose to ignore the anguished memories, thinking I was all the stronger for doing so. I scrutinized my friends, as they dissected every memory, every pain, every moment of innocence lost, and I secretly vowed not to yield my past as a crutch, as they did. My friends binged on their tormented past and excused what they had become because of it. I believed them weak in their self-reflections, full of self-pity and anger, not realizing I was the weaker one. Having been so judgmental of their past reflections, while repressing all awareness of how the past defined me, as methodically as it defined them, was a tough pill to swallow. As affirmed by Buddha, *"To conquer oneself is a greater task than conquering others."* I had wasted too much energy on the latter.

Self-reflection revived me from my comatose state of existence. Now it is an everyday task, like brushing my teeth and taking a shower. I no longer apply my make up to veil the bruises of my past, but apply it only to enhance who I am today. By loosening my leash of self-control, I am more cognizant of my wants, my needs, and who I choose to be. I am thankful to have walked in my shoes, instead of discarding my classic, black heels, held together by bottles of superglue. Even though, I have yet to completely conquer myself, I discovered what I longer want to do...I no longer want my past to define who I am today. The past will no longer design my thoughts, my heart. I will.

This design and blueprint are mine, and mine alone...someday to reinvent, to build again.





**Zachary McCarthy** has little experience writing and has never had anything published, but does enjoy eating piquant foods and laboring with his hands. Having adopted the motto of the Royal Spanish Academy, "Limpia, fija y da splendor," he finds joy in freshness. He is joined in this by his wife and several progeny.

### *Argumentative/Persuasive Essay*

## **NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND**

In 2001, three days after taking office, President George W. Bush announced his plans for bipartisan education reform that he called "No Child Left Behind." President Bush called this the "cornerstone of his administration," and expressed concern that too many of the nation's neediest children were being left behind in the public school system (Bush, 2004). Provisions of the Act include increased accountability for states, school districts and schools, more flexibility for states' spending of federal dollars, and a strong emphasis on reading, with the goal of attaining proficiency for every child by the third grade. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has failed to reach these goals since its passage; little progress has been made in students' academic achievement and performance, and many new problems have arisen because of the flaws in the bill. The goals of this bill are noble, but the mandated results are unattainable, according to many educators and those concerned with its implementation. NCLB uses standardized tests scores as a measure of student achievement; these tests are at the heart of the controversy that surrounds this bill.

What is wrong with standardized testing? A study done by Fairtest, the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, concludes that the bill's emphasis on standardized testing has created schools that are little more than test preparation centers that "teach to the test." This method of teaching discourages education reform and has done little to improve academic performance. The same students that the President desired to help, the "neediest", have borne the brunt of these reforms,



suffering because of the “narrowing and limiting” (Guisbond, Neil, & Schaeffer, 2012) effects the mandates of the bill have created. Fairtest, along with other groups, have identified some major failings with NCLB. They are: student achievement has stalled; widespread school failure is occurring; curriculum has narrowed and test preparation has displaced broader education; reliance on student test performance has caused cheating; there is not enough help for schools that have been identified as needy; and the educational consequences of childhood poverty are being ignored. Achievement testing, the benchmark of student success, does not accurately reflect student performance, and has been proven to have negative consequences.

NCLB utilizes “high stakes testing as the sole means in which to measure student academic performance and achievement. Tests are called “high stakes” when they are used to make major decisions about a child, such as graduation or advancement. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests are administered in grades three through eight and once again in high school, and cover the areas of math and reading. Previous to NCLB, NAEP testing scores showed growth, after NCLB’s passage, scores have flattened out.

There are several reasons why high stakes testing is damaging to students and school districts. Some students simply do not test well; many can be affected by anxiety caused by the large consequences attached to the test, and others do not show their learning well on a test of this type. Students may not be able to learn the material well because they attend under-funded schools featuring large class sizes and teachers without proper certification in the subject area. Students who have English as a second language or who attend special education classes or vocational schools often do worse on standardized tests than the mainstream population. Bad scores on these tests can lead to serious consequences.

Students who do poorly on the high stakes test may face retention or drop out. Grade retention has been proven to be counterproductive and emotionally damaging. In turn, this can lead to a loss of self-esteem and an “I don’t care” attitude, which could lead to the student dropping out. Studies have shown that standardized tests do relatively little for students who remain in school, but have a major negative impact on students who eventually drop out.

When major consequences are attached to standardized test scores, school districts and teachers opt to teach to the test. If only math and reading are being used as a gauge, other whole subjects may be eliminated in order to concentrate on the areas that the stakes are tied to. Other important skills such as report writing and

experimentation are limited; class work begins to look like the test. Because schools that feature low-income students tend to do poorly on standardized testing, they are the ones that are most affected by this mode of teaching. They receive little more than test coaching; skills that would enable them to succeed in life are often neglected in favor of teaching skills necessary to pass the tests. If high quality learning is the goal, teaching to the test is not a means to achieve it.

A Congressional study by the Government Accountability office estimated that states would have to create and administer more than 433 new tests to satisfy NCLB mandates (Burke, 2012). It is common for schools to devote twenty to sixty days per school year to solely teaching test materials; this does not include the number of days actually spent in testing. The Wisconsin Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development found that Wisconsin teachers were spending 976 hours per district administering tests. Looking at a student's full school career, this would result in thirty-six weeks of testing, or one complete school year (Burke, 2012). Mass amounts of time are spent in testing and positive results still elude students, teachers and schools.

Standardized tests give the public insufficient information about the true performance of students and schools. Using only test scores as a guide does not do justice to the educational system. When students are only being taught the test, their scores may not accurately reflect real academic achievement; good scores may not actually mean a child is succeeding in school. Test scores also do not reflect other non-academic areas of the school that are important in the career of the students. Poor scores on tests do not tell the whole story; the question "Why is the child failing to achieve?" is not answered. Poverty, hunger, poor home environment and child safety concerns can all impact the way a student performs on the test, and may cause lower test scores. Factors not measurable by a test can affect a child's test score.

NCLB has had other negative, unintended yet predicted consequences. Scores on standardized tests are directly tied to rewards or sanctions to states and school districts. School districts that fail to make adequate yearly progress, as measured by test scores, face improvement, corrective actions and restructuring measures. At the extreme end of this, school districts may be faced with firing up to one-half of their teaching staff and administrators, and the federal government may step in and take over the school. Some teachers have taken steps to avoid these consequences. In July, 2011, 178 teachers and principals at forty-four Atlanta area schools were found to be responsible for, or directly involved in cheating on the state's standardized tests. A report issued by the Georgia Governor's office stated that the incidents went back as far as 2001, the year that No Child Left Behind was implemented. One teacher, Julie

Rogers-Martin, who is not implicated in the scandal but is a government witness, reported that she first became aware that something was amiss when she started noticing inconsistencies between student's previous year standardized test scores and their actual achievement in her classroom. Some children who were scored as "exceeding expectations" on the previous year's standardized test were unable to do basic skills such as reading and counting. The report ultimately found that the principal of the school was responsible for erasing and changing answers on the test scores, and that she failed to maintain test security and proper oversight.

Atlanta area schools participated in a reward program that was directly connected to student scores on standardized tests. At each school, the higher the percentage of students who passed the tests, the higher the bonuses for the staff. At the state level, high passing scores helped the schools to compete for federal funding from the NCLB program. The number one reason for cheating cited by the Georgia Governor's report: "Pressure to meet adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act." (Frysh, 2011).

Jon McCarthy, an Industrial Arts teacher for 36 years at Colfax-Mingo schools, expresses some of the same frustration with NCLB mandates. Although he does not feel his position is in jeopardy, he sympathizes with other teachers in his school district. The general consensus is that the Colfax-Mingo school district will find themselves on the school in need of assistance list in the near future. Mr. McCarthy believes that poor test scores are not necessarily a reflection of poor teaching methods, but instead reflect a lack of student and family interest and involvement. Many tactics and teaching methods have been experimented with in an attempt to raise student achievement, but none have proven to be ultimately successful, except one that the teachers utilized this year. Because of poor test scores in the past, the school district was threatening to lengthen the school day by forty-five minutes if test performance did not improve. Before administering the tests, the teachers informed the students of this possibility. The results: student's achieved higher on the tests than they had in the past. Mr. McCarthy believes this was because the students felt they had something to lose in the matter, and acted accordingly. It is Mr. McCarthy's position that NCLB does not address the real problem with school achievement, which is family involvement. Hours are spent by teachers every year in an attempt to improve their teaching methods and address problem areas, but the time does not seem to be paying off. At the end of the day, it is because student's that have a good support system at home typically do well; students without the same benefits typically do poorly. Poor student test scores have consequences for schools, which in turn has consequences for students.

Low-scoring students that bring down school's performance ratings are being pushed out of the educational system in some areas of the country, further compounding a problem. In Birmingham, Alabama, 500 students were dropped out of schools before test time, and a lawsuit in New York City exposed incidents of this occurring to thousands of other students. These policies disproportionately affect students of color and students with disabilities (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). This has created what some have called a "school to prison pipeline" (Fairtest, 2007), as more students are being driven into the criminal justice system. In 2011 a civil rights group produced a position paper that explained the role of NCLB in this problem. "NCLB had the effect of encouraging low-performing schools to meet benchmarks by narrowing curriculum and instruction and de-prioritizing the educational opportunities of many students. Indeed, No Child Left Behind's 'get-tough' approach to accountability has led to more students being left even further behind, thus feeding the dropout crisis and the School-to-Prison Pipeline." (Advancement Project, 2011).

What is the fix for No Child Left Behind? The U.S. Department of Education under President Obama is allowing each state to request flexibility to better focus on student learning. States must submit plans developed within the state to improve educational outcomes for all children. This is seen as beneficial, but not a solution. The House Education and Workforce Committee introduced the Student Success Act (SSA) in early 2012, an act whose goal is to reform the accountability provisions of NCLB, provide funding flexibility to states, and limit federal intervention into local school policy (Burke, 2012). The SSA restores state authority for establishing performance ratings, eliminates "adequate yearly progress" while but still requires assessment testing, strengthens parent information about school performance and empowers states to design school improvement strategies. The ultimate goal is to take accountability for student performance away from Washington, and return it to those who care most about student achievement- parents and local school districts. The House Education and the Workforce Committee stated that "Across the country, states and school districts have led efforts to reform the nation's troubled education system. As these bold reformers step up, the federal government can step back; limiting its footprint to ensuring parents have the information they need to judge the quality of the schools." (Committee, 2012).

No Child Left Behind has been the federal government's answer to declining student performance. NCLB's sole reliance on standardized testing to measure student achievement has been viewed by many as a source of problems, and not a solution. It has been proven that achievement tests do not accurately measure student ability, and do not take into account external factors that may

affect test scores. Furthermore, the emphasis on good test scores and the ramifications if this goal is not achieved has produced unintended consequences. Narrowing of curriculum to teach to the test, cheating by staff, and drop-outs by underserved children has resulted because of NCLB. For student performance to increase, students, parents, and local school districts must make success a priority, and develop plans tailored to the needs of the students served. Although it is evident that education reform is necessary to increase student achievement, the federal government does not have a successful plan with No Child Left Behind.

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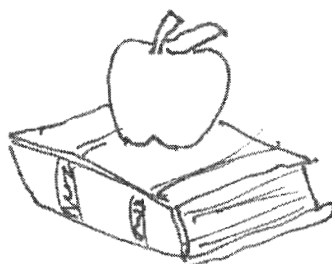
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Zachary McCarthy

*Narrative Essay*

## **FROM A HOSPITAL BED TO THE BATHROOM FLOOR**

On December 6, 2011 at 1:06 a.m., I learned several lessons that most people will never learn in their lifetime. They were free for me, but others may spend thousands of dollars and years of schooling for the same opportunity. In the early hours of that cold winter morning, in our upstairs bathroom, my son was born into my hands, ending 16 hours of difficult labor for my wife. I did not plan for this, I was not prepared, and I was scared. I learned that none of those things matter when a baby is on its way- it WILL be born, ready or not.

