



# MIAMI UNIVERSITY

O X F O R D O H I O



## Featuring Student Work by

Allison Begin, Renee Botens, Brian Crum, kristin Gatzloff,  
Allison Holzgang, Brett Kobie, Emily kottman, Elisabeth Price,  
William Richert, Susan Schoer, Ashley Shanteau, Adam Todd, Megan Wassil,  
Sarah Weyrich, Sarah Wilson, Melissa Woehr, Elisabeth Wright

**Miami University  
Best of Portfolios 2000**

Supervising Editor  
Morris Young

Editorial Board  
Brenda Helmbrecht, Heidi Huse, Connie Kendall I, Tom Pace,  
Jeff Sommers, Michelle Trim, Whitney Womack

**Miami University  
Department of English  
Oxford, OH 45056**



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## Acknowledgments

In 1990, Miami University became the first institution of higher learning to award students college credit and advanced placement based on a collection of their best high school writing. The Miami University Portfolio Writing Program was established by Laurel Black, Don Daiker, Jeffrey Summers, and Gail Stygall in order to value and encourage high school writing and to provide a fairer way of evaluating it than the standard timed placement examinations. The success of the program — as evidenced by the fact that in 1998, nearly 20% of Miami's incoming class chose to submit a portfolio — owes much to the continuing support of Dianne Sadoff, Chair of the Department of English, former Chair, C. Barry Chabot, and of College Composition Directors, Jennie Dautermann, Mary Fuller, John Heyda, Susan Jarratt, Max Morenberg, and Diana Royer.

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## Introduction

*This portfolio is not me. It is my writing. I could tell you that I am a farm girl, that I do not like cliques, or that society is always on the brink of chaos, but it would not give you a true sense of who I am. I could write ten drafts of each piece, yet my character would not be clearly defined in your mind. You would not be able to pick me out of a crowd just because you read my portfolio. I am sorry that you will not know me after you have read my portfolio, but I am confident that you will know my writing.*

—Ashley Shanteau, Reflective Letter

As these opening lines from Ashley Shanteau’s Reflective Letter suggests, her writing portfolio cannot completely present a “true sense” of her. However, as Ashley also points out, she is “confident that you will know her writing.” This is the goal of the Miami University Portfolio Program—to provide incoming first-year students with the opportunity to demonstrate their skill and depth as writers. While Miami University recognizes the value of writing instruction at the college level, it also believes that there are students who are already writing at a very high level and who can benefit from submitting a portfolio for credit. Over the last 10 years we have averaged 400-500 portfolios submitted for credit out of an entering first-year class of about 3000 students. Of these 400-500 portfolios about half receive either 3 or 6 credits. While we encourage students to submit a portfolio, we also have very high standards. *The Best of Miami University’s Portfolios 2000* is meant to share with you outstanding work submitted last year as well as to assist you in preparing a portfolio.

The creation of a writing portfolio is a process, where writers select pieces, revise their writing, and think about how they compose this portfolio. We chose the following portfolios and essays to appear in *The Best of Miami University’s Portfolios 2000* because each reflects this process of writing, where individual authors have carefully thought out and revised their writing to articulate his or her individual voice and style as well as to address a specific audience and purpose. For example, in his Reflective Letter, Adam Todd creates an imaginary conversation with a portfolio evaluator to describe what he has included in his portfolio. Renee Boten’s story, “Italia Skating Clubbed: Assault in 22<sup>nd</sup> Degree,” challenges the reader with a satire of the world of competitive ice skating. With wit and insight in her essay, “Catholics in a Cadillac,” Kristen Gatzlaff describes the joy and importance of a senior citizen nursing home for the poor. And in “Tales of a Strange Love” Brett Kobie is able to present a sharp and useful analysis of Stanley Kubrick’s 1964 film, *Dr. Strangelove*. Complete portfolios by William Richert, Susan Schoer, and Sarah Weyrich represent what we saw as overall excellence in both the written work and the compiling of the portfolio. These, as well as the other entries in *The Best of Miami University’s Portfolios 2000*, offer a myriad of approaches to writing.

*The Best of Miami University’s Portfolios 2000* consists of three complete portfolios and selections from fourteen others. A complete portfolio consists of four pieces: 1) a reflective letter introducing the author and the portfolio; 2) a narrative or short story; 3) an explanatory, exploratory or persuasive essay; and 4) a response to a text. Each section and complete portfolio is prefaced with an introduction explaining why *The Best of Miami University’s Portfolios* Committee members evaluated it so highly.

All portfolios are evaluated by at least two readers according to a six-point scoring scale: the 2000 Scoring Guide is reprinted in the Appendix. A portfolio rated “very good” or “excellent” (“5” or “6” on the scoring scale) earns six credits in college composition and completely fulfills the university writing requirements. A portfolio rated “good” (“4” on the scoring scale) earns three credits in college composition as well as advanced placement (ENG 113). A portfolio rated “average” or lower (“3,” “2,” or “1” on the scoring scale) means the student will enroll for two semesters of college composition.

While creating a portfolio is an added time investment, such an endeavor is a worthwhile project not only for the opportunity to potentially earn college credit, but also for the experience students gain from creating a portfolio, an activity they will most likely be required to do at some point in their college career. Portfolios encourage authors to approach texts with an eye to revision, and permit readers to experience the many facets of a particular author’s style of composition. However, it should be noted that the entries presented here should not serve as templates or “models” but rather as a challenge to future writers to employ dynamic styles of writing and to enter into new areas of content.

Our intention in presenting these pieces is to encourage each and every writer—as we are all writers—to produce and submit what he or she feels is his or her best work. In doing so, we hope that your experience matches Melissa Woehr’s when she describes in her Reflective Letter the “artistic” process of putting together her portfolio: “If artists resist their artistic spirits they may spare themselves some pain. However, they would live without truly living. They would not know themselves. Their world would be in shades of gray instead of brilliant lights and darks. Being an artist, in the sense of how I think rather than what I do, is an important part of who I am. In the following pages, you will read some of the art that I have created. Each piece reflects me at a specific time. Together, they begin to illustrate my personality. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share some of my art, and some of my soul, with you.”

## Reflective Letter

*The reflective letter, addressed to Miami University writing teachers, sets the tone for the portfolio, introducing not only the writer but the individual pieces as well. Readers are not expecting a narrative of your experiences and growth as a writer but, rather, evidence of the critical reflection used in assembling and producing the portfolio. To that end, most useful letters explicitly introduce the pieces and explain the purpose and audience for each piece. Both creative and more traditional letters of introduction are acceptable.*

As evidenced in this collection of reflective letters from Portfolios 2000, the writing styles with which the authors introduce themselves and their work vary widely. Yet, equally evident is the sense that each letter was crafted by a writer who can successfully work within this genre. Ashley Shanteau, in traditional letter form, describes with a powerful voice the process of assembling her portfolio. Offering a variety of work, Ashley effectively connects each piece of writing by clearly explaining its purpose and its significance to her readers. Melissa Woehr's reflective letter combines the traditional letter form with a controlling theme – the definition of an artist. Melissa's letter deftly weaves her personal views about pursuing an artistic life with a careful description of the writing she includes in her portfolio. The final two letters presented here, written by Brian Crum and Adam Todd, respectively, represent a break from the traditional reflective letter form. Brian imagines himself writing to a friend he calls "Michael" in order to assume what he considers to be a more comfortable writing position. His letter is provocatively written, deliberate in its attention to both the content and the context of his portfolio. Similarly, Adam creates a conversation between himself and an imagined "Evaluator." By using dialogue and description, his letter boldly adds a few conventions of fiction to the genre of letter writing.

All four of these letters are offered to show the wide range of options within this genre that are available to writers. Certainly, these letters show that the four selected authors are able to complete the task of introducing themselves and their writing effectively. Each author also makes apparent the critical reflection that went into choosing and assembling his/her portfolio. To that end, these letters successfully set the tone and prepare the readers to engage with the portfolio.

Be sure to look in the Complete Portfolio section to read other examples of the reflective letter.

## Reflective Letter—Ashley Shanteau

Dear Michael,

I suppose introductions are in order since I already know you, but you don't know me beyond this pile of paper. But first, I believe it is only fair to explain why you have assumed the compulsive, paranoid, paradoxical identity of my friend Michael, who, inconsequentially, would develop *another* complex if he were to realize that I am using his name in this great work of literature. Writing, or more exactly good writing, is a relatively new and therefore private experience for me. Because my writing is something I do not readily share with strangers, I would prefer to work under the guise that you (Anonymous English Professor) are, in fact, my close friend.

Now that you understand who you are, I feel that telling you a little more about myself is only right. I have been described as everything from insightful to humorous to maniacal, and, no matter what you hear from other people, I cannot fly, although I do carry a towel at all times. Sarcasm and duct tape are my greatest tools. The briefest and most accurate description of myself would be a young man who is caught between the youth of Holden Caulfield and the seriousness of Howard Roark but likes to call himself Jeff to avoid the alternatives of being Homer or Hobbes. To avoid more convoluted allusions and to diminish the lunacy, I will cut this letter short and let my writing introduce myself further.

The first work that I have included may provide the best insight into my life and thoughts. "Confessions of a Heathen" is a "coming out" story of my former closet-atheist life. Although some friends and family knew of my atheist beliefs, the majority of my peers did not know my "big, bad" secret. This personal narrative was the release valve for the strong feelings that I now proudly proclaim. I read my paper in classes, passed it through the halls and gave copies to friends. This paper took a journey that not only freed myself but also gave courage to other like-minded people who finally realized they weren't alone. This paper demonstrates the power of the written word and the positive changes that it can bring.

I knew little about the Kent State shootings when I started my research paper, "Four Days in May." This exploratory paper was my first attempt at in-depth research that explored multiple points of view before reaching a conclusion. The included paper is excerpted from the nineteen-page effort. By the time I completed the project, what had been merely an historical event instead became a vivid event to me. I visualized the events that unfolded thirty years earlier and was moved by the eyewitness accounts of grieving students and guardsmen.

My final essay is a response to *The Fountainhead* and, like my first essay, it reveals quite a bit about my personality. Being an atheist, *The Fountainhead* is the closest thing to a bible that I have ever read. The novel shows the importance of individualism and the moral perfection that comes from existing solely for oneself. The comparison of characters in the essay demonstrates the advantages of being true to oneself and the consequences of giving in to the masses.

So, dear friend, I truly hope that my letter has given you an honest journey into my mind and trust that you have enjoyed the trip.

Your friend.

## Reflective Letter—Melissa Woehr

Dear Miami University Writing Professors,

This portfolio is not me. It is my writing. I could tell you that I am a farm girl, that I do not like cliques, or that society is always on the brink of chaos, but it would not give you a true sense of who I am. I could write ten drafts of each piece, yet my character would not be clearly defined in your mind. You would not be able to pick me out of a crowd just because you read my portfolio. I am sorry that you will not know *me* after you have read my portfolio, but I am confident that you will know my writing.

“I Am a Farm Girl” is a piece that gives you a glimpse into my personal life. Originally written as a college admission essay, it focuses on something that makes me different from most students entering college: I have grown up on a farm. I was fully inspired to talk about myself, just like the rest of the common population. I basked in selfishness and took that unique opportunity to brag about my experiences. Instead of reflecting on *Macbeth*, I reflected on my life. Throughout my four years in high school, this is the piece of which I am most proud. It is not a lavish display of skill in diction or cultural literacy, but rather it screams my name in every possible way. From my straightforwardness to my enthusiasm for animals, I discuss many things that make me proud; therefore, I am proud of this piece.

Growing up as I have, I have not shared many things in common with my classmates. I attended an all girls Catholic high school located approximately 40 minutes away from my home. I found it difficult to find my niche amidst upper-middle class girls who lived in subdivisions and did not know the meaning of “work.” I expressed my frustrations in the piece entitled “Those Expectations.” Written during my junior year, the original draft of “Those Expectations” was dry and commonplace. It was the typical high school popularity essay, as many people have written many times. However, I dug it out from my English treasure chest and took a serious look at it for this portfolio. As I reread it, I wrenched at my former opinions. Did I really stereotype that badly? Due to that “digging,” I became more confident about my writing and myself, so I expanded the essay to include some relevance to the world. I set Rosa Parks and Mother Teresa as prime examples of the world’s courageous leaders. Not only did I have something to say about high school cliques, but I also wanted to speak about society as a whole. Perhaps the ending of high school and the oncoming of college played a role in my need to expand this piece beyond the thoughts of a frustrated teenage girl.

I wrote “Society Under a Microscope” during a time when I was taking my writing very seriously. I had just started my senior year, and I was trying to impress my AP British Literature teacher with my pizzazz in diction and literary style. However, it seems that the sun fizzled all creativeness out of me during the summer. Fortunately, after three drafts, I must say that “something works” about this piece, even if it isn’t that “something,” i.e., some sort of cleverness, that I was looking for originally. It has set a precedent for my organizational skills in writing. I like its rigidity; the brief outlining of the main topics in the introductory paragraph and further evaluation in the body paragraphs. It is straightforward and noncommittal to attempts at creativeness. After reading and analyzing much poetry, prose, and several plays this year, I have begun to appreciate

simplicity. Sometimes the reader just wants to read. “Simply” put, I am confident that “Society Under a Microscope” is a piece of naked textual evaluation without the frills of flamboyant phrasing.

Thank you for reading my portfolio. I enjoyed assembling this collection because it gave me the opportunity to evaluate my growth as a writer during my high school experience. I look forward to a future with the English Department at Miami University. Perhaps one day you will know *me* and not just my writing!

Sincerely,  
A Future Miami Student

## Reflective Letter—Brian Crum

Dear Miami University Writing Professors,

I have always felt a strange presence within me. For years I could not define it, but I knew it separated me from others. My family of engineering, math, and science majors wondered how I could prefer English to mathematics and jokingly called me “the oddball.” For years, I struggled to mimic my friends and not appear odd. Luckily, by ninth grade I had begun to grow tired of that fight and to enjoy being different. Through art and English classes, I soon discovered why I seem unusual: I have an artist’s soul. The knowledge that I am an artist was relieving but frightening. By defining myself as an artist, I committed myself to a new world not unlike the one Robert Frost describes when he writes:

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference. (ll. 16-20)

“The Road Not Taken” leads to a world that lies deeply within the soul. It is governed by dreams and fears, and populated by idiosyncrasies. The artist’s inner landscape is painted in deep and passionate hues. The sun shines brilliantly but it leaves some areas in darkness. An artist lives within this introverted country, which is both a great gift and a great sacrifice.

By searching for a better understanding of one’s self, the artist must walk apart from others. This separation is similar to the division I relate in “High School, Not Prime Time.” I showed a rough draft of this piece to several of my friends, all of whom are artists in their own respect, and they strongly agreed with my position. As artists and as over-achievers, we are often in contrast with the expected behaviors of teenagers. I first wrote this essay as a humorous reprieve from the stress of school. The strange quotes used as examples of dialogue are excerpts from conversations between myself and my friends. I later realized that there was a serious issue behind the story, and I molded the essay into a persuasive argument for a better depiction of teenagers in society.

The inner world of an artist is often too large for the artist’s physical being. Art is created as an outlet for some of the artist’s emotions and thoughts. Art is an attempt to free the soul. Artists must create to reach understanding and to express themselves. I wrote “Child’s Eye View” for this reason. While the specific details of that night are fading from my memory, the fear and anger I felt have remained vivid in my mind. To many others, such an experience may not have been important. However, I have always had the impressionable and sensitive nature that many artists possess, and so that night deeply affected me. I wrote the essay as a way to identify the root of my anti-war beliefs and to finally confront the fear that was created in me that night. The process of writing the essay also served as a reiteration of beliefs that were beginning to fade from my thoughts.

The usage of art as an escape is also shown in the two works I compare in my final essay. *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* and *Things Fall Apart* were written with the aid of their authors’ personal struggles against racism. While reading the two novels, I experienced worlds that

I had not known. In writing the comparative essay, I realized that those environments are not unusual. Both are characterized by the universal need for freedom and wisdom. Wisdom is not necessarily gained through age. Instead, it is acquired through a sensitivity to the world and an understanding of one's self. Wisdom is the goal toward which artists strive.

An artist possesses abilities for acute perception and creativity. However, those gifts can become controlling. As Charlotte Brontë expresses, "But this I know; the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master—something that at times strangely wills and works for itself." If artists resist their artistic spirits they may spare themselves some pain. However, they would live without truly living. They would not know themselves. Their world would be in shades of gray instead of brilliant lights and darks.

Being an artist, in the sense of how I think rather than what I do, is an important part of who I am. In the following pages, you will read some of the art that I have created. Each piece reflects me at a specific time. Together, they begin to illustrate my personality. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share some of my art, and some of my soul, with you.

Sincerely,  
A New Miami Student

## Reflective Letter—Adam Todd

Dear Evaluator,

I was told to be myself in this letter. I was told to appear to you, the evaluator, as I really am. I needed to have a conversation with you about my portfolio. How better to do that than by writing a hypothetical conversation between you and me regarding this collection?

“Hello, sir/madam,” I said. “How are you today?”

“Very well. Thank you,” replied the evaluator. “I am very interested in hearing about your portfolio, but first I’d like to hear a little bit about you.”

“Well, I’m an eighteen year old male from a average-sized southern Kentucky town. I’ve grown up in a middle-class white household. Throughout school, I have been in the vast majority both racially and economically, though I find diversity to be a wonderful thing in both people and my writing. Both in the world around me and in my writing, I enjoy exploring the unusual or offbeat aspects of life and society. I often try to shed new light on typical subjects and situations by looking at them in different ways or by placing different spins on them. Many times this approach results in a weaker product than a more conventional method might have produced, but often the result is an interesting, entertaining, and complete paper. That is what I have tried to share with you in this portfolio,” I explained.

“Thank you for sharing,” said the evaluator politely. “I’d like to hear a little bit about your personal narrative, ‘Leslie’s Choice.’”

“Oh, I’m glad you asked about that one. It is probably my favorite piece. I like this piece because it recounts an event in my life humorously, yet it has a serious epiphany. It describes a trip to the movie theater and the events leading up to it. It’s a story about what real maturity is and about being one’s self. This piece brought me the most pleasure to write. I was able to reevaluate an experience that I felt had no lasting value, to document it, and to ultimately draw meaning from it. When my friends who were involved in the experience read this piece, it brought them joy because they now also see value in this event. This piece provides more insight into my true self than any other piece in this portfolio. My feelings and thoughts are more honestly exposed in this narrative than in any other piece in this collection. I hope that you enjoy this piece as much as I do.”

“I’m sure that I will,” stated the evaluator with a nod of the head. “For your explanatory/persuasive piece, I see that you have selected ‘Take Advantage of the Safety Features on Automobiles.’ Tell me about this piece.”

“Well,” I paused to gather my thoughts, “this piece is unique in that it serves a double purpose. It educates and persuades. It educates people on the physics behind such automobile safety features as windshield wipers, airbags, and seatbelts. And it also attempts to persuade the audience, as the title says, to take advantage of these features by providing statistics and facts regarding their importance. I particularly like this piece because, while it has a distinctly mathematical and precise element to it, it is somewhat lighthearted and humorous. I wrote it in first person with the speaker being Sir Isaac Newton. Newton shares his opinion on automobile safety features as both a physicist and a member of the human race, creating an interesting perspective.”

“Wow!” the evaluator exclaimed. “I cannot wait to read that! And I’m not just saying that.”

But first I've got to hear about your response to the piece entitled 'Huck and Kevin,'" the evaluator begged.

"This is a piece that I originally wrote after seeing the *Home Alone* movies and reading *Huckleberry Finn*. This piece gave me an opportunity to explore the similarities between fictional characters of different media. I was able to explain how two fictional boys, Huckleberry Finn and Kevin McCallister, from two different media and set in two different eras closely mirrored each other in their personalities, the ways in which they reacted to society, and their interactions with other human beings."

"These pieces just keep sounding better," stated the evaluator. "But, unfortunately, my time with you is up. I have to go read your portfolio now. You seem like a fine young man and I'm sure your portfolio is absolutely wonderful. I will see you later."

I feel like that was a pretty good conversation. I was pretty much myself, and you seemed rather interested. At any rate, I was able to describe my portfolio to you. I hope you enjoy it.

Best wishes,  
Your Portfolio Friend

## A Narrative or Short Story

*This piece can be based on personal experience as a non-fiction narrative or can be a short work of fiction. Its aim is to communicate the significance of an experience or event through description, dialogue, and/or narration. Put another way, successful pieces show rather than tell. The writing can be personal and informal. This narrative or short story should have a title.*

Each of the four examples printed here illustrates qualities that our readers were drawn to in reading the narratives and short stories students submitted. As a group, they demonstrate the various ways authors can successfully and creatively write in this genre.

In “Italia Skating Clubbed: Assault in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Degree,” Renee Botens takes a unique approach to recreating for readers what life is like for members of a figure skating club. She creates a collage of scenes and dialogue that allows readers to eavesdrop on the behind-the-scenes interactions and intrigues among the skaters, coaches, and judges who make up a local figure skating community. The patchwork story is told with descriptive language and imagery, and with tongue-in-cheek humor, keeping readers involved in each vignette about the daily ups-and-downs of a figure skater’s experiences.

Allison Holzgang focuses her very powerful story on just a few hours of one man’s participation in history, the World War II, D-Day Allied invasion at Normandy. Allison presents a narrator-soldier who acts as a camera that lets readers see the chaos and horror of the battle, and who also allows us into his own thoughts and reflections upon the scene. Her attention to detail results in a moving and thoughtful narrative about the real costs of war to those called upon to experience it first-hand.

Instead of writing *about* sisters, Emily Kottman offers a letter *from* one sister *to* another, in which she meshes others’ thoughts about the sister relationship with the letter-writer’s thoughts about and experiences with her own sister. The letter is a reflection on the sisters’ lives together, written by the older sister as she leaves home for college. She wants her younger sibling to know that although she will no longer be at home, they will nevertheless always have each other’s love and support. Emily finds a creative way to present factual information based on research with personal reflection based on a young woman’s feelings about a younger sister.

Anyone with any experience driving long-distances will relate to Elisabeth Price’s narration of one driver’s lapses between the monotony of driving and the fantasy of day-dreaming. Her driver is driving on a starry night, in which the road comes to life and the car morphs into a spaceship taking off into the stars. Intermittent interactions with her passenger, her sleepy mom, snap her back to reality. This is a vividly descriptive, delightful tale of one road trip that grabs readers from the start, keeping them involved in the driver’s musings right up to the last line.

Most likely, no story or descriptive essay will contain all of the qualities represented in these examples. However, the authors whose works we have included use the particular elements described above in very effective ways and with finesse.

For more examples of essays in this genre, look in the examples of complete portfolios.

## Italia Skating Clubbed: Assault in 22<sup>nd</sup> Degree—Renee Botens

*Bee Daneeka*

It was all very confusing to Susie. She stepped on the ice and did the dance pattern as it had been written in the book. One moment she was doing the dance; the next moment she was formally charged with “failing to execute step 22 with the proper flow and edge quality, while boring the judge panel, skating in unpolished skates, excessively smiling and wearing the wrong color of black costume, and so on.” In short, the judges threw the test papers at her, and there she was, in front of the Head Judge, who wanted to know why she had dared to do step 22 wrong. Head Judge Upandchuck demanded a formal board meeting about the incident. Susie Skater replied with courtesy that she would rather just take her failed dance papers and retake the test at a later date. The Head Judge called all six hundred club members together for the meeting, sat down, and settled back.

“What did you mean,” she inquired slowly, “when you did step 22 wrong?”

“When, Mrs. Upandchuck?”

“I’m asking the questions. You’re answering them.”

“Yes, Mrs. Upandchuck. I - ”

“Did you think that you were here to tell me the way to do the step?”

“No, Mrs. Upandchuck. I - ”

“What did we bring you here for?”

“To discuss step 22.”

“You’re goddamn right,” roared the Head Judge. “Now suppose that you start telling us exactly what you’re doing before I march up to Colorado Springs and fail you on all of the tests you *have* passed.”

“I don’t think I ever did step 22.”

Susie looked across the room, and saw that the board members had resumed their trial judging practice, intently watching the proceedings with their eyes closed. Although their eyes were closed, and drool was forming at the side of their mouths, they would surely be able to make an informed decision on Susie’s case.

“How could you have not done step 22?”

“The Fourteenstep...”

