

**MIAMI UNIVERSITY
BEST OF PORTFOLIOS 2002**

EDITOR—CONNIE KENDALL
ASSISTANT EDITOR—REBECCA FLEMING

EDITORIAL BOARD—BRENDA HELMBRECHT, MEREDITH LOVE,
KIM MURRAY, JEFF SOMMERS, LISA SUTER, MORRIS YOUNG

**MIAMI UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
OXFORD, OH 45056**

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
REFLECTIVE LETTER	7
COLLEEN DUEBBER	9
MELISSA HILL	11
BRITTANY MATYAS	13
MEGAN RYAN	15
A NARRATIVE OR SHORT STORY	17
JILLIAN BLACK, "DANIEL"	19
MARISA CAPPS, "THE LOCKET"	21
MEGAN RYAN, "THE RACE"	25
NOAM SCHAFFER, "A WALK"	27
AN EXPLANATORY, EXPLORATORY, OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY	29
RAJESH DOSHI, "AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL"	30
JAMES ESTILL, "END THE CORRUPTION OF BASEBALL"	33
STEFANIE RARDIN, "IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS: ARE VOUCHERS THE SOLUTION?"	37
SHAWN RODERICK, "CELLULAR LIBERTY"	40
A RESPONSE TO A TEXT	44
LINDSEY HOSSBACH, "NO MAN STANDS ALONE"	46
ADRIANNE KRAUSS, "THE AMERICAN DREAM: A NIGHTMARE IN <i>DEATH OF A SALESMAN</i> AND <i>THE GRAPES OF WRATH</i> "	49
STEPHEN MARKLEY, "THE PRIZE THAT KEEPS HIM RUNNING"	51
SHAWN RODERICK, "LESSON LEARNED"	53
COMPLETE PORTFOLIOS	
KAILA GREGORY	57
KERRY LANIGAN	67
KENDAL ROBINSON	75
MATTHEW SKOMOROWSKI	88
2002 SCORING GUIDE FOR PORTFOLIOS	
CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE PORTFOLIOS	97
SCORING SCALE	98
GUIDELINES FOR NON-SEXIST LANGUAGE	99
ADVICE FROM PORTFOLIO SCORERS	101
SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT	102
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	104
2003 PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION INFORMATION	107
PORTFOLIO CONTENTS	108
ESSENTIAL INSTRUCTIONS	109
PORTFOLIO INFORMATION FORM	110
SUPERVISING TEACHERS	111

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. Few universities across the country present first-year students with the opportunity to receive advanced credit by submitting a portfolio; Miami's program is unique, and we hope you take advantage of it.

The Miami University Portfolio Writing Program was established by Laurel Black, Don Daiker, Jeffrey Sommers, and Gail Stygall in order to value and encourage high school writing and to provide a fairer way of evaluating it than the standard time placement examinations. The success of the program owes much to the continuing support of Keith Tuma, Chair of the Department of English, former Chair, C. Barry Chabot, and of College Composition Directors, Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, Diana Royer, Jennie Dautermann, Mary Fuller, John Heyda, Susan Jarratt, and Max Morenberg.

Five outstanding secondary English teachers helped create the portfolio program: Marilyn Elzey of Talawanda High School in Oxford; D. J. Hammond of Madeira High School in Cincinnati; John Kuehn of Kettering Fairmont High School; Ted Phillips of Mt. Healthy High School in Cincinnati; and Doris Riddle of Norwood High School in Cincinnati. Other high school teachers whose recommendations helped shape the program are Angela Brill of Mount Healthy High School; Bob Disney of Fairfield High School; Teresa McGowan of Hamilton High School; and Penni Meyer and Sharon Rab of Kettering Fairmont High School.

The portfolio program has been supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) of the U.S. Department of Education. Additional funding has come from the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA), the Miami University College for Arts and Science, the Miami University Center for the Study of Writing, the Ohio Writing Project, and the Follett's Miami Coop Bookstore.

For conducting the 2002 scoring session, we thank the Portfolio Coordinating Committee: Rebecca Fleming, Brenda Helmbrecht, Connie Kendall, Meredith Love, Kim Murray, Lisa Suter, Jeffrey Sommers, and Morris Young.

We also appreciate the work of our colleagues who read and evaluated the portfolios: Rhoda Cairns, Jan Caporale, Emma Carlson-Berne, Alesia Condy, Don Daiker, Peggy Davis, Todd Davis, Tim Debrosse, Ellen Elder, Karyn England, Donna Flinn, Kate Francis, Patricia Gibson, Perry Gordon, Christian Heisler, Marcella Howard, Christopher Jones, Christy Karnes, Angela Mangold Click, Eric Melbye, Gerry Mersch, Matthew Nelson, William Orth, Tom Pace, Charity Paddock, Phyllis Presutti, David Pyles, Amber Rife, Vida Robertson, Shawna Rushford, Marilyn Russell, Erin Sanders, Brian Seidman, Rachel Smock, Suzanne Spring, Diana Uhlman, Shevaun Watson, Angie Weaver, and Michelle Wiener.

We are grateful for the assistance of the English Department secretaries: Jackie Kearns, Kathy Fox, Debbie Morner, and especially Trudi Nixon.

Finally, we thank all of the dedicated high school English teachers who have given their students the time, opportunity, and motivation to work on the various kinds of writing that a portfolio requires. In both their reflective letters and personal correspondence, participating students frequently share the appreciation they feel for these teachers whose classrooms have made a difference in their lives as writers — and as people.

INTRODUCTION

Pausing to take a deep breath, I reflect on the changes that I have experienced recently. I am no longer a high school student, but a graduate, an adult. Next fall, I will go off to college, leaving behind everything that I have known to begin a new chapter of my life. Thoughts of my impending self-reliance fill my head as I prepare my portfolio for its journey to the post office. While the pieces enclosed are not perfect, each represents a part of me. As I grow and develop, my writing matures. Each new experience provides knowledge and inspiration for future writing. So while I may not be the most seasoned, professional writer, I am trying. As you read these three pieces I have selected, you will hopefully gain insight not only into the person that I am today, but also the person I am becoming.

Kaila Gregory, Reflective Letter

As these lines from Kaila Gregory's Reflective Letter suggest, writing grows and develops as it is shaped by meaningful events and experiences. While Kaila recognizes that the writing she includes in her portfolio is "not perfect," she also understands that her writing is always in process, becoming more mature just as she grows and gains insight as a person. The idea of growth is an important principle of the Miami University Portfolio Program. A portfolio provides incoming first-year students not only with the opportunity to demonstrate their skill and depth as writers now but also their potential growth as future college 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's Portfolios 2002* 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 a portfolio. We chose the following portfolios and essays to appear in this *Best of Miami University's Portfolios* because each reflects the process of carefully thinking and revising writing to articulate an individual voice and style in order to address a specific audience and achieve a purpose. For example, in her Reflective Letter, Brittany Matyas creates a scene at a playhouse to stage each of her portfolio pieces as an act in a drama. Through close attention to detail and effective description and dialogue in his Short Story/Narrative, "A Walk," Noam Schafer portrays two young men who contemplate their lives, their past and their future. Shawn Roderick's Explanatory, Expository, or Persuasive essay, "Cellular Liberty," demonstrates the integration of difficult "research" material into his text to support his clearly written and logical analysis. "The Prize that Keeps Him Running" by Stephen Markley exhibits the sort of analysis of a text that many student papers strive for, but often don't achieve. Stephen

identifies symbolic aspects of Ellison's *Invisible Man* and then follows these throughout his paper with a controlled and consistent tone and style. Complete portfolios by Kaila Gregory, Kerry Lanigan, Kendal Robinson, and Matthew Skomorowski 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 2002*, offer a myriad of approaches to writing.

The Best of Miami University's Portfolios 2002 consists of four 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 Portfolio Committee members evaluated it so highly.

All portfolios are evaluated by at least two readers according to a six-point scoring scale: the 2002 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 into English 113. A portfolio rated "3," "2," or "1" on the scoring scale means the student will enroll for two semesters of college composition.

While creating a portfolio requires an investment of time, such an endeavor is a worthwhile project for the opportunity to potentially earn college credit. Students also gain valuable experience from creating a portfolio since they will most likely be required to do so 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 be used as simply templates or "models" but should challenge future writers to explore dynamic styles of writing and new subjects.

The Best of Miami University's Portfolios is meant to encourage all writers to produce and submit what they feel is their best work. In composing your portfolio and in your college writing, we hope that you experience the wonder that Melissa Hill describes: "Writing has become an inextricable yet baffling part of my life. It is something deeply a part of me, but I am scarcely able to control it...It is a mystery that keeps me entranced and writing, searching for my little book-nerd message to give to the big blue earth."

Morris Young
Director of the Portfolio Program

Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson
Director of Composition

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.

The writing of your portfolio's reflective letter presents you with a unique opportunity: the opportunity to tell the instructors at Miami about the work you've done so far, and why it's important to you. Here you can say what you were thinking when you wrote each piece, and how you see them now. The challenges of this genre include the honest evaluation of your efforts, the demonstration of your strengths as a writer, and the awareness of a connection with your readers. The following four authors show ways in which writers successfully meet these challenges.

Brittany Matyas opens the show, so to speak, with a creative letter written as a play bill. She emcees her own work; the different styles of writing she has mastered are different "acts." Continuing the metaphor, she mentions the feeling of stage-fright when writing to an audience. This has us nodding our heads—we all know something of that hope for approval. Yet while her concern is evident, so is her confidence. She handles herself with great aplomb, making frequent asides to her readers. The "expressions of acceptance" she imagines at the beginning and the "criticism" she invites near the end disarm her readers, inviting nothing so much as applause.

Colleen Duebber's letter is, as she herself will tell you, a more traditional piece in a conservative style. In her straight-forward approach, she says "I write about what I know." Reading the descriptions of each piece she will offer, we become eager to learn what she knows, as well. The theme of friendship in a personal narrative might easily become maudlin and cliché in the hands of a less expert writer, but Duebber's language is powerful, prompting a closer look. "Those stumbling blocks [in our lives] combine with the general scrutiny of the world to form a pestle that proceeds to daily grind our spirits in a mortar. The one thing that saves me from existing in powder form is one good friend." The quotations from her various pieces of writing in her reflective letter draw us into her work, wanting to hear more.

The letter from Melissa Hill is fueled by her evident passion for reading and writing. Her admission that she was a "book nerd" and her admonition "Don't feel bad...it's who I am" introduced more than her writing: they introduced a savvy writer as well. She explores her love affair with writing, and in the vivid details captures not only what she writes and how she writes, but why she writes. Her closing line "My writing is my megaphone to speak to the world" shows a mature writer, unafraid to say what's on her mind regardless of who's listening.

The description for the reflective letter states that "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." Megan Ryan manages to give us both at the same time, showing us the way she assembled the present portfolio by mining her high school portfolio for

nuggets of wit and wisdom. In looking back she realizes both her growth and the need for further development, where her strengths as a writer are, and her passions.

So here they are—four bravura performances, each a reflection of a unique individual, no two alike in tone or approach. What they do share, however, are acts of reaching out to their readers, explanations of the significance of the pieces chosen for the portfolio, and polished mastery of the language. For more examples of successful reflective letters, see the Complete Portfolios at the end of this collection.

REFLECTIVE LETTER—COLLEEN DUEBBER

Dear Miami University Writing Professors,

I was just looking at Best of Portfolios 2001. I'm thinking that none of the super-creative approaches to writing a reflective letter are my style, and so I will honestly and unashamedly be my simple, traditional self. I am not so cultured, and I don't have really diverse friends or family. I live in the suburbs for goodness' sake. I am a reserved girl who reserves her notebooks for journal entries and poems. I write about what I know—I learned that I should do this from the title character in L.M. Montgomery's Anne of Avonlea. She tried to write about high and lofty things (as did I) and failed horribly.

Now that you know my background, you will better understand why I chose the piece that I did for my narrative. It was a recent journal entry that I revised and altered to fit this category. It was my personal experience and my reflection on my interaction with a friend. I feel that it applies to many teenage girls who strongly desire to map out their lives, but suffer from anxiety and disappointment when they realize all the roadblocks before them. Those stumbling blocks combine with the general scrutiny of the world to form a pestle that proceeds to daily grind our spirits in a mortar. The one thing that saves me from existing in powder form is one good friend. I know that girls out there can relate. You can only live so far on your own.

For my exploratory essay I chose a piece I had written on literature during the French Revolution. My AP English class read Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities this year, and this paper was assigned for the purpose of expanding our knowledge of the time period. It is pretty factual, and full of tidbits on the writers of the time that I found to be quite interesting. So many great, brooding minds overshadowed one another and so many revelations coincided. I really lost myself in this project—in the piles of papers and note cards and in the topic itself.

My response to a text was written about a passage from Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God. Before I decided that this was the essay I wanted to use, I sat down to look through a thick pile of essays I'd written in the past two years. This was the only one that really grabbed me when I read it. Janie was just such a beautiful character to me. Our two separate lives were so very different and yet so very much the same. You are probably asking yourself how I can say I have such a similar life to Janie's. Sometimes that certain kinship just exists, regardless of any reason. It was this strange closeness of spirit and the love I had for the novel that made me choose it.

I hope that you enjoy reading what I have gathered to send to you. My writing is normally governed largely by emotional response, but when I'm given a topic such as the French Revolution, I stick to the intellectual aspect of it. Much of what interests me deals with inner conflicts. My writing reflects my contemplation of these mental and emotional battles and will often relate directly back to what is going on in my life. So basically, my writing mirrors my life. I hope that this gives you some insight as to why I write the way I do. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A traditional girl looking forward to experiencing Miami's tradition

WORKS CITED

Montgomery, L[ucy] M[aud]. Anne of Avonlea. Mattituck, NY: American Reprint, 1909.

Dickens, Charles. A Tale of Two Cities. New York: Macmillan, 1906.

Hurston, Zora Neale. Their Eyes Were Watching God. Philadelphia: Lippencott, 1937.

REFLECTIVE LETTER—MELISSA HILL

Dear Miami University Writing Faculty,

I will be the very first to admit it. It's no secret. I am a book nerd. Before you even tell me not to be so hard on myself, before the attempts to bolster my self-esteem, let me say a few things. I wear glasses. I get good grades. I'm quiet (or so people think). I'm definitely not popular. I can't get a date for Prom. I walk around "Half-Price Books" for fun. And (this is the big one), I got a dictionary and a thesaurus for Christmas and was thrilled about it. I rest my case. It's okay. Don't feel bad. I'm happy being a dork; it's who I am.

Although I am a certifiable book nerd, I am not one of those obsessive-compulsive people who can't seem to function without their pupils fastened to a page, sucking invisible juices out of it as if it's as important as the blood in their veins. I would much rather experience life, digest it and write about it. The static joy of the paper and print seems a mere grain next to the hippopotamus-like emotions aroused by life's dynamic experiences. I get caught up in the action. I rarely take pictures; I despise looking through a lens when I can see life for what it is. For this reason my personal and creative (the two concepts are inseparable) writing is mostly reflective. I strive to dig deeper than physical experiences that anyone can describe and capture the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual action of events. My piece "Lift Thine Eyes" is one of my best examples of this. It is about feelings I experienced while on a mission trip in Mexico. I try not only to recount experiences but to explore, understand, and learn from them. Writing is my way of thinking things through and figuring them out. One of my favorite characters, Adah Price from Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*, said that she writes about "all the noise in my brain. I clamp it to the page so it will be still" (532). I feel much the same way. On paper my thoughts seem to have a logical flow, at least letter to letter and line to line if not cohesively bound by sane thought processes.

My writing has other vital functions. My parents will both tell you that I am very opinionated. I know what I think and I'll tell you all about it. I will gladly listen to the opinions of others, but if you even try to push me...Whoa buddy! That's a mistake. For this reason I use my expository writing to express and explain my opinions. "Transcending Boundaries" is my reaction to Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. It examines the character Nora, and through her gives my opinion on the "role of women." I feel I was able to justify and clarify my stand on women's rights that has sometimes given me such undue titles as "femi-nazi." Without much further elaboration (which could get lengthy) let me just say that nothing could be further from the truth. I support and applaud women in the home and anticipate having an active role in my future home.

Anyway, back to the topic at hand.

I, as with many other Americans, was profoundly and irreversibly affected by the tragedies our nation faced this year. It was through these newly changed eyes that I read George Orwell's *1984*. "The Timeless Value of *1984*" is my review of this poignant, dystopian novel. *1984* compelled me to be an active participant and supporter of my government.

Writing has become an inextricable yet baffling part of my life. It is something deeply a part of me, but I am scarcely able to control it. I wish my mind were as simple as a faucet. Why is it that when brainstorming for this letter I could think of nothing to say, but when driving to work I

have to pull over to write down the poems that won't stop? It is a mystery that keeps me entranced and writing, searching for my little book-nerd message to give to the big blue earth. My writing is my megaphone to speak to the world.

Sincerely,

WORKS CITED

Kingsolver, Barbara. The Poisonwood Bible. New York: HarperCollins, 1998.

REFLECTIVE LETTER—BRITTANY MATYAS

Dear Miami University Writing Professors,

The house lights dim, and the room that was once humming with conversation is now quiet. All eyes are on the stage, anticipating the performance. The large curtain, which lies as the only barrier between the actors and the audience, is stripped away and the stage is flushed with light. *Miami Portfolio – Act I – “Beautiful Breezes and Bruised Knees”* is scripted in my playbill. I feel somewhat anxious and exposed, though I am secure in the shadows of the theater. Yet I stand behind this exposition because of my internal desire to connect with an audience. They do not know who wrote this script, but it is my life, my ideas, a piece of the essence of who I am, performing right before their eyes.

Act I – Beautiful Breezes and Bruised Knees takes them to the childhood that molded me into the confident young person I am today. It is a reflection on the long summer nights and my neighborhood’s endless games of kick ball. I timidly peer around me, and am relieved to find I meet expressions of acceptance: heads are nodding in agreement, smiles curve across some faces. There is a connection to my story because they have all experienced the same innocence. I have always been proud of this Act because my flowing sentences make the atmosphere more dreamlike, which is how those memories feel to me now. The audience’s attention is reeled in easily, and I anticipate the next Act to come.

Act II – Teenagers, Education, and Alcohol emphasizes my voice, laced with the frustration I have felt on this particular topic. My goal of persuasion is to convince my audience that something more needs to be done to educate teenagers about alcohol. I felt it imperative to write such an Act, specifically after my junior year when all my friends began to drink, and I, because of my own personal choice not to, was singled out. Numerous facts have been obtained from various legitimate sources to support my arguments of persuasion. It is more difficult to decipher what those around me are feeling about this piece. Often this subject arouses tension, and seems to close more doors than opens. However, as Act II comes to a close and Act III is prepared to begin, I know my voice is expressed and that is more powerful than any closed door.