Jimmy is not our first child; previous to that morning we had experienced both hospital and home birth. Our experience with the hospital was less than satisfactory for many reasons. A hospital birth is a very medical affair; there are all kinds of machines and medications and personnel involved. . A Dr. cannot afford to let nature take its

course; time and the bottom line prevent this. When the baby is finally born, it is usually following much poking, prodding and unnecessary interventions, performed with the intention of making the baby come out in the fastest, most expensive way possible. The next 48 hours are filled with doctors, nurses and specialists entering your room at all hours to perform the same tasks over and over again, until someone (insurance company?) decides that you should go home.

I understand that in some cases, this process is necessary- even lifesaving. However, most of the time a woman can have a baby the old-fashioned way and be just fine. My wife and I believed that we fell into this category, and chose to forego another hospital birth in favor of a home birth. To assist us in this, we started seeing a midwife, Sheryl, who agreed to come to our home and deliver our child when it was time. Regular office visits were made throughout the pregnancy, and my wife was considered an excellent candidate for a successful home birth.

To get ready for a home birth, several things must be done. The main thing you want to prepare for are all the fluids involved in the birthing process. If you have ever given birth or watched it happen you know what I mean. In a hospital, this is all taken care of very efficiently and discreetly by hospital employees. At home, it's all on you, sometimes literally. Our midwife recommended we buy plastic to cover our floors to protect them and make things easy to dispose of when it was all over. We wanted to use our bedroom as the birthing room, so I lined our floor from wall to wall with heavy-weight, clear plastic taped at the seams for a water-tight surface. Our bed was made with a layer of plastic on the mattress, topped by a sheet, a piece of plastic and then another sheet. The plan was to have the baby in the bed and then whisk away the top two layers afterward, leaving a clean, dry surface for my wife and baby, while still protecting the mattress. The baby's bassinet was set up next to our bed with his blankets, clothing and diapers beside it. Everything that could be done to prepare a place for our new baby was done; we were ready for our son to come.

My wife and our midwife had a plan. When my wife was sure she was in labor and things started getting hairy, we were to call Sheryl to inform her. She would assess my wife's symptoms and from there they would figure out the next step to take. If contractions were regular and fairly close, it was time to talk about Sheryl coming over. She is not the type of midwife who shows up at the first signs of labor, waiting at your house through it all until the end. She wanted to arrive when things were imminent. She is a one woman show, and as many more people have decided to go the home birth route, she is a very busy person. Because we already had children and knew what to

expect, we were happy being alone until it was time to deliver. We expected Sheryl to arrive in ample time to catch the baby, as she did with our previous child.

My wife woke up Sunday, December 5 2011 and knew that it was going to be the day. She informed me of this early on, but told me not to worry. We knew the baby was not presenting itself correctly; his head was facing forward instead of to the rear, which is the ideal birth position. This was also the case in her previous pregnancy; what this meant for her was a long, painful labor during which the baby was forcefully turned around by contraction. In a situation with a posterior facing baby, many contractions can occur in a short amount of time, without birth becoming more imminent. This makes gauging progress a difficult thing, and deciding when to notify the midwife tricky.

At 9:30pm, my wife told me she was going to call the midwife. We wanted to let her know what was going on before she went to bed so she could be prepared for a call sometime during the night. She also lived about 1 hour to the south of us and the weather conditions were less than ideal. The phone call ended with the direction to call her when the contractions became too difficult to talk through, and she would come.

I was tired. We knew it was going to be a long night and we decided to try to get some rest. I fell asleep at 10:30. Apparently lying down was the impetus my wife needed; while I slept things started getting interesting. At midnight she woke me up, informing me that she was sure that she was dying. By this time she was reduced to moving around in a hunched over or crawling position, so I got up to aid her in her movement. She called the midwife and told her it was time and to come. No position was comfortable for her; we alternated between a chair, our bed and the floor in an effort to find relief. Nothing was helping.

At 12:50am, December 6, she told me she had to go to the bathroom. I helped her out of the chair and supported her until we got to the bathroom. After I aided her in getting situated, I stepped out of the bathroom to give her privacy. I was not two steps down the hall when I was being called back again. My wife's water had broken, and she felt the baby moving down. I tried to help her walk back to our nice plastic covered floors and bed, but she could not move. I wanted to pick her up, but it was too late and she could not budge. The baby was on his way out fast. I tried telling her that we could not do this, not in the bathroom, but she told me we could. I was scared and worried and I did not want to do it. I was no doctor or midwife; my role had always been spectator. My wife was prepared for this though, she had questioned our midwife about what to do if the baby wanted to be born before she arrived. She went into drill



commander mode and started giving orders. She said, "Zac, you are going to have to deliver this baby. I can't do it by myself and you will need to help. Grab some towels out of the drawer and get over here!" At this time she was supporting herself with one hand on the wall and the other on the toilet. The head was crowning. I told her to push and she told me to wait, that she needed a contraction. It was seconds and then she was pushing. Our 8.5 pound warm, wet, baby boy was born in the bathroom between the wall and the toilet, into my waiting hands and a towel.

Sheryl showed up 15 minutes later and finished things up. She felt terrible that she was not able to arrive in time to deliver the baby. We were relieved that everything had gone so well and that my wife and baby were okay. She helped to pull up all the plastic and make a load of laundry and then went home, assuring us that she would stop by in the next day or so to check up on things.

Our little boy is now almost 14 months old. He is a healthy, happy, ornery little boy, showing no signs of ill-effects related to a home/bathroom delivery. I learned several things from this experience. First, it doesn't take a hospital or even a midwife for a woman to have a safe birth; God designed her for this function and it is a completely natural, albeit painful, process. Hospitals make a killing on uninformed people following the status quo. Second, although I was fearful and apprehensive, I was still able to perform what was asked of me. When my wife was counting on me, I didn't want to let her down and knew I would have to put aside my own feelings to do what needed to be done. Last, I learned that no matter how much plastic a man lays down, it's not always going catch the mess.





**Jessica Fees** is a hard worker, juggling college, work, and her budding social life. She is a dedicated student, friend, and daughter whose interests include film, art, and writing. After college she plans to have a thriving career in English and film, while also managing a large family, just to show that a woman can have it all.

### *Argumentative Essay*

## **ARTIFICIAL SUGARS: THE NOT-SO-SWEET TRUTH**

When growing up, there are few things more exciting than the thrill of celebrating a birthday with a big party that includes friends, presents, and a big, deliciously sweet cake. The creamy softness of the moist, melting dessert on one's tongue was a luxury much anticipated at such occasions. Now, however, many people have an expectation for such overly sweet foods that is problematic and damaging to the body. This expectation is why when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a sugar substitute that is just as sweet as sugar, with very few calories, most were happy to indulge. But are these substitutes safe to consume? Can people really have their cake and eat it with few calories, too? If it seems too good to be true, that's because it is. Though artificial sugars may seem like a perfect weight-loss solution, they are neither good for the body, nor effective tools for weight loss. When trying to lose weight and get healthy, natural sugars prove far more effective than sugar substitutes.

The history of artificial sugar dates back to the discovery of the petroleum product, Saccharin in 1879, and though it has a colorful history of health risks and concerns, it is still used today along with the now most commonly used sugar substitute, aspartame (Powter). Introduced in 1981, aspartame is a chemically engineered artificial sugar that consists of three parts: 50 percent phenylalanine, 40 percent aspartic acid, and 10 percent methanol (Humphries). All three of these components have been proven to negatively impact the body, and according to Janet Starr Hull, a licensed nutritionist with a Master's Degree in Environmental Science, "The FDA has a list of 92 symptoms related to aspartame use, and thousands of people have

reported side effects from aspartame” (Hull). People may object that if these facts were true, the FDA would not approve the use of aspartame in food.

The FDA approval for aspartame and other sugar substitutes is based on the findings of studies performed primarily on rats and mice that resulted in little or inconclusive effects from aspartame (Humphries). The problem with these studies is that they are done in a “macroscopic approach,” meaning that if there are no negative side effects after one large dose of aspartame, it is assumed it is a safe product (Humphries). This type of testing, however, is unreliable because problems with sugar substitutes may occur over time, not immediately after initial ingestion. Furthermore, the way the human body breaks down products and metabolizes is different from mice, which also raises concern of the reliability of such studies (Humphries). Even if the lab results of animal testing were conclusive, the side effects artificial sugars have on humans is very well documented.

The effects artificial sweeteners have on the human body are both physiological and psychological, and cause a wide range of bodily disruptions that may affect metabolism, neuronal function, endocrine balances, and protein structure (Humphries). The particular use of aspartame affects the nervous system and brain functions which potentially link the sweetener to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Alzheimer’s disease, blindness, and Multiple Sclerosis (Humphries). Even the milder side effects of anxiety, dizziness, headaches, and cramps should raise concern (Humphries). Yet, even with these chilling reports, some people may still prefer using these products because they feel it will assist in weight loss. Not only are these chemically manufactured sweeteners damaging to the human body and mind, but it is proven that for most they are not useful tools to lose weight.

In spite of the dangers proven in artificial sweeteners, some still believe that they help enhance weight loss. Though for some this may be true, these substitutes also have the ability to create the adverse effect and cause weight gain (Artificial Sweeteners). Being healthier comes from a change of diet; by using artificial sugars people aren’t changing the way they eat, they are simply substituting the taste of natural sugars with something artificial (Greene). The problem with this substitution is that the human body is still getting a sweet fix, but without the calories, which essentially tricks one’s body (Artificial Sweeteners). Dr. Mehmet Oz, a cardiac surgeon and medical director, explains the body’s reaction by stating that “artificial [sugars] stimulate taste receptors that sense sweetness... chemicals are sent to the brain’s satiety center, which becomes confused as to whether or not the body is actually receiving calories. The result? You feel even hungrier and less full, which can lead to

weight gain" (Artificial Sweeteners). Furthermore, Dr. Oz suggests that because sugar substitutes are much sweeter than natural sugar, people may become addicted if the body builds up a tolerance when they are over used (Artificial Sweeteners). Some may think that addiction and side effects are easily avoidable by simply using sweeteners in moderation. This belief, though valid for some, has flaws.

The difficulty in using artificial sweeteners moderately is that it not only takes self-control to refrain from overusing the products, but also an immense knowledge about food because aspartame is now being used in regular food products, not just those aimed at weight loss (Humphries). This fact is concerning because people are unknowingly ingesting artificial substances in what they may think are ordinary, natural products. Though using artificial sweeteners in moderation is better than over using, the best way to become healthy and lose weight is to use natural sugar, and acquire one's taste to natural sweets (Green).

Because artificial sweeteners do not make cravings for sugar go away, the only way to do so is to change and adapt one's taste by slowly replacing unhealthy sugars with natural ones (Greene). Alternatives to using sugar substitutes include organic sweeteners found in fruit, agave, and honey which still provide sweetness and are much healthier to consume (Artificial Sweeteners).

Because of the ways the human body has adapted over time, and how our tastes have changed to prefer certain levels of sweetness, artificial sugars seem like a brilliant idea. With the proven health risks in humans, along with the adverse effect of weight gain, however, it is clear these sugar substitutes are more dangerous than the over consumption of real sugar. If losing weight and becoming healthy is one's intent, real and natural sugar proves far more likely to achieve this goal. If one is willing to change the amount and types of sugar they eat, the outcome is a far improved diet, and all around healthier, happier lifestyle.

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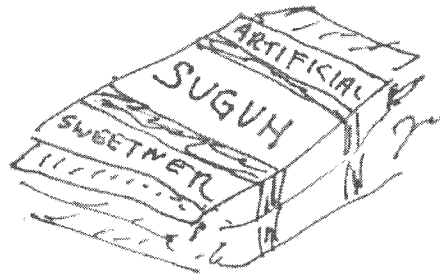
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**Joshua Stevens** feels the key to life is increasing the scope of one's perspective. As a father to three young boys (Justice, Logan and Hunter) and a beautiful baby girl (Anya), he works hard to pass his philosophy of "thinking before you do" on to his children. He is blessed to be engaged to a beautiful and charming and tolerant woman (April), who has

endured the difficulties that come from living with a man who at times seems to be estranged with his own mind. His favorite authors/poets include Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Frost, Shel Silverstein and John Saul.