“Did you, or did you not, do the Fourteenstep?”

“I did Mrs. Upchuck...”

“Then surely, you did the 22<sup>nd</sup> step.”

“But aren’t there only 14 steps in the Fourteenstep?”

“I’m asking the questions. You’re answering them.”

“The Fourteenstep...”

“That will be all. We Judges and Board Members do not have time to listen to Skaters. You will have to skate 22 extra sessions this week for challenging step 22.”

Susie went back to her locker, where she found that her shoes were no longer in their spot under her locker. They had been there before she had got on the ice. Now they were gone.

“Susie!! It’s great to see you!! I have missed you so much!! How was your test? I just

landed a triple-axel!! I'm going to Nordstrom's again after skating. I went there before skating too. I also have to get a \$500 sweater at BeBe, then I'll head over to Tiffany's and pick up another one of those diamond bracelets. Someone stole mine!! Can you believe it? Girls here are such bitches!! They steal!! Like, how rude can you be?"

"It's nice to see you Melanie, but I have to go to the ice monitors to see if they have seen my shoes."

"Someone stole those cheap Steve Madden's of yours? I can't believe it..." The door slammed as Susie walked out of the locker room. She did not bother asking the ice monitors if they had seen her shoes. She knew Melanie Minderbinder had taken them. Melanie had started a multi-national corporation called the USOC, or the United States Outstanding Clothiers. The corporation's goal was to make sure that all skaters were provided with the necessary designer accessories to complete their wardrobe. Melanie removed any necessary articles from skaters lockers for the sake of this cause. Melanie came out of the locker room.

"Did you find your shoes?" Too bad. She just happened to have some brand-new, orchid DKNY slings that were just Suzie's size. She gave her one of them, in exchange for one of the old skate guards from the lost-and-found.

#### *Head Judge Upchuck*

"Circle up!!"

"I'm not done with my make-up yet, Coach."

"One of the beads just fell off my dress!"

"Circle up!!" The veins bulged out of her neck. Coach Cullcart was getting angry.

"She's getting angry!"

"I'm getting angry!"

"She said she's getting angry!"

"Ok girls, now bow your heads. Let's say our prayer. I don't want any of that Kingdom of God or Valley of Death stuff. That's all too negative. What are you making that face for?"

"I'm sorry, coach, we just happen to like the Twenty-third psalm."

"What's in that one again?"

"That's the one you were just referring to, Coach. 'The Lord is my shepherd; I...'

"*That's* the one I was just referring to. It's out. What else do you guys know?"

"Psalm 107:8, 'Thank the Lord, for he satisfies the thirsty soul and fills the hungry soul with good.'"

"No food," the Coach decided. "You are not supposed to think about food." They thought harder.

"Corinthians 11:23...nope, that's food again."

"But what hope has the godless when God cuts him off and takes..."

"No cutting," declared the Coach. No need for reminders of the threat of disaster out on the ice.

"Men know how to mine silver..."

"No silver."

“O God, in mercy, bless us; let your face beam with joy as you...”

“No mercy.” Coach again declared. “Why can’t we take a more positive approach. Why can’t we pray for something good, like tighter blocks, for example? Couldn’t we pray for tighter blocks?”

“Well, yes Coach, I suppose we could...”

“Team Elan, ice side.” The ice monitor proclaimed.

“Girls, before we go, I’d like to walk down to the ice doing my favorite cheer. The ‘Ants Go Marching’ one.”

“No swinging arms! Heads high! The judges make their first impression by how you get on the ice! Louder!” Each skater said her verse of the song.

*“Elan goes marching eight by eight, hurrah, hurrah! Elan goes marching eight by eight, we’ll win, we’ve got the screws to their skates!”*

“Elan goes marching ten by ten, when we win first prize we’ll show them then!”

### *Coach Cullcart*

After the competition, Coach Cullcart made the requirements to be on the team more difficult. The skaters now had to pass their Senior Moves in the Field, and their Gold Dances. It made the other Coaches think that she was a hard-ass coach. The United States Figure Skating Association thought she was a hard-ass Coach, too. They gave her \$1,000 for being such a hard-ass Coach. Soon, she started making all of the skaters do fitness logs. Although the skaters did not have time to work out more than one hour per week in addition to their on-ice training, she required that the logs demonstrate that the skater had completed at least six hours of training. At first the logs were to be turned in monthly. She wanted to make sure that anyone on the team would be able to lift up the zamboni, or pirouette until they wore away a hole in the floor, should the need ever arise. Soon, the skaters had to do ten hours of ballet, weight and anaerobic training per week, and the logs were to be turned in at the end of the week. Later, the skaters had to turn in a fitness log each day before they could get on the ice, showing that they had put in 22 hours of training the previous day. This was to make sure that they had not lost the power, stamina, and poise that they had developed the day before, for the safety and well-being of the team. After questions had arisen over the dedication of the team members and their lack of ability in off-ice training, they were required to fax reports of their training every hour. These reports were to be faxed every hour, on the hour, no exceptions. Those that did not turn the log in were discharged from the team.

The judges began to recognize the team’s efforts, and at the monthly judges viewing of the team, approval that they were “on the right track” was given. Then Judge \_\_\_\_\_ de Tangler walked into the Coaches’ lounge. The other coaches parted like the Red Sea, until she reached Coach Cullcart’s desk. Judge \_\_\_\_\_ de Tangler had a frown of puzzled disapproval. With a voice that was gruff with age and resonant with ancient eminence and authority, she said:

“Gimme skate.”

Instead of skate, Coach Cullcart showed Judge \_\_\_\_\_ de Tangler the statistical analysis of the team’s training logs. Judge \_\_\_\_\_ de Tangler brushed it away with extreme displeasure the moment she recognized what it was.

“Gimme skate, I said,” she ordered loudly in harsh tones. Coach Cullcart began to tremble. She glanced to the other coaches pleadingly for guidance. For several horrible seconds, not a sound was heard. Then Captain Melanie Minderbinder nodded.

“Give her skate.”

Coach Cullcart took Judge \_\_\_\_\_ de Tangler to the ice. Judge \_\_\_\_\_ de Tangler opened her notepad and took out her glasses. She placed her rulebook beside her and her stop watch around her neck. Her eyes fell on the twenty skaters, then she roared:

“*Everybody skate!*”

“*Everybody skate!*” Melanie echoed in joyful relief, and the Fitness Log Crusade came to an end. The skaters did not have to touch a weight or ballet shoe ever again.

### *Melanie Minderbinder*

Bee Daneeka had risen from a nobody to a busybody in a matter of months. She established a self-appointed position for herself on the Board of Directors. Soon she would rule the world, but before then, her daughter had to make the team. She conducted hours and hours of behind-the-scenes work, for which many people owed her extensive appreciation. She was also the dedicated manager of the team’s try-outs, during which she had altered the judging of the skaters to proclaim her daughter the “number one skater.” Elena would now be guaranteed a spot. When the Board asked for documentation of the judging, she was disgusted. “What has this world come to when my previous certification by the Board of Directors and the fact that I have given so much of my time to this event only gets that same Board on my back? I had to clear up the judges’ numbers to make sure that they were easily legible, and that immoral Board has the nerve to accuse me of putting my daughter ahead. What is this world coming to?” Elena was given a spot. She had all of the highest credentials and was an excellent freestyle skater. She could dance like Punsalan and Swallow and could even do moves-in-the-field with her eyes closed. Her first practice with her team was solo, though. Previously, she had enjoyed swooping close to skaters on the dance ice. She would get closer and closer to hitting them, and they would get angry, which she found very amusing. But on the team ice, she found that she could not even skate on the correct foot. Team skating was much different. Once, as she was doing a treacherous lunge pass, Elena decided that it would be funny to swoop close to the skater that she was heading straight for, but she lost control and sliced her teammate’s leg at the knee. The teammate did a flip over Elena, slicing her on the chest. The pile-up of two became a pile of twenty when the next transition came. The other skaters, at high speed, were heading for Elena, and could not stop in time. After 2,222 stitches, there were only 2 skaters that were able to skate again. Susie was one of them, but soon, she realized that the other skaters were out to get her. She was always narrowly escaping their running into her, the judges were always trying to give her bad scores, and her clothes were always being stolen. The whole Italia Skating Club was against her.

After 13 years of skating with the team, Susie decided that she had to leave as soon as she could. She had to get out, so she made arrangements to go to Miami of USA.

“What are you going to do?”

“I’m going away, Coach.”

“Where are you going to go?”

“To Miami, like Shelley Orr.”

“Oh, no, no, no, no, no,” Coach Cullcart pleaded. “You’ll never make it. You can’t go to Miami. It’s absolutely insane. Your conscience will never let you rest.”

“God bless it.” Susie laughed.

“What about the disgrace?”

“What disgrace? I’m in more disgrace now.”

“It won’t be fun.”

“Yes it will”

“How do you feel?”

“Fine. No, I’m very frightened.”

“Goodbye, Susie. And good luck. We’ll meet again when the rivalry between our teams stops.”

## A Day at the Beach—Allison Holzgang

The sea transport stopped, and his army-issued black boots stepped onto solid ground, making an imprint in the sand along with a mark in his mind that would last a lifetime. With his jaw clenched, and gun in hand, he swiftly wove around the dodging bullets, following the path of his fellow comrades. In the midst of this agonizing journey, he heard a distant voice. “Over here Davis.” He recognized the voice that called his name. “Over here Davis, hurry up,” roared the voice urgently. It was coming from the left. Through the chaos of troops and bullets, he saw a pair of familiar dark brown eyes. He turned and swerved amongst the dead and bloodied.

“I can’t think of them,” he meditated. “I have to save myself.” Hundreds of soldiers were already wounded, screaming and crying out in excruciating pain. Finally, he found McKenna, who had been calling him, as well as his 94th Infantry Division comrades.

“We’re safe for now, since we’re up against the sand bank of the cliff. Once they let up to reload the artillery, we’ve got to run like a bat out of hell to that rock over there.” McKenna raised his dirt-covered index finger and pointed to a patch of rocky terrain about twenty yards away.

“That-that’s impossible Mac. We’ll be totally exposed, and we’ll have to cross a field of barbed wire.” Davis stammered out these impossible obstacles in his usual New York accent.

“No one ever said the war was going to be easy and without risks, Brooklyn. I thought people from your neighborhood were tougher than that.” McKenna jokingly replied, while reaching into the upper right pocket of his camouflage uniform, pulling out a small canister. He then opened it and put a substantial chunk of chewing tobacco in his left check. “I know it’s scary, but just say a little prayer and run like hell.” He then spat on the ground, wiped his parched lips, and listened for the shooting to cease.

Finally the firing stopped abruptly. The infantry commander let out his battle cry, “NOW! GO! GO! GO!”

Davis gripped his M-1 rifle, said a little prayer, and ran like mad. His normal six-foot, one-inch muscular stature was reduced to a three-foot, bent over, ape-like human, as he hovered close to the ground due to the atrocious maze of barbed wire. His steel blue eyes were fixed on the massive rock. Half way to his destination, the firing began its destruction again. His comrades fell left and right, shrieking with agony as they tumbled to the ground. Davis’ body was shaking with anxiety. He could feel his dog tags plastered to his heaving, sweaty chest. Suddenly, there was a deafening noise and a massive explosion only feet in front of him. The power of the bomb knocked him off his feet, thrusting him backwards. The troops in front of him were catapulted into the air, and then slammed to the ground due to the cruelties of gravity. Rubble as well as appendages hit his helmet and stung his body like hail from a storm. Yet, despite all of these obstacles, Davis got to his feet and ran even faster.

“Those damn Nazis won’t get me,” he murmured under his breath with determination. Brooklyn then found the rock through the smoke of the artillery fire. It was only a few feet away. He pushed his already fatigued body and reached the rock triumphantly. Slowly, but surely, more men reached the safety of the rock. Davis inspected the men’s faces trying to find McKenna.

Throughout the day, each soldier inched his way up the cliff, driving the Germans back. By dusk, they had claimed the entire beach.

When all was secure, Brooklyn started to take inventory amongst his comrades, trying to discover McKenna. They had been separated ever since the sand bank. He inquired about him, but no one had any information. As Davis started the trek back to his tent, he scanned the beach, which had become a graveyard. As his eyes surveyed the area, he found McKenna, his body sprawled out on the ground, hugging the red stained earth. The chewing tobacco was still in the left cheek of his mouth, and he was only inches from the rock where they had planned to meet. As Davis stared at McKenna's lifeless body, his last words shook the native New Yorker's soul. "No one ever said war was without risks." Brooklyn was numb with shock. After a moment of silence, he continued to hike back to his tent, dragging his worn feet behind him. Davis was too dejected to even cry for his old army buddy.

Davis reached the tent and opened the flap-like entrance. His muscular physique collapsed onto the cot. His hands felt down his army green undershirt and grabbed a silver locket. Davis pulled it out and opened it gingerly, careful not to get it dirty with his blood and mud stained hands. The locket revealed a beautiful young woman with light auburn hair. "I made it another day Abby," he whispered lovingly as he caressed the locket. "I made it another day." He kissed the locket and put it back underneath his shirt. Turning on his side, Davis fell into a light slumber wondering what the next day would bring.

## Sisters by Chance, Sisters by Choice—Emily Kottman

*A letter to my sister*

January 2, 2000

To my sister, Natalie, with gratitude and love for who you are and what you have meant to my life.

There is a story that I need to share with you. It begins, once upon a time on an island where all the feelings lived: happiness, sadness, knowledge, and all the others, including love. One day a tragedy occurred and it was announced that the island was sinking. As the island began to sink, all the feelings started to gather their things and depart from the island. Love was the only one that chose to stay and preserve the island as long as possible. Finally, when the island was almost totally under, love decided it was time to leave. She began calling out to the other feelings in their boats for help, but all the other feelings refused to help for different reasons. Time was the one that finally helped. He later explained that, "only time is capable of understanding how great love is." Love is a very complex emotion, and for that reason, it is something that many people do not comprehend. It is described as, "the disposition or state of feeling with regard to a person, which manifests itself in solitude for the welfare of the object, and usually also in delight in his presence and desire for his approval, warm affection, and attachment." Regardless if love is hard to understand, everyone is able to experience its great powers.

I feel that this little tale is extremely relevant to our relationship and represents everything from the journey we have so far shared together, the loyalty and love that we have developed over time, and the separate lives that we have begun to live under the same roof. Natalie, you are one of the kindest and most generous people that I know, and even though it is long overdue, in this letter I hope to express many things. You need to be told how much love I have for you—how important our relationship is to me, how much I enjoy being a part of your life while valuing our individuality—and how I hope that our relationship will grow even after we part ways from Mom and Dad.

One of the areas that love affects daily, with often no recognition, is family. Within families, love is shared between spouses, children, brothers and sisters. However, as Yale University professor of psychiatry, Theodore Lidz, explains in his classic textbook, *The Person*, "Sibling relationships can be almost as profoundly influential as the relationships with parents, and a person's relatedness to a brother or sister is often closer and more meaningful than the relationship to parents." Still, Carol Saline, author of *Sisters*, claims that, "Brothers share the biological link, but they're...well...just different. They rarely seem as emotionally glued as girls who grew up under the same roof." What sets sisters apart from brothers—and also from friends—is a very intimate meshing of heart, soul, and the mystical cords of memory. Great sister combos have appeared throughout history, dating all the way back to ancient Greek mythology when, on Mount Olympus, there were two lovely bands of sisters, the Muses and the Graces, according to renowned author on mythology, Edith Hamilton. In our case, I think the love dates back to when I was first told that I was going to have a little sister. Nat, I was so pumped. I was so glad that you were a girl rather than a boy. From

the second you were brought home, I couldn't wait to start playing with you. Of course it didn't take me a long time to realize that at that age you really weren't too much fun. All you did was sleep.

Yet, as you grew, I began to see how useful you were to my life. I always had someone to make fun of, argue with, steal the front seat from, or go get me something to drink when I was too lazy to do it myself. And for some reason, aside from the occasional tattle, you always seemed to go along with my ideas of how it should be. Of course, like all good things, this did not last long. Eventually, the battles increased and you started to fight back. At times, the fact that Mom forced us to share a room could have been viewed as a safety hazard. I can clearly remember sitting in front of a mirror and instructing you to look at your nose and notice how different it was from everyone else in our family. I then explained that the difference was nothing more than proof that you were most certainly adopted at birth.

Still, the journey continued and growing up, we have had many more good times than bad. My mind is full of vivid memories of swimming together at Lake Ozonia, playing games with the Bianchi's in the alley behind our house, "escaping" from the boring confines of family get-togethers, and always banding together on any issue against Mom and Dad. Later, as we reached our teenage years, we moved into the stage where I was always getting into trouble and you could do no wrong. Still, even then, the relationship between you and I was strong and you always tried to stick up for me. We have always been able to find the good in each other, even when some haven't been able to.

Though I am still a little bitter about the fact that you are considered the perfect daughter in the eyes of Mom and Dad, maybe that is how it was meant to be. According to Massachusetts Institute of Technology researcher, Frank J. Sulloway, in his new book, Born to Rebel, he reveals how birth order affects personality. Sulloway has come to a startling conclusion: "Not only are siblings who are raised together almost as different as people from different families, but their personalities can be predicted." Dr. Michael Maniaci of Downers Grove, explains that, "Firstborns tend to be socially dominant and resistant to change. Yet, later borns, on the other hand, are risk takers who are very concerned with justice and fairness, and often are the peacemakers in a family." I think that we certainly fit the mold for these guidelines.

The opposing roles among siblings can be seen in Jane Austen's, Sense and Sensibility. Jane Austen is a wonderful painter of family rituals and social customs. In her novel, the Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne, reach turning points in their romantic lives while struggling to cope with the new social territory of modest living. The separate choices that each sister makes about love are mirror images of their personalities and possibly even their birth order. Elinor, the eldest sister's view, "is to understand the world, not change it," states Everett Zimmerman in his review on the novel. Therefore, she is considered to hold the "sense" of the two sisters. However, Marianne, the younger sister, is thought to possess the trait of "sensibility," which is allied to emotion and she, therefore, is more concerned with the feeling and emotion involved with love and other aspects of life. Though the two share completely separate views on love, they still remain the best of friends and are able to see the value in the traits that the other bears.

Similarly, regardless of our age difference, or birth order, or views on life, through it all the love has always been there. I know that I can count on you for anything and I want you to know that

I will always have your back no matter what.

If you tell your sister to go to hell in twelve different languages and you need a quarter, you can say, 'I need a quarter.' And she'll give it to you. A friend may say, I don't want to see you again. And a friend you can give up. You can't give up a sister. You were born with them and you die with them. Or they die and leave you, and you feel absolutely discomfited. (Elizabeth Mead Steig)

Nat, I want you and I to be together until the end.

Therefore, don't think that just because I'm leaving to go away to school next year, any of my feelings will change. I won't let that happen. In Dorothy Allison's 1992 novel, Bastard Out of Carolina, one of the characters describes just such a feeling:

Seems like after that we were all grown up and everything was different. It's the way of things. One day you're all family together, fighting and hugging from one moment to the next, and then it's all gone. You're off making you own family, scared of what's coming next, and Lord, things have a way of running faster and faster all the time.

No matter what kind of relationship we have with each other—close or distant, loving or hostile, our history together will exert a profound effect on our future relationships with lovers, friends, coworkers, even our own children.

Sisters is probably the most competitive relationship within the family, but once the sisters are grown, it becomes the strongest relationship. On the whole, sisters would rather live with each other than anyone else in their old age. (Margaret Mead)

I love you always, now and forever.

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## Reality—Elisabeth Price

The damp surface of the highway gleamed in the glare of my headlights, reminding me of the glistening back of a wet, black eel. My brown hair hung in clumps along the nape of my neck, and my bare legs stuck to the vinyl seat in the summer humidity. I grabbed the window crank on the car door and twisted it until I felt a puff of clammy air brush across my forehead. My mom turned to me from where she had been sleeping in the passenger seat and smiled groggily at me.

“Four more hours. Still up to driving?”

I nodded. “Thanks to the combined effects of caffeine and rock ‘n’ roll.”

“We could stop at a hotel and continue in the morning.”

Grimacing, I shut the window as a truck thundered past us in the left lane. “No thanks. I’ve already wasted two days of my last week of vacation because of this college visit, and I don’t intend to lose any more.”

Mom nodded and settled back in her seat, readjusting her pillow. When I glanced over at her a few minutes later, she was snoozing. I was alone again with my music and the steady rhythmic vibrations of tires against the road.

Four more hours. I blinked carefully, trying to keep my mind from wandering, and stared out at the path illuminated by my headlights. Sets of twin red lights beamed steadily ahead of me, and glaring white ones streamed toward me on the other side of the highway. They reminded me of red and white blood cells, speeding through the darkened veins of an immense slumbering prehistoric creature.

The shadowy trees swirled past me, and I slowly became aware of the stars growing brighter above me. The black void of the night sky dropped onto the highway like a blanket, swallowing my ancient, box-shaped car, while the wet highway hissed underneath our tires as we crested a small hill. I felt a peculiar sensation as if the car had left the highway for an instant, and I waited for the tires to touch the highway again. We never landed. The universe had gathered us up into its endless folds, leaving the rhythms and steady droning of the highway far below us. I could sense the bony, rusted corners of our vehicle melting into one another as if the surface of the car had become my own skin. The dashboard expanded, glowing with the light of a thousand illuminated buttons. Gravity gradually dissipated. Only my seatbelt prevented me from floating from my seat, and I brushed back my long, shockingly scarlet locks, which floated around me as if I was underwater.

I reached over to the control panel and deftly flipped some of the switches in front of me. At my present speed, I would arrive at the solar system in the center of the galaxy in just under four hours. I glanced over at the dozing form beside me in the co-pilot seat and smiled. My navigator was unused to long stretches of space travel and had surrendered to her rejuvenation sequence in the middle of her shift. I decided not to wake her and stared in awe at the stars around me. More stars appeared as we approached the galaxy’s center. I spotted a diminutive topaz sphere rapidly circling one of the blazing white-gold stars. I pulled up on my controls to examine it closer. The sphere glowed in front of me, capturing my gaze like a gem in the folds of a jeweler’s black velvet cloth. A small field of craggy gray asteroids suddenly appeared directly in my path, and all at once I realized that we had drifted off course. Although I swerved to one side, my ship still shuddered violently as

small chunks of rock from the outskirts of the asteroid belt ricocheted off its hull.

Mom shifted slightly in her seat, and her eyelids fluttered. I quickly maneuvered away from the rumble strips, and the highway once again hummed softly under the car's wheels. My mom sighed and drifted back into a deep sleep. I took a sip of my coke and switched tapes. Three hours and thirty more minutes.

Yellow-tinted headlights shone into my car from behind, and then we rocked slightly in the back draft of a passing semi. I felt a strange sensation along my arms and legs, as if excess fat was being slicked from them and steely cords of muscle encased in form-fitting spandex were replacing them. My hands gripped the rubbery steering wheel rigidly, and I narrowed my eyes grimly at the truck's illuminated license plate. A chill shuddered through me, even in the muggy night. My arch-nemesis, Trukkarr, had just taken a cheap shot at my life! I cast a worried glance at my unconscious sidekick. A dark bruise spread across her temple in the place where Trukkarr had hit her only hours before.

Clenching my jaw firmly, I pressed the accelerator down and felt the rocket boosters in the back of my metallic-colored techno-car roar to life. I hurtled down the rain-drenched freeway until my headlights illuminated the entire back of Trukkarr's vehicle. Dirt was encrusted onto every surface of the semi, and mud ran down its sides in dingy rivulets. In fact, Trukkarr's truck looked just like every other eighteen-wheeler on the highway. However, I knew differently. I switched lanes effortlessly and pulled alongside Trukkarr. Now vengeance would be mine.

My sidekick stirred beside me on her seat. My heart leaped. Perhaps she would recover in time to help me defeat Trukkarr. She inhaled deeply, and her eyelids fluttered.

Abruptly she asked, "Aren't you going a little fast?"

I started and blinked down at the speedometer. "Oh, yeah. Sorry, Mom, got caught up in the road for a moment."

Mom sighed as I slowed down and the truck roared past us, leaving us in the wake of its exhaust fumes. I checked the glowing green numerals of the car's clock. Three hours and fifteen minutes left. I reached for my coke and placed its cool, moist edge against my sticky cheek before I took a sip. Mom leaned her head back against her head rest, rubbing her eyes wearily, and then shut them again.