Act III – Ghost , What Is the True Meaning? represents intuitive thinking in response to literature. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is by far the most challenging book I have read. However, this Act exhibits to the audience my ability to be challenged and to conquer the assignment given to me. This piece was constructed by penetrating a superficial viewpoint and seeking the core of what was really there. I only hope my audience can step outside of themselves too, and comprehend the abstract angle used to explain this core.

The End

The house lights chase away the darkness, and my eyes take only a second to refocus on those around me. I am satisfied, as they begin to file out, that I have expressed to the best of my ability my uniqueness and ability to flourish. I understand and welcome their criticism in their conversations, because this no doubt will only provide me room for growth. For now, however, I rest

my head back on my seat, close my eyes, and smile. My play may have finished, yet I am satisfied that this is not the end at all.

Sincerely,
The Anonymous Actress / Playwright

REFLECTIVE LETTER—MEGAN RYAN

To members of the Miami University Writing Faculty:

I have found the idea of assembling a portfolio of my “best high school writing” both overwhelming and exciting. Overwhelming because I know how much I’ve written over the past four years and exciting because this is just the sort of assignment I felt ought to be done at the conclusion of one’s senior year, while knowing I most certainly would not complete it unprovoked. As I recall, I read your brochure, became quite enthused, and then proceeded to hang it on my rather cluttered bulletin board, where it hung untouched for several months.

But eventually, once all five AP tests (including both English tests) were done and school was basically over, I began. Hours were expended as I poured through the fat blue binder “portfolio” I’d been forced to add to annually for the past six years, and read through document after document. I’d love to say that the school’s binder paid off in the end, as all three of my pieces came from there, but the fact of the matter is that in actuality none of them did. Rather, the reading of the binder just made me laugh, shiver and cringe as I realized just how much even *my* writing had changed, and (thank goodness) improved over the years. I am still astounded to read what merited an A+ in the ninth grade, how distracting my grammar errors were in tenth, and the cookie-cutter style which was sometimes encouraged in eleventh. Even more, I’ve been shocked to read some of the things I’d forgotten I’d ever written. My blue binder contains a wealth of untapped ideas and inspired moments of vision that were never fully developed. Even the earliest seventh grade piece seems to be a surprising photo record of the development not only of my writing but also of my beliefs. I recognize the roots of some of my most enlightened discussions within those papers, and it’s been interesting to see how I’ve changed.

Even more enjoyable than reading those nuggets, however, has been re-reading the 380 or so entries I’ve logged at an online diary site that my friends and I frequent. I’ve always described these entries as superficial jottings and anything but real writing. They are simply words that flowed freely through my fingertips into the net, sometimes with what I believe to be little input from my mind. Grammar and spelling were and still are of no consequence there, and this has been quite apparent to any reader. But the diary is important to me; it’s what lets me sleep at night, it’s the only way I can get all the swirling thoughts out of my head and I write in it quite frequently. I record parts of conversations I’ve had, parts of conversations I wish I’d had, and the strange thoughts and stories that make me who I am. I’ve re-read it several times, always finding something new to enjoy or laugh at. Indeed, when it comes to my journal, I am quite the narcissist, and perhaps rightly so.

My narrative piece, “The Race” stemmed directly from my journal. It is mostly true and comes from what I wrote after one of my worst races of my senior year. The original entry was much crazier and more sporadic than the one you will read, literally filled with broken sentences and stream of consciousness, but I was fond of it because it trapped a vivid memory of an event I’d loved and hated. I’ve edited it and translated it to something I think others might understand, and although one of my best friends suggests I’ve ruined it, I like it the way it reads now about as well.

The explanatory/persuasive essay is a lot less personal. My “Model UN 2002 Position Paper” was one of the most difficult pieces I’ve written this year. It required me to write from

the perspective of communist China, ignoring or understating what the Chinese would ignore or understate, and to tell the audience of other countries and judges what China's position was, rather than what my own was. Moreover, although I was the sole author of the piece, one of the girls on team also being represented by it was a native from China, and I had to deal with her feelings and biases as well. Although a bit of Chinese belief may have been lost in the re-editing process, the piece still represents well what the speaker I was writing for wanted to be saying and, I hope, the fact that I overcame my own perspective.

My final piece, "Timeless Similarities" is a short response to two poems, which was originally composed in a 40 minute class period as a practice response for the English Literature AP test. This piece tends to illustrate my ability to see how literature works, along with my occasional feat of saying something without rambling on too long. I put it in here because it also shares a truth about great writing, that it tends to come from the heart, from extreme feelings, and from a particular desperateness.

In the creation of this portfolio I tried to find pieces that were not only fairly well written, but also meant something to me. I know that regardless of my ability or inability to judge my own writing objectively, my best stuff always comes when I write about my passions. I knew as soon as I read the word "portfolio" that something about running was going in here and probably something about forensics too. In the book *Two Part Invention: The Story of a Marriage*, one of my favorite authors, Madeline L'Engle writes, "I never know, when I finish a book, how much of what has been in my mind and heart has come through my fingers and onto the page." I suspect that the more of my heart that comes to the page, the better my writing will become.

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 short story should have a title.

Jillian Black's "Daniel" is a vivid and impressive description of life in an orphanage. Narrated by Daniel's unnamed sister, the story condenses a long history of childhood trauma into powerful images that create a moving portrait of two siblings. Jillian's work illustrates a sophisticated style and the successful result of taking risks in writing. For example, notice the long string of one-word sentences in the second paragraph. Normally such a list would be overdone, and some might argue that Jillian takes the list too far. However the success of her risk lies in how well the style of the sentence illustrates the story's meaning. In this case, the staccato-like words force her readers to stop, start, and move on—a linguistic movement that imitates the emotion and irony of the narrator's experience with foster homes. Resisting the temptation write a long biographical chronology, Jillian puts readers in the mind of her narrator during a few brief moments, allowing the characterization to reveal a strong sense of inner and outer tension. Phrases like "I wear the pleated skirt and smile of docility, but I keep a fire stoked high and hot within," and the comparison between "beautiful-me" and "hideous-me" create a character that comes across as dynamic and real rather than flat and stereotypic.

A similar match between form and meaning appears in Megan C. Ryan's, "The Race." The pace of her "stream of consciousness" narrative picks up and slows down as Megan uses imagery, word choice, and sentence structure to mirror what it feels like to run in a race. And we *can* feel what it's like through her effective use of phrasing: "I chant a cadence to myself, raising my knees, pushing forward . . . In and out, in and out. I lengthen my stride, pick it up. Faster, faster." We see what she sees: "Up the hill, past the pool, and through the familiar pine trees." She wheezes and her feet "flame" as she recalls her first race in seventh grade, taking us on an adventure inside her mind as well as through her eyes. Overall, Megan's story achieves its success through a commanding style that collapses the distance between the text and the audience.

In "The Locket," Marisa Ann Capps shows us excerpts of a meaningful conversation between a young woman and her male companion. Writing realistic dialogue is often difficult, but Marisa makes it seem easy. By limiting her use of narration, we experience—mostly through dialogue—the story of a young girl who traces her Irish heritage and recognizes her self-worth, both of which are represented by the locket she wears. As the story progresses, Marisa's characters charm us, gradually drawing us in and exposing a depth of feeling that is often difficult for a writer to balance. "The Locket" holds moments of insight that sustain a reader's interest long beyond the page.

Noam Schafer's simple story titled "A Walk" gives an account of two best friends walking their dogs and sharing a cigar. The strength of Noam's narrative is its unpretentiousness. The plain-speaking dialogue portrays the familiar sound of two boys in conversation: "What's up man . . . Nothing much . . . Good to hear." Notice that the narrative commentary and character dialogue share equal space—much different from Marisa's focus in "The Locket." Because "A Walk" seems

to progress effortlessly, readers may miss some of the underlying symbolism that makes the story so memorable. As Berman and his friend reach the end of a cul-de-sac—a literal and figurative turning point—the narrative skims the surface of the boys’ excitement and anxieties about their first year in college. Although the narrator does not explicitly tell us that the friends will attend two different schools, the last few sentences provide an image of what their friendship may be like in the future. Writing with clarity and simplicity is always more difficult than it seems. In this case a simple walk communicates an important message about the complexities of friendship.

Our committee is very pleased to present these four narratives as shining examples of how to blend language and form, use dialogue effectively, and create vivid characters that capture a reader’s interest.

NARRATIVE OR SHORT STORY—JILLIAN BLACK

Daniel

My brother keeps a fist to his mouth at night to keep his cries from being heard while he is asleep. He still has the nightmares, though he will not admit it. He tells me without using words. I am not like him. I am a child and yet not a child, violated and changed by what has passed; I wear the pleated skirt and smile of docility, but I keep a fire stoked high and hot within. I see that which is behind us as through fractal glass, and while I can obscure it from his view, I cannot deny its heavy presence in my own.

Hostility. Anger. Bruising. Shouts. Violence. Hands. Cutting. Swearing. Hating. Seething. Anger. Power. Bleeding. Clawing. Scars. I see as though down a long hallway, the light pulsing at its end, behind a door, edges lined with red. I will capture, I will slay. I will stow it inside the fortress of my heart, those carnation-pink patched-plaster chambers. I coloured those walls myself. No sword, no fist, no fire breath can breach them. I swear my life. I swear my brother's life. They do not have to know. They will never think to ask.

There is someone coming. A thumb finds my mouth, a pillow my head. My eyes close obediently like new shutters, no creaking, no sticking. Someone is warm and near, but they are stupid and think I am sleeping.

And perhaps I am. Perhaps I will wake in fuzzy footed pajamas with bells and flowers on my headboard, and there will be kisses and waffles and cartoons waiting for me in the next room. Play will not be desperate but idle, and my imagination will fly beyond this cage of fear to a land with auburn-haired princesses and gnomes and fairy godmothers.

God is sobering for me, though He may be liquor for others.

They pass and we go unnoticed: two huddles of blanket and sleep-smashed hair, the same as any two of the other huddles; two thin, choke-faced children in a room of thin, choke-faced children. I touch my stomach, imagine my fist a mallet and I play my ribs like a xylophone. I make music all alone, music like a dog whistle that only the most well trained of ears may hear. Magic.

We are the trash and they are the garbage men, come to sort us through and sort us out and choose the prettiest and the best and the brightest of eye.

I am a cur, I do not bother to flatten my sticky-out ears or wriggle my rotten teeth free of my gums or hide my thick knuckles in the pockets of my coat. I am too ugly to take home. I am the snarling puppy that is eventually put to sleep. A nice way of saying murdered.

For my brother all is not lost. He is younger than I am; his eyes are blue and watery and kind. Take a comb to his hair and it will lie flat; ask him to speak and he shyly will not, embarrassed by the gaps so prominent in his teeth.

I know what they want. They will want him.

He will be good without me. He will go on not-knowing and he will grow up not-knowing and he will become a surgeon and a husband and a father and an old man not-knowing. Maybe one day he will remember, but by then I will be too far away or grizzled or dead, and it will not matter.

I was the favorite, because I did not cry out as much. You couldn't have all that carrying on. There were the neighbors to think of.

I pull the covers entirely over my head; I peer through the thinness to the darkness beyond, and in the mists of linen I find myself dancing. I am spinning and spinning, but I do not get dizzy. I am my own partner, beautiful-me and hideous-me, and we make a lovely couple, each compensating for the faults of the other. My brother is on the sidelines and he is clapping and cheering and his laughter is like church bells. I like to listen to him pray, and never do so myself. They tell us God is always there, always watching, always hovering like a gentle bee in your ear.

Was He watching then, too? Does He forgive me?

Let Him forgive my brother instead.

NARRATIVE OR SHORT STORY—MARISA CAPPS

The Locket

At midnight, Paul went outside and sat on the bench on the old, plank porch. Despite bundling himself in a heavy blanket, he shivered in the cold. The eastern sky before him was dotted with stars, scintillating above the quiet spread of desert. A few lonely clouds were drifting by. Patricia timidly opened the door; hesitant to disrupt Paul's solitude. As he glanced up at Patricia, she could see the melancholy in his eyes.

"What you said today at the funeral was beautiful," she murmured.

Paul smiled sadly.

"I just wanted to tell you that. Good night."

Paul extended his hand. "Would you join me?"

Patricia took his hand and sat down on the bench next to him. Paul wrapped the blanket around her small shoulders. She turned to look at him.

"I suppose that I have never properly thanked you for saving my life. I am sorry for that. I was not sure then that I wished it saved."

He thought about her words. "What keeps you with him?" he asked.

It took a long time for her to answer. "It is my lot."

Paul frowned. "That's not much of an answer."

"No," she replied, "but maybe that's all there is."

"Have you considered returning to Ireland?"

"It is not a possibility."

"But if it were?"

"No good comes from considering things that cannot be."

Patricia was firm. Paul considered this a moment before speaking.

"I suppose you're right. Where about in Ireland are you from anyway?"

"I came from Cork."

"You do not carry much of a brogue."

"I have worked hard to eliminate my brogue. Jack mocks me for it, and there are those in this country who hate me for it."

"It is unfortunate," Paul said. "I think that it sounds beautiful."

Her gratitude and pleasure showed in her eyes. Paul glanced downward and noticed her petite fingers nervously playing with a locket that hung around her neck. The locket was cast in the shape of a four-leaf clover. It was unique, and she wore it religiously—it was almost as if she had been born with the necklace around her neck. It was as much a part of her as her deep auburn hair and green eyes.

"I have heard it said of Cork, that the sky does not rain, it weeps," Paul continued.

"It is a beautiful, tragic land," Patricia replied. "I love what I remember of it. At least before the famine. Ireland is a magical place to be as a child. My father always said that there are sounds in Ireland you could hear nowhere else. At night the wind would sing lullabies through the trees." She pulled the blanket tighter around her. "Now, when the wind blows, I can hear music in the desert as well, but it is not nearly as beautiful."

She sighed before again looking over at him, and continuing, “Have you ever considered going back home?”

Without hesitation, Paul whispered, “Every day.”

“Yet you stay?”

“I’ve come too far to go back.”

“How can you be too far when your family waits?” Patricia probed.

“I might ask you the same,” came his swift retort.

“No one waits for me in Ireland.”

Paul looked down. “How is it that you came to be with Jack?”

“It was during the potato famine. Jack was in Ireland securing passages on a vessel. My family was starving. Everyone was starving. My father had gone out searching for food, when he came upon Jack. Jack could have helped us all to sail to America in exchange for a portion of our wages once we were employed. But my father did not want to leave. Instead he sold me to Jack- for a sum large enough for the family to remain and survive.”

“Your father told you this?”

“No. Jack did.”

“And you believed Jack?”

Patricia did not answer immediately. “I saw him pay my father.”

“That alone does not prove Jack’s words.” Paul looked at her gravely. “It is precisely the lie Jack would have you believe.”

“For what purpose?”

“If Jack can convince you that your existence is a commodity, he can use your feelings of worthlessness to control you. False beliefs can be a chain to our souls. Only if we hold on to who we truly are, can we be free. The danger is when circumstances lead us to forget.”

Patricia looked shaken. “Those were my father’s last words to me—‘Remember who you are . . .’” Patricia whispered in a voice barely audible as she clutched the locket around her neck. She squeezed the little four-leaf clover until her knuckles turned white, as if grasping for something within the necklace itself.

“I can’t know what went through your father’s mind as he gave you up. Maybe your father knew what kind of man Jack was, maybe he didn’t. It is likely that he knew that there was no other way to help you. Perhaps he did what he had to do to give you a chance at life,” Paul replied as he noticed Patricia’s uneasiness. Her beautiful face was marked by a touch of anxiety. Her lips quivered as she gazed into the sky, as if searching for her lost soul, and believing that she would find it caught up in the spray of stars.

Paul looked out into the starry night, hoping he, too, could find the real Patricia. “We often do not see things in this life as they really are- only as we believe they are. It is as written in the Bible, ‘We see through a glass darkly, . . .’ but no glass is so dark, I think, as the looking glass in which we view ourselves.”

“But a mirror cannot lie,” Patricia countered. “It is just polished glass.”

“It is not the mirror that lies. Never does man err more greatly than when he tries to see who he really is.”

“And who are we?”

Paul looked into her soft, green eyes. “We are worthy, Patricia. Worthy of life. Worthy of love. Worthy of kindness and gentleness. We are not some mistake of God or nature.”

Patricia did not want Paul to see her cry. She bowed her head, pulling the blanket above her chin.

“Until you can see yourself worthy, you will forever be chained. Not by Jack, or any man, but by your own perceptions.”

As he reached over and touched her hand, she grasped his tightly.

“I want to believe you. But perhaps I am too far gone.”

“You may not be as far as you fear. What do you remember of your father?”

She closed her eyes tightly and tried to remember. “He used to come back from the fields each day, and his face would light up when he saw me. He called me his ‘little colleen.’ The night before I left, he gave me this.”

She reached into the blackness beneath the blanket to pull out her locket. She unhooked the tiny clasp and, ever so gently, raised it by its gold chain until it hung and shimmered in the moonlight. Gold outlined the deep green enameled four-leaf clover that shone boldly before them. Patricia had worn this necklace as long as Paul had known her. He had always wondered what was inside, but never felt it in his place to ask. After a few moments of silence, Patricia unlocked it to reveal the secret held within.

“That’s my mother, on the right. She died when I was born, but I was always told by my brothers and father how beautiful and strong she was,” Patricia said aloud. Then she looked down into her lap before continuing. “My father also told me that every day he looked at me, he saw her. He saw her determination, her poise. The resemblance was unbelievable. He had this tiny mirror placed on the side opposite her picture, so as I looked at me, I could also see her, feel her presence, and gain strength from her love.”

Several minutes stretched by where neither said a word. As Patricia peered into the mirror, searching for answers, Paul felt pity for her. She had the kindest of hearts, and he hated Jack for taking advantage of her innocence, compassion, and trust. Woman like Patricia were hard to come by.

“What do you see?” Paul finally asked, breaking the silence.

“What do I see? I see me, plain and simple,” she answered. Her left eyebrow was raised in bewilderment as she pondered the meaning behind his question.

“Come on now, you’ve got to look harder than that. Don’t tell me you’ve been wearing that necklace for all of these years, and all that you’ve noticed is your reflection! You just told me that a mirror never lies. So look again, and tell me if the woman looking back at you is letting the beauty of her mother shine through. Tell me if you see a woman worthy of love and life. Tell me if you remember who you are and all that you’re worth,” Paul said with a passion that he had intended. He wasn’t going to let Patricia give up that easily; he would never forgive himself for it.

Patricia looked startled at first, and then began to cry. Openly she let the tears flow, as if washing away her feelings of worthlessness and lack of self-confidence.

“I don’t know what I see anymore,” Patricia said softly, her voice wavering.

“Look,” Paul said as he put the mirror before her brimming, emerald eyes. “I see the real Patricia struggling to come through. Her beauty and strength radiates so brightly, that I do not know how you’ve been hiding her for so long.”