### *Reflection Essay*

## THE EMPTY LOCKER

When you first glance at this photo, you see a young man standing proud in military dress. His hands are placed behind him, not in view, his shoulders are back and his chest is up. His hair is cut short, military style. The young man's eyes directly facing the camera. He is standing slightly off to the right of center. Directly to his left is an old military locker with the number 28 stenciled on its top. The doors are open to this locker and inside you see military dress uniforms hanging on the right side & camouflage uniforms hanging on the left. On the top left shelf you see a "Suave" bottle placed against the middle barrier that separates the lockers into halves. On the top right shelf you see a flashlight and a hat. In the frame, the locker is cut off about midway on its left side. There is a date of 4-18-97 on the picture, and if you're eyes are good enough you can make out the name on the name tag being worn, it says "Stevens".

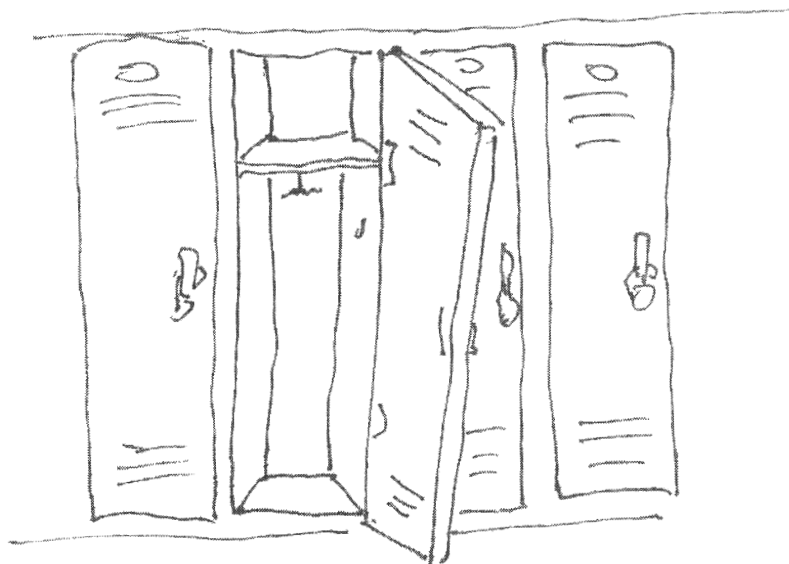
Many who look at this photo will see a young man in the military who is proud. One might even go so far as to assume that with the locker being a focus, maybe he just passed a big inspection, or was recognized for his locker. One could speculate all day, but without context it's just your everyday photo to anyone who doesn't know the story behind the photo.

The picture was taken on Lackland AFB in San Antonio, TX 4-18-97, Graduation Day from U.S. Air Force's basic training day. The young man in the photo was me. I had just turned 20 the month before. We had just concluded our ceremonies. The photographer of this photo was, as we formally would address him, Airman Lescano, a new friend and part of my flight.

The depth of this photo is, however, not felt until we address what is missing from the photo, but let's talk about what is in the photo first. There is the locker, with the old stencil of 28 on its top, to think of the countless Airmen basic that must have used this old locker and the stories it could tell. It stood open, proudly, its contents telling the tale of a young man's journey from a life that was carefree to one of responsibility. If only the contents could speak. The flashlight would tell the story of the 0400 5 mile hike with a 30 lb. pack to the obstacle course. Then it would speak of a young man dumb enough to volunteer to carry a downed flight member's pack along with his pack the full 5 miles back to the barracks. The cover or hat would tell you a story of a young man's time firing an AK-47. It would speak of the rain & the heat in Texas. The camouflage fatigues or BDU's, would speak of the chow runner standing in front of a sign giving his reporting statement over and over to a poster of a drill instructor; all the while fellow Airmen looked on in the chow hall with amusement. The dress uniform would have the most to say though.

The dress uniform was not to be worn until graduation day. It was a prize, a symbol of our accomplishment. If that uniform spoke, it would speak of a young man who was lost that day in an array of emotions that made his accomplishments seem like a distant dream. My graduation day was a painful, joyful, angering, sad, proud and confusing day. My family was a no show, as was my fiancé at the time. In a day which I met countless parents, family members, friends, girlfriends and wives, who were all there to celebrate with their loved ones, I thought to myself "where are mine?" In this picture, the distant voice of my new friend Lescano was telling his family, which was standing next to him while he was taking this photo, the stories of "Popeye" and his accomplishments. "He did 60 pull ups and the instructor finally made him get off the bar so that others had a chance..." he went on, "he broke the squadron record with 119 pushups in 2 minutes". I, or as they nicknamed me Popeye, was lost in a daze asking questions like "would I ever make my Father proud, and if so, was it even worth it?" at a time I should have been celebrating, instead I was breaking inside. I was looking at him in the picture but my focus was elsewhere. "Why did my Father choose to take out his frustrations with life out on me? Why did Mother always say I was just like Dad when we all knew she couldn't stand him? Was I unlovable? What was wrong with me?"

In the discolored still frame of my mind, this photo says much more to me than anyone viewing it could understand, and if it wasn't for this class I would never have let it be known. I see it as a turning point in my life.







**Sarah Lauer** is owned by six felines with rather distinct personalities. Sarah enjoys reading fantasy novels and watching musicals, usually with one or more cats draped across her lap. As an education major, Sarah plans to attend Iowa State through the DMACC two-year transfer program.

### *Critical Thinking and Focus Essay*

## **WHY ALL CATS SHOULD ADOPT A HUMAN**

The solitary feline lives a harsh life. In the world of speeding cars and freezing rain, they hunt and search for shelter. All cats would therefore benefit from finding a human to call their own. The typical human home provides not only shelter but also food free for the taking. In addition, humans are easily manipulated into becoming the mindless servants of the feline, as they are largely ignorant of the powers that felines possess. All cats should own a human because humans are entertaining, provide a comfortable living environment, and are relatively low-maintenance.

Humans provide a great deal of entertainment to their feline owners. Watching a human become intertwined with a furry body and tail provides hours of entertainment, especially when the human is at the top of a flight of stairs. The startled human tends to become flustered, squawking and flailing its limbs. A feline must be careful when doing this, however, as they could potentially be stepped on, which is a rather unfortunate experience. Another entertaining quirk is the way humans shriek when a claw accidentally happens to shred a piece of furniture. Humans are less likely to notice when the back of a piece of furniture is shredded. If the goal is simply to maintain the sharpness of claws, then scratching on the back of the couch is acceptable, if stealth is not the goal then shredding in a more ostentatious location will cause a better reaction. Leather couches are optimal for shredding, as the scratches show up prominently. In addition, leather is more expensive, which means that the human's reaction will be far more dramatic. Another benefit to leather as opposed to upholstery is that leather does not become stuck in the claws. Humans constantly entertain with their reactions to felines whether they intend to or not.

In addition to providing a constant source of entertainment, humans also provide cats with a comfortable living environment. As an indoor cat, regular meals are provided according to the schedule best suited to the cat. Training one's human to give food whenever it best suits the feline can be a painstaking process that may take months, and involves waking the human in the middle of the night, even if food is available. Waking the sleeping human is important because it keeps the human on his toes, and because it reinforces the idea that the feline is in control. Humans are often careless in regards to where they keep their food. Milk is a tasty treat but should be taken surreptitiously. Humans may get angry when they find cat litter floating in their glass, so a wise cat does not use a paw for drinking. Living in a house means not only having free food but also having comfortable sleeping arrangements.

Beds and couches are in place in several ideal locations throughout a house. When lying on a bed, a cat should remember to take up as much room as possible, preferably by lying in the center of the bed or across pillows, as humans are often reluctant to relocate a sleeping cat. This reluctance may be caused by fear or from awe, either is acceptable. While humans can be overly clingy, a human lap is also a comfortable napping location. A drowsy cat should always make sure that the chosen lap will be available for a decent amount of time. It should be noted that humans often remain in one place for extended periods. On occasion, the foolish human will decide to remove a sleeping feline from their lap. The vindictive feline should make the process as painful as possible; this will teach them a lesson. One option for cats that prefer a firmer resting surface is the bathtub. The primary problem with bathtub naps is the moisture that stays in the bottom of the tub. Some humans forget that their owner is sleeping and turn on the faucet and every cat knows that being wet is extremely unflattering. Another location for the hard-surface napper is the dining room table. Humans that are particularly malleable can often be persuaded to place a bowl of water on the table for the convenience of the feline.

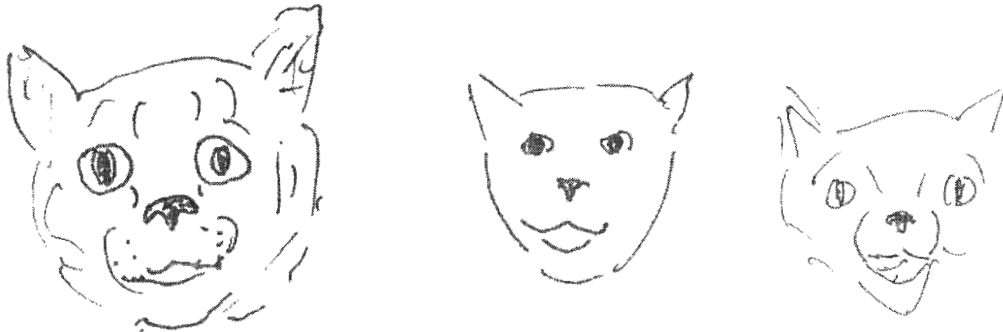
Litter boxes are an important part of any human home. They are usually placed in out-of-the-way locations or corners, to which it may take time to become accustomed. Humans are forgetful creatures and often neglect to scoop the boxes every day. This oversight results in a disgusting mess and must be corrected as quickly as possible. To show displeasure in an unscooped box, it may be necessary to do business elsewhere. Likewise, the finicky cat does not need to put up with the covered litter boxes that ignorant humans typically choose. If the cat does not use it, then the chagrined human will replace it with a more suitable box, thus returning the home to a more suitable environment.

Another endearing factor about the human is that they are relatively low-maintenance. While many humans require affirmation of their worth on a regular basis, it may be necessary to suffer their presence for short periods of time. Humans enjoy having a warm, furry body snuggled next to them but tend to read too much into it and do not realize that they are simply being placated. Sitting on a human's lap gives the human the impression that they are loved, and rubbing against their legs with a purr is an easy way to make a human happy. This requires minimal contact and is a quick and easy way to take care of a human's need for appreciation. All cats should remember that humans view themselves as highly intelligent; therefore, it may become necessary to act less intelligent in their presence, as this will lull them into a sense of complacency that can easily be exploited. Humans are basically self-sufficient. As they are perfectly capable of hunting for themselves, the prudent feline will avoid wasting time by hunting for them. It can, however, be amusing to bring the entrails of rodents to deposit at the feet of a squeamish human. The typical human is easily entertained and many humans are content to sit in one place for hours at a time, providing an ideal opportunity to please one's human by occupying her lap. The little maintenance that humans require is one more reason that humans make excellent companions for felines.