I stared blankly at the highway. A curve slowly stretched out in front of me. The glistening black eel had decided to change course. I followed the crest of its back, feeling my tires bump across the snake-like fish's ridged muscles. I hazily wondered whether the eel ever became annoyed that we had painted white slashes across its back and then drove heavy vehicles down its spine. I could see the eel rising up, crushing the helpless tractor-trailers in its massive, white-toothed jaws. The eel's back suddenly rocked, its muscles bunching together. I stared as the eel's trunk-like body rose out of the earthy bed in which it had been hibernating for years. Soil and rocks fell off its slimy sides as the creature twisted up in front of me, a nightmarish grin spreading across its face.

The eel's frame knocked a sign to the ground, and I strained to see what the sign said. "Rest stop one mile." I breathed a sigh of relief and pulled off the eel's writhing coils as soon as I could. My mom raised her head groggily as we came to a stop.

“Rest stop, Mom.”

She yawned as I cut off the engine of our car and opened my door. An oppressive wave of humidity washed over me, as if I was stepping into a jungle. The lush leaves of the trees around the parking lot draped the walkway to the facility, and tigers’ eyes watched us warily from the underbrush. I walked with smooth, quiet strides and blinked into the darkness through the eyes of a jungle native. My sensitive ears listened attentively to the dull clomping sound of my companion’s footsteps, alert for any signs of distress.

Mom held the door of the rest area open for me, and I walked into the lobby, blinking as my eyes adjusted to the bright fluorescent lights. My sandals scuffed against the grimy tile floor, and I numbly pushed open the metal swinging door to the women’s rest room. I faced a line of mirrors and white sinks. I stared at my reflection, startled. A pale teenager with long, mousy, travel-mussed hair, dark circles under her eyes, and cheeks flushed with weariness gaped back at me. Me. Myself. Was I expecting someone else?

I turned away from the mirror and shuffled down the row of stalls. Dr. Vile had placed my brain into the body of a gawky teenage girl as I slept! I felt my eyes narrow in anger and the corners of my mouth sink into a frown. He had overstepped his limits this time. As soon as I reached my stealth jet, I would hunt him down and bring him to justice.

Three more hours.

## An Explanatory, Exploratory, or Persuasive Essay

*Generally speaking, essays in this category should be focused, informative treatments of specific subjects. This essay should provide much more than convincing examples of supporting data; it should examine multiple points of view and show strong evidence of critical thinking, awareness of audience, and attention to social context. If secondary sources are used, they must be documented correctly. This explanatory, exploratory, or persuasive essay should have a title.*

While this essay provides the author with a wide array of choices, ranging from explorations of historical or political subjects to explanations of scientific processes to editorials or commentaries about controversial topics, it can also be a difficult piece to select because there are so many options. The most successful pieces in this category are focused discussions of a specific topic or subject. If the essay is meant to explore a subject fully, it will probably include supporting information that has been carefully selected. If the essay is meant to be more persuasive it still should include appropriate support and discussion and not rely on simple opinion alone.

The two selections here are good examples of fully exploring and explaining a subject. Kristin Gatzlaff uses her essay, “Catholics in a Cadillac” to explore life at a senior citizen nursing home for the poor. She combines astute observations with the words of the senior home members, providing an often moving portrait of the lives of these people. Elizabeth Wright’s essay is a more typical examination of two historical figures, “Cesar Estrada Chavez and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.” What this essay does particularly well is to discuss these two figures within the context of a common theme of civil rights. The essay provides well thought-out and developed discussions and moves beyond a simple comparison/contrast format.

For more examples of the explanatory, exploratory, persuasive essay, see the complete portfolios.

## Catholics in a Cadillac—Kristin Gatzlaff

As Ethel Menerich sat with me on a bench to wait for the lunch line to die down in the dining room, she related a story to me. “A friend once asked me, ‘Do you know where you’re living?’ and of course I said, ‘Yes.’ But they asked me again, ‘Do you *really* know where you’re living?’ And I said, ‘Well yes, I know where I’m living.’ But they said, ‘You are living in the Cadillac of nursing homes!’”

“The Cadillac of nursing homes”—not exactly the description one might expect for a home which only takes in the poor. Little Sisters of the Poor Holy Family Residence provides extraordinary care for underprivileged people. I had volunteered at this nursing home for years, but until my first official site visit, I did not realize how much the environment of Little Sisters differs from common nursing homes.

Like most homes, I noticed the residents consisted mainly of women, which seemed logical based on life expectancy. Residents also dressed in elderly fashion. Their big floral prints, polyester fabrics, and knitted sweaters appear prevalent in every home. And like anywhere else, most residents of Little Sisters live in the home because they needed someone to take care of them. However, similarities end there. Through solid values of Christianity, friendliness, and family, Little Sisters of the Poor has created an atmosphere unlike that of any traditional nursing home.

On my first visit, I attended 10:30 a.m. mass, held in the home’s chapel. Here, I had my first encounter with the home’s religious values. Residents sat in wheelchairs, lining the back of the sanctuary, while those still able to walk filled the pews along with family and staff members. After surveying the room, I found the only open seat and took my place. “Do you think you could find me a hymnal?” asked a woman behind me. I unsuccessfully searched through several different books in the pew, but soon, I heard the fragile voice again, “That’s okay, I know most of them anyway.” Undoubtedly, years upon years of mass had taught this woman, and presumably the rest of the elderly in attendance, the countless words of hymns and praises.

The service carried on with singing, praying, kneeling, standing, sitting, and listening—a traditional Catholic mass. During the homily, I glanced to my left to see a nun with her eyes closed. She may have been praying, but I felt quite certain she sat resting peacefully. Turning around, I discovered the entire row of women in wheelchairs against the back wall, also dozing off temporarily. This seemed to discredit my recently developed idea of everyone’s adamant religious enlightenment. But looking further, the people of the home truly proved their Christian faith. When the service ended and the chapel began to empty, I asked the woman behind me, who had earlier asked for the hymnal, whether she wanted me to push her wheelchair back to her room. She declined. “No, I think I’m going to stay awhile, but thank you.” Looking around, I saw several other residents and most of the nuns sitting among the pews with heads bowed in prayer. I realized their worship continued past the mass; their faith ran deeper than a boring church service.

Even outside the chapel, one could easily find evidence of prominent Christianity in the home. Figures of Jesus and the Virgin Mary adorned tables and countertops, while Christian pictures and verses decorated the walls. When I entered the elevator on my way to speak with a resident on the fifth floor, I noticed a brightly colored, framed poster on the back wall proclaiming, “Open the Doors to Christ.” Likewise, the Serenity Prayer hung on the wall to my right. I noticed similar

items in every residential room I entered. Most of the residents reflected these ideas themselves, through crucifix necklaces, and pins. Mealtimes also reinforced this concept. Shortly after the Sunday morning service, “dinner” (lunch) continued to display Christianity. “Bless us, Oh Lord, for these, thy gifts...” two nuns spoke as they led the residents in grace before they ate.

Through these dominating symbols and acts, it became very clear to me that this home stood in abrupt contrast to the outside world of questionable values and religious diversity. “It was very different coming into a religious place,” Ann Telschow, a resident of two years, explained. “I was living in an apartment before coming here, but I liked it here right away.” I wondered whether all residents felt this way, guessing that not everyone had these strong roots in religion. “Oh, yes,” Ann remarked, sounding surprised when I asked. “Everybody goes to mass and they have mass every day here with many different services.” She repeated, “everybody goes to mass.”

Christian values also appeared through kindness toward others. While walking around the home, everyone I encountered smiled and greeted me. In the elevator, a staff member inquired, “What brings you here?...Oh, where do you go to school?...And where is that located?” When another person entered the elevator, the staff member excitedly told them, “This young lady is writing a paper on our home for her high school English class! Isn’t that nice?”

More important than the friendliness and enthusiasm directed toward me, kindness and respect transpired constantly between the staff and residents. Ethel joked, “Some day they are going to have to throw me out because they spoil me so. During a social one afternoon, Linda Swanson, the director of activities, reminded all the volunteers, “Make sure you serve all the residents first.” Meeting the needs of the residents always came as a priority. “Its obviously a non-profit organization,” pointed out Joe Ceronsky, who came with me to volunteer one afternoon and had never previously been to the home. “You can tell they’re not out to make money; they just do everything they can for the people who live here.” Ann’s experience in the home reinforced this idea. “Everything is just so nice,” she commented, “and they are always doing something to make it better for us.”

Through abundant visual displays, one could easily see that the staff at Little Sisters makes notable effort to make the residents feel special. Posters listing resident birthdays during the current month hung on every floor. Also, in early March, a large poster board stood on an easel in the front of the home with individual pictures of residents on Valentine’s Day. The staff had given them cloaks, crowns, and wands to dress for the portraits. Linda explained the value of making everyone experience acceptance. “The residents are not just placed in this home. Before they come here, they have three visits to make sure they like it and fit in. It’s all like a family. We do the best we can to create that kind of atmosphere.”

I observed this family concept while speaking with Ann. Pictures of a deceased priest and brother from the home hung on her mirror alongside the pictures of her immediate family. She seemed to hold members of the Little Sisters community as close to her as family. Ann spoke to me at length about her immediate family. She showed me many pictures and cards. “This is my nephew, he’s getting married this summer...and this is my niece’s daughter,” she said while proudly displaying a Christmas card. “She married Dennis Green!” When I spoke with Clara Caduff, a ninety-nine year old resident, talked continuously about her husband, son, and sisters, all of whom had already passed on. Although many cannot see their family every day, they still remember them as an important part of their lives.

The Home encourages family to visit whenever possible. I noticed family members accompanying many residents to mass. One woman stayed with her grandmother through lunch and when departing, she said "...and I'll be back for happy hour!"

Happy Hour every Sunday provides just one of the many activities for the residents at Little Sisters. "There is always something to do," Ann commented. "We have Bingo every week and they bring in entertainment for us." Clara felt similarly. "They keep us very busy. They have musical groups come to play for us all the time and it's wonderful. They had an Irish band come for St. Patrick's day; that was very fun!" Ann also mentioned, "...They entertain us themselves every day, the people who take care of us, and the nuns are all so wonderful, sweet and nice..."

You get along with everyone so well, here," Ann explained. During the afternoon social activity, I noticed this harmony. While serving food to the residents, I noticed they would often speak up for each other. "I think she wanted some more coffee," one woman requested for the resident next to her. As I made my way around the room taking food requests, I saw another woman gently nudge a sleeping resident to make sure she had awakened by the time I arrived. All residents seemed very eager to help others.

Activities also give these people a chance to socialize. As I helped a resident find a seat during the social hour, she requested, "I'd like to sit where I can talk to someone." When Ethel walked into the room, another woman called, "Oh, come sit over here!" They proceeded in conversation throughout the party. However, not everyone came across as such a verbal socialite. I saw a resident wheeling himself over to another group after the people around him had left. Although not many words ever exchanged, the presence of others appeared comforting.

During Happy Hour, I noticed several tables with people in animated conversation, while others sat around different tables simply enjoying their snacks and beverages in peace. Regardless of where they sat, all the residents I spoke with afterward assured me they had a good time during the social event. The company of others seemed to provide ample satisfaction.

However, the camaraderie developed at Little Sisters can also create some difficulty. "It's hard because quite a few die...and two of the nuns will be leaving soon which is hard because I like them all so well." Death and relocation often force the residents to deal with change. Although some may not adjust well to these changes, Ann has simply established, "That's life, I guess." Fortunately, positive changes have also taken place through the home's recent remodeling. Due to the nature of the home's operation, all funding for this project came through donations. This shows again how the people surrounding Little Sisters do everything they can for the residents, with what they can offer.

Despite frequent change, "the Cadillac of nursing homes" drives on, maintaining values of Christianity, friendliness, and family. This creates a unique and remarkable environment for all of the home's residents. "It's a beautiful life; that's all I can say," Ann declared. Like most others at their age, these people simply want to live out the rest of their lives in peace and contentment. With the happiness residents have found at Little Sisters of the Poor Holy Family Residence, I could not possibly describe this culture as poor; they are some of the richest people I know.

## Cesar Estrada Chavez & Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—Elizabeth Wright

Boycotts. Strikes. Peace Marches. Nonviolence. For most people, seeing these words brings to mind the great Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. He had a dream, and it didn't stop there. King believed that "[i]njustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (King 1); that "[n]othing can be more diabolical than a deliberate attempt to destroy in any man his will to be a man." He strained at the bit for racial equality, pointing to "[t]he nations of Asia and Africa [who] are moving with jet-like speed toward the goal of political independence, and we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward the gaining of a cup of coffee at a lunch counter" (King 3).

But there is another man, a hidden hero, who personifies those terms for thousands of Californian workers. Cesar Estrada Chavez, founder of the United Farm Workers Association, fought valiantly and effectively to help farm workers using boycotts, marches, and political lobbying. He was "the driving force behind California's passage of the Labor Relations Act in 1975" (Varona 313). Chavez knew that "violence just hurts those who are already hurt...Instead of exposing the brutality of the oppressor, it justifies it" (Quotes on Non-Violence). He encouraged the workers in their strikes, saying: "We are confident. We have ourselves. We know how to sacrifice. We know how to work. We know how to combat the forces that oppose us. But even more than that, we are true believers in the whole idea of justice. Justice is so much on our side, that...[it] is going to see us through" (Quotes on Justice).

Although Martin Luther King has gotten much more lasting recognition for his efforts in the civil rights movement, Chavez contributed to tremendous improvements in working conditions for migrant farm workers. While King concentrated his efforts on segregation and equality in politics, Cesar worked toward higher wages and better general working conditions on California farms. Chavez and King grew up in the same time period, but in vastly different settings. While King attended school regularly and went on to graduate from a northern college, Cesar quit school after the eighth grade to help support his family. Chavez saw poverty and unfair treatment of workers in his world; King saw racism and political mistreatment of Negroes. These experiences drastically shaped the goals and directions of each man's life. The common thread that ran between them was the realization that no progress could be made without organization and planning, without calm and collected thought, and without the support of the masses. Chavez once said that "[w]hen you have people together who believe in something very strongly - whether it's religion or politics or unions - things happen" (Quotes on Community). They approached their respective issues similarly, but with very different results.

Chavez started acting in the farm workers' favor at a relatively young age. He joined the Community Service Organization (CSO) at twenty-three, rising in the organization to national director before he turned thirty-five. Working with the CSO gave Chavez experience with boycotts, marches, using religious images, and political lobbying, all of which he would use in the future. In 1962, Cesar resigned his position at the CSO and founded the National Farm Worker's Association (NFWA) to aid the farm workers' struggle. He recruited members little by little, visiting farms in the evenings when workers came in from the fields. The first three years of the NFWA's existence was

spent doing little more than organizing. Chavez realized that an unorganized movement would crumble quickly, while organization would build a strong framework that would not be crushed.

Martin Luther King joined the civil rights movement at a young age as well, appearing prominently for the first time as a leader next to Rosa Parks in the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 and 1956. He joined with numerous black leaders to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), published a book, and toured India before 1960. King led numerous peace marches, the most well-known being the 1963 March on Washington, where he gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. King wrote his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” while being held after the non-violent protests in Birmingham, Alabama earlier the same year. Stephen Oates, in Let the Trumpet Sound, writes that, “ ‘Martin always felt that anger was a very important commodity,’ recalled close friend Harry Belafonte, ‘a necessary part of the black movement in this country’ ...But theirs must not be a hateful anger, for that was debilitating and ruinous; it must be disciplined, nonviolent anger.” Earning both the Nobel Peace Prize and the title of *Time* magazine’s Man of the Year in 1964, King published another book and continued his crusades for justice and equality. The Selma campaign in Alabama, 1965, was the next notable event in King’s career. Here protesters rallied for voting rights, and King led a four-day march from Selma to Montgomery.

In 1965, Chavez and the NFWA members voted to join in a strike against Delano grape growers, helping the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) to get higher wages. After the two unions allied, the strike spread rapidly to other farms in California, getting support from outside sources as well. Several months into the strike, the workers limited the strike to two companies with the worst records. Almost a year later, the grape growers were still resistant to union efforts. Chavez led a 300-mile march from Delano to Sacramento, inspired by Dr. King’s March on Washington two years before. More than 10,000 strikers joined the 25-day march, and finally the growers agreed to negotiate (Mooney 155, 157). But much more work was in store for the NFWA. The organization affiliated itself with the AFL-CIO and changed its name to the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC).

Subsequent rallies and marches followed the Selma campaign for King, and the civil rights movement became more and more controversial. In the late 1960s, support for the cause died out due to increasing violence from both blacks and whites. King’s northern People to People tour in 1965 was well received, but he lost presidential support from Lyndon B. Johnson when he publicly opposed the Vietnam War. Little happened during the following two years, the lowest in King’s career, and contributions to SCLC had dropped off because of the two years that had passed since the last non-violent victory. In late 1967, Dr. King announced his plan for a poor people’s campaign. “Gentlemen, we’re going to take this movement and we’re going to reach out to the poor people in all directions in this country” (Oates 449). King’s plan involved a huge gathering of poor from around the United States with the goal of forcing the government to end poverty; however, it was never executed because of his assassination.

Cesar Chavez’s strikes and boycotts gained national attention, and by 1970, shipments and grape sales to major cities declined 22 percent, and more than 17 million Americans had joined the boycott (Varona 150). The UFWOC began another boycott in 1970, expanding their reach among

the farm workers. This time California lettuce companies were the victims, and in December Chavez was put in jail for refusing a court order to remove the boycott. Cesar's jailing elicited sympathy from the American public, and the boycott "gained momentum with every [editorial] article that appeared" (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 120). Chavez's own words were proven true when he stated: "If someone commits violence against us it is much better - if we can - not to react against the violence but to react in such a way as to get closer to our goal. People don't like to see a nonviolent movement subjected to violence, and there's a lot of support across the country for nonviolence. That's the key point we have going for us. We can turn the world if we can do it nonviolently" (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia 46-47).

King was convinced of much the same thing, saying that "[n]onviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it cannot be ignored" (King 2). Influenced by Gandhian pacifism, King said that "[t]he spirit of passive resistance came to me from the Bible and the teaching of Jesus. The technique came from Ghandi" (Garrow 636).

Martin Luther strongly believed that a movement could not succeed without the support of the masses. Jo Ann Robinson, one of King's good friends, told a reporter that "[t]he amazing thing about our movement is that it is a protest of the people. It is not a one man show... It's the people. The masses of this town, who are tired of being trampled on, are responsible. The leaders couldn't stop it if they wanted to" (Garrow 68). King and Chavez didn't want to stop the movements - monumental changes were being made as a result of public involvement. Dr. King saw the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed segregation, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, enforcing several points of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Chavez, with the United Farm Workers Association and the efforts of the farm workers, won the first union contracts requiring a wide variety of things including rest periods, clean drinking water, hand washing and restroom facilities, clothing for protection against exposure to pesticides, bans on most harmful pesticides, health benefits, pension plans, credit unions, sanitary and safety regulations, bans on employment discrimination and sexual harassment of women workers, and much more. Union hiring halls were established to ensure job security and workers seniority benefits. In addition, the National Farm Worker Service Center was founded to build single-family homes and rental complexes to farm workers who could not afford their own (United Farm Worker Achievements).

King ran into problems with violence continually in his life. Advocates of Black Power attacked his methods as cowardly, while white moderates believed he was an extremist - pushing the issues too quickly. To the former, Martin replied: "Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that" (Moses 165). And to the latter:

The virtue of patience will become a vice if it accepts so leisurely an approach to social change (Moses 31)...Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist — 'This nation cannot survive half slave and half free.' Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist —

‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’ So the question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice — or will we be extremists for the cause of justice? (King 6-7)

Chavez, however, is described by Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard Garcia as “A man with a presence, rooted in the tradition of the Mexican community; a man who did not engage in power struggles with other Mexican American groups nor with other Chicano leaders...Another important Chavez strength : his ability to bridge the traditional mistrust and hostility between Roman Catholic and Protestant.” Advocates of “Brown Power” saw him as a revolutionary, one example of how Chavez’s “appeal varied according to the lens of perception.” Therefore, little criticism of Cesar surfaced, and he led a life of struggle for others rather than for himself. “I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of humanity, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice...to be human is to suffer for others...God help us to be human” (Griswold del Castillo & Garcia 148-149).

While Martin Luther King may have led the Civil Rights movement that obtained equality for all people in America and gained respect and recognition, Cesar Chavez won many small victories for his people, and step by step they have gained more than anyone thought possible. Chavez struggled and rejoiced with the workers, and he knew that, “[b]eing of service is not enough. You must become a servant of the people. When you do, you can demand their commitment in return” (Quotes on Commitment). And even though Dr. King has received more recognition and publicity, Chavez has revolutionized life and work for thousands of workers all over America. “Regardless of what the future holds for our union, regardless of what the future holds for farm workers, our accomplishments cannot be undone” (Griswold del Castillo & Garcia 174).

*While internal citations are included in this essay, a “Works Cited” page should also be included.*

## A Response to a Text

*This essay should respond to a written text (short story, novel, poem, play, or essay) or a cultural text (film, music, or visual art) produced by professionals, classmates, or yourself. The response should interpret or evaluate all or part of a text. Possible approaches include analyzing textual elements, explaining the text's significance, comparing the text to other texts, relating the text to personal experience and/or connecting it to larger social or cultural contexts. Use support from the text to develop ideas and strengthen focus without overshadowing your own response or giving extensive summaries. If secondary sources are used, they must be documented correctly. (If the print text is not common, a copy of it should be included with your portfolio.) This response to a text should have a title.*

The final selection in your portfolio should be an essay responding to a literary text (poetry, short story, novel, drama, creative non-fiction), a visual text (film, painting, sculpture), or a cultural text. Your text response essay should move beyond summary into analysis and interpretation. If you conduct research for this essay, be careful not to let the opinions of critics dominate and overshadow your critical voice. The portfolio readers want to read what *you* have to say about your chosen text(s). It is crucial to support all of your claims with evidence from the text itself (in the form of descriptions, paraphrases, and quotes). In addition to strong arguments and effective evidence, portfolio readers are also looking for originality and a willingness to take risks (for example, by choosing difficult or unusual texts).

In “Rememory: A Journey Within the Soul,” Allison Begin examines Toni Morrison’s neo-slave narrative Beloved. Allison uses Morrison’s concept of “rememory” to analyze both the structure of the novel and the characterizations of Sethe, Paul D, Denver, and Beloved, all of whom are haunted (literally and figuratively) by their memories. Allison effectively incorporates details and quotes from the novel in order to prove her interpretations. Portfolio readers were also impressed with Allison’s decision to work with a highly complex and challenging novel like Beloved.

Brett Kobie’s “Tales of a Strange Love” analyzes Stanley Kubrick’s 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove*. Brett places the film in its historical and cultural context, revealing how the Cold War and mid-twentieth-century events like the Cuban Missile Crisis informed Kubrick’s satirical vision of the “absurdity of war.” Importantly, Brett includes vivid descriptions of specific scenes and quotes key passages of dialogue from the film to illustrate his points. His essay ultimately reveals the very serious themes underlying this hilarious movie.

In her essay “Hawthorne’s Hierarchy of Sin,” Megan Wassil provides a fresh perspective on a text that is commonly assigned in high school English courses—Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter. Rather than focus on the character of Hester Prynne, Megan chooses to examine the sins of the two men in Hester’s life—Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth. Megan claims that on a hierarchy of sin, Hester’s adultery would rank far below Dimmesdale’s adultery and hypocrisy and Chillingworth’s selfishness and vengefulness. Once again, the use of ample textual evidence strengthened this essay, separating it from other essays on The Scarlet Letter.

Finally, Sarah Wilson’s “Sexism as Addressed in Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre” claims that

this novel should be read within the cultural context of the 1840s, especially in light of Victorian debates about the “Woman Question.” Sarah carefully reveals how Jane Eyre rebels against conventional notions of proper womanhood, refusing to conform to rules that rendered Victorian women silent, submissive, and idle. Through examinations of selected scenes, Sarah shows how Jane’s desire for education, employment, and an equal marriage reveal Charlotte Brontë’s pioneering feminism.