“I remember. I remember who I am,” Patricia cried in a mix of sadness and joy. “I am worthy of more than I’ve become.” Throwing herself into Paul’s arms, she squeezed him as tightly as if she were holding onto life itself. Paul grazed the top of her head with his lips and pulled her closer into his embrace.

Several more minutes passed. No words were needed. He gazed back out at the starry night and the peaceful desert before looking back down at Patricia, watching her fall asleep with her locket clutched tightly in one hand. Her searching had left her exhausted. Yet Paul knew she was going to need more than rest to prove to herself just how strong she really was. As he began to doze off, a gust of wind picked up. He faintly heard the wind singing as it blew across the desert, and it was beautiful.

NARRATIVE OR SHORT STORY—MEGAN RYAN

The Race

One of my numerous running T-shirts reads “You’ve got to want it.” That seems to be everything out here and frankly, I just don’t seem to want it badly enough today. My legs are finally healthy; there’s no major joint, bone or tendon problem anymore. But mentally I am weak. I am breaking down. I am running too slowly. And it’s all happening too fast.

The first half mile I am solidly boxed in. Elbows flying everywhere, I swivel my flailing body searching for my rhythm, trying to find my place in the pack. Damn the starter and his refusal to give us a better starting slot. The first 400 meters is a solid mass of sprinting girls and I am stuck squarely behind the ones who are slowly beginning to realize just how long 3.1 miles is. A spike claws at my foot and I shove to move forward. The mulch path narrows even further and as we turn away from the crowd of spectators, we move out into the heart of the race. We surge uphill, downhill, around the pond, over the boardwalk, up the hill again, and around the pole. Our muscles churn, our breathing intensifies, and our temperatures are rising. Spit is beginning to fly, and I’m sure there are a few urine-coated legs in the field as well. But I take no notice. None of us do. We can’t afford to focus on anything but the race.

The first mile marker passes, and a husky voice calls out 7:29. I’m incredibly slow, and still too far behind. I pick it up for maybe a quarter mile. This is the point where I tell myself to run faster and get where I should be; that this is where I start my race and I should make the most of the middle mile, the toughest section. I can do anything for twenty minutes. Focus on the numbers of that jersey. Focus! But it doesn’t work, and I begin to succumb. It’s terrible. I’m tired, I’m weak, and I don’t want to keep racing. I want to spend this hot hilly mile recovering, not advancing. No longer oblivious to my physical surroundings, the rotten stench of the mulch and the loose strands which have somehow escaped my hair ties are starting to bother me. Moreover, this old foot injury is acting up, and I can feel my feet beginning to flame. I know in ten minutes they will ache quite badly, and that I am beginning to lose the mental part of this battle. But I trudge on.

Up the hill, down the hill, over the boardwalk, over the grass, around the field. Breathe, breathe, breathe. I chant a cadence to myself, raising my knees, pushing forward. I glance at my watch. I really need to be under fifteen minutes: second mile, 15:30. Thirty seconds further off. It’s time to push through it, focus on the breathing, charge the hills, drive the arms. But I don’t. I maintain the same pace throughout the next 300 meters and as we reach an incline, I slow down yet again, though you’d never guess from the rapidity and desperateness of my breathing. Up the hill, past the pool, and through the familiar pine trees. Inhale. I flashback to that first seventh grade race on this course. Exhale. Captain Kelly is in my memory, talking to me plain as day, “Well you could just stop.” Inhale. Exhale. Momentary mental toughness. She is my arch nemesis. In and out, in and out. I lengthen my stride, pick it up. Faster, faster. I must have run around parking lot, through the trees, down the hill again, but I can’t recall it at all. Delirium is setting in. Over the bridge, past the fans. Inhale. Exhale. Mother is cheering. Inhale. Inhale. Sick to my stomach, hard to move fast. Inhale, exhale, wheezing loudly, slowing down. This is the final mental breaking point. Time to push and I don’t. Fall back. Run with Kristen, in out, in out. Katie passes. Can’t let her.. Last 400..

Charge! Running. Harder. Pass Katie and three others. Can't feel anything. Final sprint. Pushing. Hard. Afraid of ghost Kelly behind me, but she's not there. Katie kicks past me. One more girl. Almost done. Clock. Must be under 25. Horrid. 24:56. Slower than ever. Crushed. But yet, happy. Done, delirious, water, mutual congratulations. Euphoria. Race.

Afterwards I am more than a bit out of it. I talk to my mom and dad for awhile, generally wondering what I am saying. Mostly I'm just seeking water. The atmosphere is fabulous; it's the reason I'm here, the reason I do it. All of the runners are congratulatory; we've all suffered the same things. The spectators are in complete awe. Dani is shocked by it all, wondering why we torture ourselves the way we do. I guess we're just a different breed. I guess it's just part of us. I love it, even when it's awful. Kim says she loves watching it, that she wishes we were delirious and crazy all the time. I think Steve is simply amazed. They all say they wish there were a culture where urine and phlegm and spit were so abundant and common and people were nuts like this. I tell them there is. We are. They say there's just too much running. I think to myself, next week I will want it more.

NARRATIVE OR SHORT STORY—NOAM SCHAFFER

A Walk

It was a warm summer evening. The sun had already set and its brilliance still lingered in the sky, it seemed, much longer than usual. It was a wonderful night for a walk with my friend and our dogs. I waited for him at the usual spot, midway between our houses—the corner of Annesely and Bernwood. He was always at least five minutes late, but he always showed up. Berman emerged over the small hill on Bernwood. His back was towards the sunset, so his face was shadowed in the dusk, yet all of his unique behaviors were clearly visible. He bounced off of the pavement with every stride, due to an abnormality in his calf muscles. With his eyes wide open, he quickly darted his head from side to side, as he usually did. He always looked as though he was waiting for something to sneak up on him. He crossed from the opposite side of the intersection and we met in the middle. The glow of the street lamp under which I was standing illuminated his face and revealed a big, goofy smile.

“What’s up man.”

“Nothing much,” I said.

“Good to hear,” he snickered.

We began our routine walk with our dogs down a dead-end street in our development. There were no street lamps on this street. The canopy of leaves above our heads blocked out whatever little light was left behind from the sun. We walked together under a tunnel of Maple trees that extended the entire street. After a short while, I pulled one of my father’s better Dominicans out of my front pant pocket. Berman chortled and said it was funny that I stole one of my father’s cigars. After getting it lit, I handed it to him and he childishly held it between his index finger and thumb. He quickly inhaled the cigar smoke and coughed almost instantly, which made me laugh. Slightly embarrassed by his inexperience, he handed it back to me.

The sky had turned to a dark grayish-blue, and all of the trees, houses, and telephone poles became solid black silhouettes against the evening sky. We took turns puffing my father’s cigar, exhaling its full, thick smoke into the crisp air. I looked up through the branches to see that a few of the first stars had appeared. Our dogs, in front of us, with their noses in the ground, were completely oblivious to the stars.

We talked about girls, school, and the exotic trips we wanted to take.

“Hey, let’s go down to Mexico for a couple of weeks. You know, I hear you can get a bottle of Absolute there for \$5.”

“Berman, you’re such an alcoholic,” I joked.

We continued walking.

“I love it how you always suggest trips and things, and we never do them. Like, ‘Hey, let’s go to Israel and get jobs there this summer,’ or ‘Hey, let’s go on a road trip to California.’”

We both laughed.

“But I’m *serious* this time,” he argued.

“OK Berman,” I said incredulously.

The cigar was more than halfway finished. We reached the end of the cul-de-sac, so we turned around and began heading back. We talked about college and how we were scared to be going in the fall, and how excited we were about the parties, and how we wondered how we would fare in the classes. After a while, we reached the intersection where we met, and the cigar was finished. I threw what was left of the cigar in the sewer drain, said goodbye, and walked away. As I walked home, I looked over my shoulder and saw Berman walking the other way, looking back at me.

AN EXPLANATORY, EXPLORATORY, OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY

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

This essay provides students with a wide variety of options, ranging from explorations of historical and/or political subjects to explanations of scientific processes to critical editorials or commentaries about controversial topics. Choosing a piece for this category can be difficult because the category is broadly defined. The most successful pieces are focused discussions on specific subjects. Essays which aim to explore and critically examine a subject thoughtfully and carefully should include appropriate outside support. The discussion should not rely on the author's opinion alone.

The essays chosen for this category fulfill the above objectives in a number of ways. For example, Shawn Roderick's essay, "Cellular Liberty," skillfully discusses the scientific process of stem cell research in an effort to both educate his readers and to persuade them to support scientific research endeavors which use stem cells. Further, Stefanie Rardin's "Improving America's Schools: Are Vouchers the Solution?" uses outside research to explore and understand the complex and varying viewpoints surrounding school vouchers. Here, she presents the opposing sides of this important national debate. In his essay, "Affirmative Action: Liberty and Justice for All," Rajesh Doshi outlines both the historical and current political contexts of affirmative action policies. By skillfully using outside research, Rajesh works to persuade his reader that affirmative action policies are necessary and important in today's cultural and political climate. James Estill's essay, "End the Corruption of Baseball" takes a very clear stance regarding the current financial situation in the Major Baseball League. James works not only to convince his reader that baseball is indeed corrupted, but he also presents what he sees as a solution to this problem.

For more examples of explanatory, exploratory, or persuasive essays, see the Complete Portfolios in this collection.

AN EXPLANATORY, EXPLORATORY, OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY—RAJESH DOSHI

Affirmative Action: Liberty and Justice for All

Affirmative Action: often upon hearing this word, one will start thinking about quotas and reverse discrimination. However, contrary to this misconception, affirmative action is actually a policy that dictates that employers attempt to find diverse employees by exploring untraditional sources of labor. The goal of affirmative action is to create a work force that mirrors the population of the nation both in gender and in ethnicity (Hanmer 8,10). Affirmative action is necessary to give all Americans an opportunity to be successful and to counteract the discrimination that still exists in modern society. Affirmative action is not only morally justifiable, but it is also socially and economically preferable in order to improve our society. The United States' government first implemented affirmative action to overcome some of the clear differences in living conditions between people of different genders and races. Unfortunately, these differences still exist and eliminating affirmative action now would be premature for our nation.

Affirmative action is essential to compensate for the fact that women and minorities receive fewer opportunities to succeed. Even after laws were passed to end institutionalized racism, the white males who owned the businesses and held the best jobs before continued to own the businesses and hold the best jobs. While legal equality may have been achieved, the nation was nowhere near having true social equality. As President Lyndon B. Johnson stated when he first started affirmative action, "This is the next and the more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result" (Mask 1). President Johnson understood that affirmative action was needed to bring true equality to all Americans by making sure all Americans had equal opportunity. On the average, African Americans' income per person is 59 percent of white Americans', and women earn 72 percent of men's salaries (Darity, Jr. 1; Plous 26). There are essentially two possible explanations for these differences in income. Either minorities and women are less capable of holding better, higher-paying jobs, or they have fewer opportunities to get these jobs. Clearly, the former case cannot be true; affirmative action is necessary to account for the latter case by giving women and minorities more opportunities. Also, differences in the amount of money possessed by people of different races help give white Americans more opportunities than black Americans. The median wealth possessed by a white household is \$10,000 while the median wealth for black households is zero dollars. Unlike income, wealth is often acquired through inheritance, and it can be used to buy a car for a long commute to work, to attend college, or to start a business (Darity Jr. 2). In this manner, wealth that was obtained during a time when racism was accepted has been passed down to a new generation of white people. This wealth has given the new generation of white Americans an unfair opportunity to be successful and is part of the reason why white males continue to hold more than ninety percent of top executive positions (Mask 1). Affirmative action can give people who don't have wealth an opportunity to succeed.

Opponents of affirmative action often say that quotas in affirmative action policies cause unqualified minorities and women to be hired by companies that would otherwise have hired

qualified employees. In reality, companies only hire qualified employees, and affirmative action policies do not involve mandatory quotas. The federal government not only refuses to endorse quotas but also forbids quotas by law (Mask 1). Until the 1970s, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) exclusively chose its astronauts from test pilots, all of whom were white males. When NASA adopted an affirmative action policy, they were forced to look elsewhere for astronauts. NASA found that many people other than test pilots were qualified for the job, and Sally Ride and Guion Bluford became the first female astronaut and the first African American astronaut, respectively (Hanmer 11). At times, companies, especially those that must attempt to get the attention of a diverse target market, feel like it is important to have diversity among their employees in order to achieve their goals. In this manner, the ability to provide different points of view can increase the qualifications of a prospective employee who is a minority or female. For example, Nike has stated, "Our mission and vision is to implement a global strategy where our supplier base better reflects our consumer base, and to leverage the art and science of Supplier Diversity to increase Nike's market share and build brand equity with targeted ethnic markets" (Nike). Nike understands that in order for its products to appeal to a diverse consumer group, its business practices must endorse diversity.

Affirmative action is needed to achieve the goal of true equality for all people in the United States because other policies that do not take race and gender into consideration are ineffective. When the University of Texas was ordered by a court to end its affirmative action policies, the college witnessed a drop of 50 percent in the number of enrolling African American freshmen (Pressley 1). Although African Americans have lower income than white Americans as stated earlier, need-based opportunities alone were not enough to keep diversity in the college. The University of California experienced a similar decline in minority attendance when this college decided to end its affirmative action program. At the Berkeley campus, the number of African American freshman entering the law school decreased from twenty students one year to one student the next year (Pressley 2). In businesses, if a seniority system is used and an affirmative action policy is not, then the white employees' jobs will generally be protected more because the white employees tend to hold higher positions (Plous 25). In the election of U.S. presidents, a situation where it is impossible to have affirmative action, our nation has chosen 43 white males for the job, indicating that in some manner, people's votes are affected by stereotypes. The same stereotypes that have prevented women or minorities from being elected president are present in businesses. In all of these cases, the absence of affirmative action has prevented minorities and women from being successful either because they are not given an opportunity or because stereotypes hinder their efforts.

Affirmative action is one of the most effective policies that the U.S. government has ever initiated because it attempts to address a serious problem at its roots. Unlike Welfare and Social Security, which try to compensate for a problem by simply giving people money, affirmative action acknowledges that we must actively attempt to give minorities and women more opportunities. Considering that slavery existed in America for 245 years and that there was institutionalized racism for 100 years after slavery, a few decades of affirmative action has only started the process of reforming our country (Plous 27). It is easy to see a strong majority in a nation and decide that the nation must be strong, but a more accurate characterization of the well-being of a nation can often be found by looking at the condition of its minority population. In this manner, the United

States is not a world leader; some African Americans here are not very well off, as indicated by their income. Nevertheless, affirmative action has helped move our nation in the correct direction, and if it is continued, affirmative action will leave us with a strong majority, a strong minority, a strong nation.

WORKS CITED

Darity Jr., William. "Give Affirmative Action Timer to Act." AAD Project. 1 Dec. 2000.

University of California Santa Barbara, Department of English. 19 Feb. 2002

<<http://aad.english.ucsb.edu/docs/darity.html>>.

Hanmer, Trudy J. Affirmative Action: Opportunity for All?. Hillside, NJ: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1993.

Mask, Susan. "Countering the Myths: A Proponent's Point of View." University of Iowa, Office of Affirmative Action. 25 Feb. 2002

<<http://www.uiowa.edu/~oaa/counteri.htm>>.

Plous, Scott. "Ten Myths About Affirmative Action." Journal of Social Issues. 52.4 (1996): 25-31.

Pressley, Sue Anne. "Texas Campus Attracts Fewer Minorities." Washington Post. 28

Aug. 1997, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/affirm/stories/aa082897.htm>>.

Supplier Diversity. Nike. 17 Mar. 2002.

<<http://www.nikebiz.com/diversity/supplier.shtml>>.

AN EXPLANATORY, EXPLORATORY, OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY—JAMES ESTILL

End the Corruption of Baseball

*“Of course it’s hard; if it wasn’t, everyone would do it.
Hard is what makes the game great.”*

-Tom Hanks

The Problem

Baseball used to be a simple game, associated with the smell of hot dogs, the sweet dew of the night air as fans rose for the seventh inning stretch, and the beautiful spectacle of the field with its freshly cut grass and newly chalked base lines. Now it seems like each game is won by at least five runs, the stadiums are half empty, and the pride of a baseball radio announcer, once an honorable career, has dwindled along with the game. Additionally, since 1976 players’ salaries have increased 168% a year, numbers too high to be blamed on inflation (Breton 4). These current conditions reflect the growing corruption of baseball.

Why is there corruption in baseball? It’s simple; players are asking for more money, which only big market teams can afford. If a player comes up through the league in a small market team and becomes a success, he demands more money, which the team can’t afford, so he moves to a big market team that will satisfy his demands. For example, look at Cincinnati Reds’ former players Bret Boone, Dimitri Young, Pokey Reese, Denny Neagle, Mike Cameron, and Jeff Shaw, all players of all-star caliber now playing for teams paying a bigger salary. This causes the problem of uncompetitive small market teams, who make up 44% of baseball (Player 1). With nearly half of the league being uncompetitive, it doesn’t make for a really surprising season.

This lack of competition snowballs into corrupting other parts of the game. There is a steady decrease in attendance; the Cincinnati Reds total attendance for 2001 was about two million, a twenty four percent decrease from the 2000 season (Cincinnati 1). To make up for lagging attendance there is an increase in ticket prices as well; an average Cincinnati Reds ticket will rise from the 2001 season of \$15.40 to \$16.86, still below the league average, which will rise from \$16.00 to \$18.86 (Mann 1).

Despite such an obvious problem, there is little motivation for it to be solved. Most of the people in power to solve the problem don’t want it solved. The owners of big market teams, e.g., George Steinbrenner, winner of four World Series since the 1994 strike, are happy with the lack of competition (World 1). They can guarantee their teams will be winners every year, as long as there is no change in the current system. And if their team isn’t a winner, they have the bucks to buy up more of the league’s talent to become even more dominant. The baseball players’ union doesn’t want a change because the players’ salaries keep increasing (Fehr 1). The problem is the players have stopped caring about winning and only care about the size of their salaries.

The obvious options for solving this problem are team or player salary caps, or team profit sharing, which other sports have found successful. But if there is objection to change, the players can strike, as in 1994, then there will be no agreement for change, and the small market teams will lose even more money during the strike. The evidence of the loss from the 1994 strike is shown:

MLB claims to have operated at a loss every year from 1975 to 1985, then at a profit every year from then until the strike, although the profit was only \$22M in 1992 and \$36M in 1993. The strike led to large losses; the reported figures were \$375M in 1994, \$326M in 1995, and \$185M in 1996; attendance was still down by 15% in 1996 from its pre-strike level (Grabiner 1).

The negative consequences for not stopping the corruption of baseball are great. Small market teams will go out of business, the sport will lose its greatness and tradition, only a handful of competitive teams will remain, another players' strike will take place, and players will only care about playing for the money. By solving the problem each fan can go in to the start of the season with the hope of a winning team.