While life with a human is undoubtedly luxurious, some credence must be given to the argument that life without a human is preferable. Life as a solitary cat means no veterinarian visits and no demeaning claw-trimmings. This process is incredibly humiliating, as the cat is held high off the ground by the scruff of its neck. A more ferocious cat may be wrapped in a towel, its legs pinned down so as not to injure their human torturer. The cat's magnificent claws are then cut away, leaving stubs that take days to resharpen. Vets also prescribe medicine, which the unfortunate cat must suffer. The intelligent human will grab an unsuspecting feline from a deep sleep and have an accomplice hold the poor creature as they shove pills down its throat. The foolish human will instead chase a wakeful and wary cat, calling out that the medicine is for the cat's own good. If the cat is lucky, it will escape the human and find a safe place to hide until the danger has passed. Some of the best hiding spots are in places that the human cannot reach such as the rafters of the basement or a hidden niche in the coat closet. The unfortunate feline maybe caught, however, so they must be ready to fight their captor. Claws and teeth are the best defenses for the struggling feline, as humans have tender, easily punctured skin, but squirming out of the human's grasp and running for cover is often the wisest solution. Another annoyance is the tendency of humans to apply hairball medicine to the paws, thus marring the beauty of the fur. Outdoor cats have the opportunity to hunt when they please; nothing is quite as satisfying as the crunch of a mouse between the teeth. Humans underestimate the power of the feline

and are apparently unaware of the fact that felines are perfectly capable of bathing themselves. This delusion results in baths, an unpleasant experience for all involved, as cats and water are not meant to mix. The imprudent human will grab the ill-fated feline, wrap her in a towel, and proceed to dip her in warm, soapy, and extremely wet water. The typical cat will then struggle and maul the hapless human until bath time is finally finished. Although humans can be clueless creatures, they provide cats with the benefits of a comfortable life indoors without the dangers of the outside world. The wise cat must choose between the independence and danger of wild life, and the safety and occasional annoyances of life with a human.

Life with humans is challenging, but the benefits far out way the costs. Humans provide a steady source of food and comfort. Without humans, a cat has no access to beds or couches, not to mention the lack of a reliable food source. While humans are needy, they are also easily placated. Sitting on laps and purring are two easy ways to keep a human happy, which is important as they provide a constant source of entertainment. With this in mind, it can easily be said that all cats must adopt a human.





**Katie Taylor** has long followed the philosophy that good writers are also good readers. Aside from studying, she spends a lot of her time reading her favorite subject, young adult fiction novels. Her favorite authors are C.S. Lewis, J.K. Rowling, and finally someone without an abbreviated name, Edgar Allan Poe. Katie hopes to graduate with an AAS degree by 2013.

### *Explaining a Concept Essay*

## **SLEEP AND ITS DISORDERS**

Have you ever thought about how you sleep? Most of us would admit that we do not. Sleeping is the most natural alternate state of consciousness, and it has been estimated that the average person will sleep a shocking third of his or her life (Huffman 173). But who is complaining? Sleep is a refreshing part of our lives where we can escape our troubles and drift into ourselves.

There are four stages of sleep, each having a different function and effect on the mind and body. In stage 1 of sleep, breathing becomes regular, heart rate slows, and blood pressure decreases, though you are easily awakened if roused. In stage 2 your body becomes even more relaxed, while your brain emits rapid, high-amplitude brain waves known as sleep-spindles. Stages 3 and 4 are even further relaxed states of the body, while the brain begins to produce slow, high-amplitude brain waves known as delta-waves (Huffman 177-78).

Stages 1 through 4 of sleep are referred to as NREM sleep, or non-rapid-eye-movement sleep. These are the stages leading up to the next stage where we see dreaming as well as paralysis of large muscle groups in the body. This next stage is called REM sleep, or rapid-eye-movement sleep, the telltale sign that the sleeper is dreaming. REM sleep is commonly referred to as paradoxical sleep because the sleeper's body is mostly still and unresponsive while the brain is alert and active, similar to an alert brain (Huffman 178).

Many psychologists have studied sleep, but above all they are interested in our dreams, and as a result there are several major theories as to why we sleep and dream. The repair/restoration theory of sleep suggests that sleep helps us rest from our daily life, while the evolutionary/circadian theory tells us that sleep evolved so pre-historic humans and non-humans could rest while they were not foraging for food (Huffman 180).

According to popular psychologist Sigmund Freud, dreams supposedly would give us an inside look into our own unconscious thoughts and desires, which include several references to human sexuality. In contrast to Freud, we have the biological view of dreams which tells us that dreams are basically just a product of random stimulation of brain cells during REM sleep. Next we have the cognitive view, which asserts that dreams are a form of thinking during sleep (Huffman 182). Whatever the reason we sleep and dream, researchers know that we all dream. Sleep studies have shown us that when people are awakened from REM sleep, they almost always report having a dream (Huffman 178).

Sleeping and dreaming are important for your body, and we can accurately see this when the body suddenly stops getting enough sleep. Go for a night without sleeping and you might feel irritable or have trouble concentrating—go without sleep for a week and your body will start to shut down. This process is a sleep disorder called sleep-deprivation, which is connected to “mood alterations, decreased self-esteem, reduced concentration and motivation, increased irritability, lapses in attention, reduced motor skills, and increased. . . sign[s] of stress” (Huffman 175).

What are sleep disorders? Kate Halverson, professor of Psychology, points out that sleep disorders are separated into two basic categories: Dyssomnias—problems with amount, timing and the quality of your sleep, and Parasomnias—abnormal disturbances in sleep. Sleep disorders that fall under the category of dyssomnias are insomnia (lack of sleep), sleep apnea (periods of sleep where you do not breathe), and narcolepsy (sudden onsets of sleep). Among parasomnias we see nightmares (bad dreams), night terrors (physiological arousal and feelings of panic), sleep-talking and sleep-walking (Halverson).

Sleep-talking and walking are perhaps the least harmful sleep disorder of the four, and they are mostly prevalent among small children—though it has been known to show up in adults who are experiencing stress or major life events (Huffman 187).

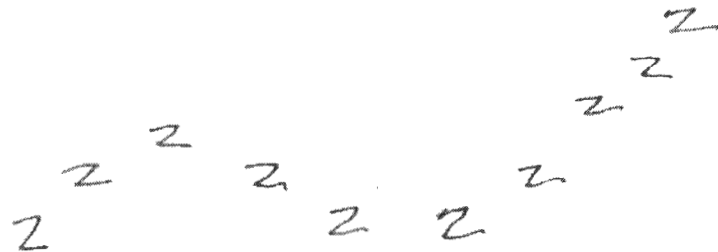
Although they may seem analogous, nightmares and night terrors are fundamentally different. While both occur mostly in young children, nightmares can be remembered immediately upon waking and may continue to be recalled throughout the day; night terrors, however, are not. In fact, night terrors have the greatest effect on the parents of these children, as they are the ones who have to listen to this sleep-disorder while it plagues their children.

Despite the fact that we have sleep disorders, we know that sleep is helpful for our overall health, and there does not seem to be any lasting effects from dreams, positive or otherwise. Whether they mean something to us or are simply our brains way of processing information, we will continue to be curious about and study our dreams.

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**Crystal Korth** is a lady who likes stale Cheetos and cold beer. She likes her beef jerky teriyakified and her cars small. She has an aversion to potato salad and pickles. She was not scared of heights until after she jumped out of the plane. She can't tell a joke without giving away the punchline. And she LOVES America's Funniest Home Videos.

### *Compare/Contrast Essay*

#### **MR. CLEAN**

Parents and teachers have always advised against moving in with a best friend. They said that's how you become enemies. I took it to heart, knowing that I was young and they probably knew what they were talking about. Years later, I did it anyway.

My best friend Davey and I met our freshmen year of college in 1999. We got along famously because of our lack of adherence to rules. Although we lived in different states for the 12 years after that, we forged a strong friendship through phone and text conversations, instant messages and emails. We travelled a lot together, and got in plenty of trouble along the way. For years we planned out biggest adventure, buying a boat and sailing around the world. So when I was ready for a change, I didn't hesitate to move into his house.

For the first few months it was nothing but fun. We spent a month on the road and lived like kings. When we returned home, there were plenty of household projects and landscaping issues to keep us busy. However, we began to bump heads.

My birthday is on Earth Day, and I have been in save the earth clubs and tree planting crews my whole life. I am an avid recycler, an enthusiast, if you will. So it pained me greatly to watch Davey throw his empty beer cans directly into the garbage.



He, on the other hand, cannot stand the idea of having more than one bin for waste. He said that is a waste of space. When I told him that it is the law to recycle, he retorted, "Then my tax dollars can pay for people to sort it."

Davey thinks it's disgusting when I pull his banana peels out of the trash to put in the compost pile. I, on the other hand, think compost is magical.

Although neither one of us can stand a messy, dirty house we both have entirely different ideas of what clean is. For instance, clean to me is everything in its proper spot, everything washed thoroughly, dusted, vacuumed, and lemon fresh. Clean for Davey is out of sight, out of mind. Company coming over? Dirty dishes can be stacked in the oven. Shoes, jackets, and tennis rackets thrown in the coat closet, any dirt on the floor is most efficiently swept beneath the kitchen rug, and any mail, magazines or newspapers find a loving home in the fireplace. I'm no longer alarmed to find my purse in the microwave.

When the time comes to sweep the floors I am a bit of a traditionalist. I use a straw broom and a baby blue dustpan. This is a system that was passed down to me by my ancestors. It takes approximately two to three minutes, three or four days a week. Davey, on the other hand, finds that method old and outdated. He will eagerly spend fifteen minutes locating, gassing, and crank-starting the leaf blower. He will roar through the house blowing precious bills out of their neat piles and spiders out of their corners. "Open the sliders!" He'll command, and attempt to send everything cascading out across the deck.

When I have a bit too much coffee and the jitters cause me to spill, or when, but not if, the spoon that I stir the marinara sauce with as I'm making spaghetti with falls out of the pot and splatters all over the stove and the floor, I reach for a handy dandy paper towel to blot up the mess. And when I'm done wiping it up, I toss it in the nearest trash can. Oh, but not my roommate Davey. He will find the cleanest, whitest dish towel, whether it's on the counter already or in the laundry room, and he'll make sure to soak up all the pretty colors.

When it comes to the dishes I prefer to clean each one as I go along. When I finish chopping onions, I wash the knife and the cutting board. When I finish beating eggs, I wash the fork and the bowl. That way, by the time the food is ready to hit the table, the sink is empty, and the only thing left to do is wash the plates and silverware.

Bravo! You guessed it; Davey has a hard time with this one. After having worked in restaurant kitchens for years, he's used to having someone else to wash all of his dirty dishes. He'll dirty every dish in the arsenal, confident that there'll be some poor schmuck to come along and take the dirty dishes away, only to return with clean dishes. Voila!

Grocery shopping is something that I have always enjoyed. It doesn't bother me to stop every night after work and pick up the ingredients that I need for the night's recipe. This eliminates the problem of uneaten food decaying in the refrigerator. Not to mention, it's an enjoyable three minute walk to Dahl's, the local grocery store, from our house. Davey doesn't agree. He's got a Costco membership, so we are all stocked up for the next Apocalypse. Once I asked him to grab some stuff to spice up our salads. We are now in our third month of eating through three pound bags of dried cranberries and almond slices. A 76 pack of peanut butter granola bars has left my tongue dry and my throat parched. In an attempt to remedy that Davey bought me two cases of sparkling water. You guessed it, they were buy one, get one free. Davey can't pass up a sale, even if we've run out room in the kitchen and have cases of water and soda stacked in the garage. The freezer is full to the brim because there's no way two people can consume 12 green peppers before they go bad. But, you won't ever hear me complain about the abundance of bacon; I love bacon.

I love cooking immensely. It's one of the few things that I can be patient for these days. I like to cook things at a low temperature for a long time. "Simmer" is a favorite word of mine. Special stews and roasts that take all day to make are my specialty. However Davey is a different story.

Davey has a trademark phrase; "the temperature/flame/time got away from me a little," he'll say as he presents hockey puck burgers or steaks that taste like shoe leather. Beans do burn on the grill; just ask Davey if you'd like to see a demonstration. You can always tell which pans Davey used by looking at the pots soaking in the sink with an inch of burnt vittles on the bottom. He doesn't discriminate though, He's happy to burn other people's cooking too. Just step away from the kitchen for a moment to take a phone call and you too can see your precious chowder turn to high and bubbling like whirlpool. Gum, that's what it becomes.