## Rememory: A Journey Within The Soul —Al I lison Begin

To survive, one must depend on the acceptance and integration of what is past and what is present. In her novel Beloved, Toni Morrison carefully constructs events that parallel the way the human mind functions; this serves as a means by which the reader can understand the *activity* of memory. “Rememory” enables Sethe, the novel’s protagonist, to reconstruct her past realities. The vividness that Sethe brings to every moment through recurring images characterizes her understanding of herself. Through rememory, Morrison is able to carry Sethe on a journey from being a woman who identifies herself only with motherhood, to a woman who begins to identify herself as a human being. Morrison glorifies the potential of language, and her faith in the power and construction of words instills trust in her readers that Sethe has claimed ownership of her freed self. The structure of Morrison’s novel, which is arranged in trimesters, carries the reader on a mother’s journey beginning with the recognition of a haunting “new” presence, then gradually coming to terms with one’s fears and reservations, and finally giving birth to a new identity while reclaiming one’s own.

Morrison characterizes the first trimester of Beloved as a time of unrest in order to create an unpleasant tone associated with any memories being stirred. Sethe struggles daily to block out her past. The first thing that she does when she gets to work is to knead bread: “Working dough. Working, working dough. Nothing better than that to the day’s serious work of beating back the past” (Morrison 73). The internal and external scars which slavery has left on Sethe’s soul are irreparable. Each time she relives a memory, she experiences the pain all over again. Morrison parallels her character’s unrest with the past with a mother’s unrest during the first stage of pregnancy.

Morrison uses the voices of two people, lost from each other in remembrance, and brings them together by juxtaposing memory against memory until finally their recollections converge in the same episode. After a sexual encounter, Sethe and Paul D reflect on their shared experiences in slavery at the Sweet Home plantation. It is against this backdrop that both characters struggle to tackle their feelings of inadequacy. Although Sethe and Paul D share their memories, there is only so much that they are willing to divulge since “[s]aying more might push them both to a place they couldn’t get back from” (Morrison 72). While Paul’s coping mechanism is to place all of his painful memories in the tobacco tin buried in his chest, Sethe’s coping mechanism is prevention. The characterizations of Sethe, Paul D, and Sethe’s daughter Denver continue through the use of flashbacks. By juxtaposing memory with scenes from the present, Morrison offers a better understanding of Denver and her reaction to Paul D. Lonely and troubled, she finds solace inside her own small world and connection to the memories her mother has shared with her regarding her birth. Denver feeds her hunger through these memories as well as through perfume and the boxwood arbor. It is in this first trimester that Morrison begins to connect imagery with the retrieval of past events. For all, the baby ghost acts as a catalyst for remembering the past. Rememory becomes an action. Its circular movement lands all of the characters into a world where rememories are realities, “always there waiting for you,” never at rest (Morrison 44).

Beloved's arrival marks a transition between the first and second trimester. This is a time in which all the characters begin to accept their identities, even if they are defined by a culmination of both past and present events. Beloved's arrival is a turning point in the novel because it upsets the family dynamic that has begun to develop among Sethe, Denver, and Paul D. However, her arrival had already been foreshadowed. Morrison continues to use imagery as a trigger for rememory. Sethe walks out of the water, and upon seeing Beloved, has an urge to urinate. This can be compared to a woman's breaking water in the process of birth. In addition, there is also Beloved's unquenchable thirst. Water itself is a symbol of life, death, and rebirth, and serves not only to symbolize Beloved's return to 124 Bluestone Road, but also to aggravate Sethe's process of rememory for the purpose of character development and change. In addition, the questions that Beloved asks Sethe act as triggering mechanisms. They are an opportunity for Sethe to confront her past without feeling threatened by memory. In this passage of free association, Sethe for the first time makes a true effort to discover what lies deep within her. Even the stories that are painfully inexplicable, like the memory of Nan and the language Sethe would never know, signify movement in her ability to come to terms with the past. Parallel to Sethe's progress is Paul D's recollection regarding his prison experience in Alfred, Georgia. This chapter is written in exposition, and as Paul D. linearly "rememories" or relives these events, he gives birth to an understanding of his manhood, an understanding that was absent before his rememory.

The third trimester is marked by the birth of a new self, and structurally it is a culmination of rememories that eventually culminate in the present time. When Sethe finally has the opportunity to tell her side of the story, she proves that "keeping the past at bay" is no longer a priority of hers. Her future has a much different foundation. As Sethe slowly confesses, Paul D finally realizes the depths of Sethe's love. He also has to make a judgment: was Sethe right or wrong for killing her infant Beloved? While the chaos of the second trimester begins to fade, a new tone is established. Sethe's new consciousness, alerted by her rememories, appears in the novel as a monologue directed at Beloved in order to justify her murder. There is also very little punctuation as if to capture the mind of someone swaying back and forth carelessly from past to present. Then Sethe, Denver, and Beloved all engage in conversation:

"You rememory me?"

"Yes. I remember you."

"You never forgot me?"

"Your face is mine." (Morrison 136)

In this passage, the rememory of past events begins to possess a universal quality. Beloved's memory spans beyond the immediate past to Africa and the Middle Passage, another recurring image in the novel. Morrison collects experiences from all of the men and women who were stolen from their homeland. Beloved also struggles to identify and merge with Sethe. She not only searches for her face, but wants to be that face. In taking ownership of herself, Sethe unshackles herself from the ghosts of her past. Beloved has helped Sethe to free herself, and now can finally depart. Beloved takes Sethe's complex past and from it lifts one of life's simple truths: only you can define yourself. Sethe is finally free and at peace.

From spiteful to loud to quiet, 124 Bluestone Road has evolved just as the characters have. All have remembered. Redemption comes because the past has been reconciled. Forgetting comes only with the pain of remembering, and in a world of memories, we are bound to bump in to one of our own. Morrison gives birth to a story and in doing so claims ownership for herself, which is something only *she* could do.

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## Tales of a Strange Love—Brett Kobie

*Dr. Strangelove*, filmmaker Stanley Kubrick's nuclear war satire, portrays America's leaders as fumbling idiots and forces American viewers to question the ability of their government. *Dr. Strangelove's* cast explores the quirks and dysfunctional personality traits that a layperson would find far-fetched in a person of power. The characters are diverse yet unified in their unfailing stupidity and naivete. The film's hysterical dialogue sheds a darkly comic light at the most ironic of times—war. This film came out at a height of paranoia of the nuclear age and the Cold War, just after the Cuban Missile Crisis. It depicts a horrible, tragic incident in which a breach in the government and diplomatic mistakes result in nuclear holocaust.

General Ripper, a psychotic anti-Communist, exploits a loophole in the chain of command and orders nuclear warheads to be dropped on Russia. Ripper, in a moment of humor, explains his motivation—most likely gleaned from bits of “red” propaganda he has internalized: “I can no longer sit back and allow Communist infiltration, Communist indoctrination, Communist subversion, and the international Communist conspiracy to sap and impurify all of our precious bodily fluids.” He elaborates further citing the Communist fluoridation of U.S. drinking water as the most dangerous of Soviet plots to infiltrate and destroy the American people. With all the sense of a Joe McCarthy, Ripper is prepared to begin and accept the consequences of a nuclear war.

The impending disaster is soon brought to the attention of America's President Muffle and his team of able advisers, who quickly prove themselves worthless wastes of space. The President scrambles to consult the Russian Premier, a stereotypical drunken Soviet who equals Muffle in immaturity. The American President does not mince words (and one is lead to believe he lacks the capacity to do so) in telling Dimitri, the Russian leader, of the soon-to-be exploding bomb. Listening to only one side of the telephone conversation, the viewer finds humor as the two bicker as playing children would: “I'm sorry too, Dimitri. I'm very sorry. All right! You're sorrier than I am! But I am sorry as well. I am as sorry as you are, Dimitri. Don't say that you are more sorry than I am, because I am capable of being just as sorry as you are. So we're both sorry, all right?” Adding humor to this already silly monologue is an American general's immature sparring with a Russian ambassador, which leads the President to bark ironically “You can't fight in here; this is the War Room!”

Meanwhile, nearly out of fuel, the commissioned aircraft must carry out its orders sooner than planned. Major Kong, the plane's pilot, after delivering a powerful speech on the importance of that day's events and the heroism shown by his cohorts, makes final preparations for the dropping of the bomb. Finding that the bomb door circuits are out of order, Kong retires to bottom of the aircraft for emergency repairs. Kong straddles the warhead, splicing circuits and correcting the problem. He then opens the bomb doors manually. He eyes the target below and realizes that a movement to dismount the bomb would cause it to be dropped late, and thus miss its intended point of detonation. Without hesitation, Kong accepts his fate, riding the bomb in its falling arc waving his hat over his head celebrating his success in ecstatic rodeo style.

After he bomb explodes, the good doctor emerges from his silence. Dr. Strangelove is an extremist of the evil German sort, a Hitler-Mengele hybrid. His accent is thick and he constantly

restrains his hand from making the Nazi salute. It seems odd to the viewer that a man of such background should be an advisor to the President. Assuming that the attack will bring fierce retaliation from the Russians by way of the mythical “Doomsday Machine” (a device set to detonate upon the impact of a nuclear bomb, with enough force to exterminate all that lives), Strangelove proposes that a reservation be erected in the interest of preserving a “nucleus of human specimens.” Of course this sample of human life will include high-ranking government officials, as the people will need *able* leaders.

With its humor at times almost to the point of slapstick, *Dr. Strangelove* satire can be lost in farce. Yet it succeeds in its intention to portray the complete absurdity of war. By presenting war with humor, the film conveys just how much of a farce the nuclear arms race really was. The extreme views of the characters aren’t fiction; Baby Boomers, for example, can recall debates about “acceptable” civilian losses in the event of a bomb being dropped. Kubrick satirizes this time period wonderfully, capturing the insanity of a world gone mad. The key question of the film really is: who is running the mad house? In a world where world leaders scramble and bicker childishly and take advice from Nazi Germans, a world where bombs can be dropped at the will of a psychotic general, one seems better off to recline and laugh at the pure insanity of it all.

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## Hawthorne's Hierarchy of Sin— Megan Wassil

Throughout the novel *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne focuses on the struggle of Hester Prynne, a woman who is forced to deal with the strict Puritan punishment for the adulterous birth of her child, Pearl. Yet, the very Puritan values that bring Hester public ignominy help to lift her to a position of respect in the community. Although Hawthorne does not condone Hester's sin, he takes pains to show that her sin is minimal in comparison to those of her weak lover, Arthur Dimmesdale, and of her vengeful husband, Roger Chillingworth.

Hester finds solace in the moral teachings of her religion and in acts of repentance, which help her deal with the struggles resulting from her sin. Although she no longer practices her faith openly after her public disgrace, she still has deep ties to her God and religion. She often prays for Pearl in hopes that her child's wild character will be calmed with time. Hester accepts her punishment readily, elaborately embroidering the scarlet "A" she is forced to wear on her breast and dressing Pearl in scarlet. She continues to wear the symbol of her sin long after the community declares her repented due to her commendable record of community service, showing everyone that she has nothing to hide. Indeed, Hester's salvation lies in the truth: "In all things else, I have striven to be true! Truth was the one virtue which I might have held fast, and did hold fast, through all extremity. . . . A lie is never good, even though death threaten on the other side!" (200). Hester finds comfort in prayer and repentance, which help to make her strong: "Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers- stern and wild ones- and they had made her strong" (206). Through her experience Hester comes to be respected by the Boston community and finds peace with herself and her God.

Hester's fault lies in the fact that her passion and love are stronger than her respect for the Puritan's moral code. She declares that "[w]hat we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so! We said so to each other!" (201). As the novel progresses, Hawthorne increasingly portrays Hester as the victim of the faults of both Chillingworth and Dimmesdale. Chillingworth's selfishness allows him to marry the beautiful and passionate Hester even though he realizes it will be difficult for her to feel love for him, as he is "well stricken in years," with a "slight deformity," and is not suited to her tastes (59). Hester also falls victim to Chillingworth's foolishness when he sends his wife ahead of him to the New World. From here, Fate takes over and Hester is left without word of her husband's welfare, as he is captured by Indians and held hostage for over a year. Thus, the lonely and unhappy Hester is in a perfect position to accept the love of the minister, Dimmesdale. Dimmesdale's weakness allows him to continue his love affair with Hester even though he is unprepared to take responsibility for their relationship or for Hester's pregnancy. Finally, Hester becomes the victim of the beliefs of her society, as she is forced to stay in a loveless marriage. She recognizes the injustice which has befallen her and expresses the hope that Puritan morality be replaced by a new moral order: ". . . in Heaven's own time a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness" (272).

Most importantly, however, is the fact that Hester commits a sin of passion whereas the sins of Chillingworth and Dimmesdale are attributed to their intellect. Dimmesdale chooses to hide his

sin and in doing so injures both himself and others. He becomes increasingly sensitive to the adoration his congregation bestows on him in the years following Hester's public ignominy. The fact that the basis of this adoration is due to his supposedly pure life constantly reminds Dimmesdale of his hypocrisy. He turns to many forms of private chastisement, such as fasting, the keeping of exhausting vigils, and whipping himself bloody, in the hope that his guilt will lessen with time. However, his conscience still plagues him, and his guilt is only compounded by the torment he suffers at the hands of Chillingworth and by watching Pearl, the product of his sin, grow up. As Dimmesdale weakens physically and mentally, he begins to rationalize his actions, finding solace in the fact that his congregation will lose a good minister if he were to publicly confess to his sin. However, Dimmesdale later views these rationalizations as further examples of his character weakness, and they add to the guilt which eventually brings about his death.

Dimmesdale knows that the only way he can attain salvation and be freed from his nagging conscience and Chillingworth is through a public confession of his sin. Hawthorne demonstrates that a public confession is essential if Dimmesdale wishes to purge his guilt and to attain salvation, even after his attempts at private repentance. His failed attempt to confess on the scaffold early in the novel foreshadows his later confession and death at the novel's climax, after he successfully delivers his Election Day speech, on what should have been his greatest day as a servant of God. Dimmesdale's confession does serve its purpose, freeing him from the torment of Chillingworth and a guilty conscience, while granting him salvation in the eyes of God. Chillingworth brings to light the importance of Dimmesdale's confession stating, "[h]adst thou sought the whole earth over, there was no place so secret—no high place nor lowly place where thou couldst have escaped me—save on this very scaffold!" (262). Hawthorne also uses these words to show the reader the cold mentality of Chillingworth, or Roger Prynne, whose sins are far more serious than those of Hester or Dimmesdale.

Chillingworth commits his first sin when he selfishly marries Hester, knowing their union will be loveless: "Mine was the first wrong, when I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay" (75). Yet this rationalization does not stop him from seeking revenge for her sin which results, in part, from his. In his effort to exact revenge, Chillingworth deliberately sets out to destroy Dimmesdale's life, and in doing so he transforms himself into a devil. Hawthorne brings this change to light soon after Chillingworth takes up residence with Dimmesdale: "At first, his expression had been calm, meditative, scholar-like. Now, there was something ugly and evil in his face, which they [the people of Boston] had not previously noticed, and which grew still the more obvious to sight the oftener they looked upon him" (129). Chillingworth believes his motives to be correct and blames Dimmesdale for his transformation, of which he is fully aware. Because Chillingworth refuses to accept responsibility for his actions, Hawthorne makes it clear that his sins far outweigh those of Hester or Dimmesdale. As Dimmesdale states, "[w]e are not, Hester, the worst sinners in the world. There is one worse than even the polluted priest! That old man's revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of the human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so!" (201). When Dimmesdale escapes Chillingworth's tormenting by confessing to his sin, Chillingworth loses his reason for living, as he can no longer seek revenge on the deceased Dimmesdale. For his sins Chillingworth suffers a

horrible fate: “All his strength and energy—all his vital and intellectual force—seemed at once to desert him; insomuch that he positively withered up, shriveled away, and almost vanished from mortal site. . .” (268). He dies very shortly after Dimmesdale.

Although it appears at first glance that Hester is Hawthorne’s focus in *The Scarlet Letter*, a closer examination reveals that the novel revolves around the struggles of a weak lover and a jealous husband. Indeed, Hawthorne shows that Hester, who readily faces her problems, grows stronger and gains the respect of her community, whereas both Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, who are consumed by fear and hate respectively, bring about their own demise.

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## Sexism as Addressed in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre— Sarah Wilson

The Victorian era in England marked a period of unprecedented technological, scientific, political, and economic advancement. By the 1840s, the English had witnessed remarkable industrial achievements including the advent of the railways and the photographic negative. They had witnessed the expansion of the Empire, and, as a result, were living in a time of great economic stability. Yet they had also seen thousands of people starving—and dying—due to the Irish potato famine and poor conditions and benefits in British factories and witnessed the entire order of society questioned as the working classes began to demand representation in Parliament. The English also experienced biological and scientific breakthroughs that challenged the once universally accepted beliefs in the authority of the Bible, the divine ordering of nature, and the gross exploitation of women and people of other races. It was a time of great achievement, yes, but it was also a time of great contradiction and uncertainty.

The Victorian era was also the age of the novel, as many English citizens now possessed the time and money to afford such a luxury. Novels at the beginning of the Victorian era reflect the growing unease of the day; writers of the 1840s in particular responded indirectly to the social upheaval, writing personal, subjective novels.

Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre, published in 1847, is an archetype of the 1840s novel. It tells the story of Jane Eyre, an orphan who eventually finds herself and happiness as a governess and, later, a wife. Although this is a "personal" story that provides escape and entertainment for its readers, Jane Eyre most certainly, if sometimes subtly, deals with a number of Victorian social issues, especially issues pertaining to women and their expected behavior in society. Women in the Victorian era were supposed to be passive, pure, and idle; were not to be well educated; and were expected to marry. Throughout Brontë's novel, Jane Eyre learns the realities of these social expectations and directly and indirectly speaks against them.

Readers learn early in the story that Jane Eyre does not fit contemporary society's idea of a proper woman. As a child, Jane stands up to her aunt, Mrs. Reed, on more than one recorded occasion when Jane feels she has been treated unjustly (Brontë 28, 37). At one point, Jane bluntly tells her aunt, "I declare, I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed [Jane's cousin]" (37). This was at best improper behavior for a child in Victorian society, and it was most definitely seen as improper by Mrs. Reed who grows to hate Jane, calling her "tiresome, ill-conditioned" and "scheming" (26). But her aunt's reprimands and hatred do not deter Jane from speaking up in the face of injustice.

During the scenes at Lowood Academy, Brontë compares Jane's strong personality to the reserved and submissive Helen Burns. The teachers often punish Helen excessively, yet she never once objects or even questions their discipline. When Jane asks her about this self-discipline, Helen simply explains that it is her "duty" to bear the punishment submissively (58). Although Helen's "proper" female behavior does not entirely inhibit Jane's passionate personality, it does serve to moderate her a bit so that when she is publicly humiliated for being a "liar," she does not impulsively speak against her authority, which saves herself from harsher discipline (70). Jane is passive in this scene, and Brontë uses it to show the reader the injustices that occur because of women's expected passivity.

Later, Jane also rebels against the social expectation that women are to be idle creatures (114, 115). She says:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties . . . they suffer from too rigid restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (115)

This passage is perhaps the most directly feminist passage in the novel.

Jane Eyre's outcry against women's required idleness does not stop with this speech. It is addressed very vividly with the character of Bertha, Mr. Rochester's first wife, who is considered crazy and is locked up on the third floor of Thornfield. Mr. Rochester explains to Jane that after he married Bertha, she had "continued outbreaks of her violent and unreasonable temper," and, as he describes, was found to be "intemperate and unchaste" (323). For these reasons, Bertha is pronounced insane, and therefore, locked up. However, Brontë suggests that it is only after Bertha's isolation (and idleness) that she goes truly mad. When Jane sees Bertha, who has been locked on the third floor for fifteen years, she describes her as a beast, groveling on all fours, snatching, and growling (307). At this point in the novel, the reader, whether in the Victorian age or the twentieth century, cannot help but sympathize with Victorian women who were subjected to such "idleness."

Women of the Victorian era were also supposed to remain uneducated, except for what "custom has pronounced necessary for their sex" (115). Charlotte Brontë herself enjoyed an education, and so does her character Jane Eyre. Lowood provided girls with an education that was quite broad in comparison to that which most women received in the mid-1800s when school was a place where "young ladies sat in the stocks, wore back-boards, and were expected to be exceedingly genteel and precise" (25-26). Like all good Victorian women, it was important for girls at Lowood to learn sewing (55), music (50), French, and drawing (78); they were also taught lessons in history, geography, and grammar (50).

When Jane starts teaching at Morton, she encounters female students who have been taught nothing but the "feminine disciplines"—reading, writing, and sewing (385). Jane makes it her mission to teach these girls "grammar, geography, history, and the finer kinds of needlework," hoping to expand their minds against the status quo (385). Most women of the Victorian era who wanted a broad education had to teach themselves, as the reader finds out Mary and Diana have done. When Jane comes upon them, they are in their living room, pouring over books in German (350). Perhaps even Mary and Diana would not have been able to enjoy such endeavors had they remained under their parents' guardianship. In all of these references, Brontë is clearly, though somewhat indirectly, condemning society's ideas of "feminine" educational needs.

Victorian women were also expected to mature and marry. Indeed, there were few career fields open to them besides dressmaking and governessing, as Jane Eyre addresses. In fact, when Jane decides to leave Lowood after eight years, she complains of wanting something more, and decides on governessing because "it is of no use wanting anything better" (80). Although she is an intelligent, independent-spirited woman, the options available to Jane are slim. After she leaves

Thornfield, she finds that the dressmaker in Morton was not in need of employees and the factory only employed men (344). So, again, she searches for a governess position.

Although Jane finds a wonderful position as governess at Thornfield, Brontë is careful to point out in the novel that not all governess positions are so grand. Mary and Diana were also governesses, but were in families who saw them as “humble dependents, and who neither knew nor sought one of their innate excellences” (371). If anyone could have known the downside of governessing, it was Charlotte Brontë—she and her two sisters were all governesses.

Jane Eyre does eventually marry, however. Still, her ideas of marriage are quite different than those of most “proper” Victorian women. She will not marry St. John when he asks because she will not be a wife unless she could be an equal partner; she could not be “forced to keep the fire of [her] nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital” (429). Further, she marries Mr. Rochester only after he is dependent and in need of her care, claiming that she likes him better that way (469). Victorian women were supposed to be passive, idle, uneducated, and subordinate partners in marriage. Readers are forced to realize that Jane conforms to none of these expectations.

Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is representative of British novels in the 1840s. Though she tells the personal story of a young governess, Brontë also uses the story to address an important social issue of the Victorian era—sexism—directly and indirectly exposing the flaws and hypocrisies of the patriarchal Victorian society.

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## Complete Portfolio—William Richert

Richert's letter is informative and does an excellent job of setting up the context for each piece in the portfolio. He provides his purpose for writing each piece and also demonstrates effective rhetorical awareness by providing the audience for each piece and how that audience affects the choices he made while writing. The letter, therefore, is helpful for the reader to understand the rhetorical situation of each piece. Although Richert's personal essay, "Pornography, Political Cartoons, and a Public Restroom," is short, it is effective because it takes a risk by using humor and sharp analysis of an unconventional art medium – bathroom graffiti. This effective use of analysis continues in Richert's exploratory essay, "Binary Reasoning in History and Biology," in which he explores the uses and drawbacks of binary thinking in different academic disciplines. Richert effectively explains the issue, shows different sides to the argument, and does all this in clear, forceful language. In his response to a text, Richert again takes an unconventional route by analyzing a painting. This essay demonstrates Richert's ability to use language effectively in visually describing the painting. But, he goes beyond description to show how the elements of the painting reinforce its various themes. Overall, Richert's portfolio takes risks, uses language effectively, and shows various prose tasks that analyze sophisticated issues.

## William Richert—Reflective Letter

To the reader,

As I read over the best examples of my writing in high school, I am struck by the absence of writings from an actual English or literature class. There are many that made the first few cuts, but my final choices for submission reflect a more versatile practice, from art criticism and philosophy to a humorous college application essay. I can only hope that the tendency of these writings to display skills learned in my English classes, while not actually dealing with the subject matter of an English class, makes these selections more interesting to the fatigued reader.