The Solution

The only possible solution to the corruption is a salary cap, but this cap must be presented in a way that satisfies the fans, players, and team owners. To accomplish this, I propose a cap that provides rewards and bonuses each year. The salary cap has three elements: a cap on team salaries, an individual player cap, and a cap on ticket prices.

The team salary cap will be \$70 million per team per year, the total amount of money each team can spend on players for that year. This is a fair compromise, considering that the New York Yankees had a team payroll of approximately \$110 million at the start of the 2001 season and the Minnesota Twins had a team payroll of only \$25 million (Player 1). Last year 13 out of the league's 30 teams had a payroll of over \$70 million (Player 1). This salary cap will make it impossible for big market teams to buy up all of the league's talent with bigger salaries, keeping talent evenly distributed among the league to allow for competitive baseball from each team each year.

The individual player salary cap will be \$6 million per year. This still allows great players to make more money than most since the average player salary last year was approximately \$2,250,000, yet it keeps players from signing absurd contracts like that of Derek Jeter who made \$12,600,000 last year for the New York Yankees (Player 1). Big market teams will have difficulty dominating the league with this cap in place, and they will not be able to buy stars from other teams if that player is already making the league maximum, which will be affordable to small markets. There will be no ulterior motivation for those all-stars to leave.

Finally, each stadium must provide at least two thousand seats at a maximum price of \$5 per seat. This is not a huge burden on team owners since each stadium can seat at least 40 thousand people, of which 38 thousand can be charged more than \$5. This allows anyone to be able to afford to see a baseball game with his or her family. Currently, a family of four has to pay about eighty dollars per game, just for admission (Mann 1)! Each child should be able to experience the magic of a Major League Baseball game.

Obviously these caps are not attractive to players or big market team owners, and there would probably be a strike if only these caps were put in place. To make the players happy, there will be a team of players rewarded each year for their performance. At the end of the season each player, coach, and owner will vote for the top three players of each field position, and the top five starting and relieving pitchers. This means a total of thirty-four players will receive bonuses. There will be a panel of ten appointed officials that will look at these votes and player statistics to make their final

decisions. Each player selected to this team will receive a cash bonus for that year. The ten first prize winners will receive a bonus of one million dollars each, the ten second prize winners will receive a bonus of \$500,000 each, the ten third prize winners will receive a bonus of \$250,000 each, and the four remaining pitchers will receive a bonus of \$200,000 each. To satisfy the team owners, the winning team of the World Series will receive a bonus of ten million dollars and the runners-up will receive a bonus of five million dollars, which the owners can use to evenly distribute to players, management, or anything necessary to improve their team. All records of spending for owners will have to be reported to ensure the owners don't pocket the money themselves.

To provide the money for the bonuses each team will be taxed 2% of their total team payroll. With the team salary cap this means a team with the maximum team payroll only has to pay \$1,400,000 a year. That's less than the average player salary. This will provide the league with \$40 million from team taxes. After distributing the bonuses at the end of the season the league will have about \$9 million left over. This money will be distributed to the worst five teams in the league to help them sign better players for the following season.

With this system no team will stay on the bottom of the league and players will be rewarded for their performance on a year-to-year basis. This keeps teams from wasting money on players who are injured and players who sign big, long-term contracts and stop performing up to their potential. If a player isn't satisfied with his salary from the caps, the only way he can make more money is by having a great season, or if his team is in the World Series.

Some would argue this idea is socialistic instead of capitalistic, which is true. What the reader should keep in mind is baseball or any professional sport should not be treated the same as a regular business. There are many similar aspects, but baseball is different. Baseball is only great if it is competitive, whereas the goal in business is to make the competition against your company as weak as possible. Baseball also deals with different things such as citizens' tax money to pay for stadiums and the broad base of the cliental that must be satisfied.

The Justification

This system will keep almost every single team competitive every single year. Each fan and player can have hope for a winning season, and no team will stay dominant for ten years at a time. With an exciting increase in competition, attendance is guaranteed to skyrocket and the game will be restored to its former splendor.

A simple team or player salary cap would anger too many people. The players and big market team owners would never accept it, and the only result would be another strike.

In this proposed solution everyone wins. The fans get a more competitive league, the players receive bonuses for performance, and the team owners receive bonuses for a winning team. The only cost will be a slight decrease in profits of current top players and teams, but this sacrifice is better than no baseball at all, and they can all agree that baseball is in a downward spiral and needs a change.

Imagine a family of four being able to go to a ball game for only \$20 and to see a classic 2-1 victory in ten innings. Imagine a season where none of the predicted teams reached the playoffs

and the World Series is won by a team that spent less than \$80 million that year. This is the baseball that we used to know and love, and this is the baseball that we need to get back to.

WORKS CITED

- Breton, Marcos. "Salary Cap is needed if Baseball is to Survive." 18 Feb. 2002.
< <http://www.sacbee.com>>.
- Grabner, David. "Frequently Asked Questions About the Strike." 27 March 2002.
<<http://www.baseball1.com>>.
- Lewis, Corey. "Salary Cap, Anyone? Yankee Wealth Killing Baseball." 18 Feb. 2002.
< <http://www.thedailyworld.com>>.
- Mann, Dinn. "Behind the Seams with Bud Selig." 27 March 2002. < <http://www.mlb.com>>.
- Plimpton, George. Out of My League. New York: Lyons and Burford, Publishers, 1961.
- Smizik, Bob. "Baseball Can't Bear Costs for Salary Cap." 18 Feb. 2002.
< <http://www.post-gazette.com>>.
- Unknown. "2001 Standings: Regular." 18 Feb. 2002. < <http://www.espn.go.com>>.
- Unknown. "Cincinnati Reds Attendance." 27 March 2002. < <http://www.cbs.sportsline.com>>.
- Unknown. "Fehr: Forget about It." 18 Feb. 2002. < <http://www.sportsillustrated.cnn.com>>.
- Unknown. "Player Salaries Opening Day 2001." 18 Feb. 2002.
<<http://www.sports.espn.go.com>>.
- Unknown. "World Series Winners." 27 March 2002. < <http://www.historicbaseball.com>>.

AN EXPLANATORY, EXPLORATORY, OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY—STEPHANIE RARDIN

Improving America's Schools: Are Vouchers the Solution?

It is a growing debate in an area that American society cannot afford to ignore, as the discussion on voucher schools directly affects our youth, the very foundation of our country. Many cities across the United States have proposed school voucher programs in an effort to improve the education of inner-city children that come from low-income families. However, with this proposition arises certain questions that cannot be avoided. Although proponents of school vouchers argue differently, challengers of the system expressly state that the taxpayer-funded voucher system infringes upon our First Amendment rights. Additionally, opponents suggest that the money being used for vouchers be provided to failing public schools, as used to be, and should continue to be, the American way. At the same time, voucher advocates believe that the consequences of a full-scale voucher policy for our nation's public schools would, in fact, be beneficial. Still, both sides of the argument agree: our nation must find a way to give every student in struggling schools the best education possible. The complex disagreement lies in the steps that must be taken in order to achieve this goal. Should the government adopt a taxpayer-funded voucher system or otherwise explore alternate routes that could more effectively ensure the success of the American educational system?

Bob Chase, president of the National Education Association of Washington, D.C., strongly holds that voucher schools are, in fact, not the answer to improving America's public schools. Rather, Chase asserts that investing tax dollars in improving public schools is a far more advantageous step in the way of progress for the school system. Moreover, Chase writes that an overwhelming majority of American people prefer to devote their tax dollars to improving public schools, not in imperfect and unproven voucher programs (Chase 1). And why should concerned parents support public schools over vouchers? The answer, according to Chase, is simple, as public schools over the past thirty years have halved the performance imbalance between white and African American students and, within the last five years, have raised the achievement level of the nation's poorest children by an entire grade (Chase 1). Chase maintains that, instead of "throwing money" at poorly managed schools, a "genuine commitment be made to giving all children, regardless of zip code, adequate educational resources," as is the desire of taxpayers and the tradition of education in America (Chase 2).

In contrast, advocates of taxpayer-funded voucher programs suggest that vouchers provided to low-income, inner-city students would actually benefit the public school system from which the student left to pursue a voucher-supported education. Although it is true that budgets will decline for public schools with the institution of voucher schools, *Commentary* magazine editor Gary Rosen writes that schools will only be losing the money formerly used for the voucher-assisted student, as public schools receive per-pupil funding. Additionally, because voucher schools are primarily maintained by grants from the state and public schools by both state and local taxes, public schools will continue to be benefited from local taxes intended to cover even those pupils that have enrolled in a voucher school. In the 1997 school year, Cleveland and Milwaukee public school districts, areas

in which vouchers schools have already been introduced, earned three thousand dollars for each departing voucher student (Rosen 6). Voucher proponents affirm that the “left behind” students will only be benefited by excess funds created by absence of the students with the poorest learning conditions, income, and family support.

Challengers of taxpayer-supported voucher programs assert that, regardless of the benefits or disadvantages of vouchers, the constitutionality of the program must be the primary consideration of the government. Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers in Washington, D.C., writes that a voucher system “forces taxpayers to support a religion to which they do not subscribe,” as more than ninety percent of voucher schools are private, religious institutions. This imbalance of secular and parochial voucher schools leaves little choice to parents who desire to send their students to a voucher school but do not follow the religion of the voucher school. This lack of options, according to Feldman, is a direct undermining of the establishment of religion clause of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution (Feldman 2). The ACLU declares that, “vouchers violate the bedrock principle of separation of church and state, forcing all taxpayers to support religious beliefs and practices with which they may strongly disagree” (Rosen 3).

Quite the opposite is the opinion of the supporters of the taxpayer-funded voucher systems who hold that vouchers are, in fact, constitutional. Rosen writes,

Yes, [vouchers] may incidentally promote one or another religious creed, but their primary purpose is to improve the educational prospects of our inner-city students trapped in our very worst public schools. Low-income parents who take advantage of vouchers know all this. For them, school choice is above all a way to save their children’s minds, not their souls. (Rosen 5)

In addition to the apparent lack of concern for the religious tendencies of voucher schools, Justices of the state courts of Wisconsin and Ohio have ruled that public aid given to students in religious schools as a part of a “broader, religiously neutral program” meets the requirements of the establishment of religion clause interpretations of the Supreme Court of the United States (Rosen 5). It seems, according to Rosen and other voucher supporters, that the implications of these rulings are obviously pro-voucher school systems (Rosen 6).

The question of improving America’s educational scenario is one of important moral and constitutional considerations. Chase, Feldman, and numerous opponents of taxpayer-funded voucher policies agree that the money being spent on untested voucher schools rightfully belongs to public schools, as is the desire of a majority of taxpayers and is the tradition of the American educational system. However, Rosen and other supporters hold that the institution of voucher schools will benefit public schools by relinquishing extra funds to a student body devoid of the most at-risk, poor learners of the student population that will likely pursue a voucher-supported education. The controversy of the constitutionality presents two sides of completely opposite views. While the end results of the opposing opinions both continue to seek an improved outlook for America’s failing public educational system, it is the methods of realization of this objective that proponents and opponents of vouchers strongly disagree upon.

WORKS CITED

Chase, Bob and Sandra Feldman. "Are School Vouchers the Answer?" June 2000.

<<http://www.findarticles.com/>>.

Rosen, Gary. "Are School Vouchers Un-American?" Gale Group, 2000.

<<http://www.findarticles.com/>>.

AN EXPLANATORY, EXPLORATORY, OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY—SHAWN S. RODERICK

Cellular Liberty

In the United States of America, people have many rights and freedoms that are respected by the Federal Government. As stated in Civil Disobedience by Henry David Thoreau: “There will never be a truly free and enlightened state until the state comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power” (225). In the goal to make America a truly free and enlightened state, laws have been enacted to preserve individual rights. With the furthering of medical science, the issue of individual rights vs. government regulation has been raised many times, and the right of the individual has always been held in the highest regard. This is why our government should both legalize and fund embryonic stem cell research.

The free choices granted us by our laws have always had certain limitations. To maintain a balance of freedom without anarchy, our laws governing individual action prevent someone from infringing on the rights of another. John Stuart Mill states in his essay “On Liberty,” that “The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others” (390). Each individual should be free to voice certain opinions and practice certain activities, as long as they are doing no harm to others. For instance, we have the right to drive, but not to drive recklessly. We have the right to own a gun, but not to use that gun to murder somebody. We have the right to our own property, but not to someone else’s property. All of these laws were made to protect the rights of the individual from malicious actions of another, and it is by the power of the federal government that these laws are enforced.

What, then, should be the limit of the government’s power when it comes to our bodies? Thoreau writes: “A government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it” (216). If the majority of the public were to decide what each individual should do in every aspect of their life, our democratic system would be nullified. Our laws are written to recognize individuals’ capability to make their own decisions. We have the right to donate our organs, and that it is our choice. We have the right to donate our entire bodies to science postmortem, and that is our choice. Couples have the right to donate their eggs and sperm for in-vitro fertilization of another couple, and that is their choice. Women have the right to decide whether they want to conceive a child or terminate a pregnancy, and that is their choice. In each instance individuals are given the power to choose, they are not denied the opportunity, or forced into doing something they do not want to. The government does not deny your right to be an organ donor, or tell you that you have to conceive a child when another couple cannot, because we would then be practicing Totalitarianism instead of Democracy. These examples, although extreme, directly relate to the subject of stem cell research because of what it entails and how the procedure is done.

Stem cells are cells that are not specialized, and can become many different kinds of human tissue. There are two types of stem cells: Adult stem cells, which cannot form all tissues of the body, are found in umbilical cord blood, bone marrow, the placenta, and brain tissue of cadavers. Embryonic stem cells are present in the embryo during the earliest stages of development, before any specialized tissue starts to take shape. These cells form all 210 tissues of the human body. To

obtain adult stem cells, scientist can extract them from the respective source. To obtain embryonic stem cells, an embryo is made in a lab, then the cells are extracted. This process destroys the embryo. These cells can duplicate almost infinitely, without cloning, given the right environment to live in. There are about 60 “lines” of embryonic stem cells that have been grown from leftover in-vitro fertilization embryos. Furthering the research on embryonic stem cells will require embryos with different genetic makeup, and therefore more lines are needed. As Yale Cell Biologist Dr. Diane Krause told Time magazine: “If too many of the lines dead-end or die off, research could stagnate...some stem cell uses will require diversity greater than 60 lines” (Kluger/Lemonick 20). This is why scientists are pushing to legalize the donation of eggs and sperm to make embryos for the research. The process of destroying embryos for the sole purpose of scientific research has incited a heated ethical debate.

Many people morally oppose legalizing and funding stem cell research by the federal government. In a speech given to the American public on August 9, 2001, President Bush stated: “Many people are finding that the more they know about stem cell research, the less certain they are about the right ethical and moral conclusions” (1). Knowledge of the procedure only complicates the issue further, because people have different beliefs as to exactly when human life begins. Many religious groups believe that it begins when sperm fertilizes an egg, while others believe that a group of cells is not a baby until it takes on human shape, having all the tissues and features of a person. A great fear surrounds the possibility that this research could become twisted and evil, turning into botched cloning experiments, or finding new weapons for germ warfare. Experimenting on unwilling humans is considered a crime against humanity, and embryonic stem cell research has been compared to such a crime. B.A. Robinson of the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance compared experiments that destroy an embryo to “the infamous medical experiments that were inflicted on unwilling and uninformed victims in Nazi death camps” (4). The horrible medical experiments performed by the Nazis were done by force, robbing the victim of the choice to participate or not. These experiments also served no real medical purpose, they were acts of malice, and did not benefit humankind.

Stem Cell research is not forced on anybody, and seeks only to benefit humankind in the absolute maximum. President Bill Clinton passed a law stating a couple’s legal consent had to be sought in order for their embryo to be used for stem cell research. This law honors peoples’ free-choice to do what they please with their genetic material, and it still stands despite a recent ruling by congress placing a temporary freeze on generating new lines. The University of Wisconsin scientist who was first to conduct stem cell research, James Thompson, used embryos that “were doomed anyway” (Golden 27) from unused in-vitro fertilization banks. Thompson convinced couples to let him use their embryos for his research, instead of throwing them away, which is what scientists normally do with the unused embryos. Many diseases have already been treated with the stem cell lines that exist, including breast and testicular cancer, brain tumors, and certain types of leukemia. More benefits are becoming apparent as discoveries are made. Lawrence S.B. Goldstien, professor of Cellular and Molecular Medicine at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine, stated the potential that embryonic stem cells have in a letter for the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research: “embryonic stem cell research may make it possible to treat Parkinson’s

disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and others by allowing researchers to learn how to induce embryonic stem cells to form the cell types lost in these diseases, and then to transplant them into patients" (1). Despite the lack of a unified moral stance by the scientific community, one thing all Cellular and Genetic scientists agree on is that the procedures for conducting stem cell research are safe, and will yield untold benefits for treatments of diseases.

Stem cell research will continue to impact our lives. Whether that impact is positive or negative should be under the control of all citizens in America. The practice is not outlawed in other countries, which means that the research will take place whether America outlaws it or not. We have already lost some of our brightest scientists to these countries because of our failed policies. The laws governing stem cell research, voted in by us, will mainly be applicable to government-funded programs. Private firms are conducting the research now, but with private interest come many problems. Goldstein speculates: "a company with a commercial interest in diabetes, and that has a good cell line, may only be willing to provide cells if the receiving scientist agrees not to pursue any research projects related to diabetes" (3). Picture how much beneficial research could be held back because of greed.

This research should be funded by the Federal Government to insure that the American citizens have say in the policies governing it, and to insure that the right to choose what happens to our genetic material is preserved. If the government is to outlaw what people can do with their egg or sperm, what is next? Will women's right to choose abortion or birth control be in danger? What about any law concerning our bodies, from surgical procedures to prescription drugs? Mills writes: "The appropriate region of human liberty...compromises first...absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological" (391). In America, the citizens have always had the right to express and practice what they deemed morally fit. If we allow our government to enact laws that dictate what we can and cannot do with our own flesh, we are allowing some of our freedom to be taken away.

WORKS CITED

Bevington, Linda. "Stem Cells and the Human Embryo." Bioethix.org.

Retrieved 20 October 2001. <<http://bioethix.org/resources/overviews/stemcell.html>>

Bush, George W. "Remarks by the President on Stem Cell Research."

Whitehouse.gov. Updated August 9, 2001. Retrieved 20 October 2001.

<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/20010809-2.html>>.

Golden, Fredrick. "Stem Winder." Time Magazine. August 2001: 27-28.

Goldstein, Lawrence S.B. "Optimism & Limitations." Stemcellfunding.org. Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research. Updated 20 October 2001. Retrieved 23 October 2001. <<http://www.stemcellfunding.org/fastaction/news>>.