Somehow Davey's behavior reminds me distinctly of myself when I was ten or twelve years old and my stepdad wanted me to take on some extra chores. I purposely mowed the lawn crooked and washed the car with the windows open in hopes that Bruce would be so fed up with me that he'd just do it himself. It worked every time.

There's a lot of compromising, a lot of give and take, but somehow Davey and I are making our relationship work. Unfortunately for me, it's meant me taking on all of the cleaning responsibilities and telling him to keep the hell out of the kitchen, but hey, as long as he keeps bringing home the bacon, ten pounds at a time, I can deal.





**Scott Pueschel** believes it is time for the American people to take a stand and let Washington know that illegal immigration will not be tolerated anymore. Although he doesn't currently have a favorite author, he enjoys reading biographies any chance he gets. His favorite book is *A Journey* by Tony Blair. The single father of a nine year old son fears that the American people are losing faith in the U.S. government and if something doesn't change soon, the American people will turn their backs on them completely.

### *Argumentative Essay*

## **PRESS ONE FOR ENGLISH: ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION'S IMPACT ON AMERICA**

For years, the United States has played host to millions of immigrants who have come from all over the world. Illegals leave their cruel governments behind for the freedom America has to offer. Without immigration, America wouldn't have the wonderful, diverse country it is today. Illegal immigration, on the other hand, has become a major thorn in America's side. Over the past fifty years, illegal immigration has taken a major toll on a number of issues in the U.S. Crime rates, U.S. economy, and the harm inflicted on border communities are a few of the top issues that have hurt the U.S. Because of these issues, border security has become a priority to keep these illegal immigrants in Mexico. Many Americans feel borders aren't secure enough, while others feel there are more important issues to worry about. Securing America's borders and keeping America safe should be the government's top priority, especially after the events of September 11. When all the facts are examined, it is obvious that illegal immigration is poisoning America more and more every day.

One reason that illegal immigration is poisoning America is the threat it poses on the U.S. economy. A popular myth that is currently circulating is that illegal workers are doing no harm by working in the U.S. illegally because they are working jobs that Americans refuse to work. However, Michael Tezlow feels that "proponents to this school of thought rarely put forth facts or figures to support their assertion" (24). Shockingly, some employers actually claim that the market for workers is tight, and if they would reduce labor, consumer cost would go through the roof. The main problem

is with the policies that are put in place to protect the American workers from issues like this. According to William Galston, Noah Pickus, and Peter Skerry, “the overwhelming majority of firms applying for visas for temporary workers do not have to provide any meaningful evidence that they have first sought out American workers for positions to be filled” (93). It is overwhelmingly obvious that there are just as many willing American workers as there are illegal workers. The crackdowns on packing plants across America have proven this point. Michael Tezlow states that “almost immediately after hundreds of illegal workers were rounded up, creating an actual tight market, Swift and Company officials increased wages by \$1.95 per hour to attract legal workers” (26).

Another reason that illegal immigration is poisoning America is the contribution it has to the increase in crime. For years there has been a debate on whether or not illegal immigrants are criminal or not. According to William Galston, Noah Pickus, and Peter Skerry, “the best estimates suggest that approximately 11.9 million immigrants are in the United States illegally. Their continued presence is the result of our failures to devise and implement effective immigration policies” (89). Many claim they are simply here to work. Others feel that the second they made the choice to come into the U.S. illegally, they broke the law, which makes them a criminal. Ruben G. Rumbaut, author of “The Myth of Immigrant Criminality” feels that “the misperception that immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, are responsible for higher crime rates is deeply rooted in American public opinion and is sustained by media anecdotes and popular myth” (qtd. in Barry 49). Well, facts are in no way, opinions, like Mr. Rumbaut may suggest. The facts don’t lie. In Ventura County, California, a local newspaper has a special section for the “Most Wanted of Ventura County.” Tom Barry points out that “week in and week out four or five of the six, and occasionally six of the six most wanted are Hispanic and frequently a note will say, thought to have fled to Mexico” (40). Based on evidence of name changes [sometimes three times per immigrant], it is obvious these habitual offenders are illegal immigrants.

Another reason that illegal immigration is poisoning America is harm caused to the border communities. According to Melissa J. Doak, “the state with the most arrests of illegal aliens is California (58%) followed by Texas (14%) and Arizona with (8%)” (82). A majority of those arrests occur within the communities bordering Mexico. Residents of these small border communities are not only angry, but also scared. The main issue border community residents fear most is personal security. Residents are angry that Washington refuses to provide them with this simple right. According to Leo Banks, “last year the Border Patrol made an astonishing 241,673 arrests in the Tucson sector, which covers 262 miles of the Arizona-Mexico border” (54). Residents have resulted to

buying safes to lock up valuables they don't want stolen, while they are out tending to their farms. Illegal immigrants will break doors down looking for food, money, guns, and they will murder anyone standing in their way. Proof of that occurred on March 28, 2010. Rob Krentz, a local rancher and active member of his community, was shot to death while out in his field. The suspect, appeared to be a local drug smuggler. Unfortunately, this act of crime wasn't the first, and will not be the last. Leo Banks recalls, "In a Douglas gunshop after the shooting, I watched customers stream in to buy safes and pistols. Even bird watching ladies from Portal are arming up. They see the threat clearly and understand they face it alone" (56).

In a time when the American people feel more and more disconnected from government and less secure about their physical and economic well-being, now is the time for immigration policies to get a make over. With record numbers of illegal immigrants slithering through the cracks of the U.S. every year, the American people need to take a stand and let Washington know this kind of criminal activity will not be tolerated. It is the government's job to analyze the facts and take care of the legal citizens of America and stop putting most of their focus on accomidating to those who are in our country illegally. It's time for Washington to stop worrying about all the votes they will lose by deporting illegal immigrants or tightening the American borders. The American people are losing faith in the U.S. government and if something doesn't change soon, the American people will turn their backs on them completely.

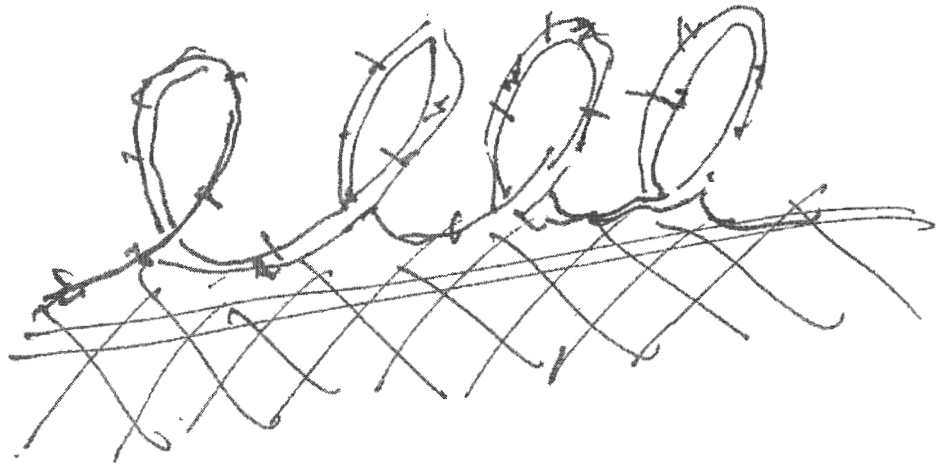
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**Kyle DuPass** is a Minnesota sports fan. His favorite sports are baseball, hockey, and baseball. His favorite athletes are Joe Mauer of the Minnesota Twins and Jared Allen of the Minnesota Vikings. He hopes to see the Minnesota Vikings win a Super Bowl and the Minnesota Twins win another World Series before he dies. He attends the Twins home opener every year.

### *Explaining a Concept Essay*

## THE CURSE OF THE BILLY GOAT

What does a goat have to do with baseball? A lot if you are a Chicago Cubs' fan. Cubs' fans have been disgruntled for the last half century because of a goat. Season after season, this goat is blamed for the Cubs not getting to a World Series. They claim they are cursed -- cursed by a goat named Murphy, who fans think, year after year, keep the Cubs out of the World Series. Even when they have been close, they have melted down and lost, proving to fans that the Cubs are forever cursed by the billy goat.

The Chicago Cubs last won a World Series Championship in 1908 against the Detroit Tigers. Since then they have been to seven World Series but have lost every one. Their last World Series was in 1945 against the Detroit Tigers. They lost this championship, but what happened at game four of this series would change the Cubs forever (Billy Goat Tavern).

Billy Sianis, owner of The Billy Goat Tavern, had two tickets to game four of the 1945 World Series. The Cubs were facing the Detroit Tigers and had a two games to one lead in the series. Billy decided to take his pet goat, Murphy, to the game for good luck. At the entrance Billy was stopped by the ushers who told him there were no pets allowed in Wrigley Field. Billy got frustrated and asked to appeal to the Cubs' owner, P.K. Wrigley. Wrigley listened to Billy, and then restated that the goat would not be allowed in because it stunk. Billy, red in the face, screamed, "The Cubs ain't gonna win no more! The Cubs will never win a World Series again, as long as my goat is not allowed at Wrigley Field!" The Cubs ended up losing the game and the series, being



swept at home by the Tigers. After the series Billy sent a telegram to Wrigley, which said, "Who stinks now?" And the curse had begun (Billy Goat Tavern).

Since then, the Cubs have gone on to lose more games than they have won and have not seen the World Series (Billy Goat Tavern). They have come close but have had some of the biggest meltdowns in baseball history. One of the most infamous meltdowns occurred in the 1969 season, right before Billy's death.

On April 15, 1969, David Condon, writer for the *Chicago Tribune*, reported Billy had lifted the curse (Bradley and Gordon 194). It was an amazing thing to hear for Cubs' fans. They had a glimmer of hope, which would be smashed that very same year.

The Cubs started out the 1969 season strong and fans were very optimistic that this was their season. They had an amazing team made up of five future Hall of Famers. By July the Cubs were hot. They had a six game lead on the New York Mets and didn't look as if they were going to slow down (Talley 66). At the beginning of August, the Cubs were still winning and had a division title in their sites. The Mets were right on their tail though, only four games out of first (Talley 152). Mid-August, after a black cat had ran the field during a game with the Mets, they started their collapse. Had the curse sent a bad luck, black cat to that game? Well, that September they lost eight games in a row and lost their lead in the division. They posted a record of eight wins and twenty-five losses and the Mets won the division by an astonishing eight games (Talley 264, 294). The Mets then went on to win the World Series and Cubs fans were once again disappointed (Bradley and Gordon 194).

Was the curse to blame once again? Billy proclaimed it wasn't; the Mets were just a better team (Bradley and Gordon 194). Though fans wanted to believe that, they didn't. Curse talk started up, once again. When would the Cubs get to the World Series? In the '70's and '80's they would come close a few times only to be beaten in the end, by what fans think, is the goat's fault (Sianis).

The closest to the World Series the Cubs have gotten was in 2003. It is probably the most famous reappearance of the goat of recent years. This time, though, the goat reappeared as a person, a long time Chicago Cubs fan, by the name of Steve Bartman.

The Cubs had beaten the Atlanta Braves in the divisional playoffs and made it to the National League Championship Series against the Florida Marlins. All of a sudden they had a three game to zero, best of seven, series lead. The Marlins would win the next two games. The Cubs went into game 6 at home and had their number one

pitcher, Mark Prior, on the mound (Billy Goat Tavern). The outlook was bright for Cubs fans, but they still had the goat in the back of their heads, only hoping Murphy would not return.

Going into the eighth inning, the Cubs had a 3-0 lead with Prior still on the mound. With one out, and only five outs away from a World Series birth, the Marlins' Luis Castillo hit a foul ball to the left side (Billy Goat Tavern). The ball seemed to be out of the reach for outfielder Moises Alou. The crowd in the left field stands stood in anticipation of catching the foul ball. As the ball started to come down, it seemed to drift back into the field of play. Alou, not giving up on the ball, stood at the wall, zeroed in. He had the ball in his sights, but when he jumped up to catch it, it wasn't there. In disbelief, he looked up to the stand, only to see a man, wearing a Cubs' hat and headphones, bobbling the ball into the seats next to him. He was Steve Bartman (Bradley and Gordon 203).