The first item in the portfolio, a combined story and personal essay, is entitled “Pornography, Political Cartoons, and a Public Restroom.” It is, in fact, a humorous piece that I wrote for a committee of professors at the University of Akron. I assumed that, since I was applying for admission into their honors program, my essay would be one among hundreds, and the professors would most likely be bored to tears by the time they came to my essay. So, to help it stand out, I chose a humorous experience and crafted it to answer the assigned essay question which was, “Describe an activity, element, or skill in one of the arts that is beyond your current competence. What exactly is required of you in order to bring that activity, element, or skill within your competency?” In order to keep the focus of the essay on the skill that I wish to “bring within my competency,” and also to show the audience what a polite young man I am, I refrain from specifying exactly what I saw in the public restroom.

The next item is a kind of exploratory essay. It was written for a philosophy class whose main purpose was to familiarize the student with the problems of knowledge, particularly with the problems inherent in the knowledge behind the student’s other classes. Hence, the paper draws supporting examples from the study of history and biology. The specific problem posed to me for this essay deals with the human habit of grouping concepts and ideas into opposing pairs. Right/wrong, subjective/objective, and particle/wave are just a few examples given. I provide a few of my own as I explore the good and the harm that is done by the use of this binary reasoning. The paper is therefore entitled, “Binary Reasoning in History and Science.” It is the most formal of the three writings as its subject matter requires a more objective approach.

The final item is a response to a sculpture. “Entitled Ophelia’s Last Rites: Ed Frances’ Untitled Woman,” it describes, analyzes, and interprets a work by local artist, Ed Frances. As with any serious piece of art criticism, the topic is dealt with in a formal matter while still maintaining a personal approach to the artwork in question. Poetic use of language is critical for writers to convey their interpretation and appreciation of an artwork to a reader who has never before seen the piece and may not even like art. Thus, I employ similes, metaphors, literary allusions, and other devices in order to communicate my take on what is a truly ghastly piece of art. One might think it ironic that I must write about a piece that I hate looking at and convey appreciation for an artist whose work disturbs me, yet this is the challenge of art criticism; to appreciate a work without saying “I like it” or “I do not like it,” to employ those personal reactions within the overall appreciation.

While the specifications for samples submitted in the portfolio already ensure a display of versatility in writing, I hope that my portfolio displays a versatility in thinking as well. Reading it is a pleasurable experience for me, and I hope it is for the reader as well.

Sincerely,  
A Future Miami Student

## William Richert—A Narrative or Short Story Pornography, Political Cartoons, and a Public Restroom

Not too long ago, I confidently entered a local public restroom, secure in the knowledge that I was in a family-oriented establishment. To my astonishment, I found an offensive yet skillfully rendered drawing displayed quite prominently on the otherwise clean surface of the far wall. A gentleman, who had entered the restroom a moment earlier, pushed by me as he hurried back to the door with a scowl on his face and two young sons in tow. My own reaction was less pronounced, but when I returned to my table amidst the polite murmur of the candlelit dining room, there, again, loomed the image, trespassing on the well-kept highways of my mind. As the evening wore on, my initial disgust lessened, and I became consumed by a sincere jealousy of the “artist” whose work I had so unwillingly previewed in the restroom. I had studied art history before, but I never coveted the skill of drawing that makes much of art possible. As strange as it may sound to cultured ears, the lowbrow masterpiece that I saw that night impressed me far more with its blunt manner of approach and with its efficiency in inciting a reaction from the viewer than any Hellenistic statuary or Impressionist painting. Obviously, the drawing was not to be considered art, but it carried with it the immediacy and power of a visual gunshot, without the aid of a title, or an explanation, or any polished style. Hence, this particular drawing appeared to stand on the summit of self-expression and the skill of drawing took on a magical connotation for me especially because I was not adept at it. Of course, my own tastes would not include barbaric images, such as the one alluded to above, were I to ever learn how to draw well. Rather, I see greater value in more refined examples of draftsmanship like the work of our own Beacon Journal political cartoonist, Chip Bok. Many of his cartoons are as straightforward an expression as the bathroom drawing, having the same immediacy and potentially inflammatory appeal. The difference is that his work portrays the acceptable subject matter of politics and society and has the backing of a respectable newspaper. The expressive quality of his rough drawings, though, has a similar punch as the, shall we say, *Study in the Crude*, No. 1.

The first step in bringing this activity within my own competence is to recognize the value in it, as I have above. Next, I must patiently pick up a pencil and try a few sketches of my own, employing whatever subject matter rears itself out of my mind. This is the most difficult part as I have noticed minute tremors in my hands when I try to hold them still or control them. So far, I have tried to draw a cup of water, but have been unable to decide whether to portray it as half full or half empty. These difficulties taught me another important lesson about achieving competence, the necessity of humility. Without a realistic perspective of one’s own abilities and achievements, one will be without the ability of frank self-evaluation which is an ability that can lead to the improvement and the strengthening of all other aptitudes.

## William Richert—An Explanatory, Exploratory, or Persuasive Essay Binary Reasoning in History and Biology

In our attempts to understand and connect things, we constantly order the ideas that we learn into associations and categories. Exploring one's own thinking reveals a host of associations that are based on paired opposites. Light/dark, autotroph/heterotroph, Palestinian/Israeli—all paired together as opposing ideas and all taken from different areas of knowledge. It seems perfectly natural to set ideas against each other, and indeed, useful in remembering and understanding their relationships. Yet, surely this two-valued logic has its failings, as most details of the real world do not easily fit into an either-this-or-that-but-not-both category. When, then, does this binary reasoning simplify subject matter so much that it endangers the truth? Is there ultimately a trade-off between the utility of two-valued logic and the need for greater accuracy and truth?

The function of binary reasoning is to simplify bodies of knowledge and subject matter, making it easier for humans to conceptualize the material. 'To simplify,' in this case, can be interchanged with 'to categorize,' for by placing objects or ideas into one group or another, we are sorting them into two categories. Often, this categorization makes the initial learning of a body of knowledge less difficult, as when a biology teacher begins the semester by specifying the characteristics of things that are alive and things which are not alive, neglecting to mention viruses until later as they share characteristics of both categories. The students would find themselves confused if the teacher immediately launched into the subtleties of the definition of 'alive' before going over the general qualifications for that category. Similarly, students in a history course will learn that the American Civil War was fought between the North and the South before they learn about the exceptions, the groups of people who did not fight with the side of their geographic locality and the complex reasons for this. Once they understand the basic situation of who was generally fighting the war against whom will they be ready to further examine the special cases and how these special cases fit into the overall panorama of history. Thus, by approaching subject matter with the use of binary reasoning, we simplify the learning process.

Simplifying knowledge by categorizing it into 'either/or' not only aids in broaching old material to newly-exposed students, but it is also useful in exploring the very edge of knowledge. Take the quest of scientists, for example. Without categories like wave/particle or positive/negative how would a scientist be able to sort through ideas enough to understand his field of inquiry, let alone design an experiment? In order to "make sense" of the world, a scientist first needs to observe it, and, naturally, pronounced contrasts in the world that he observes will draw his attention more than subtle variations. Both modern-day children and the ancient Greeks saw a fundamental difference between plants and animals. Thus the first taxonomic kingdoms were born, animalia and plantae. Life only fits into one of these two categories for a long period of time, helping to order the vast array of life to be found on earth for human study. Hence, in science, binary reasoning serves as a useful starting point on the road of knowledge.

A negative result of binary reasoning is that, in certain cases, simplifying ideas by seeing them as opposing one another is detrimental to truth and impairs the accuracy of knowledge. Take the above example of categorizing things as 'alive' or 'not alive.' There, the teacher does enhance

the learning process by initially employing binary reasoning, yet, based only on these two opposites, the students remain unacquainted with a truer conception of life, the idea that life's boundaries are blurred at best. Things, such as viruses, defy traditional labeling and open the door for a looser interpretation of the concept of life. Here, a commonly accepted set of opposites is threatened by something that does not fit into either category. In order to remain faithful to the truth, then, the conscientious student or scientist must disregard the original two-valued notion of life, shifting their paradigm. Thereby, the old bipolar conception is sacrificed for the sake of truth.

Besides endangering truth, the oversimplification that comes with binary reasoning can adversely affect one's view of history by shrouding the complex forces at work. Often, in the study of history, one must determine which of two opposing forces played a greater part in the better interests of humanity. Americans might look at the Cold War and see themselves as being the "good guys" in the overall struggle between Marxism and capitalism. When they focus in on specific situations or fronts in that cold war, though, their broad association of good and bad with capitalism and Marxism, respectively, blinds them to the uniqueness of those individual situations. The binary reasoning results in clumps of value associations {good with Americans, bad with communists}. These associations persist when one looks at, say, America's policy in Vietnam. Since the American historical observer sees a conflict between two ideologies, capitalism {read: good} vs. communism {read: evil}, his view of events will be tainted with bias. Two-valued logic encourages the formation of a pronounced bias because it forces the observer to see things in "black and white." Furthermore, the massive amounts of historical data available {and sometimes the lack of such data} can prove impossible for the historian to fully explore. In order to efficiently study the subject matter and prove a point, he must adopt or create his own 'either/or' categories.

The early concept of the fall of the Roman Empire was based on the idea that there were 'Romans' and then there were 'barbarians', and the barbarians destroyed the empire. This seems to make sense, but when more historical data related to the interaction between Roman and barbarian is brought to light, it becomes clear that the two-valued hypothesis is a tad simplistic. Many groups of barbarians, in fact, prolonged the life of the empire by serving in Roman legions and, in some cases, taking over and running local governments smoothly. And then there are the economic and social factors of Rome itself, yet faced with the daunting task of having to explain the fall of the Empire in an early stage of historical study, the observers had to posit a simple explanation in order to be able to support it. Hence, the previously existing knowledge that some barbarian groups invaded the Empire provided the meat for an easy binary approach to the problem. Just as the scientist is forced to work with what meager data is at his disposal by using a two-valued approach, so the historian uses it to open up new fields of inquiry for focus and exploration. Thus, despite the fact that 'either/or' pairs of opposing categories prove to be short-lived in their factual validity, their value as starting points in the quest for truth justifies and explains their use.

Let it be pointed out that the above argument supported itself in its own methodology, for in attempting to determine whether binary-reasoning either limits or expands knowledge, I originally employed the opposing categories of limits knowledge /expands knowledge and then discovered that both were true. The two-valued approach was not, therefore, accurate but it was justified because it helped to pose a problem and narrow the inquiry, giving rise to a truer conception of the nature and usefulness of thinking in opposites.

## William Richert—A Response to a Text Ophelia's Last Rites: Ed Frances' Untitled Woman

But age, with his stealing steps,  
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,  
And hath shipp'd me intil the land,  
As if I had never been such.

— Shakespeare,  
Hamlet, 5.1.73-76

The grave diggers lower Ophelia's body into the ground. Yet, even while her friends, brother, and former lover watch on, the priest refuses to perform the last rites of burial. The priest doubts the purity of Ophelia's death, and grief-stricken, Laertes and Hamlet leap into her grave. In a sculpture entitled, Untitled Woman, local artist Ed Frances produces his own version of that famous scene from Hamlet. Casting himself in the role of the priest, Frances denies his audience comfort while pinning his subject to its mortality as with a vise. His chilling use of abstraction and visual metaphor leaves the audience in a state of desperation, frantically searching for an escape from the grave for the anonymous female figure.

Borrowing visual metaphors from nature, Frances conveys a sense of the barren. The dominating material of the sculpture, cast glass, is rife with imperfections, bubbles, cracks, specks, and spots. It weighs heavily on its pedestal like a dirty and unworked block of ice. Its form is asymmetrical and ragged with jagged edges and uneven surfaces, as if an arctic explorer had accidentally knocked it from a glacier with a sledge hammer. Inside the front of the sculpture, sharp protrusions hang over the stylized female form from the side and stand out against its white coloring like bare tree limbs over snow. The allusions to winter and lifelessness are further advanced by the coffin shape of the outer cast glass and by the dark mass which sits, almost oozes, to the right of the female form. This tumor pushes out on the walls of the coffin, filling the right side and threatening to engulf the delicate female abstraction. It is like mud spilled in the coffin. The symmetry of the female form, its color, and its smoothness of texture contrast with the rougher black mass beside it like ice-cubes with pumice. Yet, although this visual contrast separates the two objects into distinctly different elements within the work, they differ little in their connotations and in their effect on the viewer. Both of the elements evoke a sense of the cold and the barren. Thus, the piece utilizes cast glass and various mixed media to convey the lifelessness of ice, snow, rock, winter, and the grave.

Within this foreboding emotional atmosphere, the female figure becomes the center of attention. Compressed from the viewer's right by the black mass and entrapped from the left by the dark wires, the figure draws the eye to two lustrous bulges that are like breasts. Apparently this figure is the woman who is "untitled." Truly, there is an absence of identity in this work, for the woman is depicted in abstraction with no face and hardly an indicator of her humanity besides the breasts. In addition, she is held on all sides by barriers—the back of the sculpture reveals that she is embedded in the glass coffin. All the while, the black mass swarms about her like a horde of cockroaches and

the wires close in on her like an iron maiden. This woman is impotent, anonymous, and at the mercy of her surroundings.

Construed as a comment on existence and death, the woman of Untitled Woman becomes a symbol for every mortal: born with a coffin already tied to her back and cancer worn about her like a sweater, it is only a matter of time. Could a more contrasting view of death than Frances' sculpture be compared with El Greco's Burial of the Count of Orgaz? In that work, the dead man has the honor of having, not only a face, but a whole work of art named for him. To El Greco, the Count of Orgaz was important enough to be lifted, doll-like, into heaven by Christ himself, and while Frances has molded his woman in her coffin, El Greco allows Orgaz to slip out of his tomb to a chorus of angels. In contrast, Frances depicts his subject in abstraction, reducing the individual and robbing her of her identity and importance. Therefore, the abstract style of the work is crucial for the expression of the artist's own particular perspective.

When confronted with Untitled Woman, one sympathizes with Laertes and Hamlet and curses the "churlish" Ed Frances, for Frances is no better than that "knavish priest" whose refusal to acknowledge the meaning in Ophelia's death strips her of her very humanity. Like Laertes and Hamlet, one climbs into the grave with this Ophelia, trying to find the beauty and comfort that one so desperately wants to find. Yet, there is no comfort, for Frances has made a strong coffin.

## Complete Portfolio—Susan Schroer

In her cover letter, Susan uses humor and descriptive language to reflect on her relationship with writing in general and creativity in particular. She goes beyond introducing herself to her readers: each of her pieces is introduced and briefly explained as she informs her audience of exactly what to expect from her portfolio. Susan continues to demonstrate her proficiency with descriptive and creative language in her Story/Descriptive piece “Cicada.” Though her piece is only two pages, Susan provides the right amount of detail (her description of the air conditioned house is especially good) and dialogue to keep the piece moving and engaging. Yet, Susan does more than simply describe an environment: she introduces her readers to an interesting and unique experience she had collecting cicadas with a neighborhood friend. In her Exploratory piece, Susan demonstrates her personal investment in the issue of adult literacy by integrating personal experience with well-documented research. As a result, Susan seems very informed about her chosen topic. Finally, in her text response, Susan uses her personal experience working at a library to help her understand the text Blue Highways. Though personal experience does not have to be included in a text response, Susan’s interpretation of the text is influenced by her encounters with her co-workers. Overall, Susan’s portfolio demonstrates that she is a proficient writer regardless of the writing task at hand.

## Susan Schroer—Reflective Letter

Dear Miami University Writing Professors:

When I was in middle school there was a deep and bitter misunderstanding between me and the word “creativity” — a mistake on my part, which was made perhaps because this word was thrown around so much. It was invariably one of the first out of the teacher’s mouth when a new project was introduced. “Above all, class, be creative,” a geography instructor might say, while explaining that we were to build a three-dimensional relief map of the Mesopotamian valley using homemade papier-mâché. To me, creativity came to mean an abandonment of reason in which I was unwilling to take part — of which I was even incapable. I was bound by the Universal Law of Conservation of Ideas, under which spontaneous generation of anything original is illegal.

Now I work with a different definition. “Be creative,” to my ears, means: “it’s okay to be sick of everything you’ve ever heard, seen, and read. Go ahead. Be jaded at age eighteen. Do something new.” This adventurous spirit influenced both the “quest” behind “A, E, I, O, You and Me,” and the combination story-essay style in which it was written. Yet in a way I still operate under my law of conservation. Whenever I’m happy with what I’m writing, the feeling is not one of generation but of translation — I channel ideas that are already floating around somewhere and are simply ready to be written. To be precise, I can’t evaluate myself as a writer because I’m really more of a scribe.

It’s a superstitious notion that seems even sillier now that I see it on paper. I’m one step away from obeying little voices that speak to me late at night, under the pressure of impossibly close deadlines and a caffeine-induced haze. In fact, maybe I’m already crazy and hearing things: since my tongue is none too nimble, I like to think my strength is an ear for language. When my form of expression works it’s because I limit myself to what sounds harmonious and rhythmic, familiar and recognizable, like a song I used to know but haven’t heard for seventeen years. This insistence on prose that rings with what I’ve experienced explains two truths about my writing:

- 1) I spend far too much time agonizing over the right word.
- 2) I write terrible fiction.

I read a brief essay once by Rita Dove (a Miami alumna, bless her) in which she speculated that the physical pleasure of books led her to become a writer. If someone ever asks me such a question, I think I will say it was the words and the people. Words get stuck inside my head and they are too goddamn beautiful to ignore; people (like the ones I ran across at Parkdale) congregate in my mind to form an able cast of characters. The whole jumble may well make me crazy, but any insanity that makes me this happy is worth suffering.

Sincerely,  
A New Miami Student

## Susan Schroer—A Narrative or Short Story Cicada Song

Each summer I somehow forget the peculiar scent of an air-conditioned house. The cold wind that starts to blast out of vents in early June has a certain smell – not strong, but crisp, very clean, and slightly stale. Every year when we first switch the system on, the sensation is the same, so that it seems as if these very breezes had spent the winter somewhere nearby, caged and waiting until the seasonal cycle called them into service once again. Their fragrance gives the house a sterile feeling of being sealed from all the squawks and squeals and heat and chaos of the outdoors. Just stepping from the porch through the front door is like entering a carefully preserved and astonishingly lifelike museum exhibit of what was here last year.

What lies beyond the front door, meanwhile, is more like a zoo. Due to some sort of hiccup in the rhythm of nature, the seventeen-year cicadas have returned four years early; what the newspapers claim is a small strain seems nothing short of an infestation. Their chattering competes with the song of birds, and their bodies litter the sidewalk. They hang from the underside of leaves in a buggy stupor while their empty corpse-like shells cling to the outside walls of my house. I am continually forced to stare into their metallic sequin eyes, these creatures that languish everywhere from on top of my doorbell to inside my neighbor's old pickle jar.

Nathan, the five-year-old next door, has become a highly skilled hunter. “I got a bunch of ‘em,” he tells me conspiratorially, with something of a swagger. “Wanna see?” And, forgetting that the glass is transparent, before I can refuse, he's unscrewed the lid and out comes an awful cloud of smells: dill and brine and long-dead insects. I smile, but only because his grin is so contagious. “I got a whole bunch of ‘em,” he explains. You would almost think there were a market for the things.

He actually has a remarkable sense of entrepreneurship, and vast amounts of energy to back it up. Some summer days, I spend the afternoon with Nathan while his mother goes out, and during this time he is harder to keep inside than the cicadas' droning is to keep out. In good weather we play baseball, with me moving exaggeratedly slow in the outfield, and him sliding into each base as he circles them after each hit. We recline on the front steps and discuss his abilities as a runner over a bag of Scooby Snacks. We go to the park, where he stains both knees a vivid green by barrel-rolling down hills. We add more specimens to his collection, of course; every bug in our path must surrender itself to the cause of science. Nathan gives me a brief biology lesson: “This guy is dead,” he says, pointing to a sand-colored empty shell, “but these ones are still living,” indicating the jar's other occupants who resemble bugs, but seem to be in the throes of rigor mortis. I don't bother to tell him that every insect in that jar is already quite dead, or, if not, it will soon suffocate. Besides, once we acquire any single bug, his interest wanes and his attention refocuses on the next capture.

Sometimes our sessions together run late, and then I drag Nathan back into civilization (that is, air conditioning) for his bedtime routine. Once all the evidence of our adventures is scrubbed away, it's time for fresh pajamas and a story or two. Last week he asked me for a prayer, but the only one I know is about hallowed names and trespassing, which didn't seem quite suitable. We ad libbed a few thank you's instead.

“Thank you for my baby brother and my new bike and for baseball.”

“Thank you for pretty days and cool nights and summer skies.”

I thought my evening’s work was done, and was dimming the light when I noticed his window still wide open. “Nathan, you should keep that closed so the heat won’t get in,” I scolded, reaching around the prized jar that sat on his sill to pull the glass down. He sat up to exclaim, “*No*, Susan, you *can’t*,” in that exasperated tone that children learn so well from adults. “Let them say goodnight to their family,” said Nathan, and he gazed past me out into the trees, as if the loudness of the insects’ song made it visible. I looked at the jar, that Vlasic mausoleum, and wondered how I had just been talked into letting dead bugs communicate with their loved ones, who only had a few days left themselves.

But one night’s cooling bill is a fairly small price to pay to set a five-year-old’s spirit at ease. And if my own parents notice a jump in our energy costs this month, I’ll know why: as it turns out, listening to the cicadas’ calls swell and subside is somehow reassuring, even for those of us who don’t need to wish them goodnight – in fact, it’s not a bad way to fall asleep. Air conditioning, I figure, will be there for each of the next sixteen summers. The cicadas are only around for so long.

## Susan Schroer—An Explanatory, Exploratory, or Persuasive Essay A, E, I, O, You and Me

Last winter I developed the uneasy feeling that my days of being handed lessons to learn — like my days of being served free meals at home — would come to an end in a few short months. There is a college-search cliché that compares getting educated with drinking from a fire hydrant. Now (as if the other pressures of leaving home were not enough) I have a vague fear of being knocked flat by an uncontrollable stream of knowledge, and being unable to taste the drops I need. So my questions formed: What does the learning process mean to an “adult,” and how does an instructor help an adult? Add to these questions one that’s been nagging at me for longer — does the simple act of reading really hold the magic that parents and teachers say it does? — and you have my quest. I decided to become a literacy tutor, to learn how to teach and to teach someone else how to learn.

Like any quest, mine began with the noblest of intentions. I wanted to find someone the system had left behind — an American-born adult who had gone to school and somehow slipped through the cracks. After all, illiteracy is a social issue that tends to be particularly romanticized: even though “illiterate” can be used in a derogatory way, we think of the power to read as some sort of magic cure for apathy and low ambitions. I came dangerously close to thinking of myself as a literacy missionary preparing to go into the world, convert the heathens into reading devotees, and by watching the light spark in their eyes, reaffirm my own faith in the written word. As Frank Laubach put it: “It is astonishing how many people catch the appetite for reaching down among the poorest and lowliest and lost and helping them out of their abject condition”(Laubach 119).

Thank goodness I started to research before my aspirations got out of hand. One of my first sources explained that according to the National Literacy Act of 1991, literacy in America is “an individual’s ability to read, write and speak in English and compute and solve problems necessary to function on the job and in society”(Cheatham 5). This “ability to function” is only loosely defined: because of disagreement on where to place the threshold, the estimates of how many Americans are illiterate ranges from three to sixty-seven million, generally centering around twenty-seven (Anderson 6). The adults placed in this group have difficulty drawing interpretations from passages, or understanding information in a bar graph. In other words, these people are okay with multiplication tables and newspaper headlines, but can’t fully participate in the everyday world.

Now I had a better idea of the situation. America’s problem is that too many adults struggle with the text and forms and numbers that they encounter in daily life. There is a national need for tutors, not to recruit new members into book-of-the-month clubs, but to help these people get on with their lives. I was ready to go out and become part of the remedy, although the remedy wasn’t quite ready for me. A quick call to the Literacy Network of Greater Cincinnati told me exactly what kind of a part I was allowed to be.

“Are you eighteen?” was the response to my questions on tutoring.

“Oh. Well, no.” Being underage can be so aggravating. Not only was I banned at age seventeen from buying alcohol, cigarettes, or lottery tickets, or staying out too late, but for a few seconds I thought my age was going to mess up my Quest. Luckily the nice man on the other end gave me the number of a lady at Scarlet Oaks, who signed me up for her program’s tutor training sessions in January. Finally, the only things standing in my way were a few hundred hours of waiting and an almost complete lack of teaching experience.