- Kluger, Jeffrey., and Lemonick, Michael D. “And What About the Science?” Time Magazine. August 2001: 20-21.
- Mill, John Stuart. “On Liberty.” Primis II. United States of America: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2001.
- Prentice, David A. “Current Clinical Applications of Adult Stem Cells.” Stemcellfunding.org. Updated 25 June 2001. Retrieved 20 October 2001. <<http://stemcellfunding.org>>.
- Robinson, B.A. “Human Embryo Research: All Sides to the Debate.” Religioustolerance.org. Updated 21 October 2001. Retrieved 23 October 2001. <http://www.religioustolerance.org/res_emb.htm>.
- Thoreau, Henry David. “Civil Disobedience.” Reading, Writing, and the Humanities. United States of America: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1991.

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 the 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.

Lindsey Hossbach's "No Man Stands Alone" begins by tying a theme from Camus' The Plague to a quote from Socrates about the worthlessness of the unexamined life. After thus capturing the reader's attention, Lindsay then goes on to explain how the lives of Camus' characters were changed irrevocably from the individual or social pressure that resulted in their personal reflection. Lindsey pays careful attention to illustrating her points for her readers by weaving into her prose examples or dialogue from the characters about whom she is speaking. Her conclusion recognizes the complexity of the self-reflection issue that she is exploring by reemphasizing her main points in the paper and introducing one last quote that illustrates the lesson from Camus' story that readers and Camus' characters alike can benefit from learning.

Stephen Markley's introduction of "The Prize That Keeps Him Running" features a beautifully constructed final sentence that gives the reader a strong sense of purpose for the rest of his paper. He also uses quotes well, often to give the reader a stronger sense of what he is describing about the text he is analyzing. Stephen does a particularly nice job analyzing characters' uses of words in the dialogue he quotes. After his analysis, he is careful to make a graceful transition from the specific example back to the larger framework of the story he is examining. Stephen uses language creatively, recognizing, for example, that the briefcase in the story seems to operate as literal and figurative baggage. Stephen's paper is filled with summary of Ellison's text, but the summary does not control the paper; the summary is used to provide explanation and evidence of Stephen's thesis and case for the symbolism of the briefcase. Stephen concentrates on how the briefcase operates as a symbol, but also remembers to share with his readers what significance that symbol has to the larger scope of the text, in this case, to Ellison's protagonist.

Shawn S. Roderick's "Lesson Learned" begins with just enough summary to catch his readers' interest in the text he will analyze, Lord Jim, and then enough transition to his main point to provide his readers with direction and purpose for his paper. Roderick has a talent for reading Conrad and picking out possible clues that lie just beyond the text, hints that Conrad might be leaving for his readers. His quotes bring the reader vividly into the text he is analyzing, sometimes only with the quoting of a couple especially significant, colorful words of dialogue. Roderick repeatedly provides his readers a new way of looking at Conrad's text, offering metaphors for

physical actions that the characters do. His topic sentences demonstrate clearly the path that he is taking through his analysis, connecting his main point with the particular sub point that he is on, or summarizing the previous points and connecting them to his next point.

Adrienne Krauss's "The American Dream: A Nightmare in Death of a Salesman and The Grapes of Wrath" specializes in connecting topics within the literature she is examining to some of the larger social and cultural issues that surrounded the writing of these texts. Putting these insights into her introduction sets up her readers' personal interest in her topic, and she transitions well into how the texts she examines illustrate the issues she mentions. Adrienne uses language effectively and creatively, creating a vivid picture for her readers when she speaks of Willy being "entranced by these illusions" and Biff being on a "similar illusory course." Throughout her paper, Krauss transitions effectively from what she sees that Steinbeck is trying to say about America in the Depression to what evidence is in the text for her interpretation. Her ending effectively comments on a potentially unwieldy issue, avoiding generalizations by backing everything she says with specific examples from the text.

RESPONSE TO A TEXT—LINDSEY HOSSBACH

No Man Stands Alone

Socrates, a Greek philosopher, once said that “the unexamined life is not worth living” (*Apology* 38b). Like Socrates, Albert Camus believed that a man needs to live meaningfully. In his novel *The Plague* Camus creates characters who are forced to think, reflect, and assume responsibility for living as they battle an epidemic of bubonic plague that is ravaging the Algerian port of Oran. For ten months as the outbreak isolates the city from the rest of the world, each of the citizens reacts in his or her own way. Camus’ main characters undergo both individual and social transformations.

Dr. Bernard Rieux, the narrator and central character, is one of the first people in Oran to recognize the plague and is instrumental in fighting it. The plague brings to a focus the best in him as he assumes responsibility for his fellow man and uses all of his talent and strength to fight tirelessly against the plague without concern for his own welfare. He realizes that the town will need to band together to fight against the disease: “The essential thing was to save the greatest possible number of persons from dying and being doomed to unending separation. And to do this there was only one resource: to fight the plague. There was nothing admirable about this attitude; it was merely logical” (Camus 133).

Since Rieux does not believe in God or an afterlife, he accepts that the present is all that matters. He feels it is important for him to battle death in an effort to preserve life. Even though he acknowledges that man can never conquer death, he feels that his life has value when he helps others fight mortality.

As the plague ends, Rieux reaffirms the value of human love which makes happiness possible: “They knew now that if there is one thing one can always yearn for and sometimes attain, it is human love” (Camus 300). Rieux believes that man has to do what is necessary while he is alive and must believe in humanity: “. . . Rieux was thinking it was only right that those whose desires are limited to man and his humble yet formidable love should enter, if only now and then, into their reward” (Camus 301).

When the gates of Oran are opened, Rieux writes a chronicle of the plague hoping to teach others a lesson. He wants them to witness the admirable qualities in men and the injustice they endure. As a doctor he knows that the plague bacillus can lie dormant for long periods and then resurface. Although man may never be the victor over the plague and the loss of life it inflicts, he can better manage life’s adversities in the future.

Another important character is Raymond Rambert, a Parisian journalist, who goes through a metamorphosis over the course of the epidemic. He finds himself trapped in Oran when the gates of the city are closed. This determined young man tries to escape in any way possible because he feels that Oran’s problems are none of his concern since he is an outsider. Rambert’s appeals to the civil authorities are unsuccessful. He asks Dr. Rieux to help his cause and is enraged when Rieux refuses. He then offers money to smugglers for his escape. Later during an exchange Rieux tells him:

. . . for nothing in the world would I try to dissuade you from what you're going to do; it seems to me absolutely right and proper. However, there's one thing I must tell you: there's no question of heroism in all this. It's a matter of common decency. That's an idea which may make some people smile, but the only means of fighting a plague is—common decency. (Camus 163)

This makes Rambert begin to question whether his quest for personal happiness is more important than the greater good of the city. After Rambert finds out that Rieux is separated from his wife, he discovers that he is not the only one missing a loved one and has a change of heart. He understands that he is needed in Oran and refuses his chance to escape. Rambert is no longer an outsider; he is a part of Oran. He joins in the effort to fight the plague and realizes that all of Oran must work together in order to overcome this tragedy and that the welfare of many is more important than his individual happiness. The plague has changed him into a mature and responsible adult. It has brought meaning to his life.

When the gates to the city are opened, Rambert questions his reunion with his love. He feels that he cannot go back to her because she has not had the same life experiences: “If only he could put the clock back and be once more the man who, at the outbreak of the epidemic, had had only one thought and one desire: to escape and return to the woman he loved! But that, he knew, was out of the question now; he had changed too greatly” (Camus 294).

The plague also brings out the best qualities of Joseph Grand, a civil servant, who has led a dull, routine life until the plague comes to Oran: “. . . in short, he had all the attributes of insignificance” (Camus 44). When he is not working long hours for little pay, he is rewriting the first sentence of a book he dreams of writing. Grand is never satisfied with the sentence and fails to progress any further. He has failed to ask for higher wages and has failed in his marriage: “And lastly—this was the real trouble—Joseph Grand couldn't find his words” (Camus 45). Grand accepts life as it comes. The plague forces him to think about and assume responsibility for his life. He is one of the first to volunteer to help fight the plague. In his own way Grand joins the fight against indifference:

. . . Grand was the true embodiment of the quiet courage that inspired the sanitary groups. He had said yes without a moment's hesitation and with the large-heartedness that was second nature with him. All he had asked was to be allotted light duties: he was too old for anything else. He could give his time from six to eight every evening. When Rieux thanked him with some warmth, he seemed surprised. “Why, that's not difficult! Plague is here and we've got to make a stand, that's obvious. Ah, I only wish everything were as simple!” (Camus 134)

Grand contracts the disease, yet he survives. During this ordeal he gains an insight into the failures of his marriage and his novel. After he realizes that he was never sufficiently physical and verbal to Jeanne, his ex-wife, he writes her a letter. He also decides to do away with the adjectives in his writing. He now seems happier, is able to move freely, and has “. . . a twinkle in his eye . . .” (Camus 306).

In The Plague Camus' characters are forced to think, reflect, and assume responsibility for living. Their self-discovery and actions demonstrate that every man can give meaning to his life

by doing good deeds for the welfare of others. In the case of the plague men have to work together and do away with indifference if they are to reach the common goal. One of the purposes of Dr. Rieux's chronicle was ". . . to state quite simply what we learn in time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise" (Camus 308). The plague has offered them a chance to give meaning back to their lives.

WORKS CITED

Camus, Albert. The Plague. New York: Vintage International, 1975.

Socrates. Apology 38b.

RESPONSE TO A TEXT—ADRIANNE KRAUSS

The American Dream: A Nightmare in Death of a Salesman and The Grapes of Wrath

The American dream of success through hard work and of unlimited opportunity in a vast country actually started before America was officially America, before the colonists broke away from England and established an independent country. That dream has endured and flourished for hundreds of years; as a result, American writers naturally turn to it for subject matter, theme, and structure. In examining its lure and promise, they often find, not surprisingly, that for those who fall short, failure can be devastating because material success is a part of our cultural expectations. Americans are judged and judge themselves on individual success or failure as indicators of their personal worth. Indeed, two works of fiction, Death of a Salesman and The Grapes of Wrath, are good examples of these ideas, for they illustrate the repercussions of the belief in the American Dream and what happens when the dream proves elusive.

In Death of a Salesman, Willy Loman's illusions are based on his belief in individual success, but his ideas about how to attain that success are impractical and unrealistic. Willy's comment in Act I that "some people accomplish something" (15) is ironic because he yearns for this to be true for himself and Biff, but it is not true for either of them. Willy thinks he's "vital in New England" (14) and would be "in charge of New York now" (14) if his original boss was still alive. However, although Willy is entranced by these illusions, the reality is that he is not a successful salesman and is fired. He also thinks Biff should be making good money and blames his son's failure on his laziness. But it is Willy who has set Biff on a similar illusory course, for he has convinced his son that he only needs to be attractive and well-liked, not studious or even honest. Willy can't understand how "In the greatest country in the world a young man with such personal attractiveness, gets lost." (16). Almost as an afterthought he adds, "And such a hard worker. There's one thing about Biff, he's not lazy" (16). Willy's confusion comes from his own mixed-up values, which are in contrast to the American work ethic. For example, Willy prefers Swiss over American cheese (16), a symbol that he really doesn't understand or accept the qualities he needs to be successful in America. Willy can't even stand the effects or price of success. He resents growth and competition, which he calls "maddening" (17), and keeps finding excuses for his and Biff's failures. He can't seem to move beyond 1928, which comes just before the Great Depression, itself a real symbol of the failure of the American Dream. And Biff carries on his father's legacy: "He has succeeded less, and his dreams are stronger and less acceptable" (19) than his brother's. But even Happy, who wants to "show some of those pompous, self-important executives . . . that Hap Loman can make the grade" (24), agrees with Biff that "the trouble is we weren't brought up to grub for money" (24). Thus Willy and Biff are really out of place in the American Dream of working hard in business and getting rich. Where they want to be is outdoors doing something on the land, something muscular with their hands rather than with their heads. All their talk of getting ahead is really just that—talk. Willy doesn't have business smarts, talks too much, and all the time realizes that he's "not noticed" (36). After his suicide his family gives him the best requiem, the truest epitaph, when Linda says,

”He was so wonderful with his hands” (138), and Biff acknowledges, “He had the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong” (138). For Willy Loman, then, the only way to free himself from the curse of trying to follow the American Dream is to leave the dreamscape, to commit suicide. His wife’s final words that “We’re free” (139) is ironically very true for Willy, although she can’t understand why he kills himself or that her husband’s tragic suicide is, for him, preferable to his tragic existence.

The Grapes of Wrath also illustrates characters in search for the American Dream and how the dream tragically fails them. The story reads on both a literal and symbolic level as it describes how poor working-class farmers lose their land to the bank and the big tractors. Like the turtle in Chapter 3 that comes over the grass “leaving a beaten trail behind him” and looking at the hill that “reared up ahead of him” (14), the Joad family and others are confronted by danger and setbacks caused by modern improvements and the capitalist enterprise. Basically, Steinbeck sees the American people during the Depression as either suffering or contributing to the suffering of others. Thus, when the Joad family is dispossessed and leaves home in the Oklahoma Dust Bowl for California in search of good jobs and a better life, the Californians harass them, call them “Okies,” and think they are less than human. Even the car dealerships in Chapter 7 make their profit by conning “dumb bunny” (65) farmers into buying junkers. And on the Joads’ journey in search of a better life, the family breaks up, their fortunes disappear, and their dreams turn to bitter disillusionment and despair. For example, instead of acquiring material possessions, they end up having to sell most of their belongings for ridiculously low prices. Thus, traveling along Route 66, they move from one hopeless situation to another. The promise of high wages is a false lure, the “land of milk and honey” turns out to be sour grapes, and the hopes and dreams of the dispossessed are turned to wrath, one reason for the book’s title. The fat gas attendant’s repeated remarks that he doesn’t “know what the country’s comin’ to” (126-127) and that a “Fella can’t make a livin’ no more” (127) leads up to Jim Casy’s remark that “they’s somepin worse’n the devil got hold a the country” (129), and that is the capitalist system, which is supposed to make life better for everyone. Steinbeck creates a connection between the rotten grapes and the moral decay among the businessmen because of their greed, a vice that is poisoning the American promise by bringing great hardship with little hope for a better future.

In conclusion, both of these works use the deep personal loss of their characters to represent the greater dilemma posed by an American Dream that is elusive and, at least for them, never fulfilled. Hopelessness, despair and disillusionment are the result of what both authors portray as a ruthless, often dehumanizing capitalist system that seeks profit at any cost.

WORKS CITED

Miller, Arthur. Death of a Salesman. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

Steinbeck, John. The Grapes of Wrath. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

RESPONSE TO A TEXT—STEPHEN MARKLEY

The Prize That Keeps Him Running

The narrator of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is the victim of his own trust. Throughout the novel he trusts that various people and groups are helping and looking out for him when in reality they are using him for their own benefit. They give him the illusion that he is useful and important, all the while running him in circles. Ellison uses much symbolism in his book, some blatant and some hard to perceive, but nothing embodies the oppression and deception of the white hierarchy surrounding him better than his treasured briefcase, one of the most important symbols in the book.

The briefcase is introduced in the very first chapter. The narrator receives it after giving a speech endorsing Booker T. Washington's philosophy of black subservience in front of his hometown's leading white citizens (and after being forced to fight like an animal for their entertainment in the "battle royal"). Wrapped in white tissue paper symbolizing the skin color and mistrustful nature of the gift's givers, the calfskin brief case is awarded to him by his school's superintendent. Inside is a scholarship to an all-black college. The superintendent, who moments before watched him attempt to pluck coins from an electrified rug, says to him, "Boy, take this prize and keep it well. Consider it a badge of office" (32). The irony is that the only "badge of office" it signifies is that of good slave. He also says, "Someday it will be filled with important papers" (32). This is especially ironic considering what happens to those "important papers" at the end of the novel.

The night after his speech the narrator has a dream in which his grandfather tells him to look inside his briefcase. Inside he finds a note that says, "To Whom It May Concern: Keep This Nigger-Boy Running" (33). The obvious symbolism of that dream serves as the hinge for the entire novel. No matter where it sends him, for as long as the narrator carries that briefcase, he is jerked around like a puppet on a string, kept running by all those for whom that message was meant.

As the story progresses, it becomes clear that the items the narrator stores in the briefcase are just as important and telling as the briefcase itself. First, there are Bledsoe's letters. Bledsoe, the president of the college, expels the narrator, telling him to go to New York City to find work. He gives the narrator letters of recommendation and promises that he can return to the college after the summer. The narrator optimistically stuffs the letters into his briefcase and journeys to New York only to find himself ignored by the men for whom the letters are intended. After delivering his last letter, he discovers the truth of Bledsoe's "recommendation." Bledsoe has written in each letter that the narrator shall "never, under any circumstances, be enrolled as a student here again" (190). He also writes to ask "that he continue undisturbed in these vain hopes while remaining as far as possible from our midst" (191). The narrator discovers that Bledsoe's letters were only meant to keep him chasing his own tail.

Another item the narrator stores in his briefcase is a coin bank. Right before he is about to leave Mary (the kind lady who gives him refuge in New York) to join the Brotherhood, the narrator notices a "cast-iron figure of a very black, red-lipped and wide-mouthed Negro, whose white eyes stared up at me from the floor, his face an enormous grin" (319). In a fit of anger, he grabs the bank and smashes it against a pipe, sending coins flying. Ashamed for what he has done to a piece

of Mary's property, he gathers the broken iron shards along with the coins and leaves the apartment to dispose of them. He first tries to throw the broken heap into a trashcan only to be viciously threatened by the trashcan's owner. His next attempt is thwarted by a passerby who rescues the bundled mess, incredulous that the narrator is not pleased with this act of kindness. The narrator's inability to rid himself of the racist icon represents his inability to rid himself of stereotypes and racism as well, despite his move from south to north. Eventually, he ends up stashing the whole mess in his briefcase, where it remains, following him as literal and figurative baggage.

The final and most important object the narrator buries in his briefcase is, like the coin bank, an icon of a stereotypical African-American. He picks up one of Tod Clifton's Sambo dolls after the fallen member of the Brotherhood is killed by the police. The doll represents the same things as the bank, but also has a deeper meaning. As he sells them, Clifton means for the dolls to be ironic, and in part they represent how the Brotherhood sees black people as nothing more than faceless "Sambos" to be used to serve the organization's needs.

These are not the only objects of importance the narrator stores in his beloved briefcase, but they are the most encompassing of his story. In the novel's final chapter, when the narrator is trapped in the dark sewer and must burn the papers from his briefcase to see his way, everything goes. First his high school diploma, then the Sambo doll, followed by a threatening anonymous note. Everything he burns from the briefcase—the "important papers" the superintendent spoke of in Chapter one—is a symbol of the narrator's plight as the forces pulling his strings run him around. Not until this cleansing of his prized briefcase, can he be free from the people who wanted to "Keep This Nigger-Boy Running."