Alou threw his arms in the air in disbelief. If he would have made the catch, which looked possible, they would've been four outs away from the World Series. The curse had struck once again, and the Cubs started to collapse. They gave up eight runs that inning and the Marlins went on to win the game 8-3 (Bradley and Gordon 203). The Cubs would lose game seven and the Marlins would go on to win the World Series against the New York Yankees.

Bartman left game six, escorted by security, before the game even ended, while fans booed and yelled at him on his way out. They were devastated by the loss and could only think that the curse was still alive. Bartman's actions were proof enough.

How would the curse be broken? After several attempts nothing seemed to break it. Several times the Cubs have allowed relatives of Billy and a goat into Wrigley Field (Sianis). This has happened on numerous occasions, but seems not to have worked. Some fans want to go as far as performing an exorcism on a goat, claiming it is the only way the curse will be broken (Bradley and Gordon 198). Paul Sianis, grandnephew of Billy Sianis, stated, "The curse can be broken but the goat must be involved in the process. Theo [Epstein] can break it if the goat is on the team." Whatever the crazy idea is of breaking the curse, Cubs' fans will try just about anything.

Probably the strangest attempt to break the curse happened after the Steve Bartman fiasco. In 2004, the ball that Bartman bobbed was auctioned off and bought by Cubs' announcer Harry Caray and Grant DePorter, president of Harry Caray's Restaurant, for an astounding \$113,824.16. They decided that the ball should be blown

up into millions of pieces, thus getting rid of the curse (Bradley and Gordon 204). After a letdown season in 2004, they decided that it did not work and would have to go to even greater lengths to break the curse. They took it to an extreme level and ground up the tiny pieces of the leftover ball from the explosion. They mixed it into a spaghetti sauce and fed it to over 700 willing fans (Bradley and Gordon 205). To the dismay of Cubs' fans, their digestion of a cursed baseball has not seemed to lift the goat's curse.

Cubs' announcer, Harry Caray, once said, "Chicago people are kind of fatalistic, but they continue to hope that somehow, some way the Cubs will shock even them and win it just one time. Their fatalism allows them to enjoy the team's success, knowing that one horrible thing will happen down the line to rip the rug out from underneath them" (ThinkExist). For Cubs' fans sake, hopefully they win a World Series in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rather sooner than later. Hopefully, the curse will be broken and fans can put Billy Sianis and Murphy behind them. They can forget about goats, black cats, Steve Bartman, and baseball spaghetti; rather, they can call themselves champions, something a Cubs fan has not said in a very long time. When and if this will happen, who knows? But until it does, Murphy's curse will be alive with the most lovable losers, the Chicago Cubs.

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**Michael Hanrahan**, loving husband and proud father of two bright young ladies, is an aspiring History/English major who hopes someday to share his passion for ancient times and literature with the students of the Iowa School system. Michael is an avid reader who especially enjoys reading historical fiction and the classics. Michael's favorite authors include George R.R. Martin and James Bradley.

### *Literacy Narrative*

## ONCE UPON A TIME

The room is clustered with the standard decorations that litter every three year olds room. Lying on the bed are enough animals to fill most of a small city zoo, although these are stuffed. Two Zhu-Zhu Pets, mechanical mice, sit in the corner of the room, poised as if ready to actually scamper about. There are mismatched outfits scattered around, those that my daughter had decided weren't appropriate for the evening's attire. The light is low to help foster an environment conducive to "sleep time." My daughter, Mia, sits perched upon my lap, both of us sharing room on the Lazy Boy recliner that occupies one corner of her room. Mia is fresh out of the tub and smells of strawberries and soap, thanks to her current shampoo choice. "The end," I say as I finish reading her *Hop on Pop*, an age old classic written by Dr. Seuss that I remember with a forlorn fondness being read as a child. "Read it again, Daddy!" she demands.

It's hard for many of us to recall the exact moment in our lives when reading was magically transformed from nightly routine to that special pastime we grow to love and cherish, if there even exists that extraordinary experience. It's even more magical to see that spark take shape and bloom like winter roses in early spring within our own children. I have the special privilege of remembering with great affection how that miraculous moment sparked and developed within myself, and also to see it begin to flicker within my daughter.

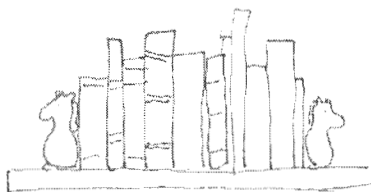
The transformation began for me as a child near to the age of my own daughter, about four. Nightly my father read to me the tales of the Brothers Grim, or one of Dr.

Seuss' many melodic adventures. I remember to this day the environment of these long evenings, cuddled into his lap, the smell of cigar smoke and old spice lingering in the air, as he told me these tales again and again. It was at that moment the initial spark took flight, and I began to truly love reading. I must say that at the ripe old age of five my reading ability left me far from turning the pages of classical artists such as Homer or Shakespeare. I knew enough to recognize a few words, and with my father's patience, we developed and nurtured this spark, and began to turn it into a flame.

As the years of my childhood progressed, so did my love for the written word, and my father's contribution to this love. At age twelve, I began reading shorter novels intended for children several years above my age. The pages of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, by C.S. Lewis, turned like the wheels of a hauler down a steep grade. The entire education of reading could be considered a family affair, as my father helped me through the tougher grammar, and explained to me the words I didn't comprehend. By fifteen, he not only recommended novels for me to read, but also shared those he had read. These novels we read and critiqued together, not unlike an early representation of Siskel and Ebert, dedicated to exemplifying the best of the literature we experienced.

As my graduation from high school approached, our shelves were adorned with the classical representations of Plato, Dante, and Gibbon, and the modern works of King, Koontz, L'Amour, and many others. They have each imparted their own piece of wisdom, not only to my upbringing but also on a majority of my adult life. I owe it all to the love a father has of reading, a love he had the wisdom to impart upon his child.

"Daddy!" shouts Mia, marking my return to the reality of the here and now from my reminiscing of a past that is long gone. "Can you please read *Hop on Pop* one more time?" I'm certain the answer to that question is easily guessed. "Of course, sweetheart." I can see the enjoyment and satisfaction she gets from my reading to her. I've sparked the flame, and hope that someday that love for reading burns like a roaring blaze, as I know my love for her, and my father will always do.





**Dan Kainz** was born and raised in Cottage Grove, MN which is a small suburb of St. Paul, MN. He spent many summers in Northern Minnesota fishing with his family and continues to fish as much as he can to this day, having entered numerous fishing tournaments in the past. His favorite authors are William Kent Krueger and Jim Saric. Dan now lives in Des Moines, IA with his wife Emily, son Dominick, daughter Olivia, and pet Cocker Spaniel mix Kirby

(named after his favorite baseball player Kirby Puckett). He enjoys all Minnesota sports teams and still watches them as much as he can. He is currently attending Des Moines Area Community College learning to be a Computer Forensic Detective.

### *Compare/Contrast Essay*

## WHAT TO DO?

Muskies are very particular about what they eat. They definitely drive people insane when they try to catch the fish that is called the fish of 1,000 casts. It could very easily be called the fish of 10,000 casts because the musky are that elusive at times. There are two main types of baits to use, or throw, for muskies. Artificial bait and live bait. There is definitely a vast array of artificial baits that can be used by a musky fisherman, as well as quite a few different types of live bait. I will go over those different types in detail later. While thinking about my essay for artificial bait and live bait, I thought how easy it would be to write about these two since I have used both countless times in the past. Then I thought about actually presenting these different baits to a musky and trying to teach someone who has never used either before and try to catch a musky using them. There are countless variables involved while fishing for muskies that I will not be covering in this essay. Those would be wind, cloud cover, moon phases, previous weather patterns, low and high pressure systems, time of day, boat control, local state fishing laws, and the list goes on. I have been fishing for muskies for almost 20 years and I still do not know everything there is to know about the elusive fish.

No matter which method you would ultimately try, if you would like to fish for muskies, there are some basics that must be covered before you fish for them. Rods, reels, fishing line, leaders, and lure retrieval are key. When fishing for muskies, you

must keep in mind that at any given time, a 40 pound plus fish may hit your bait. You must have a very sturdy rod, a reel that is large enough to hold up to 100 pound test braided line, and a large net to hold the fish at boat side. I normally use one piece rods that range in length from 8 foot to nine foot. "The extra-long rod probably made the biggest difference in this battle. A longer rod is nearly always superior once a big fish is hooked" said Joe Bucher, professional guide and author of numerous articles and books regarding fishing for muskies. They are made of graphite and carbon, this way they are extremely lite. I use large bait casting reels that have a minimum line capacity of 50 pound test; the best that I have found is the Ambassadeur T7000i level wind reel. The reason for this reel is that it can hold the 100 pound test braided line I use, is easy to cast, easy to reel a lure in, and is lightweight. Any good hoop style net will work, just make sure it has a large handle and the hoop is at least 48 inches. The line should be a minimum of 50 pound test braided line, but heavier if you intend to do any trolling. One last piece of tackle that is very important is the leader. The leader is what connects the fishing line to the lure. I normally use a leader that has double the breaking strength of the line I am using. Muskies have very large and sharp teeth. Their mouths are also hard as bone. When a musky hits the lure and the hook is set, the brunt of that force of the bite and hook set is placed upon the leader.

I will not try to sway someone to use just artificial over live bait, since they both have their best times and applications to use them. The norm is to use artificial baits from late spring until fall, but you can use live bait whenever you would like to. The reason why you would not want to use live bait during the warmer months is because the muskies that are in the lake would not be in one exact type of cover or structure from lake to lake. Sure, they would be patrolling the weed lines and weed breaks on most lakes, adjacent to deeper water. But if the lake has a good population of Ciscoe or Whitefish, most of the larger trophy sized muskies will be patrolling open water, normally in close proximity to these schools of baitfish. If this is the case, what I have found to be a very effective method is to boat around the lake using your sonar or fish locator and locate these schools of bait fish. These schools will show as a mass on the screen, normally just below the thermocline. Also, you will see larger fish close to these schools; these will be the muskies or very large northern pike if they are in the lake. The thermocline is the imaginary line in the water that actually separates the warmer surface water from the cooler water near the bottom. The thermocline normally sets up sometime in June in the Midwest, earlier in Southern states. Once these schools are found, what I like to do is either troll at a foot or two above the marked depths of the fish I saw around the school. Or the other preferred method is to slowly drift or use the trolling motor to go around the school and cast lures. You would have to make sure that

the lures are being retrieved at the proper depth so they would be in the 'strike zone' of the muskies you are trying to catch.

Another method that is used during the warmer months is to cast along weed lines, either submerged or floating beds of weeds. When I am doing this, boat control is key to success at 'raising' fish. Raising fish is when a musky follows your lure and you are able to see the fish. The best method that I have discovered to use to throw a long cast (called a bomb cast) along the weed edge is in the direction you are moving. This will attract any muskies that may be lurking just off the weed edge in deeper water. After that initial cast, do shorter casts into every single pocket and turn in the weeds you can see. Once you reach the point that your bomb cast hit the water, repeat the process. When you do raise a musky, but you cannot raise it again, mark it as a way point on your fish locator so you can come back and try again later in the day. Muskies are territorial, and they should stay in the same area for some time. Or at least until weather or the moon cycle moves them.