Any high school student worth the letters on his or her varsity jacket knows that the first step in research is to run for the nearest Internet terminal and order library books. Those who are even wiser know that it’s possible to start making discoveries even before the materials arrive. My first observation was the careful way in which this whole issue is worded: my searches for “illiteracy” yielded nothing, but the listings for “literacy” were pages long. Remedial education for adults, I learned, is a branch that focuses on the positive even more relentlessly than education for young children. My sources were so full of encouraging words they sometimes seemed to sugarcoat the truth that learning can be hard — even the Scarlet Oaks material was labeled with the motto, “A, E, I, O, and You,” like some sort of nursery school rhyme. I could understand that adults returning to classes (in some cases after many years) might feel insecure or experience “anxiety” and “uneven learning” (Cheatham 22) due to the ups and downs of the real world. Still, I wondered, weren’t some of these suggestions a bit condescending? Why spend time writing “I can learn this,” instead of actually diving in and learning it?

Then again, who am I to say? I don’t remember learning to read. My mom says I mastered Dr. Seuss around the time I mastered toilet training (one milestone came early, the other late). At this point both abilities are so natural that I’m not quite sure how to explain either one. The suggestions for adult literacy tutors seem plausible enough. At the same time, these lesson plans bring back bad memories of “language arts” classes in middle school that would have made anyone distrust the written word. I may not remember learning to read, but I do remember endless drills on hunting for topic sentences and main ideas, obvious foreshadowing and plodding similes. These were the classes that made me hate the words “like” and “as” just by association. I now see their usefulness in teaching someone how to read and analyze the language, but still I wish there were another, kinder way to go about these things. Did I hate those lessons so much because I already felt confident as a reader? Would they be perceived differently by someone who wants desperately to feel that same confidence?

As my dad is so fond of saying when I start to talk in questions, “There’s only one way to find out.” Before long I had attended the first training session and been snowed out of the second; according to Scarlet Oaks I was qualified to tutor. As I walked into the first class one quote from my reading echoed through my head — “three days’ training, no matter how well designed, cannot provide a volunteer tutor with the arsenal of techniques necessary”(Lerche 224) to effectively teach. Having had under three hours, I felt as if I were marching unarmed into the middle of a battlefield. Happily, the others in the beige-walled cubicle seemed to have forgotten their weapons, too.

What struck me first was that the sessions at Scarlet Oaks could only loosely be called classes. Nobody ever stood up to teach anything or address the whole group at once; the room was

engineered so that there really was no front or back. To a passerby it would have resembled a library with fewer bookshelves and a bit more noise. Every detail of the setup followed the golden rules of literacy I had read about in December. The program title (ABLE, Adult Basic Literacy Education) rings with hope. The two teachers were called “coordinators” (a non-threatening title) and were clearly likeable and effective.

Becoming an effective teacher myself was another story, and a goal that I worked toward over many weeks. The evening that sticks in my memory the most involves an “adult” — how hard this word is to define! — only one year older than I. That week I came on a Wednesday instead of Tuesday to find a different coordinator who matched me with a student I hadn’t met. Things didn’t start out well; as I stood at the student’s desk the woman in charge handed me a teacher’s edition and gave me instructions, acting as if he either weren’t there or as if he couldn’t hear us. After she left I sat down uncomfortably, knowing full well I had broken one of the cardinal rules of tutoring (Don’t Help Where You’re Not Wanted). I tried to look interested in the chapter on ratios as he worked on his practice test.

Several minutes later I’d had enough of cross-multiplication and I glanced over to check his progress. The poor guy — Brandon, his name tag said — was still staring at the same problem as when he started. I tried to sound nonchalant. “So. . . those questions going okay?”

“Yeah,” he said. Then, “Except this one here, I don’t really remember how it goes.”

*Six hundred thirty divided by fifteen*, the paper read. “It’s not so bad,” I told him, “you need to put fifteen into two numbers over here, so that’s sixty-three, and three left over..” He picked up even before I left off and had finished in a few seconds more. “Forty-two. Yeah. Okay. I guess I just had qualms about doing two digits at once.”

It was just one word, so maybe I shouldn’t have gotten as excited as I did, but he had only spoken about twenty so far and one of them was “qualms.” I wouldn’t have been more surprised if he’d quoted Shakespeare out of the blue. “Qualms!” I exclaimed. “That’s one of my favorite words, except when I use it most people don’t know what I mean.”

He finally looked up, first at my nametag, then at me. “Well, I stopped looking up words in the dictionary a while ago. People made fun of me for having an expansive vocabulary. So I chose to be stupid. And look at me now.”

Expansive is not one of my favorite words, so I didn’t have much else to say. “People are stupid,” I told him without thinking because it was the first thing that came to mind.

He seemed to know I didn’t mean him. “Yeah,” he said. And he picked up his pencil and went on to number twelve, doodling as he worked. Of course, I had to analyze that. Was he “intelligent and creative in finding ways to compensate for [his] lack of proficiency”(Cheatham 22)? Or was he looking for an outlet for his proficiency?

Or was he just choosing to adopt an attitude that would let him enjoy what he was good at?

If the definition of “mentor” can be stretched beyond what Homer took it to mean — if the age difference doesn’t really matter and the time of interaction can be as short as the time it takes to do long division — then maybe mentors really do work. Maybe I can see what all the mentoring hype is about.

One of the conclusions I've made as a result of these explorations is that all learners are essentially children looking for adventure. Some were enthusiastic about reading because they associated it with magical, fairy-tale qualities. Others were in the awkward adolescent stage of learning, which led to their insecurity and self-consciousness. And Brandon was just a strong-willed little boy who knew his own ability and thought that it made him above asking for help.

The question of “means versus end” has also been resolved for me. I started out thinking that literacy, per se, is neutral; put another way, it is “good only if people read good things. It is bad”(Laubach 122) as soon as it's misdirected. Forget those grade-school posters proclaiming that “Reading is Power” — it's *what* you read that makes you strong. Laubach, meanwhile, believed that the means could also be an end in a way because when the lessons go well “it is a delightful process for both student and teacher”(Laubach 12). I can't deny that learning something is meaningful in itself; anything pleasurable should be automatically worthwhile. In the end, though, I've decided that the skills learned by night in cubicles at Scarlet Oaks are meant to be applied to a further purpose. By themselves they can be used or abused, just like the power tools on that very same campus that slice through wood and steel by day.

So even though literacy is mainly the path to some destination, it can also be traveled for the sheer pleasure. Similarly, you might say that my quest has been simultaneously a means of answering those nagging questions and an end, because I've found answers to questions that hadn't been asked yet. I am now eighteen, making me an adult (at least in the eyes of the law). For the next four years I'll be considered a full-time student, making me a learner. During that time I'm not going to think of “teaching as the bestowal of knowledge”(Daloz 237) because it's really the learner's role to seize, guard, and sometimes reclaim the truth. I'll keep looking for “useful applications”(Brown, O. 9) of my knowledge instead hoarding it up; even when education is fun, it shouldn't stop there. And I'll try to remember that “all people are students and teachers, learners and facilitators, in various situations in life” (Cheatham 19). The thing is, not only do we each have lots to learn — we all have something to teach as well.

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## Susan Schroer—A Response to a Text The Path to Parkdale

I don't know what exactly I expected to find at the library that summer. Rows of gleaming shelves and neatly stacked books, probably. No sound but the humming of fluorescent lights and the thump of rubber stamps. The librarians would be demure types — soft-spoken and intellectual. I thought of the place itself as a sort of solemn temple to the written word. With these images in mind, I was startled by my first glimpse of the employees' workroom. As it turns out, librarians read the *People* magazines before they go on display, and complain to each other about bratty kids that file through, and they leave sticky bottles of Mountain Dew in the refrigerator. Such are the secret lives of the people who used to strike fear into the hearts of my second-grade classmates.

For me, it was a slightly jarring introduction to the working world. I was starting my first summer job, and, after hours, reading Blue Highways and thinking about journeys. William Least Heat Moon crossed the country over fifteen years ago, devouring Walt Whitman and “gathering the minds of men” (410). I was crossing a small threshold of reality, gathering observations on the behavior of men. He turned his back on the trials of life and I was watching its eccentricities; he was growing cynical and I am still completely green. Yet to me in June 1999, our journeys seemed almost identical. So as Least Heat Moon studied Leaves of Grass, I studied this road diary and tried to follow its winding philosophy.

It was the philosophy that came in handy — especially the parts that Least Heat Moon picked up on his way from the book and from the people. Among other things, Whitman wrote, “I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait” (396). Useful advice, as it turned out: arguing with the methods at Parkdale Branch Library is a waste of time if you can just sit back and watch. My fellow student assistant Molly, for example, was a variety show by herself. She was an impish thing, with a wheat-colored ponytail and an arc of bangs over her forehead. Her face was square and freckled; her eyes never opened more than halfway, as if she were perpetually examining something. “C'mon,” she would say, “lemme show you how to sort magazines,” and then I was being pulled to the racks and nudged onto a footstool with her interrogating me all the while. “How d'you like it so far?” she asked. “It's nice enough, I guess,” she answered herself, “but I'm outta here in August, thank God.” And so on, until we had finished whatever it was I needed to learn. She was most animated around five, when another student, Matt, got ready to leave. “Adios, amigos!” he always said, and she would reply with a “Sayonara!” Sometimes they worked their way through over a dozen languages this way, laughing and growing louder with each goodbye. “That boy's a bitch,” she told me happily after he had gone, and I just nodded because I didn't know how else to respond. I was the Marcy to her Peppermint Patty.

Least Heat Moon learned from one Miz Alice of Smith Island, Maryland, that having “the sense to let everyone else live different” (410) is the hardest thing of all. Somehow enough of us have that sense, and thank goodness; without the variation that once colored America (and that still exists in muted tones), there would be no magical blue-highway towns, no circus troupes of characters like the ones I found at Parkdale. Millie, the children's librarian, struck me as one of the oddest

— she seemed from another era with her spotless white pumps and full skirts and bobbed hair. Millie would have been best cast as a 1950's schoolteacher. "Would you girls and boys like to join the reading club?" she'd primly ask the scrappy kids who had only come in to paw through our videos. She tended to pout when another librarian corrected her on something, as if she'd fancied herself in charge of this dust-jacketed corner of the world. Marty, my boss, was another story: when I arrived he'd just dyed his hair firefly yellow and had it cut in a buzz. For weeks he wore loud tropical shirts and told everyone it was his tribute to summer. Far from being laid-back or fun loving, though, he spent much of his time enforcing time limits for the computers, and re-alphabetizing the books I'd shelved. Then there was Charlene, the red-haired college student in her late fifties, and Roxana in her flowered peasant skirts, who was taking time off from earning a dual degree in clarinet and Spanish. I didn't have to drive thousands of miles to meet types like these — I found them in the middle of Forest Park.

Least Heat Moon's other mentor named Walter — this time de la Mare — said that "things are the mind's mute looking-glass" (227). This led our wandering hero to conclude that he was "a man looking at himself by looking at what he looks at" (228). Many of his musings throughout the journey were a little cryptic, but this one especially puzzled me. If self-identity is based on the things we perceive, then is each of our personalities formed as a result of chance? because what we look at is no more than what is there to see. Surely man controls his own mind, and is more than a reflection of his surroundings — and if not, might there at least be a Fate somewhere making sure the right people collide?

I believe there is, and last summer she made me collide with a refreshing book on self-discovery and a whole mess of refreshing people, crazy though they were. In late August all the students at Parkdale left one by one, and each week we had one installment of a goodbye party. Marty made his specialty (Mountain Dew bundt cake). Millie smiled maternally and told the college students to be careful and call their mothers often. On her last day, Molly drove away blaring her horn and flashing her lights in exhilaration. As for me (like Whitman, a mere witness), I was wondering if these people were really who I saw them to be, and if they would be a part of me because of the time we spent together.

An old Jerseyman to William Least Heat Moon, explaining his faith in the force of nature and in mankind: "...then say I believe... because it is absurd" (392). It is, indeed, absurd. And so I too believe.

## Works Cited

Heat Moon, William Least. Blue Highways : A Journey into America. Boston: Little, Brown, 1982.  
Whitman, Walt. Leaves of Grass. Philadelphia, 1900.

## Complete Portfolio—Sarah Weyrich

Sarah's Reflective Letter is expressive and informative as she introduces the writing in her portfolio. Beginning with a vivid depiction of the way she keeps a journal (which she considers to be "the best decision [she's] ever made"), Sarah easily moves from description to explanation. Her letter effectively prepares the readers for the writing that follows. For her Short Story/Narrative piece, Sarah continues in a reflective mode in the selection she titles "Mirror." "Mirror" is interestingly written in the second-person, a kind of self-reflexive narrative in which she confronts her innermost emotions. Her ability to consistently write from this point of view evidences a strong facility with language. The Exploratory Essay offered by Sarah is titled "Parade." Here, Sarah explores the connections between what she describes as the tangible, sensory drama of a 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and the larger, more abstract notions of community and individualism. This exploratory piece is simultaneously light-hearted and deeply thought-provoking. For the final selection in Sarah's portfolio, she responds to William Golding's popular novel, *Lord of the Flies*. Sarah focuses her argument on the symbolism found within the text, offering as support particular scenes and characters. Though rather briefly developed, Sarah does attempt to situate the action in the novel within the political and historical period in which it was produced. This sort of connective thinking requires a critical worldview and represents the qualities of a mature writer. Overall, Sarah's portfolio is poignantly written and engages the reader in a variety of ways.

## Susan Weyrich—Reflective Letter

Dear Writing Professors of Miami University,

Inhaling the musky scent of its leather-bound pages, head pressed against my pillow, pen in hand, I enter the saga of my journal. Between the worn and cracked covers, inscribed on each gild-edged page, is my blood and my soul. I run my fingers over the ink and the textures made from the pen's pressure — my mind flowed onto paper. Sometimes, I will simply lie in my bed and let my thoughts wander and watch my hand dance over the pages: other times, I get caught up in passions and fall into a fit of writing just to channel some of the *intensity*. Some parts neat and smooth and flowing, some filled with scribbles and inkblots and barely legible, I am looking back at my life spilled on paper. All the tears and laughter and love and disappointment transform into something tangible.

I write to have that. To me, my pieces of writing are more than words — they are alive. Each is different, a separate entity, but still a part of me. They live in my mind, my heart, and the journal I received for my 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. *Keeping this journal was the best decision I ever made.*

My pieces have changed over the years, as they should. I believe they've grown with time and maturity and experience. I've always had a penchant for poetry. My earlier brushes show a kind of cliched naivete towards romance, but with bittersweetness and in an innocent voice that I can remember and miss so well. You can trace my development to the writer I am today. Reading each piece chronologically, I am *emerging*, growing up with each turn of the page. It fascinates me, enralls me, *inspires me*.

Each of these works I've selected for my portfolio is the work of that inspiration. Each carries my mark as if words contained DNA. I feel they reflect me as the writer I have become.

Mirror is an example of that reflection. This piece is very personal, almost like a journal entry, but written in the second-person form to intimate that I am speaking to myself. It is brief, naked, emotional, and I am exposed. I choose this to introduce the other two pieces, because in it you can analyze how I think as it explores my fears and confusions, and taste where my writing comes from.

Parade is an essay exploring where I grew up, the different facets of my community. To understand me and my labors, you must be shown where I have come from. As I say in the essay, "...because this is, after all, my home." This paper, besides setting a stage for my descriptive talents, showcases my ability to make a connection between something intangible — the sense of community and all its peoples — to something real and colorful — the parade.

The last piece is a response to William Golding's Lord of the Flies, in which I give examples of the novel as being a "social commentary." My first love before writing was literature. Great books inspired my love affair with writing. This piece shows how I respond to those literary works that had such an impact on me. Lord of the Flies is especially important because I discuss at great length the beautifully written symbolism developed throughout the book and try my best to touch at

the deeper meanings. In many of my own writings you will find symbolism, which this novel inspired my love for.

My hand aches with writing, but I cannot stop. I will never stop. I have yet to find something that can so complete me and fill this need inside me. It is insatiable: the need to satisfy this part of me is as strong as it ever was. Without it, what would I *be*?

This is what I am. This is where I am.

## Susan Weyrich—A Narrative or Short Story Mirror

When you were younger things were different — simpler somehow, but complex in that way only a child can grasp. Everything was a mystery, and you longed for the knowledge of the forbidden “adult things.” Things that they said you would only understand when you got older. And now you are seventeen and you see how lucky you were in your ignorance; how the understanding itself was all a mystery, how understanding has grown in complexity and mirrors the complexity of being alive and missing the bliss of youth.

But they tell you that you are still a child. You aren’t responsible enough to stay out past one a.m., but you are old enough to carry the weight of what secrets adulthood holds on your shoulders. You fight with your mother over this and even openly defy her, staying out well past two knowing that she will never tell your father, to spare you his wrath or to spare herself. You later wrestle with the guilt of having disappointed her, not only for staying out late but also for telling yourself it was because you didn’t care and because she didn’t care. And this makes you feel so badly that you have to push it out of your mind, knowing with every part of your being that it is only because she cares so much.

Yet, you continue to do things that your parents don’t like. Things that frightened you as a child. Things that the nuns in your Catholic grade school damned and preached against as bringing eternal hell after this earth, and you would tell the nuns that no! you would never steal, never do drugs, never have sex before marriage (oh that was a big one) in fact you would never even let a boy *kiss* you before you heard wedding bells. But your boyfriend now regularly parks his car down the street from your house (where there are no night lamps) about a half-hour before you have to be home and you still slink in fifteen minutes after curfew with rumpled hair and smudged make-up.

And your mother who has been waiting up even though she has work in the morning only sighs and lets you sneak quietly to bed where you will sleep off the affects of the rum and coke you consumed. You wake up in the afternoon sunlight streaming through your bedroom window and curse the birds that are chirping, interrupting your sleep and forcing you to face the guilt and a headache. Two Tylenol will fix both.

Love confuses you now because it used to be simple and pure and sweet and now it took all these twists and turns and you don’t understand how something can be both fierce and so gentle. You get so caught up in sex and obsession and infatuation and passion and all the things love was *supposed* to feel like and hardly remember the way it used to feel when your father still kissed you goodnight. You love your parents but feel somewhat sheepish about it, as if admitting it would be admitting vulnerability. Once when your boyfriend broke up with you (the one your mother didn’t like because he was too old for you and your father didn’t know about), you broke down and let your mom hug you while you cried and let her know for the first time in years that she had been right. And how bad that hurt and felt so good at the same time.

Your grandfather died a month ago and won’t be at your high school graduation. So now you have one extra ticket and you give it to your friend who has seven brothers and sisters, and you

have that ache when you give away his ticket, like you are finalizing his death again. This will be the first time he will not be there. After graduation you will have summer, which seems far off at the moment, in the still gray and chilly early spring. You will leave in the fall for college, thank god. It is only a half-hour away but you will be *free*. You will not have to worry about your parents trusting you. You don't think you trust yourself.

You are in your car and you drive until you stop crying because you can't go home and let your parents see you cry. They will ask questions that you don't know how to answer. You come up with all these reasons in your head, but none seem to fit exactly. You want to be alone but feel so lonely; you turn the radio up and let that comfort you. It is getting so late now.

Looking in your mirror, you press your face against the cool glass and close your eyes to what you see.

## Susan Weyrich—An Explanatory, Exploratory, or Persuasive Essay Parade

Have you ever tasted heat? The hot, sticky air of July thick in your throat with the excitement of summer? It is the taste the neighborhood kids seem to thrive on, amazingly exuding boundless bouts of energy in 90-plus-degree sunshine, while the old men sweat it out in ill-fitting sleeveless shirts and the women quench it with Diet Cokes under wide-brim straw hats and 45 or higher SPFs. It is the smell of grass being cut and the sound made by endless duets of lawnmowers and sprinklers. It is the feeling of the humid moisture beading on my bare skin in my new bikini. It is the taste of my mother's "sun tea" with ice and lemon. It is the Fourth-of-July...

At noon in Northside, the sun is overhead and relentlessly blinding even through my expensive shades. My younger sisters are barefoot and walking in the grass to avoid being burned by the baking sidewalk. The steam wafting above the asphalt causes the horizon to look wavy and mirage-like. We haul portable lawn chairs made from cheap metal and plastic through this jungle-heat, to line along the street that cuts through the heart of our neighborhood, now pulsing with the bustle of people already crowded on either side. The fire and police sirens can be heard in the distance — obscenely loud in declaring the beginning of the parade. This is what I remember...

The Pink Triangle organization of gays and lesbians, with the proudly displayed "rainbow" flag fluttering, march behind the Vietnam veterans with their medals and full war regalia. The program for black inner-city school children — an unruly mob of little marchers — lead the convertible carrying the mayor (her assistants hand out buttons and stickers that the kids grab greedily and slap on without any particular interest as to what the buttons say). Other neighborhood children ride decorated bicycles alongside the floats throwing candy. The sun beats down on the black asphalt and we are all connected to this — the people, the parade, the heat...

The local high school bands hold the beat of the marching, but are scattered along the length of the parade to avoid any intermixing of school anthems. In between is a medley of organizations — some are the pre-requisite boy-and-girl-scouts and local politicians, but mostly there are representatives of the community. *Diverse* is the only word to describe the residents of Northside. The parade is a motley tribute to all of them.

Northside has a history. Beyond the parade and the diversity of the people, it has a history that has brought these groups together into one small neighborhood. Growing with neighbors, old and new, that represent the distinct peoples making a mark in our country has helped me appreciate the beauty of the new blends of cultures emerging in my community. The people of Northside are woven together in a patchwork of gay, straight, black inner-city, white Appalachian, Latino, young and old, richer and poorer. Living in this environment has taught me cultures and lifestyles and a tolerance for differences. It is a microcosm of the American society.

The parade is more than a celebration of the holiday of our country's independence; it is a tradition that extols the community as a whole. It portrays in an hour the tolerance and appreciation that was established through years of living together.

The air is so hot you can taste it. The parade continues and I drink cold water in gulps while my sisters scramble over the neighbor's kids to get some cheap candy discarded by a float's inhabitant. The neighbors wave and the drivers honk their horns and I smile and wave back because this is, after all, my home.

## Susan Weyrich—A Response to a Text

### The Lord of the Flies: A Social Commentary

“... and in front of Simon, the Lord of the Flies hung on his stick and grinned. At last Simon gave up and looked back; saw the white teeth and the dim eyes and the blood- and his gaze was held by that ancient, inescapable recognition.”

What exactly is the “Lord of the Flies?” And what “ancient, inescapable recognition” does William Golding speak of? In the midst of the cold war and communism scares, this disquieting aura acts as a backdrop to the island. It is an ultimately pessimistic novel. It addresses questions like how do dictators come to power, do democracies always work, and what is the natural state and fate of humanity and society, getting at the heart of human nature in a very male-dominated, conflict-driven way. The war, the plane shot down, and the boys’ concern that the “Reds” will find them before the British, shows Golding’s intention of treating the boys’ isolated existence as a microcosm of the adult military world.

I am plunged into Golding’s imagined island world from the first sentence. He uses lush description to build a setting that will contrast and reflect the boys’ primitive descent. The word “scar” describes the natural feature of the land, conjuring images of redness and blood from the first paragraph. The beautiful, yet often odd, descriptions help serve as a contrast between humans and nature. The use of words like “scar” and “blood” foreshadows the future interaction between the boys and nature — the pigs, the hunt, the storm. At the same time, the beauty and the order of the natural surroundings contrast with the decline of society developed throughout the book. Integral to this setting is the fair-haired boy climbing the rocks, Ralph. When Ralph meets Piggy, we notice the obvious differences between the two — the attractive and the fat, the daydreamer and the thinker. There is a moment when Piggy looks up at Ralph and sees the shadows on his face reversed. This reverse of shadows seems to signify the missed initial connection between Piggy and Ralph- Ralph looks through Piggy. He smiles because he feels as if he is leaping into a “real life adventure” with no adults, and Piggy interprets the smile as “a mark of recognition.”

This is central to the idea of the novel: the boys recognize in each other their shared search *for* recognition, and their mutual lack of recognition for the truth. Piggy desperately wants to be recognized for what he can contribute to the group. Piggy finds the conch shell — he is the symbol of civilization — and Ralph does not recognize its power until Piggy explains it to him. However, Piggy cannot blow the conch because of his asthma. Piggy has the ideas but cannot carry them out. He is the intellectual, the man with powerful ideas who gets no respect. Things begin to happen only after Ralph, the attractive leader, puts Piggy’s ideas into action. The conch becomes the symbol of Ralph’s leadership, even though Piggy procured it.