WORKS CITED

Ellison, Ralph. Invisible Man. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

RESPONSE TO TEXT—SHAWN S. RODERICK

Lesson Learned

Joseph Conrad's novel Lord Jim is set in the late 1800's in the Far East. The protagonist, Jim, is a young, idealistic sailor who commits a crime early in the story. Jim is tortured from within with the feeling of worthlessness after this crime, and runs from his past searching for an opportunity to redeem himself. The novel is mostly relayed to the reader via Marlow, an old sea captain who took an unusual interest in Jim, and tells the story of Jim's life at every opportunity. Jim is an enigma to almost all who meet him, and the secondary characters in this novel, combined with Marlow's analysis, enable the reader to compare and contrast Jim with different personalities to better understand his puzzling nature. Marlow struggles to figure out why Jim clings so tightly to his past failures, and Jim struggles to become the man he thinks he should be. The plot provides for many critical turning points where Jim's decision making, which is clouded by romantic idealism, governs the outcome of events. Conrad's characters and plot point to a central lesson: people need to realize that they are naturally fallible, and are not capable of achieving perfection with regard to honor.

The first physical description of Jim by the third person narrator in the beginning of the novel presents paradoxes in Jim's character, and introduces the fact that although characters can absorb him wholly, they cannot figure him out. The narrator says that Jim is "...an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built," and is much like "a charging bull" (9). Jim's description continues with: "...his manner displayed a kind of dogged self-assertion which had nothing aggressive in it" (9). Jim appears to be two things at once. He is tall, but not six feet tall, which is a normal height associated with physical dominance. He is powerfully built like a bull, yet displays no aggressive qualities or meanness. Jim's appearance is thus instantly captivating without knowledge of his character. With this introduction, Conrad hints on the fact that Jim defies all that is expected of him, and his own nature even defies itself.

Conrad's plot involves many shifts in time to foreshadow coming events. Jim will be haunted by a certain event in the novel, but it is necessary to understand why this is by traveling back in time to find other events that shaped Jim's idealism. When Jim witnesses a collision while on a training ship, but hesitates to do something about it, the feeling of lost opportunity overcomes him. Jim looks at his captain with "the pain of conscious defeat in his eyes," and the advice the captain gives him is "Better luck next time. This will teach you to be smart" (13). In the literal sense, Jim's consciousness has defeated itself, because he had total control over whether or not to hesitate in a time of danger. The captain's words to Jim foreshadow Jim's search for redemption of his honor, but as the "next time" arrives, he again fails to live up to his own expectations.

During the accident aboard the Patna, Jim's actions, when compared to those of the crew, expose his romantic and idealistic nature. Jim experiences major conflict within him regarding what he is actually doing versus what he thinks a heroic sailor should do. When relaying the story to Marlow, Jim says he kept thinking "Eight hundred people and seven boats- and no time!" (69). Then Jim poses a question to Marlow: "Do you think I was afraid of death? I am ready to swear I was not" (70). What was truly bothering Jim was not the fact that 800 people could have died, it

was that they could have died on his watch. Only a romantic, enveloped in an unrealistic expectation of what duty and honor are, would be “ready to fight a losing battle to the last...” (70). As such, Jim wages war between being compelled to take action, and being paralyzed by fear. The other crewmembers have little obligation to honor and duty, and seek to “clear out,” abandoning all on board (73). The 2nd engineer cannot understand Jim’s obligation to honor: “Won’t you save your own life- you infernal coward... Coward!” (79). Conrad’s visual imagery powerfully contrasts the lone sailor holding his honor above his life while everyone else literally jumps ship. It is only by the act of jumping overboard with the crew that Jim associates himself with them in any way. In jumping, he has metaphorically jumped into a new reality. Jim feels the need to “jump out of that accursed boat and swim back,” while others on the lifeboat are busy inventing a story to protect them.

In the trial following the Patna incident, Conrad’s character Captain Brierly analyzes Jim, and from him, learns the lesson that Jim will not learn until the end of the novel. When comparing Captain Brierly to Jim, the idealism that motivates both characters in a different way can be seen, and a better understanding of Jim is obtained. Brierly is first described as a near-perfect person: “He had never in his life made a mistake...” then his personal value is associated with material things: “He had a gold chronometer presented to him by the underwriters, and a pair of binoculars with suitable inscription from some foreign Government” (48). He has been living up to an image of what he thinks a sea captain should be, and Conrad connects Brierly’s worth as a person with material items to show Brierly’s shallowness. Also, the word “never” in this line is an absolute, like the deterministic view of honor residing in his mind. When Jim refuses an offer from Brierly and Marlow to run away by saying “Never! From no man- from not a single man on earth,” Brierly’s true nature surfaces (61). He is utterly confused and angry at Jim’s decision, saying “Can’t he see that wretched skipper of his has cleared out? What does he expect to happen?” (54), and later draws a conclusion about what he would do in a similar situation: “Well then, let him creep twenty feet underground and stay there! By heavens! I would” (55). By this admission, it is clear that Brierly has compared himself with the upstanding Jim, and knows that Jim is the better person. Brierly realizes that pursuit of perfect honor is impossible, and his own is false. He decides to commit suicide to escape his fate and be remembered at his best, but ironically that is not how Marlow portrays him to the listeners of this story. Brierly’s death foreshadows Jim’s own, because both men face their pasts before death.

Comparing how characters describe Jim and react to him during his many changes of location and occupations shows that, in running from his past, Jim is actually creating his own lost opportunities. Every time Jim suddenly quits a job or re-locates, he is destroying the very chance to build the new honorable reputation he has been hoping to. When Marlow first offers help to Jim, he describes Jim’s emotional state as “holding fast to some deep idea which I could detect shimmering like a pool of water in the dark” (138). The idea that Jim is holding on to is “shimmering,” or has a glimmer of something valuable but not clear, and that idea is his new future. Jim finally accepts help, and is admired by his employers. Mr. Denver says Jim is unable to be “guilty of anything much worse than robbing an orchard,” and talks of plans for Jim’s future when he tells Marlow “I laid on Jim’s behalf the first stone of a castle in Spain” (141). The metaphor for Jim’s honor and reputation

being rebuilt as a castle continues when Marlow finds out Jim has left Mr. Denver's employ because the 2nd engineer showed up at the workplace. Marlow says, "I was utterly crushed under the ruins of my castle," because like Mr. Denver, he had been building Jim's new future and had plans for him. Mr. Denver and Marlow are disappointed, but Engstrom's reaction is more severe. He yells "And who the devil cares about that?" at Marlow upon finding out that Jim was the mate on the Patna (147). Jim's ability to make clear decisions is influenced by his passion to hide the past, and by leaving job after job, he ironically severs ties with people willing to forget about his past. His constant hunt for a place to disappear and start over leads to the island of his demise: Patusan.

The parallels between the characters on Patusan and those on the Patna show that the opportunity for heroism Jim is given on Patusan is almost literally the Patna incident all over again, but Jim's pursuit of honor leads him to make different decisions this time. On Patusan, Jim is working for Dormain, who is described by Marlow: "His bulk for a Malay was immense, but he did not look merely fat; he looked imposing, monumental" (193). Once again Jim is working for a man much like the Patna captain, who was also imposing and overweight. The captain of the Patna fled to avoid the trial, making Jim face it alone, and Dormain will turn on Jim, making Jim face death alone. On Patusan, Raja Allang and Sherif Ali represent the 2nd engineer and the German crewmember of the Patna, both being an evil force against Jim and the "others." On the Patna, the passengers and Jim could have drowned because the crew was not attempting to save anyone except themselves, and in Patusan, Ali and Allang seek to dominate the natives and kill Jim. In both circumstances, the Malays are in a subordinate position to Jim, and are in need of his guidance. On the Patna, the Malays "silent and almost motionless, steered, one on each side of the wheel," and later still clung to the helm of a ship that was going nowhere (21). In Patusan, the Malays have named Jim "Tuan Jim," or Lord Jim, and seek his guidance on almost every issue of public and private life: "Only the other day an old fool he had never seen in his life came from some village miles away to find out if he should divorce his wife" (200). When a second chance for honor presents itself to Jim on Patusan, he chooses not to figuratively leave those Malays clinging to the helm of a sinking ship, but to rescue them from the tyranny of Ali and Allang. The evil in Ali and Allang was overt, and thus easily defeated by the romantic Jim, but when evil cloaked in good appears, it ultimately defeats Jim by using his romanticism against him.

From the time Gentleman Brown enters the novel until the end, the same romantic and idealistic nature that has been working for Jim produces negative results; this is because Gentleman Brown is the only character in the novel that has Jim figured out. At first, Brown is intimidated by Jim, thinking "He had all the advantages on his side-possession, security, power; he was on the side of an overwhelming force!" (281). Brown is ready to be defeated by this man, but as he questions Jim about the past, he begins to see Jim's strength in relation to his appearance. Brown asks, "What do you know more of me than I know of you?" and then comments on Jim's life story: "I know it is no better than mine" (283). Through continued probing, Brown uncovers what appears to be a flaw in Jim's character when saying "There are my men in the same boat-and by God, I am not the sort to jump out of trouble and leave them in a d-d lurch" (283). After this statement, Jim appears visibly shaken, and Brown knows that he can win this battle. Brown represents pure evil, and therefore decides to use Jim's nature against itself rather than help Jim, which leads to Jim's death.

The characters in this book are so affected by Jim because he is everything good that most people wish they could be, and that evil wants to destroy. A letter received from Jim written by his father partly explains his motivation to pursue perfection in honor: “who once gives into temptation, in the very instant hazards his total depravity and everlasting ruin” (253). Thus, Jim has been striving his whole life to “never, through any possible motives, (to) do anything which you believe to be wrong” (253). Jim’s dedication to this ideal makes other characters want to preserve and be part of something that is so good, therefore Jim is helped with his quest at every opportunity. Jim is a man above the opinions of others, above both easterners and westerners, and seemingly above reality. He has been chasing perfection, and proudly walks to his death having learned a lesson; perfection is not possible, so one must both admit one’s mistakes and live with them.

WORKS CITED

Conrad, Joseph. Lord Jim. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, 1923.

COMPLETE PORTFOLIO—KAILA GREGORY

The first piece in this portfolio, a reflective letter, reads like a short narrative where we move with the writer through her bedroom and through the topics of each of her portfolio pieces. “Midnight Memories” uses dialogue and reflection to recreate the relationship between a little girl and her grandfather. Kaila manages several written sources and personal interviews to create a persuasive argument in “Identity in the Age of the Internet.” And, her response to Robert Frost’s “The Wind and the Rain” is well-organized and very clear in purpose. As a whole, Kaila’s portfolio displays an effective use of language, uses dialogue and detail to create scenes to engage the reader, and demonstrates an ability to handle varied writing tasks.

REFLECTIVE LETTER—KAILA GREGORY

Dear Miami University Writing Professors,

In a frenzy, I rush into my bedroom, haphazardly tossing my cap and gown onto the floor. I have just arrived home from my high school graduation; I am finally an adult in the eyes of society. As I begin to ponder my newfound adulthood, I slowly scan the contents of my room, absent-mindedly tugging at my newly pierced belly button. My eyes rest on a black model horse perched on my dresser. The horse had been a gift from my grandfather when I was young. He had recently passed away, and the horse provides many fond memories for me. The two of us used to have an imaginary horse named Midnight, as described in my narrative piece “Midnight Memories.” As I walk over to the model horse, I notice that he has a white star on his forehead, drawn in with whiteout to make the model look just like Midnight. Writing “Midnight Memories” helped me deal with the loss of Grandpa, and as I trace my finger over the model horse’s face, I smile, remembering all of the little things he would do just to make me laugh.

As I stand by the horse, lost in my memories, I am startled by the sound of an instant message popping onto my screen. I return to my computer and click on the AOL instant message. The message is from the football player whose smile has a way of making my knees weak. Although I cannot manage to speak to him in person without blushing eighty different shades of red, we have great conversations online. As I confidently tell him about my belly button piercing experience, I am reminded of “Identity in the Age of the Internet,” the explanatory piece that I selected for my portfolio. Like many other computer users, I tend to show a different, more confident side of myself online, but until I wrote this piece for my psychology exam, I had never really examined the effect that the Internet has on a person’s sense of self. “Identity in the Age of the Internet” is, in my opinion, one of the most intriguing works I have written. The research concerning the way the Internet changes our lives was fascinating, and I could not believe that I had never considered this concept before, seeing as I spend a good majority of my time online. As I play the role of a calm, confident adult, I chat with #14 about the past experiences of high school. He mentions how difficult the final English essay was, and my attention immediately turns to the poetry book sitting on my desk.

The book no longer has a cover, and after spending the entire year at the bottom of my locker, it had definitely seen better days. I was forced to purchase the book, whose damage was “beyond repair” according to my AP English teacher. I leaf through the book, finding a bookmark in Robert Frost’s “The Wind and the Rain.” Although I do not consider myself to be a fan of poetry, I liked this particular poem. I found its message to be very inspirational, and I felt connected to the poem somehow. Therefore, I have included my essay concerning the natural images within “The Wind and the Rain” as my final selection for my portfolio.

I close the poetry book, momentarily stop chatting on AOL, and release my belly button ring. Pausing to take a deep breath, I reflect on the changes that I have experienced recently. I am no longer a high school student, but a graduate, an adult. Next fall, I will go off to college, leaving behind everything that I have known to begin a new chapter of my life. Thoughts of my impending self-reliance fill my head as I prepare my portfolio for its journey to the post office. While the

pieces enclosed are not perfect, each represents a part of me. As I grow and develop, my writing matures. Each new experience provides knowledge and inspiration for future writing. So while I may not be the most seasoned, professional writer, I am trying. As you read these three pieces I have selected, you will hopefully gain insight not only into the person that I am today, but also the person I am becoming.

Sincerely,
A future Miami student, still under construction

A NARRATIVE OR SHORT STORY—KAILA GREGORY

Midnight Memories

As I walked through the door of the funeral home, the floral arrangements blurred into a sea of vivid colors. Wiping away my tears, I headed over to the collage of photographs of my grandfather. His smile seemed to transcend the image on the pictures, and for a moment, I could almost hear his laughter and see his eyes dancing as they tended to do when he told one of his famous jokes. My eyes scanned the old photographs, searching for myself amidst the images. They came to rest on a photo of Grandpa holding me in his lap when I was probably no more than four years old. The flowers surrounding me once again blended into an array of hues as I let my mind wander.....

“Look Grandpa, he’s over there!” A little blond girl rushed over to the window, her curly ponytail bouncing with every step she takes. Her cheeks were a flushed, rosy shade, and her green eyes sparkled like emeralds with excitement. “See him?” she asked, turning towards the elderly man sitting in the rocking chair next to the window. Slowly, the man turned, his eyes following the little girl’s pointing finger. He nodded. “I sure do,” he replied with a smile, knowing that there was no one outside.

“It’s my horse, Grandpa,” the child continued. She withdrew from the window, climbing onto her grandfather’s lap. “Midnight’s here again, and he’s still as black as coal except for that small white star on his face,” she informed him, trying to imitate the shape of the white star with her fingers. The man just nodded, amused at his granddaughter’s antics. This was a game that the two of them had been playing for quite some time. The child loved horses, but because she lived within the city limits and had no pony of her own, she had developed an imaginary horse. She loved to tell her Grandpa about Midnight galloping across the snow or jumping over tall fences. However, no one else had the privilege of hearing these stories. Midnight was a secret that the girl shared only with her Grandpa.

“Did I tell you what he did yesterday?” the girl asks, almost breathless with enthusiasm. Not waiting for a response from her grandfather, she launched into an explanation of her imaginary horse’s most recent adventure. Midnight had been lost in a snowstorm, trapped in the woods for three whole days with no blanket to keep him warm at night. “He was such a smart, brave horse, Grandpa, that he managed to find his way home” the granddaughter chirped. “I left him apples and carrots on the kitchen table last night, and when I woke up this morning, Midnight had eaten everything but the apple core!” The child’s grandfather just chuckled. “That crazy horse!” he said. She just nodded in agreement, giggling with her grandfather.

“Did I ever tell you about the horse pony I had when I was your age?” her grandpa asked. The girl’s eyes widened as she looked up at the elderly man. “You had a horse, too?” she exclaimed wistfully. He nodded, thinking fast as always. “You bet I did. Except my pony did not look like yours. Nope, mine was a dark brown mare named Chocolate.” The little girl snuggled up against her grandfather, and the plush rocking chair groaning quietly as she moved closer. “Tell me about her, Grandpa” the child begged. Enchanted by his stories, the small child listened intently as the

man fabricated a tale about Chocolate saving his life. According to the man, he had been swimming in a pond nearby his house. After wandering too far out into the water, he began to sink, but Chocolate was watching from the pasture, and she jumped the fence. “She raced over to the pond, jumped in, and rescued me from drowning!” he finished. “Wow!” exclaimed his granddaughter, with her eyes wide open like full moons. The two were so absorbed in their imaginative game that neither of them noticed as the child’s grandmother snapped a photograph of them.

Grabbing a tissue from the box on the table next to the collage, I attempted to dam the flood of tears that streamed down my cheeks. That photograph captured my most fond memory of my grandfather. Midnight was a special secret that only Grandpa and I knew about. As I glanced at the slate blue casket where my grandfather’s body laid, I envisioned my invisible coal-black stallion galloping across the clouds towards Heaven to visit Grandpa.

AN EXPLANATORY, EXPLORATORY, OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY—KAILA GREGORY

Identity in the Age of the Internet

Technology is changing rapidly. Now more than ever before, the Internet plays a vital role in everyday life. With the click of a mouse, people all over the world can exchange information with one another almost instantaneously. This changing technology allows people to broaden their horizons, exploring different cultures and learning new information. But in addition to learning about others, the Internet provides people with a means of learning about themselves. Online, they can assume different identities, exploring multiple facets of their personalities. In the words of Justin Lewis, a student at the Ohio State University who frequently chats online in multi-user domains, “When you are online, you are who you pretend to be.” This brings up an interesting question: Does the ability to assume multiple roles online have a significant effect upon a person’s sense of self? According to Sherry Turkle, author of *Life on the Screen*, the role of computers in people’s daily lives has a huge impact on how they perceive themselves, and there is much evidence to support her viewpoint. Clearly, the rapidly changing technology has an effect on the way people see themselves, redefining their identities in the age of the Internet.

“Online, I feel completely confident in myself,” says Justin Lewis. “I am normally very shy and reserved, but in chatrooms, I talk to everyone. I spend hours online talking to people, but in reality, there is no way that I would have the confidence to start a conversation with a stranger. Being online, I am able to act the way I wish I could in real life.” This holds true for many Internet users. Being online gives them a chance to overcome any inhibitions they many have in reality. For many users, chatting online gives them the opportunity to make up for what they lack in real life. The socially inept are able to be confident and popular online, initiating conversations with complete strangers.