While fishing with artificial baits, there is one key part of the retrieve that must be mastered. I have hooked so many muskies during a circle or figure 8 at boat side that I cannot even recall how many. The process is this: when your retrieve is almost to the boat, spread your feet to shoulder length apart, square your shoulders almost sideways to your feet, and have your hand grip the rod and reel so if a musky hits this close to the boat, you will not lose your rod and reel. Once the lure is under five feet (I prefer two feet, some people prefer up to five) from the boat, start to pull the lure using your rod and start making a larger arc. Make the arc exactly as the two techniques sound, either in a circle or a figure 8. I will normally do at least five circles or figure 8s, more if a musky is around. While doing these, make sure that you are watching your lure and the area in the water closely; a musky may be following and watching your lure. I try to speed up the lure a little in each turn of a figure 8; I have found that this little speed difference sometimes triggers a fish to strike. "A second attempt (of the figure 8) produced a similar reaction and seemed to excite the fish more. The fish suddenly overtook the tail end of the lure and clamped down on it. I was now with the biggest musky I'd ever hooked on a figure 8 in nearly 40 years of fishing" according to Joe Bucher.

What type of artificial bait to use depends on what type of water you are fishing. If fishing open water or weed edges, deeper running crank baits are to be used. Trying to make sure that the lure matches the food source of the lake. Silver to white toned lures if ciscoes and whitefish are the prevalent food source or perch to sunfish colored baits if those are the main food source for the Muskies. If there are Northern Pike in the lake as well, I have found that crank baits that look like small northern pike are very



good. I have caught countless large muskies and large northern pike using this color of lure. I am not sure why, maybe it is because they want to get rid of future competition? That color works great for me, but not for some other musky fisherman I know. If fishing shallow water or weed pockets or weeds below the surface use top water baits, buck tails, or spinner baits. These three baits all run shallow or on the surface. This way your bait will not foul with weeds, and you also must retrieve the baits fast to keep them above the weed tops, this is called burning. "Burning bucktails is one of the most overlooked musky patterns. A very important part of this pattern is covering water. There are a few criteria for my burners. I prefer small to medium sized bucktails. While burning, I can cover 10 times the water that I could if I was fishing with normal lures. This way I can mark muskies as a way point on my GPS and come back with slower lures later" according to Like Ronnestrand who is an acclaimed musky angler, guide, and author of numerous articles about muskies.

During the early spring and fall (before and after the thermocline sets) live bait is the prevalent bait of choice. Normally the live bait will be large sucker minnows or large chubs. The size of the live bait depends on the musky in the lake. I will normally use live bait between 12 and 16 inches in length. Only larger muskies will go for these baits and the smaller muskies will not be able to bite them. When using live bait, hooking the bait is critical. When fishing below a large bobber, the hook will need to be hooked through the bait behind the dorsal fin; this will allow the bait to appear to swim naturally. A circle hook is the best hook to use for live bait. This is because it is normally smaller than any other type of hook, but has a wider hook gap. The depth of the bait also depends on what type of water you are fishing. Live bait fishing is done along weed edges and in pockets and turns of weed lines. IF fishing weed edges, a deeper presentation is needed because the water is deeper. If fishing in pockets and turns in the weed line a shallower approach is needed due to shallower water.

Setting the hook is different between the two styles. When using artificial baits, the hook will need to be set immediately upon the strike. Live bait will need to be set once the musky has the hook in its mouth. This sometimes will take up to a minute. When setting the hook, picture a very large dial clock in front of you. When fishing with artificial baits, set the hook by lifting the rod between 12:00 and 3:00 on the clock face, this will drive the hooks from the artificial bait into the mouth of the fish. When using live bait, lift the rod between 3:00 and 6:00, this will drive the circle hook into the corner of the fish's mouth. When setting the hook in either presentation, try to jerk the rod as hard as you can in the 'times' I described above. Remember that the musky's mouth is as hard as bone and the hooks need to be driven in for a solid hook set.

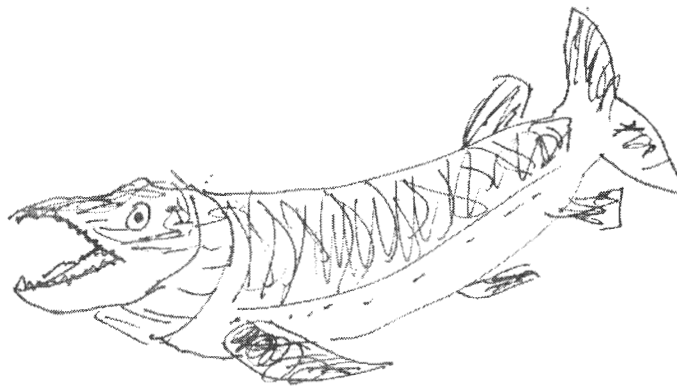
Fighting, landing, and handling the musky are the same with both techniques. Fight the musky and land it as quickly as possible without injuring the fish. While fighting the fish, make sure that the reel drag is set tight enough that the fish can pull line if it decides to run but you can still reel in against the weight of a heavy fish. A rule of thumb that I use for setting a drag on a reel is to wrap the line once around my hand and pull against the reel. I want to barely be able to pull line out of the reel doing this. You can also set the drag looser or tighter depending on the cover you are fishing. If fishing open water, set the drag a little looser to allow the fish to make longer runs. If fishing heavy cover, set the drag tighter because odds are the fish will dive deep into the cover and will need to be pulled free. Remember that while fighting a fish, constant tension will need to be on the line and fish. If the line becomes loose, the hooks very easily could come free. If the fish starts to 'tail walk' near the boat, (a tail walk is when the fish jumps out of the water and appears to walk on the water with its tail) make sure to keep a close eye on the lure while keeping tension on the line. This is when the musky is most prone to throw a lure from its mouth. Since tension must be kept on the line, and the fish is near the boat, the lure may fly towards you if it comes loose. A good remedy for this is to keep the rod tip away from above your head. Remember the 2:00 rule stated earlier. Keep the rod tip pointed towards 2:00 on the clock this way the lure will fly up and away from you to the right.

Once the fight is over and the fish is ready to be landed in the net, make sure to be quick about landing the fish. A Musky will exert a lot of energy fighting the rod and reel; you want to make sure to return the fish with as much energy left as possible. When the fish is coming near the boat, make sure that you scoop the fish from the head and have the net as deep in the water as possible to avoid fowling the hooks into the net, therefore possibly causing injury to the fish. Keep the barrel of the net in the water after the fish is landed, try to keep the musky in the water as long as possible. Remove the hooks as quickly as possible using sturdy pliers. Long handled needle nosed pliers work best for musky. Be very careful of the mouth and gills of a musky. The teeth are razor sharp and the gill plates are also razor sharp. A good pair of rubber / Kevlar gloves is recommended for handling muskies and removing hooks. It has never happened to me, but I have heard stories from other musky fisherman that a musky can clamp down on a hand or fingers and lacerate a hand so bad that surgery is needed to repair the damage. If the hooks cannot be removed quickly, just cut the hook shank and leave that part of the hook still in the musky's mouth. The hook will corrode and drop out within a week. Doing this is a lot better than trying to remove the hook and causing an injury to the fish, which may be mortal to the fish.

Once the fish is ready to be released, make sure to hold the fish with one hand holding the gizzard. This is the area under the neck, between the gill plates. The other hand needs to cradle the fish's stomach. Remember that a fish lives in the water horizontally, not vertically. If a fish would be lifted out of the water vertically, the internal organs would not be supported correctly and could tear loose and cause a mortal injury to the fish. While holding the fish correctly, get a good picture taken and lean over and lay the fish in the water. Do not let the fish go, in fact hold onto the tail of the fish and help it to stay horizontal in the water. If possible, do this while facing into any wind or waves that are coming into the side of the boat, this will help to get more oxygen into the fish's gills. Sometimes it may take up to ten minutes of assistance for a fish to revive enough to swim on its own, sometimes it takes a minute. Once the fish is ready, it will swim away on its own. Never let a fish go and sink, it will drown because oxygen will not flow over the gills. It is better to hold onto the tail and have it splash you with an aggravated swipe of its tail, then to possibly kill one by letting it sink. After the fish is released, take a breather and remember with a smile the fight and the fish. Now go ahead and try to catch the fish of 1,000 casts. Hopefully it will not be the fish of 10,000 casts as some people call it.

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**Amber Hauptert** loves to write essays and find different ways to catch the reader's attention. She also enjoys helping those in need of assistance, and believes that everyone should experience farm life. Because she grew up on the farm she learned how to ride four wheelers and enjoys a ride every time she goes home to visit. Her dream is to become an English teacher and show

others that there is more to writing than just completing the homework assignment.

### *Research Essay*

## TOO YOUNG TO BE SEXY

Imagine you're in a room filled with rushing people. Everywhere you look you see sparkles and glitter in copious amounts. Everyone in the room is getting her hair and makeup done, changing into outfits of all kinds, and some people are even throwing a fit. Now, take a closer look, and you will realize that everyone in the room is getting ready for a pageant, and all of them are children. You will also notice they are wearing very provocative outfits and look doll like.

Children who are in pageants spend the majority of their time practicing for an upcoming pageant, getting fake tans and fake teeth, and also spending way too much money on outfits and preparation for the show. Starting pageants at such a young age can cause psychological confusion and damage later on in life. Where do you draw the line?

One reason child beauty pageant have become such a publically debated issue is because of the TLC show *Toddlers & Tiaras*. Since the show has aired, more than two million people watch the show every week (Trigg, West, and Aradillas 162). The problem with having so many viewers is you don't know who is watching your child perform. A registered sex offender could easily be watching the show, trying to figure out every little thing about your child and end up stalking or harming her, causing a tragedy.

On December 26, 1996, JonBenet Ramsey was found dead in her home at the age of six. Her parents awoke to find her missing from her room and an \$118,000 ransom note. Later, she was found by her father in the basement of their home. JonBenet had been in pageants starting at a young age, performing and winning many of them (Sable). If you look back at the outfits children wore in the past, you would notice how different they are from today, but still very suggestive. Police believed that the killer was someone outside of the family, a pedophile. Sadly, the case remains unsolved and the family is left with no answer, and no end to their tragedy (Sable).

This piece of history hangs over the heads of all pageant parents and raises the question: how can they exploit their children in such a provocative way? With all the makeup, fake hair, and fake tans, it's no wonder why this is a largely debated issue. They are no longer children but are now a glorified mini-Barbie. It's perfectly normal for children to play dress up, but it's not normal to alter them completely on a regular basis. There has to be some kind of worry the parents have about entering their children in a pageant and dressing them like adults. I would be worried for my child's safety even without enrolling her in a pageant. The world we live in today is not the same as it was when pageants started.

Beauty pageants began in 1921, but child beauty pageants weren't introduced until the 1960's with minimal restrictions (Nussbaum). When first started they were used by an Atlantic City hotel owner as a marketing tool to keep tourists in town longer. Beauty pageants grew and continued until 1929 when the Great Depression hit (Nussbaum). The Attorney General of the Department of Justice in California states: "There is no law that prescribes how a pageant must be managed, the rules are set by each contest promoter" (Nussbaum). With that being said, the only people who have the ability to decide what they're child will wear in a pageant are the parents. They have the authority to say yes or no to anything their child thinks she needs. No one can tell them how to spend their money.

On average, pageants cost between \$250 and \$800 just to enter locally (Giroux 39). That total does not include money spent on hair, makeup, tanning, teeth, and outfits. According to *People* magazine, one child's family spent a total of \$3,703 on one pageant. Her dress alone cost \$1,800, and for her registration they spent \$1,000 (Trigg, West, and Aradillas 165). One pageant mom admits, "You have to be dedicated if you want to run with the big dogs, and it's very expensive. You're never going to win that money back, even if they win every weekend. But you've got to do it, because it's something you enjoy as a family" (Trigg, West, and Aradillas 168). The real question is does the family, the parents, or the child enjoy it more?

With as much as pageants cost, it's amazing that people are able to afford them. Typically, people who enter local pageants are from a working class background. Middle to upper class families usually enter in the larger and more expensive pageants (Giroux 39). Many pageant parents argue that there is nothing better than winning a pageant to boost the confidence of their child (Trigg, West, and Aradillas 168). To some, this style of "confidence boost" seems great, but to others it seems outrageous. Not only do people see it as a way of damaging their child's psychological wellbeing, but they see it as an excuse for children to believe they can get away with anything because they are so used to being pampered. Many also feel that starting pageants too young can have a damaging effect on how children will feel about their appearance in the future.