This relationship between Piggy and Ralph contrasts with the introduction of Jack Merridew. Compared to Ralph’s still attractiveness, Jack is ugly, has flaming red hair, and a black cloak that swirls behind him. Ralph seems to recognize him as both a comrade and a competitor. Despite all the darkness in his introduction, Jack cannot kill the first pig. Society still controls him at this point, allowing him to become friends with Ralph. Still, he inspires a premonition that next time there will be no mercy.

We can see this contrast between Ralph and Jack develop. Jack is the hunter and cannot focus on anything else, least of all the rescue fire. Jack thinks only of the pig — pig over rescue, pig over shelter. Ralph cannot bridge the gap and neither can Jack — the gap of hunt versus shelter, primitive thrill versus humbling domesticity. Once again, Ralph has problems with recognition. He does not recognize the nature of Jack even when he confronts him. He is not recognizing the deeper problems, the fear of “the beast” and the inhumanity of humanity, when these problems appear before him. Instead, Ralph remains concerned with the others’ irresponsibility.

Jack uses clay to disguise his face and trick the pigs. When Jack does this he changes the visual representation of himself, moving further from society and rendering himself unrecognizable. Both Ralph and Jack still have some connection to the past, but Jack is moving away from it, moving to create his own world governed by the laws of hunting and survival.

Without any adults on the island, the boys must learn to govern themselves; however, problems ensue. Piggy tries to find out each of the boys’ names but cannot. The youngest, the least influenced by society, are the first to run away, the first to show the breakdown of societal control. This problem continues in Ralph’s speech — no one seems to understand the importance of being rescued. Just as he suggested the vote earlier, Ralph continues to act as the democratic leader who tries to organize their civilization with a series of roles and rules and gives everyone a chance to speak. In this way, Ralph begins to show some of his shortcomings. He does not know how to think, at least not like Piggy, and more importantly, he does not understand the effects of fear. Ralph keeps thinking that fear of “the beast” is not really important. Ralph fails to understand that he should be more afraid of “the beast” and that Jack uses fear to lead. He must at least acknowledge the fear if he intends to lead. His ideas of importance differ from the boys and he does not understand their fears. Ralph, signifying democratic leadership, leads without respect to human nature and fails. Although in words the boys are still following Ralph, in action they follow Jack. Ralph begins to shirk from leadership and Jack seizes the power. We see two sides of Ralph. One half wants civilization and the comforts of home. Yet, Ralph has grown used to the dirty primitive conditions of the island and has come to consider them normal. Ralph is perfectly human and thus perfectly flawed. He rushes in with the other boys in the reenactment of the hunt with Roger, also trying to get a piece of “that brown, vulnerable flesh.” He wants the boys to recognize his attempt to hunt. In theory, this should make Ralph the natural leader. He is enough like the other boys that they can relate to him, but also recognizes his own power to lead.

If this is true, why does Ralph fail as a leader? First, he does not see the importance of his sensitive human qualities. Rather than using his perceptiveness and primitive instincts to lead, he battles against his own nature, attempting to make himself and the other boys civilized. Ralph gives up his power to Jack almost willingly. He stays behind, afraid of his own instincts, afraid to take responsibility.

The first major turning point in not only the power shift from Ralph to Jack, but ultimately in the novel, occurs in chapter 4: The hunters’ first kill coincides with the first chance for rescue. The two events are linked — the boys give up the chance for rescue for the chance to kill. Their value system, what they consider truly important, has shifted significantly.

The fire burning out of control is another example of the power that the boys have to rule themselves, the power that causes their destruction just as the fire destroys the island. This is the beginning of the destruction of the island. In a previous chapter the boys roll stones down the mountain, declaring ownership. Ownership becomes destruction, and the degradation of the natural world through burning fires or killing pigs mirrors the breakdown of the boys' socialized humanity.

We also get a closer view of Roger in this chapter, who throws stones near one of the younger boys, Henry. This is extremely significant. Roger aims a few yards away from Henry, still following the laws of society. Civilization forces him to limit his primitive violent instincts, but these constraints no longer fetter him by the end of the novel.

The irony between "civilization" and life on the island continues into chapter 6. "The Beast from Air" is the "sign" they receive in the form of a dead parachutist apparently killed at war. Piggy and Ralph were just yearning for what they considered the perfection of adult civilization, but just as the boys are fighting on the island, the men in the outside world also continue to fight. Even as Piggy and Ralph think to themselves that civilization is good, their only knowledge of civilization or "the outside world" proves terribly flawed.

By this point, the power dynamic has shifted. Jack gives the boys their only option. As the best hunter, only he can save them from "the beast." He leads them on a hunt, but instead of finding an actual beast on the mountain, they unleash "the beast" within themselves, attacking a nursing sow with lust and fury. Roger, cruel and sadistic in nature, impales the sow with almost demented excitement. The boys "sharpen a stick at both ends" and leave the sow's head as a sacrifice to "the beast," a sacrifice that takes on the symbolic role of the beastly urges they have succumbed to within.

Simon, the idealistic and religious character, understands the inner beast before anyone else, having a stronger connection to nature than his island-mates. Simon watches the sow's head as he sits alone in the clearing and has the onset of a seizure, during which he begins to realize the truth of humanity, namely that everything is a "bad business." He is struck by the recognition, the "ancient, inescapable recognition" of this evil force. He achieves the recognition that all the boys fumble with, seeing "the beast" or "the Lord of the Flies" for what it is: the fear and evil inside themselves. The Lord of the Flies is not the sow at all, but rather the creature that has been created as a physical representation of the human beast. Simon finds the parachutist tangled in the rocks and cuts him free. He attempts to free the boys from what they *thought* was the beast, but "the beast" is in them, in the dance. When the storm breaks in chapter 9, it mirrors the rising climax and Simon is killed in the boys' frenzied "dance." The boys kill Simon because they misrecognize him as "the beast."

The shift from reason and democracy to irrational dictatorship is complete. The hunters' decision to steal Piggy's glasses over the conch signifies this shift. In a dictatorship, they have no need for an object that allows all to speak. But Golding also implies that the boys are willing subjects under Jack's rule. They follow him almost blindly, mutely. No one challenges Jack other than Piggy and Ralph. And the former symbols of power all ultimately end up destroyed. The boys ignore Ralph's conch signal: the rejection of the conch is a rejection of the rules of society. The shell

remains the symbol of society, but when the shell is destroyed that which it signifies is also shattered, and Jack is secure in his role as chief. Roger, the former “stone thrower,” becomes his full role as an executioner when he kills Piggy with “a sense of delirious abandonment” by heaving a boulder onto him.

The boys have removed themselves from all semblance of civilization. They hunt Ralph like an animal. Roger sharpens a stick at both ends. Even after Ralph finds the sow’s skull on the stick and destroys it, the symbol of savagery, “the beast” still exists. Ironically, it is the fire that Jack sets to smoke Ralph out of the undergrowth that destroys the island but ultimately signals a Navy cruiser. The fire, once signifying rescue and later used for destruction, becomes both.

The novel ends in the adult perspective. The officer is uncomfortable thinking about the savagery of the boys, and looks off to his cruiser in the distance while Ralph weeps for “the end of innocence, and the darkness of man’s heart.” Golding is making a point about the hypocrisy of the civilization. In reality, the world is just a larger version of the island. The officer’s comment on “the Coral Island” is also ironically significant in elevating The Lord of the Flies from a book about a group of lost boys on an island to a beautifully symbolic work of social commentary. The view presented is dark and pessimistic, making its readers look deep inside their own human nature and at the structure of society in a frighteningly different light.

## 2000 Scoring Guide for Portfolios

A portfolio consists of four equally important pieces of prose writing. Each portfolio is read holistically by at least two English instructors; each gives a single comprehensive score on a six-point scale (“6” is high; “1” is low). What follows are two lists: one highlights characteristics of effective portfolios; the other offers a more specific scoring scale used by readers. In determining a single score, readers judge the quality of the portfolio as a whole and do not average the four pieces.

### Characteristics of Effective Portfolios

The following list, in no particular order, represents some of the features of effective student writing that were most often mentioned during the portfolio anchoring sessions:

- Develops pieces fully and substantially.
- Uses language imaginatively and effectively.
- Addresses the “so what” question.
- Shows when appropriate: creates scenes; uses dialogue and internal monologue.
- Supports assertions and generalizations with evidence, examples, and details.
- Recognizes complexities in issues and positions.
- Explores larger social or cultural contexts.
- Demonstrates an awareness of audience.
- Writes with purpose, consistency, and focus.
- Engages readers: pieces are at least occasionally moving or powerful.
- Demonstrates awareness of global/local organization appropriate for the writing task.

## Scoring Scale

- 1 Range** A **Poor** portfolio: its many weaknesses clearly outweigh its strengths. It may lack development and/or evidence of global and local organization. Substantial grammatical errors may impede reading. Focus may be unstated and/or unclear.
- 2 Range** A **Fair** portfolio: its weaknesses outweigh its strengths. There is little evidence of the writer's ability to handle varied writing tasks successfully. Usually thin in substance and undistinguished in style, but perhaps clear and error free.
- 3 Range** An **Adequate** portfolio: its strengths and weaknesses are about evenly balanced. Demonstrates some awareness of global/local organization appropriate for the writing task. Evidence of the writer's ability to handle varied writing tasks throughout the portfolio is uneven. Some pieces may be too brief, underdeveloped, general or predictable, but the language use is generally competent.
- 4 Range** A **Good** portfolio: its strengths outweigh its weaknesses. Articulates a purpose and provides moments of sustained exploration of a question. Demonstrates awareness of global/local organization appropriate for the writing task. There is evidence of the writer's ability to handle varied writing tasks. Portfolio shows some awareness of audience and demonstrates some use of evidence.
- 5 Range** A **Very Good** portfolio: its many strengths outweigh its weaknesses. It attempts to isolate a task or frame a question for a specific audience. Writing begins to address the "so what" question. Portfolio suggests an ability to handle varied writing tasks successfully.
- 6 Range** An **Excellent** portfolio: its numerous and significant strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. Demonstrates an ability to handle varied writing tasks successfully. Effectively isolates a task or frames a question for a specific audience. Writing addresses the "so what" question. Pieces are substantially developed and move beyond the predictable and cliché in approach, style, or subject matter.

## Guidelines for Using Non-Sexist Language

Language not only reflects the world around us but also conditions or shapes people's thoughts and attitudes. In other words, when we write or speak, we're actually doing things to our audience—pleasing them, amusing them, informing them, or perhaps hurting them—not simply expressing our thoughts. The fact that words can harm us every bit as much as sticks and stones demands that we be responsible for what we say and how we say things. Realizing this, most of us have already rid our vocabularies of really vulgar words that label people on the basis of their race, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation—words we know are painful. But our language still contains conventions that in more subtle ways can be as hurtful as those obviously vulgar words.

This is particularly true in the area of gender, where we can do harm without even realizing it. For instance, if we use the pronouns he, his, or him to stand for both men and women, if we use man to stand for all human beings, or if we label people as mailmen or chairmen regardless of their gender, we are making an unfair and harmful distinction. By not being aware that even seemingly insignificant parts of our language like the use of pronouns have social implications, we trivialize and make irrelevant the existence and contributions of half of humanity. In an age when roles are changing rapidly, when women are becoming doctors, scientists, farmers, and athletes, and when men work as elementary school teachers, nurses, and secretaries, we need to make sure that we neither intentionally nor unintentionally exclude anyone by our use of language. Eliminating sexist language may not eliminate biased conduct, but it can create greater possibilities for women and men to share equally active and caring roles in our society.

Thus we consider it inappropriate to use sexist language in papers written for the composition classes. In this policy, the English Department is following the guidelines used in all Miami University publications, as well as in professional journals in most academic fields. Organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Modern Language Association have required the use of non-sexist language in their publications for more than a decade.

Here are some ways you can avoid accidentally transmitting sexually-biased messages along with the messages you mean to send.

### **I. Avoid the pronoun problem by using plurals in sentences.**

Examples:

Give each student his paper as soon as he asks for it.

Anyone who wants to eat dinner should wash his hands.

Alternatives:

Give students their papers as soon as they ask for them.

All who want to eat dinner should wash their hands.

## **II. Eliminate words which cause unnecessary gender problems.**

Examples:

A nurse must take care of her patients.

Every person has a right to ask his question and to voice his opinion,

Alternatives:

A nurse must take care of patients.

Every person has a right to ask questions and voice opinions.

## **II. Use inclusive nouns.**

Examples:

mankind

chairman

businessman, fireman,

mailman

Alternatives:

humanity, human beings, people, humankind

coordinator, moderator, presiding officer, head, chair, chairperson

business executive, fire fighter,

mail carrier

## **IV. Use alternatives to phrases which demean or stereotype women.**

Examples:

lady lawyer, woman doctor

career girl, lady  
authoress, poetess

Have your mother send cookies  
for the field trip.

While lunch was delayed, the  
ladies chattered about last night's  
meeting.

Alternatives:

lawyer, doctor

professional, woman  
author, poet

Have your parents send cookies  
for the field trip.

While lunch was delayed, the  
women talked about last night's meeting.

## **Advice from Portfolio Scorers**

Each year, portfolio readers at Miami read hundreds of portfolios. And each year at the end of the scoring sessions, we ask those readers to evaluate their responses to the portfolios they have read and to offer advice to students who are compiling portfolios in hopes of receiving credit from Miami University. What follows here is a summary of the evaluators' remarks and thoughts from the last two years.

### **Two Most Important Features: Aim and Audience**

Evaluators this year follow previous evaluators in indicating that a clear aim and sense of audience are the two most important features of a successful portfolio. In fact, the majority of remarks from instructors this year emphasize that while students need to show mature and insightful thinking and writing, they should also present themselves naturally, not artificially. Evaluators suggest that students should not be afraid to use "I," and that "their own voice(s) should not be drowned by research." We have recommended in the past, and we continue to encourage you to "write as yourself," not as the student you think college professors want you to be. We look for evidence that you think about how you fit into the world, about how issues you write about relate to your personal situations (social, racial, gendered, economic, regional, religious, etc.). Instructors suggest repeatedly:

"Consider your audience. We're real people who can see through stereotypic, immature arguments. We appreciate critical thinking and self-awareness in each piece, not just description."

Raters are interested in what you think and see and how you see those things in relation to broader issues and concerns. Evaluators tell students to "think about how the pieces you write connect, and talk about them as a whole, not just as random pieces." Also, "think seriously about ambiguities, feelings, and problems. Revise, rewrite and show that you are thinking about your audience."

The readers at Miami are diverse in age, teaching experience, interests, and tastes. While we range from experienced graduate students to tenured professors, we are all interested in students and spend quite a bit of time reading and evaluating college writing. When we score the portfolios submitted to us, we develop a set criteria that describes the qualities we value in writing. (See Appendix D: Scoring Guide.) Before completing your portfolio, you should spend time reading your work with the scoring criteria in mind. While we make changes from year to year, the major criteria remain the same, and you should be familiar with them.

## Specific Suggestions for Improvement

While you should keep audience and aim in mind as you develop your portfolio, you will benefit as well from more specific advice and suggestions our raters offer below.

- 1. The importance of the reflective letter:** The most common pieces of advice our raters suggest concern the reflective letter. This initial piece is obviously an important part of the portfolio, much more than just a cover letter. Part of what we mean when we say “reflective” is that we want you to situate yourself for your readers—in terms of your “social location,” or, in other words, how your race, class, and gender influence your values and opinions. One rater insists, “Give much more attention to the reflective letter. It should be REFLECTIVE (many were not) and interesting,” and “go beyond simple summary of what is in the collection. Reflect on how the pieces reveal something about you as a writer and how they are connected.” The reflective letter sets the tone for the whole portfolio and creates a first and lasting impression. Think about what reflection involves—not just including details about who you are and how you write but also about how and why your background and environment have affected what you write. Many successful letters strike a balance between confidence and humility; many show awareness of strengths and limitations, as well as awareness that writing has consequences (beyond getting credit for English at Miami).
- 2. Use the full 12-page allotment:** We strongly urge you to take full advantage of the 12-page limit and develop your pieces fully. All raters notice whether or not a student’s portfolio has enough “substance.” With this in mind, we ask that students use the page limit and make it work. Five or six pages isn’t enough. Longer portfolios offer analysis and discuss the complexity of issues. Brief portfolios rarely get a high score because they can’t fully develop, support, and sustain a writer’s position.
- 3. Develop with specific detail:** Use many details, examples, and illustrations to develop and explain your points. Instructors prefer concreteness to vagueness and showing to telling. When appropriate, use dialogue and narrative examples and scenes to help develop your work. As one rater suggests, “Look at a lot of examples in *Best of Miami University’s Portfolios* and try to figure out why they are good pieces. Usually, it’s not because of the topic but because of how the writer develops the topic.”
- 4. Content and style should suit audience and aim:** Be aware of “big issue” topics and make sure you can take them on in a way that is focused and thoughtful. A reader is less likely to be enthusiastic about the 26th paper on abortion or *Hamlet* unless it has a fresh angle. Also, when using outside sources, work from your own viewpoint instead of simply retelling other people’s ideas. If you use outside sources, be sure to include a Works Cited page so readers know that you know how to give appropriate credit to other writers when you use their ideas.

5. **Be creative:** Don't be afraid to experiment. Include pieces in a variety of styles if possible. Raters say, "forget formulas" emphasizing that "a good five-paragraph theme has no greater chance than a good paper with any other structure... Life is too short to cram into five paragraphs!" Several raters have mentioned that they want a writer to "take chances, use humor—show different sides of yourself! Take time to ask yourself: 'How can I make this more interesting? More engaging?' and then take time to revise. No one wants to be bored."
6. **Revise your portfolio carefully:** Most professional writers see revision as going well beyond changing words and correcting grammar. Give yourself plenty of time to spend reading and re-reading your work, thinking of ways to offer fresher examples and more compelling arguments. Revising also means considering your audience: "Go over your pieces and 're-see' them for this audience and situation."
7. **Appearance and correctness count:** Of course content is most important, but after taking the time to do the writing, you need to spend time polishing and correcting the work. Both spell check and get a trusted person to proofread. Give pieces titles, number pages, and use a legible, plain typeface or font. Full portfolios in italics or long narrow fonts are difficult to read, and anything smaller than 10 pt. is also extremely hard to read. Remember to use a readable point size: 12 pt. (depending on the font) is best. Double-spacing is standard, as are one-inch margins on all sides of the page.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Can I send one single paper that fulfills the requirements of a narrative or story, an explanatory/exploratory/persuasive essay, and a response to a text?**

Yes. Some teachers will assign a writing assignment that is “multi-genre” and that fulfills many of the expectations we have for the separate pieces we ask you to submit. If you have such a “multi-genre” paper, it must be substantial enough to fulfill all of the content requirements for the portfolio.

If you choose to submit a multi-genre paper in place of separate papers, we ask the following:

- Explain your choice in your reflective letter. Tell us what specific required genres your paper fulfills, making sure to follow the instructions for the letter (in the brochure) asking you to critically reflect on your choices for the portfolio as well as on the purpose and audience for your multi-genre paper, as you would for any other papers you submit in your portfolio.
- Make certain to follow appropriate in-text and bibliographic procedures for all the papers submitted in your portfolio in which you use others’ ideas or refer to outside sources.
- Be sure to follow the “essential instructions” listed in the brochure for your portfolio (such as including drafts for the portfolio, removing all identifying information, staying within page number limits, writing your social security number on each page, etc.).

### **What exactly does the brochure instruction to “properly document” sources mean? Do bibliographic pages count in my page number limit?**

To properly document your use of someone else’s words or ideas, you must both cite your source in your paper, at the end of each quotation or paraphrase you take from a source, and provide full bibliographic documentation on a separate page at the end of each paper in which you use other sources. To be consistent in your documentation, you will need to follow one specific citation style—such as MLA, APA, or Chicago—throughout each paper. English departments typically use MLA style, but you can use other styles, as long as you do so consistently. Requirements for each of the styles listed above can be found online, or in individual style manuals or general writing manuals (such as Diana Hacker’s *A Pocket Style Manual*) available in most retail bookstores or college textbook stores.

Bibliographic pages do NOT count in the 12-page limit for the portfolio. So if your portfolio ends up being 14 or 15 pages long, for example, because of your end-page documentation, but the actual text of the papers you submit totals 12 pages or less, then your portfolio falls within the maximum page limit. Do *not* leave out the bibliographic pages because they put your portfolio over 12 pages.

### **What’s the difference between a “traditional” reflective letter and a “creative” one?**

A “traditional” reflective letter more-or-less takes the form of a personal letter of introduction, which is structured as a typical formal letter: it opens with a greeting; moves to a brief introduction of the writer; offers reflective information about each of the works included (i.e., it provides a context for each work and explains why you selected each one for the portfolio); and then closes with some concluding remarks about the writer or the portfolio. For many students, the traditional reflective letter form is a good choice.

However, some writers choose to open up this traditional kind of letter, to include conventions from other writing genres. For example, one writer might choose to submit a letter that includes dialogue, creates a detailed scene, or incorporates figurative language as a means of introduction or reflection. Another writer might choose to cite outside sources—like interesting quotes from plays, poems, or works of fiction—to fulfill the requirements for the reflective letter. That is, the genre of reflective letter writing is able to accommodate a variety of creative options that you can select from or combine. Since the letter is the first piece of writing included in the portfolio, you will do well to consider all of the options available to you—and try drafting out various ones to see how they might look to and be received by the portfolio audience—as you set out to write your reflective letter.

Whether you select the traditional or creative letter, or try a combination of both, be sure you still follow the instructions in the brochure regarding the focus that your letter should take on the writing that you are including in the portfolio.

### **How important are titles to the portfolio contents?**

Titles are often a very difficult and a sometimes overlooked part of the composing process. But the title is the first introduction to a piece of writing that readers see, and as such it is an important element of the work itself. Spend some time thinking about how you will title the three works in your portfolio which require titles (all but the reflective letter). For each title you create, ask yourself: Will this title intrigue my readers? Does it reflect what I have written in my paper? If I saw this title on a paper, would I be likely to read the rest of the paper based on the title alone? You could also get feedback from other people, asking them the same kinds of questions. Following this procedure can help you determine if you have chosen an interesting title that will effectively prepare the audience for reading your text.

### **Does all of the writing included in my portfolio have to be related in some way?**

Another way to put this question is, do I need a “theme” that connects all four of my works? And the answer to that question is no. You do not have to feel “locked in” to selecting or creating pieces that are all somehow “related” to each other. On the other hand, your reflective letter is meant to explain to your portfolio readers how you chose the individual pieces you included in the portfolio, and why they work well together to showcase your writing strengths and give your portfolio varied depth and balance. That is, the most successful portfolios demonstrate an ability to write effectively in differ-

ent genres of writing. The portfolio readers will be looking for your ability to compose in a variety of ways: reflection on specific texts you have written; narration of a personal experience or short story writing; exploration, explanation, and/or persuasion; and response to other texts.

**Do all 4 pieces in my portfolio have to be equal length?**

The most important thing to remember is to use the full 12-page limit and develop your thoughts in each piece as fully as possible. But don't try to force each paper you include to be of equal length. Chances are that your reflective letter will only be 1-2 pages in length, while your remaining pieces may range from 3-5 pages each. A balanced portfolio will usually present your writing in a more effective way than, for example, one very long piece and 3 very short pieces. In other words, use the 12 pages in a way that helps you produce 4 pieces that you are happy with and that, taken together, will showcase your writing abilities most effectively. Your portfolio readers will be reading and evaluating your portfolio as a whole.

## Portfolio Contents

A portfolio consists of a completed information form together with the following four equally important pieces of prose writing. Poetry may be included as part of any piece, but since this is a prose portfolio, poetry should not comprise an entire piece. Miami's Department of English follows the NCTE *Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language* and any sources used must be properly documented with in-text and end page citation. Examples and explanation of both the use of nonsexist language and proper documentation can be found on Miami English Department's Portfolio Website. <http://www.muohio.edu/portfolio/>

### 1. A Reflective Letter

The reflective letter, addressed to Miami University writing teachers, sets the tone for the portfolio, introducing not only the writer but the individual pieces as well. Readers are not expecting a narrative of your experiences and growth as a writer but, rather, evidence of the critical reflection used in assembling and producing the portfolio. To that end, most useful letters explicitly introduce the pieces and explain the purpose and audience for each piece. Both creative and more traditional letters of introduction are acceptable.