While there are those who find themselves behaving differently online, others argue that they do not change any aspect of themselves when online. According to user Drew Maguire, a student at Denison University, “I don’t pretend to be someone else when I’m online. I am just myself.” However, what Harrah is saying holds true for all users, whether they take on a role to play or not. All of the users are “being themselves;” they just have more control over which aspect of their personality they want to emphasize. A person who is normally reserved may open up and act confident online, but he is still being himself. There is a confident side to him, and although he may only be able to portray this when chatting on the Internet, it is still a part of who he is.

Some critics tend to disagree with the notion that one’s experiences online can help them discover and explore different aspects of their selves. According to Immanuel Kant, author of *Critique of Pure Reason*, “The self cannot be encountered through experience. We must accept the epistemic connectedness of the unitary self” (Goldsworth, online). But while Kant does not believe that one’s experiences can help him define his sense of self, there is much evidence to contradict his beliefs concerning the existence of a unitary self. Today, due to the amount of technology available, the existence of a multiple self seems much more appropriate.

According to Sherry Turkle, the effect of increased computer usage has provided evidence of a divided self. The self can now be explained in terms of three aspects: the flexible self, the saturated self, and the multiple self. The flexible self is best characterized by “the ability to adapt

and change” (Turkle, 631). Today, one’s identity is no longer about maintaining stability, but about the ability to be fluid. Virtual communities provide environments where the flexible self thrives. “In these environments, people either explicitly play roles (as in MUD’s) or more subtly shape themselves online” (Turkle, 632). The experience described by Justin Lewis certainly offers insight into this aspect of the flexible self. Online, he plays a certain role, and from this, he is able to learn more about the outgoing, friendly side of his personality.

The concept of the saturated self comes from Gergen’s notion “that communication technologies have caused us to ‘colonize each others’ brains” (Turkle, 633). Online, people are exposed to many various cultures and new ideas. They combine these new ideas with their existing thoughts, causing them to reexamining their own beliefs. Because of people’s ability to have “relationships spread across the globe” and a vast “knowledge of other cultures,” they are constantly “relativizing [their] attitudes and depriving [them] of any norms” (Turkle, 633). While there are those who consider this saturation of self to be a “breakdown of identity,” Gergen suggests that this saturation actually provides the people with new opportunities to explore other cultures while learning about themselves at the same time (Turkle, 633).

The multiple self is characterized as being multiple, yet at the same time coherent. While this seems like a contradiction, Robert Jay Lifton explains the concept in terms of what he calls the “healthy protean self: fluid in transformations but ...grounded in coherence,” giving people “a sense of self without being one self” (Turkle, 634). More and more people are experiencing this multiple self through chatting in multi-user domains. By going online and creating different roles to play, people are examining different aspects of their personality. No matter how different their character online may be from the self they portray in real life, that character is still representative of some part of their true personality. Whether or not they reveal this part of themselves in real life is irrelevant; it is a part of them nonetheless.

Clearly, the Internet does have an effect upon people’s sense of self. It allows them to discover different sides of their personalities through assuming roles in multi-user domains and absorbing new ideas from people with different cultures and beliefs. But Howard Rheingold, author of *Virtual Communities*, feels that there may be a danger in exploring one’s self. He calls cyberspace, “a place where people often end up revealing themselves far more intimately than they would be inclined to do without the intermediation of screens and pseudonyms” (Rheingold, 467). This belief, however, does not seem to hold true. In cyberspace, people do not end up revealing more than they *would* be inclined to do in reality; they reveal more than they *could* in reality.

Oftentimes, the side of themselves that people reveal online is the part of their personality that they are not able to show in reality. Those who are shy may find themselves outgoing online. Those who are normally reserved and proper may find themselves being bold and rebellious online. The aspect of one’s personality that is revealed online is still a part of who that person is. It is not a part of themselves that people want to hide, but rather a part that they do not feel comfortable exploring in reality. Virtual reality allows them the opportunity to reveal this aspect of their personality, giving people a better understanding of who they are as a person. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, author of *The Evolving Self*, states that “we are dynamic, continually changing individuals” (Csikszentmihalyi,

546). The Internet provides people with a means to “change” by allowing them to explore the many facets of their personalities that they may otherwise never reveal.

As technology continues to change, the Internet will continue to play a meaningful role in the way that people view and express themselves. It allows them to learn not only about other people, but also about themselves. Users can incorporate the new ideas they learn from others into their system of beliefs, while at the same time portraying a character online who represents a part of themselves they are unable to share in reality. With the vast array of technology available today, the opportunities to grow as a person are endless.

WORKS CITED

- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihalyi. “The World of Self.” *Signatures: An Anthology for Writers*. Ed. Lorraine Granieri. Mountainview, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999.
- Goldworth, Robert. The Examined Life Online Philosophy Journal. Available Online: <http://examinedlifejournal.com/archives/vol2ed7/GoldsworthHumeandKantessay.shtml>, 7 May 2002.
- Lewis, Justin. Personal Interview. 4 May 2002.
- Maguire, Drew. Personal Interview. 5 May 2002.
- Rheingold, Howard. “Cyberhood vs. Neighborhood: Community” *Signatures: An Anthology for Writers*. Ed. Lorraine Granieri. Mountainview, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999.
- Turkle, Sherry. “Identity Crisis.” *Signatures: An Anthology for Writers*. Ed. Lorraine Granieri. Mountainview, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999.

RESPONSE TO A TEXT—KAILA GREGORY

Images of Nature in “The Wind and the Rain”

In his poem “The Wind and the Rain,” Robert Frost develops a central theme, presenting a man’s reflection upon his life. As the man ages, he realizes that he spent much of his life worrying about his inevitable death instead of living his life to the fullest. The man expresses his desire to renew life at all costs; he would rather die living than spend the rest of his life concerning himself with death. Robert Frost’s theme in “The Wind and the Rain,” therefore, is that life should be lived, and one should not worry about his inevitable death, for he does not have the power to control death, only the way he lives his life. Frost uses images of nature throughout the poem to support his central theme.

In part I of “The Wind and the Rain,” the speaker discusses the fact that he is aging, and his death is undeniable. He realizes that he has “let [his focus on death] drive [him] deathward,” yet he has done little to change his focus. The man regrets that he spent much of his life “[singing] of death,” wishing that he knew in his youth that focusing on death only leads one closer to dying. He does not want others to repeat his mistake, saying that a child should not be left unwarned about the consequences of focusing on death. Robert Frost uses images of the “season-ending wind,” removing the leaves from the trees and strewing them in the forest, to reinforce the man’s thoughts concerning death. Just as the man must inevitably grow older, the seasons must change. Autumn must come to an end, just as life, too, must end. The leaves have no more control over the wind than man does over his death. In both nature and human life, “Fate has no choice but to fulfill.”

Robert Frost expresses his desire to renew his life at all costs, using images of nature to convey his ideas. He discusses a desert flower and the great lengths to which he would go to water the plant and save its life. Despite the fact that too much water will drown the flower, the man is willing to “pick up all the ocean less its salt...[and] empty it unsparing upon the flower.” The man believes in living at all costs, and he is willing to try, no matter how much of a chance he must make to renew his life, just as he is willing to give the flower an ocean of water to refresh its life, even though the plant may become “water-bowed.” “The mightier the shower,” the more eager the man is to run underneath and ask for “water heavy on the head.” Even though too much water may drown him, he is willing to sacrifice his life for the chance to truly live. In the final stanza of the poem, the speaker reveals that “when there was rain, [he was] one no dwelling could contain.” Rain has a bad connotative meaning, implying that in spite of hardships the man faced in life, he was still able to live his life. However, now that the man is aging, he sets “forth at dusk, [his] time of day” because just as his life is fading away, the sunlight also dims at the close of the day. The man calls the rain “tears adopted by [his] eyes,” saying that he has no more tears left to dry. He spent so much of his life worrying about death that now, when death is approaching, he is emotionally numb, having no more tears to stop.

In “The Wind and the Rain,” poet Robert Frost employs images of nature to develop his central theme, the idea that one must live life without fear of the inevitable and be willing to take chances to renew life. The images he presents show the life cycle found in nature, such as leaves falling from a tree at the end of autumn and desert flowers trying to bloom. For both man and

nature, the same ideals hold true: “fate has no choice but to fulfill.” Therefore, one should not worry about what he cannot change, and instead, focus on living life to the fullest.

WORKS CITED

Frost, Robert. *A Witness Tree*. New York: Henry Holt Publishing, 1942.

COMPLETE PORTFOLIO—KERRY LANIGAN

In her reflective letter, Kerry shows an awareness of her audience and attempts to engage her reader with humor as she introduces each of the pieces she has included in her portfolio. “Showstopper” is what Kerry describes as “realistic” account of a very difficult situation, and the descriptions she gives of both her surroundings and her feelings through internal monologue make it extremely effective. In her well-organized and passionate persuasive essay, “Not Just False Teeth and Bingo Babes,” the author describes America’s attitude towards the elderly and makes the argument that our society should pay more attention to this overlooked and important group of people. In “Faith Lost in the Night,” Kerry examines Elie Wiesel’s Night, using quotes from the text to illustrate her argument about the main character’s relationship with God. Each piece in this portfolio is fully developed and demonstrates a careful attention to the details of language use.

REFLECTIVE LETTER—KERRY LANIGAN

Dear Miami University Writing Professors,

So when I first looked at the little brochure sent to me in the mail, inviting me to submit a writing portfolio (after I got over my little naïve power-trip of actually *getting* some mail that wasn't a postcard from my dentist), I quickly and subconsciously envisioned each of the pieces a little something like this: The Reflective Letter – no problem, good times, my friends and I chilling on bean-bag chairs being silly and eating popcorn with chopsticks. The Personal Narrative – standing in front of the class, palms a little bit sweaty, reading something that you enjoyed writing but are very aware of all the eyes watching you. The Essay – mom dragging you, whining and sniveling, through the department store to look at *one more* flower printed muumuu. And finally the Response to a Text – bust out the tux, garter, and limo because this baby is for-mal. There's your outline girl, get cracking.

Well...I didn't do it exactly that way.

After working up the guts to look in my high school portfolio, it only took me about thirty seconds to realize that I didn't want to use anything in there. And you should be pretty happy that I made that decision, because as stirring as the account I wrote about the housing situation in Chinatown or the imagery in Ethan Frome, my made-for-school papers weren't exactly the kind of material you want to snuggle into bed with. Those processed works, combined with my current end-of-senior-year attitude (everything seems to fall into the category of – deepbreath – relaxing *ahhh...*) helped me make the decision that I was going to write what makes me feel good, not what makes me look like a super-quoting mind-bending smarty pants. And so I did.

My personal narrative is in honor of all of those really *really* bad nights when everything was awful and you come home, slam your door, and burst into tears, saying “That was so terrible, I hate everyone and now I'm going to sit here and *write* about it!” What...you don't ever say that? Oh.... Well, I do but then I usually end up sleeping or watching stand-up on Comedy Central. So when it came time to write the narrative, I composed “Showstopper” with times like those in mind. Some close friends that read it said it was depressing, but I countered, after a quick bristle and second guess – that it is *realistic*. And hey, if it strikes some emotion in me, it might in other people as well. And isn't that what writing is about, after all?

My essay is also very relaxed. As I wrote it, I thought hard about whether it was *too* relaxed, too laid-back and opinionated. But then I remembered that my personal favorite essays aren't the ones filled with facts, dates, and quotes, but the ones written with passion and a little bit of sense. “Not Just False Teeth Fellas and Bingo Babes” is based on a subject that matters a lot to me. I work with the elderly and their happiness and individuality are aspects that I try to acknowledge as much as possible, and in my essay I tried to get these ideas across to the reader as directly and comfortably as I could.

“Faith Lost in the Night” was probably the easiest piece for me to compose. The book struck a chord for me when I first read it, and I was excited to get the chance to write about it. The subject matter of a Holocaust survivor's wavering faith in God was not extremely a hidden complexity to

critique, but I felt that it was incredibly deep for the reader to *comprehend*. Many professors might disagree, but I believe that the level of intensity with which a piece is written is not necessarily as important as the power that the reader feels about the subject after reading it.

All right, all right, enough of this reflecting junk already! Let me finish this off and send it in and hope maybe you like it, right? But there's the thing – right now, where in any other paper I would be tapering off into repeated-ness, I feel as though I could write pages more about how creating these three works has affected that little lobe of my brain labeled *Writing Stuff*. Writing has always been fun for me, but usually I write at a specific audience that I am familiar with – parents, teachers, friends. But I don't know you, Miami Professor, not yet, and so I wrote these works for myself. They made me happy, they gave me a little bit of confidence, some new ideas, and – dare I say it – made me feel like, yeah, maybe this whole writing spiel could actually be worth something.

Deep breath – ahhh....

Sincerely,

If I had my way? It would be Chantilly Rose

A NARRATIVE OR SHORT STORY—KERRY LANIGAN

Showstopper

It should have been raining. It almost always rains in the movies when girls get their hearts broken. When that young man with a bittersweet smile and “I’m sorry” eyes shows up on the doorstep; telling his sweetheart that he is going off to war or beginning a battle with a fatal disease. Instead here I am: the blundering heroine of my own crazy film, with a script that seems to have a few gaping holes where all the witty lines are supposed to be. In the hot, sticky passenger seat of a black ’94 Grand Am, subconsciously capping and uncapping an Ice Mountain water bottle, listening to my boyfriend jumble up a bunch of words that eventually translate into: it’s over. C’est fini.

He stops talking and takes a deep, shuddering breath and I realize that it’s my cue to talk. He’s waiting for me to say something along the lines of: “Sure Matt, I totally agree with you. I think it’s a great idea to end this relationship that I have put my whole being into for two years. I’m so relieved that you brought it up first, seeya around and good luck with all your future chicks.” I look out the window at my house that lies beyond the curb where we are parked; it’s quickly fading into a blurry mess as the stupid tears come, and I can’t get them to stop falling no matter how wide I open my eyes, no matter how much room I give them to well.

I open my mouth to say something; to beg, to plead, to scream, but all that comes out is a strangled noise, full of mucus and high with tears. I start to breathe in those hiccup-y gasps and put my head in my hands. All of my past attempts to hide my sensitive, weepy side from Matt have fallen apart in these unforgivable few moments. And he knows, stupid, stupid boy, he knows exactly what I’m feeling, and he puts his arms around me and holds this silly, shaking, helpless girl just like he always has; only now she is no longer his liability.

I fight the urge to lay my head down on his shoulder, right where it has always fit so comfortably, and stiffly try to catch my trembling breath. A song starts playing softly on the radio – my signature kind: with a solitary guitar and one lonely violin; a song that could make something stir in the depths of even the happiest of people.

Staring at where the August sun flashes on the streaked windshield I wait for the shallow thoughts to come, the what-did-I-do-wrongs and the how-can-I-change or even the what-will-people-thinks. I try to remember every time he forgot to call me back, every embarrassing comment he made in front of my parents, all the reasons that had made me so angry times in the past. But I can’t. What are suddenly filling my mind are the thousands of times he patiently answered my absurdly computer-illiterate questions, when he showed up at my door after a fight with a crumpled rose, looking ridiculously hopeful and pleading, how he braved a sea of big-haired wild women at a Bon Jovi concert he took me to.

I can see the worried figure of my mom peering from behind the lace curtains of my front room. She probably thinks we’re making out. And suddenly I want to be inside with her, hide my face in her lap and sob and let her tell me the hundred lies that mothers tell their daughters to make them feel better. He’s awful mom, just awful. He did it on purpose, mom; he never liked me to begin with. And I certainly, *most definitely* didn’t love him. Fifteen minutes ago I was just a stupid little girl.

Matt pulls away from me and starts to drum his fingers on the steering wheel. I see him glance at the time on the radio. The song has changed to something buoyant and noisy. I can almost feel the thickness of the air, bulky with unsaid words and stress and self-consciousness. He's waiting for me to make my grand exit, and I'm searching my mind for the stage directions. There are no final bows, no clapping crowd, just two kids trying to step as delicately as possible from Before to After.

AN EXPLANATORY, EXPLORATORY, OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY—KERRY LANIGAN

Not Just False Teeth Fellas and Bingo Babes

It is becoming increasingly and blatantly evident that America is a country in which youth is king. Everyone wants to look young, feel young, and possess that youthful vigor and dynamism that is so highly respected by both the media and by the public. Our shelves are stocked with products to make us appear younger in any way, shape, or form; our most popular television shows revolve around the lives of the young and beautiful (what happened to the Golden Girls?). It seems that America's population has forgotten that with luck, some day we will all become older. We will become those wrinkly, slow, and uncannily wise beings that hover in the background of today's society. And what kind of life will we find once we reach that invisible point? Today's elderly are treated with resentment and antagonism that is in appalling opposition to the respect that they deserve.

In many other countries around the globe, especially in the East, growing older is an outward sign of one's increase in knowledge and experiences. Because of this healthily accurate image of aging, the process is seen as admirable; grandparents and great-grandparents hold the most revered place in the family hierarchy. However, this is not the case in the United States. While middle-aged parents are trying to work their way into a more prosperous lifestyle, their children and their parents are lost in the shuffle. While adults are usually driven to find the best possible daily care for their children, they oftentimes forget about the needs of their own parents, who are becoming less self-sufficient and more disadvantaged. It is becoming more and more common to see grandma and grandpa shipped off to a nursing home then cared for by family members.

Granted, not every family has the funds or the available space to invite their elderly relatives into their own home, and oftentimes nursing or assisted living care is the really the only choice. But today the news is filled with tales of nursing home abuse and neglect, from the extremely horrendous to the simply irritating. And are those every-other weekend visits enough of a payback for the people who raised you, taught you, loved (and still love) you, and who may be at the loneliest point of their life? The elderly are suffering not only from lack of respect from this younger generation, but a lack of attention from their own families.

In today's highly technological and web-based culture, older people are often left behind. They did not have the advantage of learning computer and communications skills the way that younger people do now. So much of everyday life is based on the technology that we possess, abilities that the elderly find perplexing and sometimes frightening. Instead of attempting to familiarize that particular generation with this knowledge, society pokes fun at their "rustic" lifestyles and preferences.

As a civilization, we need to make a more conscious effort to remember that our elderly people are not just little white-haired pawns that we look to for amusement or landing pads for our frustration. We have decided that it is acceptable to store them, ignore them, and ostracize them. They are our parents, our parents' parents, our war veterans, our pioneers, our teachers, people who have been through the same rough times that we encounter and then some. We can learn more from them than from any manual, guidebook, or Fox news program. And maybe if we give them a chance, they can pick up a thing or two from us crazy youngsters as well.

RESPONSE TO A TEXT—KERRY LANIGAN

Faith Lost in the Night

At first glance, *Night*, by Eliezer Wiesel does not seem to be an example of deep or emotionally complex literature. It is a tiny book, one hundred pages at the most with a lot of dialogue and short choppy sentences. But in this memoir, Wiesel strings along the events that took him through the Holocaust until they form one of the most riveting, shocking, and grimly realistic tales ever told of history's most famous horror story. In *Night*, Wiesel reveals the intense impact that concentration camps had on his life, not through grisly details but in correlation with his lost faith in God and the human conscience.