In extreme cases, body-image experts warn that these children may eventually become obsessed with their appearance, putting them at risk for eating disorders or making them seek out plastic surgery (Trigg, West, and Aradillas 166). If you continually apply makeup and other cosmetic enhancements to your child in order for her to have the upper hand in judging, your child will never feel good enough without any of these things. No child should have to think that she isn't pretty enough without the extra beauty advancements. It's no wonder they are more prone to eating disorders and plastic surgery. I would feel the same if I were judged on looks starting at such a young age.

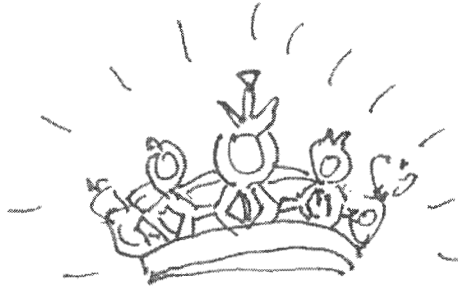
With as many events as there are going on every week in America, I don't foresee pageant life ever coming to an end. But I do have hopes that parents will realize how explicitly dressed their children are and tone it down. Although kids find pageants fun and see it as a hobby, something has to change before it's too late. Nobody wants to have a child taken advantage of like JonBenet Ramsey. So ask yourself again, where do you draw the line?

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**Tiffany Berner** is 22 yrs old, and a full time student. In her free time she works and plays with her 1 year old Shih Tzu named Riley. She is working on and AA in liberal arts while she figures out what she wants to be when she grows up.

### *Art Interpretation Essay*

## **AN ESCAPE TO SALVATION**

Upon entering the lower level of the Mary and John Pappajohn Gallery in the Richard Myer Wing, my first thought was to go look at the three vacuums stacked one on the other. Beyond that one couldn't miss the painting, *Untitled 1987-88* composed by Anselm Kiefer, due to its sheer size. Imagine a two stall garage, but with elements making it a three dimensional painting. People wouldn't be able to pass without having their eyes drawn. What caught my attention right away were the ladder and ballet shoes that hang atop the painting. It intrigued me to look at the placard to get an idea of what the meaning or title is which disappointingly reads *Untitled*. This means the title is open to a person's own interpretation. Brian Boucher, art critic and writer explains how Keifer is known for his works of "historical, mythological and literary themes that animate post war German culture"(Artchive). Looking at it for just a moment's time makes one curious why there is a ladder, ballet slippers, wire and two sets of railroad tracks.. From understanding Kiefer's post-war German style, it can be concluded that this painting depicts the aftermath of the Holocaust. This has people wanting more understanding of the symbolic messages of the charred chaos that combines to make this painting a whole.

*Untitled* is an impressionist piece with specific objects being the subject matter. Gazing up at the top of the painting there is a metal sheet of a dark stormy grey that stretches the width of the entire length. I was approached by an art center employee; he explained to me that this metal panel has been believed to have come from a cathedral that was burnt down during the war. This panel represents the struggle against Nazism and escaping mankind's worst impulses (Noun, Roy, Schulze and



Worthen 154-155). In the middle, an old, burned, unstable ladder, full of both vertical and horizontal lines which are a nickel grey, hangs atop of the metal sheet. There to symbolize the climb to salvation. The condition of this ladder is to represent the difficulty present to accomplish such salvation (Noun, Roy, Schulze and Worthen 154-155). Hanging from the ladder are two scorched ballet slippers representing all the people who lost their lives that could've been artists in their own light.

The medium in which the painting is created uses oil, acrylic, emulsion, and ash (Noun, Roy, Schulze and Worthen 154-155). Oil paint uses a combination of linseed oil, varnish and turpentine to produce a thin or thick consistency (Martin, and Jacobus 71). In this case it was used as a thick consistency to give the effect of layers. Looking in the background it appears to be a town that sits my thoughts on it is that it was a concentration camp for Jewish people. Acrylic is a form of plastic resin that dries quickly and is flexible to apply and use (Martin, and Jacobus 74). Using this type of paint ensures that the color will not fade or age with time. Ash is also used as a mixed media to create the effect of rusty, burnt, old train tracks. The tracks in the middle are made of vertical lines that are a rustic copper color. When looking around the tracks it appears beaten up and burnt as though someone took a torch to the painting giving its charred look. This could be seen as a portrayal of those tracks never being used again to bring people to their deaths.

After knowing the layout of the major symbols at base of the tracks the German word "abend" is inscribed, meaning "evening". Germans believed that the setting sun meant the end of life and the beginning of a soul's journey into eternity (Noun, Roy, Schulze and Worthen 154-155). This may be why the painting looks dark like nightfall. Located to the right of the ballet slippers is the word "land", believed to be the land soaked with blood from all the victims. Also visible is "EU" on the right edge of the painting which people speculate as Kiefer saying, "this is Europe". After these tragic events Germans weren't liked, the meaning Kiefer might have been trying to give is that with every mistake comes a lesson learned.

Knowing Anselm's style of post-war German style, this only slightly narrows the countless possibilities of interpretation. Upon entry of the Des Moines art Center and traveling down a staircase to the Mary and John Pappajohn Gallery the infamous piece "*Untitled*" hangs. Across from it is a bench for people to sit on while he or she takes in the painting and its entire message. *Untitled* needs to be viewed with an open mind for endless possibilities. Of course the giant blue plug and shop vacuums are enough to catch anyone's eye, but all the history put into one remarkably large three dimensional painting was all I needed to keep me consumed in this painting. My beliefs of the

Holocaust are that it was horrible, tragic, and unneeded. The portrayal of this is remarkable to me and to different viewers it may mean different things. To me this means the chance for a change.

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**Erin Doran** has returned to the academic world after nearly fourteen years out of school. She has decided to continue her education at DMACC and hopes to earn her AAS by 2014. She is the proud mom of three beautiful boys and hopes to be a positive role model to her kids by earning her degree.

### *Film Critique Essay*

## A NEW FOUND LAND

In the movie *The Station Agent*, written and directed by Thomas McCarthy, the life of a man suffering from dwarfism is explored, along with his one passion in life; trains. McCarthy portrays the man, Finbar McBride (Peter Dinklage) as quiet and content to lead his life in relative solitude. This film not only depicts the struggles he endures as a dwarf, but uses trains as a recurring symbol throughout the film while Fin explores new relationships in his life. Thomas McCarthy creatively uses various editing techniques and camera angles, along with a truly touching underlying subject matter to present the movie as not just mere entertainment, but as art.

As the movie opens there is a shot of trains moving, then a close up of Fin smoking a cigarette on a roof top. The shot pans out and the audience sees for the first time that Fin is a dwarf. Fin carries a train station agent's pocket watch and checks the time on it. Two of the main themes in the film are presented in these first few moments; dwarfism and Fin's introverted lifestyle; which is, essentially, much like the life of a station agent. He gets ready to go to work and meets his boss and friend Henry (Paul Benjamin) in the hallway. It appears that they live together, work together, and are each-others only confidants. After work, they go to dinner together and to a movie showing about train chasing. Their relationship is simple, somewhat boring, but it appears they have created a bond based on their mutual love of trains.

The next day the routine continues. There is a close up of Fin working on a model train set and a plastic conductor man falls over onto its side. At the same time as this close up there is the sound of a thud as Henry falls to the floor. This is one of the first examples of trains being symbolic in the film. There is a jump cut to Fin sitting on a

chair at a lawyer's office. The lawyer explains that Henry has bequeathed him a train station in a remote part of New Jersey called Newfoundland. The name of the town offers a bit of foreshadowing in what is to come for Fin.

Fin leaves the old store and apartment and heads out to find his new home. The director uses a series of montage shots to capture his journey to Newfoundland. When he gets there he finds an old train station, a few rail cars and a set of tracks right in front of the station. As Fin enters, all the camera shots are at a low angle to capture the rooms from Fin's perspective. His new home appears to be isolated and quiet, except for the trains, just the way Fin wants it.

The next day, however, Fin meets Joe (Bobby Cannavale), a young man that sells coffee out of a truck that he parks near the station house. Joe is basically the opposite of Fin. He is overly outgoing, wants to make friends right away, and proceeds to shove his way into Fin's life from day one. This appears to be a theme with the new people in Fin's life. The same day, Olivia (Patricia Clarkson) almost runs Fin over not once but twice on the same road. Olivia goes to get coffee from Joe and finds out where Fin lives. This begins the sometimes awkward but essentially healing relationship between these three characters.

Fin would walk everywhere he went because he didn't know how to drive a car. He would most often walk up and down the railroad tracks. Joe would ask over and over again until Fin finally let him walk with him. McCarthy cut to a long shot of the two of them walking along the tracks; a two car train. In these scenes the director uses a following shot to keep pace with them as they walk (Martin & Jacobus 302). As their friendship grows and Joe uses his outgoing personality to draw Olivia into their walk, so grows their "train" of friendship.

Joe and Olivia find out that Fin has a passion for train chasing but has never been able to experience it due to his physical limitations. Olivia gives Fin a camcorder and Joe takes Fin on his first train chasing adventure. The director uses a tracking shot as they race along, adding to the excitement. They all get together to watch Fin's "premier" at Olivia's house. The ease of their relationships is clear at this point, Fin's trains have brought them together. Unfortunately, the next day Olivia's husband catches them all together and Olivia is tossed into a dark place, dealing with the recent death of her son and withdraws from the friendship.

Fin doesn't give up, however, and goes back to Olivia's house. He finds her on her kitchen floor after having taken a bottle of pills. Despite the recent hard times in their relationship, both Fin and Joe are waiting for Olivia when she is released from the

hospital. The scene cuts to a shot of the three of them, once again sitting together in an easy kind of silence. It is a friendship that none of them had ever known before, and one that all of them had desperately needed.

Although their relationships hit a few snags along the way, Fin, Joe and Olivia have all found a connection in each other that helps them heal in their own way. Fin has finally begun opening up to them. He laughs with them, talks with them, and feels accepted for who he is instead of being judged based on his size. Olivia clings to the friendship as a way of coping with her son's death. Joe is basically attention starved, and has finally found a bond with these two people that satisfy him. Each character has come to this remote town for different reasons; to heal, to help family, to belong somewhere. What they found in this new land is each other.

Thomas McCarthy has artfully created a heart-warming film about overcoming diversity and the bonds of friendship that can be formed despite differences. His use of lighting, editing, camera angles and storyline add to this film's artistic vision. Award winning director Sydney Pollack once said "Editing feels almost like sculpting or a form of continuing the writing process" ([theactingworkshop.com](http://theactingworkshop.com)). I agree with this statement because film, like sculpting or writing, is as much about art as it is entertainment. McCarthy proves this in his simple and poignant film, *The Station Agent*.

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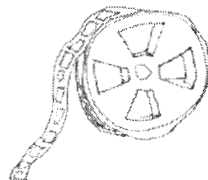
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# CONTRIBUTORS



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<b>Algreen</b>	Megan 1
<b>Berner</b>	Tiffany 93
<b>Collier</b>	Garfield 40
<b>Doran</b>	Erin 96
<b>DuPass</b>	Kyle 77
<b>Fees</b>	Jessica 55
<b>Ferguson</b>	Megan 6
<b>Frey</b>	Elliott 15
<b>Gates</b>	Tim 34
<b>Hanrahan</b>	Michael 81
<b>Hauptert</b>	Amber 89
<b>Kainz</b>	Dan 83
<b>Korth</b>	Crystal 69
<b>Lauer</b>	Sarah 62
<b>Lynch</b>	Jacob 21
<b>McCarl</b>	Coy 30
<b>McCarthy</b>	Zachary 45
<b>Meyer</b>	Gary 26
<b>Owen</b>	Karen 11
<b>Pueschel</b>	Scott 73
<b>Stevens</b>	Joshua 59
<b>Taylor</b>	Katie 66
<b>Williams</b>	Leticia 43

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