### 2. A Narrative or Short Story

This piece can be based on personal experience as a non-fiction narrative or can be a short work of fiction. Its aim is to communicate the significance of an experience or event through description, dialogue, and/or narration. Put another way, successful pieces show rather than tell. The writing can be personal and informal. This narrative or short story should have a title.

### 3. An Explanatory, Exploratory, or Persuasive Essay

Generally speaking, essays in this category should be focused, informative treatments of specific subjects. This essay should provide much more than convincing examples of supporting data; it should examine multiple points of view and show strong evidence of critical thinking, awareness of audience, and attention to social context. If secondary sources are used, they must be documented correctly. This explanatory, exploratory, or persuasive essay should have a title.

### 4. A Response to a Text

This essay should respond to a written text (short story, novel, poem, play, or essay) or a cultural text (film, music, or visual art) produced by professionals, classmates, or yourself. The response should interpret or evaluate all or part of a text. Possible approaches include analyzing textual elements, explaining the text's significance, comparing the text to other texts, relating the text to personal experience and /or connecting it to larger social or cultural contexts. Use support from the text to develop ideas and strengthen focus without overshadowing your own response or giving extensive summaries. If secondary sources are used, they must be documented correctly. (If the print text is not common, a copy of it should be included with your portfolio.) This response to a text should have a title.

## Essential Instructions

Papers written in class or out of school, including college application essays, are acceptable. Papers may be revised after being returned by a teacher.

Arrange your portfolio in this order:

- completed information form
- reflective letter
- narrative or short story
- explanatory, exploratory, or persuasive essay
- response to a text

For any **one** piece of writing, label all draft material and paperclip it to the end of the appropriate essay. Portfolios lacking draft material will not be scored.

Your name, hometown, school, and teacher's name should not appear anywhere in any of the portfolio pieces (*including your reflective letter*), and all your writing must be free of teacher's marks, grades, and comments. *This does not include your draft materials.*

Write your social security number in the upper right hand corner of each page.

Do not staple or bind your portfolio.

Your completed portfolio, not counting works cited pages and draft material, should not exceed 12 typed, double-spaced full pages (8.5"x11") using a 12-point font. If your four pieces total more than 12 pages, your portfolio will not be read. The strongest portfolios tend to range in length from 10 to 12 pages.

All materials must be mailed on or before June 4, 2001, by your supervising teacher—the teacher most familiar with the pieces in your portfolio. This teacher must sign the *Portfolio Information Form* documenting that all writing in the portfolio is your own. You must also sign the form.

Portfolio submission costs \$28, more if you earn credit, and you will receive a \$10 gift certificate from an Oxford area bookstore. You will be billed later, so do not send payment with your portfolio. Results will be mailed at the end of June. Results will not be given over the phone.

**Portfolios must be postmarked by June 4, 2001.** Send to:

Portfolio Writing Program  
Department of English  
Miami University  
Oxford, OH 45056

## PORTFOLIO INFORMATION FORM

To the student: Complete the first half of this form (type or print) and give it to your supervising teacher along with your portfolio and a stamped 10x13 envelope addressed to: Portfolio Writing Program, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056. Do not send payment.

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

SS#: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Will you be (check one): \_\_\_\_\_ an entering first year student \_\_\_\_\_ a transfer student  
\_\_\_\_\_ an upperclass Miami student \_\_\_\_\_ other

At what campus will you enroll: \_\_\_\_\_ Hamilton \_\_\_\_\_ Middletown \_\_\_\_\_ Oxford

**I pledge that all the writing included in the attached portfolio is my own, and I grant Miami University permission to publish all or part of its contents.**

Signature of Student \_\_\_\_\_

To the Teacher: If you believe this portfolio contains only the student's own work, please complete this form, insert it and the portfolio into the envelope provided by the student, and mail it by June 4, 2001. Thank you!

Supervising Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Home Phone: ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Name of High School: \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

**To the best of my knowledge, the attached portfolio has been written by this student.**

Signature of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## 2000 Supervising Teachers

|                      |   |                       |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Mrs. Sheri L. Allen  | Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School | Broadview Heights, OH |
| William J. Allen     | Kenston High School                       | Chagrin Falls, OH     |
| Shawn-Paul Allison   | St. Vincent-St Mary High School           | Akron, OH             |
| Shelly Allison-Grubb | McComb High School                        | McComb, OH            |
| Sharon C. Alloway    | Bishop Watterson High School              | Columbus, OH          |
| Barbara Amato        | Anderson High School                      | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Barbara J. Angott    | Seaholm High School                       | Birmingham, MI        |
| Elizabeth Armentrout | Middletown High School                    | Middletown, OH        |
| William C. Armstrong | The Overlake School                       | Redmond, WA           |
| Michael Bader        | Sylvania Southview High School            | Sylvania, OH          |
| Rosemary Bailey      | Xenia High School                         | Xenia, OH             |
| Jacquelyn R. Baker   | Oak Hills High School                     | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Margaret M. Baker    | Irondequoit High School                   | Rochester, NY         |
| Leonard B. Balk      | Chagrin Falls High School                 | Chagrin Falls, OH     |
| David O. Barberic    | Olmsted Falls High School                 | Olmsted Falls, OH     |
| Carol S. Barger      | Walsh Jesuit High School                  | Cuyahoga Falls, OH    |
| Paul Barker          | St. Edward High School                    | Lakewood, OH          |
| David Barkley        | Dublin-Scioto High School                 | Dublin, OH            |
| Michelle M. Barren   | Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy        | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Mrs. Bette Bates     | Grafton Memorial Senior High School       | Grafton, MA           |
| Leslie Baumann       | Westerville North High School             | Westerville, OH       |
| Tom A. Beach         | St. Ignatius High School                  | Cleveland, OH         |
| Kenneth C. Beckley   | Newcomerstown High School                 | Newcomerstown, OH     |
| Terry Bell           | Oakwood Senior High School                | Dayton, OH            |
| Amy B. Birtman       | Lake Forest High School                   | Lake Forest, IL       |
| Judith A. Blair      | Holy Name High School                     | Parma Heights, OH     |
| Patricia T. Blake    | Cincinnati Northwest High School          | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Sarah F. Blakeman    | Greenwood High School                     | Bowling Green, KY     |
| Susan J. Bookwalter  | Thomas Worthington High School            | Worthington, OH       |
| Lizabeth L. Bradshaw | Cathedral High School                     | Indianapolis, IN      |
| Bridget Bradt        | Nazareth Academy                          | LaGrange Park, IL     |
| Sonja A. Brazell     | St. Charles High School                   | Saint Charles, IL     |
| Gaile M. Brennan     | Fairfield City Schools                    | Fairfield, OH         |
| Kathleen Brens       | St. Charles High School                   | Saint Charles, IL     |
| Cynthia K. Briggs    | Wyoming High School                       | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Darrin Broadway      | Ottawa Hills High School                  | Toledo, OH            |
| Kathleen S. Brooks   | Kenton High School                        | Kenton, OH            |
| Carolyn Brown        | Notre Dame de la Baie Academy             | Green Bay, WI         |
| Mrs. Linda L. Brown  | Vandalia Butler High School               | Vandalia, OH          |
| Andrea K. Brownstein | Mary Institute/St. Louis Country Day      | Saint Louis, MO       |
| Deborah L. Bryson    | Franklin Regional Senior High School      | Murrysville, PA       |
| Mary Buckingham      | Westlake High School                      | Westlake, OH          |
| Leslie T. Bush       | Finneytown High School                    | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Scott Callaghan      | Wadsworth High School                     | Wadsworth, OH         |
| Karen Cameron        | Maumee High School                        | Maumee, OH            |

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|------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Kelsey Caples          | Canyon Del Oro High School        | Tucson, AZ           |
| Mary M. Carey          | Glenbrook South High School       | Glenview, IL         |
| Alan R. Carruthers     | Rockhurst High School             | Kansas City, MO      |
| Ronni Chern            | James Madison High School         | Vienna, VA           |
| Sandra Cipares         | Michigan City High School         | Michigan City, IN    |
| Daniel L. Claynl       | Maine Township High School South  | Park Ridge, IL       |
| Janet Coakley          | William Henry Harrison HS         | Harrison, OH         |
| Sandra Coleman         | Anderson High School              | Mount Healthy, OH    |
| Nancy Corbett          | Philo High School                 | Philo, OH            |
| Colleen K. Couture     | Magic City Campus                 | Minot, ND            |
| Mrs. Merrill L. Cowart | Franklin High School              | Franklin, PA         |
| Clare E. Cox           | Talawanda High School             | Oxford, OH           |
| James C. Davis         | Troy High School                  | Troy, OH             |
| Dr. Robert B. Davis    | Miami University—Hamilton         | Hamilton, OH         |
| Elizabeth F. Deegan    | Hudson High School                | Hudson, OH           |
| Michael J. Dehring     | St. Xavier High School            | Cincinnati, OH       |
| Cynthia deMontigny     | Rochester Adams High School       | Rochester Hills, MI  |
| Becky Dennis           | Logan High School                 | Logan, OH            |
| Paulette M. Dewey      | Robert S. Rogers High School      | Toledo, OH           |
| Kurt Dinan             | Lakota East High School           | Liberty Township, OH |
| Sarah K. Dorger        | Wyoming High School               | Cincinnati, OH       |
| Juliette Draffen       | Valley View High School           | Germantown, OH       |
| Debra J. Drew          | Perrysburg High School            | Perrysburg, OH       |
| Donald Lee Dunstan     | Greenon High School               | Springfield, OH      |
| Linda K. Eddy          | Marietta High School              | Marietta, OH         |
| Dino Effychiov         | Ridgewood High School             | Ridgewood, NJ        |
| Lorelle Elberly        | West Ottawa High School           | Holland, MI          |
| Mrs. Linda B. Ellis    | Richard Montgomery High School    | Rockville, MD        |
| Jennifer Evans         | Hamilton Southeastern High School | Fishers, IN          |
| Patricia K. Fast       | Minster High School               | Minster, OH          |
| Deborah A. Feeney      | Tinora High School                | Defiance, OH         |
| Mrs. Nanette M. Fetter | Sylvania Southview High School    | Sylvania, OH         |
| J. Field               | Glenbrook North High School       | Northbrook, IL       |
| Teresa R. Figley       | Ayersville High School            | Defiance, OH         |
| Janet Fish             | Thomas Worthington High School    | Worthington, OH      |
| Deborah Fleming        | Ashland University                | Ashland, Oh          |
| Mrs. Whitney Flick     | Woodmore High School              | Elmore, OH           |
| William Flint          | Miami University                  | Oxford, OH           |
| James M. Fogarty       | Benet Academy                     | Lisle, IL            |
| Mrs. Lisa M. Foos      | Gibsonburg High School            | Gibsonburg, OH       |
| Karl J. Froeb          | Dulaney High School               | Timonium, MD         |
| Karen Fulop            | Valley Forge High School          | Parma Heights, OH    |
| Jerry Gamertsfelder    | McDonald High School              | McDonald, OH         |
| F. Gantz               | Dublin Coffman High School        | Dublin, OH           |
| James M. Geer          | Beavercreek High School           | Beavercreek, OH      |
| Ellen Geisler          | Mentor High School                | Mentor, OH           |
| Kate Glass             | Buffalo Grove High School         | Buffalo Grove, IL    |

|                         |                                       |                      |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Mrs. Connie Goode       | Bluffton High School                  | Bluffton, OH         |
| Cheryl Gordon           | Logan High School                     | Logan, OH            |
| Jennifer Goshorn        | Farmington High School                | Farmington, MI       |
| Nancy Graf              | Will C. Wood High School              | Vacaville, CA        |
| Donna S. Guith          | Troy High School                      | Troy, MI             |
| Frank G. Hager          | Wooster High School                   | Wooster, OH          |
| Richard Hague           | Purcell Marian High School            | Cincinnati, OH       |
| Terri Hamilton          | Woodford County High School           | Versailles, KY       |
| Joyce Haner             | Okemos High School                    | Okemos, MI           |
| Beth M. Harding         | Princeton High School                 | Cincinnati, OH       |
| Craig Hargis            | Notre Dame High School                | Riverside, CA        |
| Larry Hays, Jr.         | Whitfield High School                 | Saint Louis, MO      |
| Mrs. Peggy Heimerdinger | duPont Manual High School             | Louisville, KY       |
| James L. Hemmert        | Carroll High School                   | Dayton, OH           |
| Mrs. Barbara Hendrix    | Houston High School                   | Germantown, TN       |
| Casey Henry             | Mt. Lebanon High School               | Pittsburgh, PA       |
| Timothy A. Hicks        | Colerain High School                  | Cincinnati, OH       |
| Jon F. Holley           | Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy     | Cuyahoga Falls, OH   |
| Stephen M. Holt         | Russell High School                   | Russell, KY          |
| Patsy Huey              | Shiloh High School                    | Snellville, GA       |
| Karen L. Hull           | Big Walnut High School                | Sunbury, OH          |
| Julie Ivers             | Visitation Academy                    | Saint Louis, MO      |
| Diana Jackson           | Logan Elm High School                 | Circleville, OH      |
| Glenn Jambor            | Garfield Heights High School          | Garfield Heights, OH |
| Jerry T. Johnson        | Carmel High School                    | Carmel, IN           |
| Sharon Arko Jones       | Parma Senior High School              | Parma, OH            |
| Roseann Julian          | Talawanda High School                 | Oxford, OH           |
| Robert A. Kaczor        | Newark High School                    | Newark, OH           |
| Ann S. Kay              | Mansfield Senior High School          | Mansfield, OH        |
| George Kelly            | Madison East High School              | Madison, WI          |
| J. Kelzow               | Hinsdale Central High School          | Hinsdale, IL         |
| Michael Kennedy         | Newton South High School              | Newton, MA           |
| Kathryn Kercher         | Berkley High School                   | Berkley, MI          |
| Mary Pat Key            | Hughes High School                    | Cincinnati, OH       |
| Constance M. Keyser     | Newton Falls High School              | Newton Falls, OH     |
| Diane E. Kirtley        | Nazareth Academy                      | LaGrange Park, IL    |
| Judith D. Klefas        | Sycamore High School                  | Cincinnati, OH       |
| Dianne S. Klein         | Bowling Green High School             | Bowling Green, OH    |
| Kathleen H. Knox        | Elyria Catholic High School           | Elyria, OH           |
| Patty Kovacs            | University of Chicago Lab High School | Chicago, IL          |
| Kristi L. Kremer        | Archbishop Alter High School          | Kettering, OH        |
| Christine V. Krueger    | Our Lady of the Elms High School      | Akron, OH            |
| Nanette M. Kunz         | Bethel-Tate High School               | Bethel, OH           |
| Greg M. Kurtz           | Dayton Christian Schools              | Dayton, OH           |
| Prof. David Lange       | Luther Preparatory School             | Watertown, WI        |
| Catherine R. LaPlante   | Bishop Rosecrans High School          | Zanesville, OH       |
| Larry Laraby            | Notre Dame de la Baie Academy         | Green Bay, WI        |

|                       |   |                       |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Rosemary Laughlin     | University Laboratory High School         | Urbana, IL            |
| Bill Leece            | Rolling Meadows High School               | Rolling Meadows, IL   |
| Beverly J. Lelan      | Napoleon High School                      | Napoleon, OH          |
| James V. Lonergan     | Maine Township High School South          | Park Ridge, IL        |
| Carol Kirler Low      | Pickerington High School                  | Pickerington, OH      |
| Therese D. Lustic     | Hudson High School                        | Hudson, OH            |
| Michelle M. Lynn      | Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School | Broadview Heights, OH |
| Katherine L. Maisano  | Gill St. Bernard's School                 | Gladstone, NJ         |
| Connie A. Martin      | Milford High School                       | Milford, OH           |
| Pat Martin            | Naperville North High School              | Naperville, IL        |
| Diane P. McCartney    | West Holmes High School                   | Millersburg, OH       |
| Robin L. McCutchan    | Lebanon High School                       | Lebanon, OH           |
| Kelly McNamara        | West Geauga High School                   | Chesterland, OH       |
| Janet Hormon McNeal   | Cathedral High School                     | Indianapolis, IN      |
| Nancy McReynolds      | Eisenhower High School                    | Decatur, IL           |
| Terryl S. Meador      | Cincinnati Northwest High School          | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Patricia A. Mellen    | Sandusky High School                      | Sandusky, OH          |
| Meg Menkedick         | Gahanna Lincoln High School               | Gahanna, OH           |
| Larry Milam           | Teays Valley High School                  | Ashville, OH          |
| Carol A. Milkovich    | Rochester Adams High School               | Rochester Hills, MI   |
| Betsy Miller          | Upper Arlington High School               | Columbus, OH          |
| Kristine L. Mogen     | Harvey S. Firestone High School           | Akron, OH             |
| Shirley Montgomery    | Lakota West High School                   | West Chester, OH      |
| Doris Nell            | Lebanon High School                       | Lebanon, OH           |
| Mrs. Colleen Neville  | Magnificat High School                    | Rocky River, OH       |
| James R. Oberschlakl  | Western Brown High School                 | Mount Orab, OH        |
| Chris Oetter          | New Trier High School                     | Winnetka, IL          |
| Brent Oliver          | Greenfield Central High School            | Greenfield, IN        |
| Linda Parker          | Washington State Community College        | Marietta, OH          |
| Kathleen Pasquantonio | Novi High School                          | Novi, MI              |
| Mary E. Patroulis     | Champaign Central High School             | Champaign, IL         |
| Paula S. Patterson    | Crestview Local High School               | Columbiana, OH        |
| Michael T. Pekarek    | Centerville High School                   | Centerville, OH       |
| Brenda Pepitone       | Wayne High School                         | Huber Heights, OH     |
| Dee Phillips          | Hudson High School                        | Hudson, OH            |
| M. J. Phillips        | Port Clinton High School                  | Port Clinton, OH      |
| John C. Polivka       | Turpin High School                        | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Barbara A. Powell     | Lebanon High School                       | Lebanon, OH           |
| Cathy Ransenberg      | Mariemont High School                     | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Cynthia L. Reasbeck   | Bridgeport High School                    | Bridgeport, OH        |
| Mary Jane Reed        | Solon High School                         | Solon, OH             |
| Mary Sue Reimueller   | Avon Lake High School                     | Avon Lake, OH         |
| Gregory V. Renneker   | Stephen T. Badin High School              | Hamilton, OH          |
| Joyce E. Rex          | Walter E. Stebbins High School            | Riverside, OH         |
| Gerald H. Richardson  | Little Miami High School                  | Morrow, OH            |
| Candace S. Riley      | Upper Arlington High School               | Columbus, OH          |
| Christopher M. Riley  | Barstow School                            | Kansas City, MO       |

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| Mr. Pat Riley               | Perkins High School                       | Sandusky, OH          |
| Kathleen Roberts            | Winton Woods High School                  | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Dennis Rogers               | Dublin Scioto High School                 | Dublin, OH            |
| Richard J. Rohr             | Dalton High School                        | Dalton, OH            |
| Liv Rosin                   | Mounds View High School                   | Arden Hills, MN       |
| Mrs. Barbara Rottura        | Rocky River High School                   | Rocky River, OH       |
| Brother Robert C. Ruhl, CSV | St. Viator High School                    | Arlington Heights, IL |
| Patricia Russell            | Quince Orchard High School                | Gaithersburg, MD      |
| Karin Rutt                  | Cumberland Valley High School             | Mechanicsburg, PA     |
| Cheryl Salzman              | Colerain High School                      | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Helen Samolis               | Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School | Broadview Heights, OH |
| Robert Sauerbrey            | La Salle High School                      | Cincinnati, OH        |
| Susan K. Schaurer           | Eaton High School                         | Eaton, OH             |
| Cynthia Schoenhoff          | Worthington Kilbourne High School         | Columbus, OH          |
| Richard W. Scott            | West High School                          | Torrance, CA          |
| Jacqueline Sherman          | North Allegheny High School               | Wexford, PA           |
| Janet K. Simon              | National Trail High School                | New Paris, OH         |
| Mrs. Nanette W. Singer      | Lower Dauphin High School                 | Hummelstown, PA       |
| Mrs. Dianne R. Skelly       | West Carrollton Senior High School        | West Carrollton, OH   |
| Doris Slone                 | Hinsdale Central High School              | Hinsdale, IL          |
| Jaime Smith                 | Lemon-Monroe High School                  | Monroe, OH            |
| Jean A. Smith               | Pleasant High School                      | Marion, OH            |
| David L. Soots              | Bishop Chatard High School                | Indianapolis, IN      |
| Julie Sparks                | Madison Consolidated High School          | Madison, IN           |
| Linda O. Specht             | Strongsville High School                  | Strongsville, OH      |
| Ron D. Springfield          | Carl Albert Senior High School            | Midwest City, OK      |
| Richard A. Stevens          | Perry High School                         | Perry, OH             |
| Virginia Stillwell          | Wayzata High School                       | Plymouth, MN          |
| Virginia R. Stoller         | Ottawa-Glandorf High School               | Ottawa, OH            |
| Michael Stracco             | Benet Academy                             | Lisle, IL             |
| Kathleen Strawser           | Berea High School                         | Berea, OH             |
| Lannae L. Stuleville        | Roncalli High School                      | Indianapolis, IN      |
| Carole Swift                | Bettendorf High School                    | Bettendorf, IA        |
| Rodney J. Taylor            | Pittsford Sutherland High School          | Pittsford, NY         |
| Mary E. Thigpin             | Centennial High School                    | Franklin, TN          |
| Frank H. Thomas             | Pomperaug High School                     | Southbury, CT         |
| Dr. Kathleen Thomas         | Garaway High School                       | Sugarcreek, OH        |
| Robert Thurtle              | Aragon High School                        | San Mateo, CA         |
| Betsy A. Torge              | Librarian, Lane Public Library            | Oxford, OH            |
| John Tottenham              | Hawken School                             | Gates Mills, OH       |
| Kathleen Tumminia           | St. Louis Priory School                   | Creve Couer, MO       |
| Katherine D. Urkovich       | Lake Forest High School                   | Lake Forest, IL       |
| Tanya W. Van Hyfte          | Harrison High School                      | West Lafayette, IN    |
| Sue Van Meter               | Poland Seminary High School               | Poland, OH            |
| Carolyn Van Zante           | West High School                          | Iowa City, IA         |
| Terri Wainwright            | Bel Air High School                       | Bel Air, MD           |
| Velina J. Warren            | Brookfield High School                    | Brookfield, OH        |

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| C. Kay Watson         | Lakota East High School             | Liberty Township, OH |
| David Weaner          | Westerville North High School       | Westerville, OH      |
| Sally D. Weaver       | Genoa Area High School              | Genoa, OH            |
| Elizabeth A. Webber   | Medina Senior High School           | Medina, OH           |
| Janet Weil            | Troy High School                    | Troy, MI             |
| Brian H. Welch        | Villa Duchesne/Oak Hill High School | Saint Louis, MO      |
| David P. Wetta        | York Community High School          | Elmhurst, IL         |
| Judy White            | Harvey S. Firestone High School     | Akron, OH            |
| Deborah Whitley       | Thomas S. Wootton High School       | Rockville, MD        |
| James M. Wilkinson    | Marquette University High School    | Milwaukee, WI        |
| David A. Wilks        | Holy Name High School               | Parma Heights, OH    |
| Jane Wilks            | Clarence Senior High School         | Clarence, NY         |
| Deborah Williams      | Lawrence Central High School        | Indianapolis, IN     |
| Phillip G. Wilson     | Shawnee Mission West High School    | Overland Park, KS    |
| Dr. Edward F. Wingler | Hinsdale Central High School        | Hinsdale, IL         |
| Allison L. Wischer    | Wyoming High School                 | Cincinnati, OH       |
| Pauline S. Wittle     | Middleton High School               | Middleton, WI        |
| Robert J. Witz        | Dowling High School                 | West Des Moines, IA  |
| William Wixwall       | Shorewood High School               | Shorewood, WI        |
| David Wood            | Lake Highlands High School          | Dallas, TX           |
| Natalie M. Zangara    | West Geauga High School             | Chesterland, OH      |
| James Zimmerman       | Archbishop Alter High School        | Kettering, OH        |