Elie Wiesel's God is more than a substantial part of his life. When Elie first introduces himself in his novel, he describes his religion as the basis of his work, his play, and his community. The reader meets Elie as a Jew living in a little town in Transylvania, where he is intently studying his faith under the direction of a poor homeless man. As a foreshadowing of the role that God will play in the rest of Elie's journey through the Holocaust, the story opens with Elie's teacher telling him: "Man questions God and God answers. But we don't understand his answers" (2). This is a concept that Elie struggles with throughout the book, from when his life is still happy and peaceful until it has been left in disarray.

In 1944 the German Nazis occupy the city where Elie lives, and the Jews are forced out of their homes to be led to concentration camps. Wiesel attempts to convey his confusion and apprehension at the time by recalling his reaction when he sees his Rabbi being led away with all of the others. "His mere presence among the deportees added a touch of unreality to the scene" (14). This is a man who Elie had followed, emulated, and revered highly as a pivot of his faith, but he was not even close enough to God to escape the Nazis. Elie and his father are taken to Auschwitz where they are separated from the rest of the family and first hear about atrocities such as the incinerators and gas showers. In the beginning Elie believes that everything is a rumor, a lie, that humankind cannot perform such crimes, but he soon is forced to witness the demise in front of his eyes. This is when his outlook on his faith starts to waver. While watching the smoke billow up from a crematory, Elie hears a man standing next to him begging him to pray, and for the first time in his life Wiesel turns away from God. "The Eternal, Lord of the Universe, the All-Powerful and Terrible, was silent. What had I to thank him for?" (31).

As Elie gets used to his new life in such a hellish state, he realizes that the trusting and faithful child that he once had been had been taken away along with his family and all else that he had ever known. While so many others around him still implore the God of their past to bring them through their suffering, Wiesel reveals to the reader that although he still believes that there is a God, he no longer sees Him as a just and compassionate leader but a cruel and testing spectator.

Elie's faith in his Lord and his instinctive love for humanity are put to their final tests as the novel approaches its climax and conclusion. After witnessing the malicious, brutal hanging of an innocent child, Elie comes to the conclusion that God is no longer with him but dead, having died along with all of the Jews beside him in the camp. "Where is God now? He is hanging here on the gallows..." (62). With insightful but saddening irony Wiesel realizes that Hitler is the only one

who has kept all of his promises to the Jewish race. He is completing his mission to exterminate them, while a God who promised to watch over them is no where to be found. While the rest of the practicing Jews celebrate Yom Kippur by eating even less despite their forced deathly fast, Elie consumes his rations of stale bread in a direct defiance to God.

Throughout his record, Elie stresses that it is the presence of his father that keeps him struggling for survival in the camps. Family is of great importance to him, and with every hardship he encounters, Elie uses the fact that his father was counting on him as a motive to endure. But even this bond between father and son is slowly beaten away by the Nazis and their torture. Wiesel's father becomes increasingly weak, and Elie struggles with an inner conflict between his desire for his father to live through the Holocaust and the relief that would come if Elie no longer had to carry him along every day. When his father eventually passes on, Wiesel is not overcome with grief, as he would have been under pre-annihilation circumstances, but instead feels a type of liberation. "...in the recesses of my weakened conscience, could I have searched it, I might perhaps have found something like - free at last!" (106).

Elie Wiesel spent thirteen years of his life seeking God through prayer, study, and examination of the goodness of those around him. In a few short months, Adolf Hitler managed to destroy all of the things that made up the foundation of Elie's life. The physical scars, the hunger, the sickness all healed with time, but Wiesel still is missing the most important pieces that were taken from him during his stay in Nazi concentration camps – his faith in his Lord, his trust in father and friend, and his knowledge of the essential goodness of humankind.

WORKS CITED

Wiesel, Elie. Night. New York: Bantam Books, 1960.

COMPLETE PORTFOLIO—KENDAL ROBINSON

Kendal carefully explains the pieces she has chosen for her portfolio in her reflective letter, giving the reader an excellent roadmap for what is to come. In her narrative, which she describes as her best piece, Kendal uses vivid details and internal monologue to recreate a retreat and the epiphany she experiences there. Detail is also a critical component of her piece “The Daughter of Unoka.” In this exploratory essay, the author compares herself with a character from Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, using details from both the text and her personal experience to illustrate this comparison. In her response to a text, Kendal gives a very detailed reading of Grendel, explicating the various ideologies of Grendel to create a more general reading of the text. Overall, these pieces demonstrate the author’s imaginative and effective use of language.

REFLECTIVE LETTER—KENDAL ROBINSON

Dear Miami University Writing Professors,

For some reason school hasn't been able to capture my imagination. It isn't that I know everything already, or that it is too difficult for me to keep up, but perhaps it is the uniformity of how and what we learn. I was taught that grades meant everything—an indicator of my future success. However, as I have realized that grades hold little meaning in my life, I have had a harder and harder time staying interested in many subjects. And it isn't that I don't think education is important, because I think learning is essential for a fulfilling life. So it must be the routine of each class, the stripping of creativity and abundance of mechanically generated busy work. Some assignments, however, are able to capture my imagination, and therefore my effort, predominantly those which allow me to express myself through writing.

Walking down the halls I often see amazing drawings and paintings my fellow classmates have created. I am filled with awe and wonder at such talent, for I am not an artist. It is easily apparent how much time and detail go into such fine pieces of art. I admire the imagination the artist must possess, to have an image in the mind's eye and then be able to so perfectly reproduce it in reality. Their escape through paintings, drawings, sculptures, and other media is the equivalent to my escape through writing. I think of it as a challenge of creativity, an expression of emotions where there is no other outlet available in my other studies. In no other class work have I shown such dedication, such interest, and determination than in my writing assignments. It's not that I am naturally a good writer, because that is not so, but that for some reason the opportunity for individuality speaks to me, the desire to communicate my feelings, my ideas, and stimulates me to extend my capabilities to discover what I can truly accomplish when I put forth the effort. Do not expect to find the masterful work of Shakespeare in the following pieces of literature, but look at each as a young writer searching and experimenting with techniques and devices to discover which are most useful in portraying the ideas and concepts most important to the piece.

In my first piece, "Light in a World of Darkness," I attempt to portray what most people would describe as an epiphany. This is a wonderful piece to start with as it reveals best, of the three selected pieces, who and what I am through my thoughts, in my voice, and in my beliefs. You will also note that in this particular piece I experiment with imagery and description as tools to recapture the moment for the reader. You will not find me pushing my beliefs on you, merely recreating the events that took place that beautiful fall weekend; which proved to be a pivotal moment not only in my spiritual life but in my every day life as well, still affecting me even today, four years later.

My second piece reveals an inspiration from the novel Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, entitled "The Daughter of Unoka." In this essay I compare myself to the father of the main character and hero, Okonkwo. He embodied many desirable traits, all of which were inspired by his not wanting to be like his father, Unoka. I intended this to be more of an entertaining piece which questions our society's demand for certain desirable traits, and excuses others as characteristics to be avoided. Unfortunately for Unoka and myself, those undesirable characteristics are woven into our very being.

In the last piece I have responded to the novel, Grendel by John Gardner. This more formal piece is my favorite example of what perseverance will do for you, as my very first response differs greatly in understanding and writing ability than in my final draft. With each rewrite I was able to learn something which would enhance not only my understanding of the novel, but of my own writing abilities. While you read through this piece, you will slowly discover, as I did, the significance of the different ideologies Grendel attached himself to throughout the novel, also giving you a greater understanding of the purpose of Gardner's work as a whole.

Throughout these selections you will discover that I have not perfected my writing technique but continue to experiment and explore with different styles. I thank you for your time and effort as you review each piece. I know that if you are anything like me, sometimes it is hard to concentrate as you find yourself thinking of the warm summer breeze in the shade of your favorite tree, poking the ice of your fresh lemonade as you eagerly turn the page of a book by a favorite author. You smile as you notice, in the corner of your eye, the little boy chasing a butterfly from one flower to the next... I'm sorry, where was I?

Sincerely,
An eager Miami student

A NARRATIVE OR SHORT STORY—KENDAL ROBINSON

Light in a World of Darkness

I jumped in the car anticipating the freedom of this weekend. *YES!!! Finally it's Friday! Man, I can't wait to go out with my friends tonight, maybe my boyfriend tomorrow night, lunch with the gang at the local "Chef-o-nette" diner on Saturday. At last I will be able to unwind and have a good time. Two nights is never enough.*

"Twins, you have your confirmation retreat this weekend. Aren't you excited?!"

My mother interrupted my thoughts and dashed my vision of a wonderful weekend. I was filled with a deep sensation of dread. I absolutely *hated* my confirmation class. I was given *homework*. Like I didn't get enough homework at school! Everyone but me would have at least one close friend at the retreat but me, creating a big "in crowd" and leaving me as the "out crowd". I just knew I'd spend the whole weekend by myself, especially since the idea of spending a whole weekend with these people made me shudder. Secretly my mind screamed *NOOO!!!!* I was certain this would be the weekend from *Hell!*

After an hour-long bus ride we arrived at the cabin in Yellow Springs, Ohio where we would be staying for the next two evenings. What a dump. Well, I guess it wasn't that bad. We had two big rooms, one for the girls and one for the guys, three working restrooms, a lounge, and a kitchen. At least it was spacious. After exploring the woods around the cabin at free time, a session in the lounge, and a surprisingly good dinner that we made on our own, I was ready for bed. It was only around 9:30, but I figured the more sleep I got the less time it would feel like I was there. I looked around me to say goodnight to anyone who might have glimpsed me crawling into my small, gritty sleeping bag, but everyone appeared to be flirting with each other, leaving me unobserved. The sight of my thirty fellow confirmands throwing themselves at one another while on a church retreat made me ill, leaving me with an unpleasant feeling well into the night.

I awoke to whispers being spoken softly from one invisible person to another as I drifted into consciousness. *Tomorrow I'll be on my way home. These two days will just be a drop of water in the pool of time.* I tried to console myself. The day was to be spent at the gorge. I mildly desired to see what a gorge was as I had no idea. I also heard we were to hike around, which I love to do, so I started looking forward to the day. I was surprised to get the subtle feelings of wanting to be in this place away from all my comforts. I grabbed my camera and headed towards the door... towards the gorge... and unbeknownst to myself, towards a new perspective on life.

The sky was clear and the atmosphere was joyous. Beautiful trees and the calm sound of rushing water from the nearby stream encircled me. The air was filled with the smell of autumn leaves and a cold chill. I was overwhelmed by the beauty before me. *Stop. Listen.* The birds were serenading one another as the wind stroked the dry leaves still clinging to their branches. It seemed too much to take in all at once. The farther I walked, the more beautiful my surroundings became. The gorge was a long way off, but I was too busy admiring the beauty of this life to notice that almost no one else was interested in seeing it. Only five of us made it. Twenty-five people were too tired, too bored, or too infatuated with the opposite gender to set their eyes on one of the most beautiful scenes I have ever experienced.

I looked over the edge of the cliff to get a closer look at the gorge and saw a deep wide cut splitting land and rock. Down in the split the water rushed towards its unknown destination and created a sound so calming, so soothing, so peaceful. The cliffs leading down to the stream were covered with delicate pink leaves that made me feel like I was seeing a rose for the first time. The soft green color of the pine trees mixed with the deep blue of the sky and the pinkish hue of the cliffs made me feel like I was noticing life like I never had before. I was filled with a deep appreciation, not just for myself, but also for everything outside of myself. I didn't want to leave, but as the sky darkened our tummies grumbled for food.

Back at camp we sipped our hot chocolate while we listened to the lesson for the evening. I found myself captivated by the discussions and wanted to know more. It seemed each story related to my life, and I felt like I was meant to hear every word that was said. Our leader became silent. I looked around wondering why he would stop talking in the middle of his story. *GO ON!* I wanted to say, but I was the only one who wanted to hear the lesson. Almost everyone was ignoring his words, so he dismissed us. How sad. It seemed no one else was taking advantage of the opportunity laid out before them. Was no one else experiencing what I was?

I stayed out late that night. A fire was built, and we roasted marshmallows while playing guessing games, card tricks, and occasionally whispering the horrific events of a scary story, either made up or remembered from long ago. Slowly people drifted inside to bed, but I wanted the night to last. I wanted more than anything to stay in that moment. I started talking with the very people I wanted to avoid. I found they were not who I thought they were at all. I noticed that I pre-judged people I barely knew, but once I got to know them I realized how wrong I was in my assumptions about who they were. I began asking myself who I was, what I stood for, and what I loved most in life. I began seriously questioning whether or not there was a higher being than myself.

The night ended earlier than desired when someone fell off one of the bunk beds—no major injuries, but we were still sent to bed before something worse could happen. Around one in the morning the few of us left in the cold had to put out the fire and retire to our chilled sleeping bags. As we poured buckets of water over the fire, the sound of sizzling from the dying fire ripped through the cool night air. Billows of smoke poured from the ash-spotted earth. The smoke was so thick I couldn't see anything through it. I stood right in the middle of the smoke. It was such a strange feeling, like I was flying. I felt happy and free. I felt something wonderful filling my life.

After getting five hours of sleep, I quietly slipped out of my warm, cozy sleeping bag, so I could hike around one last time before we would have to leave. I wanted time alone to enjoy the nature around me and reflect upon my experience. I found a small waterfall and sat admiring it. I began to notice the small things that made me happy: watching the water flow in a gently rolling stream, listening to a soft breeze whisper in the leaves of nearby trees, catching the scent of fresh flowers after a spring shower. I started realizing how I stressed such small things in my life: *“Where is that foundation? I can't go to school with this facial atrocity for all to see! I can't believe I got an A- on that test, my life is over!”* My mind filled with echoes of my recent past. I was saddened as I realized that I had not been appreciating more important aspects of life; going out with friends when I should have stayed home with my family; carelessly wishing days away when I needed to be thanking God for the air that filled my lungs that very day. I started realizing what I liked in myself,

and what I wanted to change. I started realizing. Then I let go. I let go of everything I had been clinging to for meaning. Good grades, lots of friends, and a boyfriend were things that could make me happy, for a while, but they were incapable of fulfilling my thirst for something more reliable and everlasting. In the cool of that fall morning, I looked through dying leaves and bare branches of the trees and watched the first golden rays of sun as they woke up the sleepy sky. I, too, was ready to wake up, but this time with God.

I am not sure if my fellow confirmands came to any realizations or conclusions through their experience on the retreat. My sense was that they showed up to become members in a church their parents chose for them, and went home, unchanged. It seemed that God had little to do with why any of my classmates were really there. I admit, I was the same way to begin with—only there to get the class over with and please my parents. I wasn't looking for God. Getting away from the distractions of my cozy life at home and jumping into the beautiful displays of nature really helped me to reevaluate who I was and whether or not I was on the right path to who I wanted to be. I guess having no friends or guys to throw myself at has its benefits after all.

“How was the retreat?” my mother asked when she picked us up at the church. “It was fine,” I responded. Although I was feeling the retreat was much better than fine, I couldn't find the words to explain the weekend. I felt like a summer breeze had swept through my life and carried away my troubles. I felt like a new and better person. We pulled into our driveway, and as I stepped out of the car, I realized that over the weekend I was able to find my self as well as my faith, and nothing has been the same since. Wanting to become more knowledgeable, I started reading my Bible, attending church, as well as school youth groups. I didn't know many people at first, but everyone I met welcomed me with open arms. I knew many of the changes would be difficult for me, breaking bad habits are never easy, but I was ready to make those sacrifices and meet those challenges.

Sometimes I wonder, after all this time, where I would be today if I had stayed home for that wonderful weekend. My best guess... lost, or at least still wondering.

AN EXPLANATORY, EXPLORATORY, OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY—KENDAL ROBINSON

The Daughter of Unoka

I wish I could say that the character Okonkwo, in the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, is very similar to myself, but I would be lying. Okonkwo is filled with many admirable traits: drive, ambition, goals, and his ability to overcome through his constant productivity. Okonkwo had the determination to become a great man, and even with the odds against him, he succeeded. “With a father like Unoka, Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men had. He neither inherited a barn nor a title, or even a young wife. But in spite of these disadvantages, he had begun even in his father’s lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future” (18). Most of his accomplishments were despite his father, whom Okonkwo loathed, but with whom I connected. In the novel, I relate more to Okonkwo’s father, Unoka, a much more laid back character. Like Unoka, I am in love with life, lazy, not worried about tomorrow, and deeply in debt.

Unoka had a great appreciation for the moment. For instance, “he loved this season of the year, when the rains had stopped and the sun rose every morning with dazzling beauty. And it was not too hot either...” (5). Such a description makes me want to lay down drowsy in the grass and enjoy the beauty of the day, for as Unoka “loved it all” (5), I too love it all (5)! What I would give for another summer day to simply nap, sprawled on my stomach in the grass of my back yard, feeling the warmth of the sun and security of a newborn napping in its mother’s arms. How deeply do I love these moments of drowsiness and warmth nature supplies her children. I imagine Unoka had similar experiences through playing the flute. “He was very good on his flute, and his happiest moments were the two or three moons after the harvest when the village musicians brought down their instruments, hung above the fireplace. Unoka would play with them, his face beaming with blessedness and peace” (4). Unoka and I enjoy the simple things life has to offer. Perhaps this appreciation is rooted in our struggle against society, one which demands the focus of our lives to lie beyond the setting sun. However, there must come a day when you ask yourself, will I even be alive tomorrow? Will the work I do now help me in any way if I am six feet under? In which case I can’t help but ask myself “what’s the point of living in tomorrow if I solely exist in today?” Therefore, I don’t assume there will be a tomorrow, but appreciate the moments the present bring, loving every second of feeling, either pain or joy, love or hate, which life has so graciously given me, for there is little feeling when you are dead.

Like Unoka, I, too, am improvident. Unoka “was poor and his wife and children barely had enough to eat” (5). This shows how little he thought about the future. In order to feed his family, he would have to work hard on the farm without seeing the benefits at first, to prosper later and have food for his family. Similar to his improvidence is Unoka’s incapability to think about tomorrow. “If any money came his way, and it seldom did, he immediately bought gourds of palm-wine, called round his neighbors and made merry” (4). He could have saved this money to pay off his debts, but the thought probably never crossed his mind. Instead, Unoka celebrates the gift with the people he cares about and lets tomorrow worry about itself. What a wonderful way to live. My improvidence is seen through scholastic tests. For instance, I don’t study as hard as I could the night before a test. Only when I get the grade back do I think about what I could have done, if so motivated, to prepare

for my future. For I was told that grades only mattered to get into the college of my choice—which would then affect the job I wanted to get for the family I wanted to support in the house I would want to buy and for the food which I would want to supply for my children. This is what my parents have done for me. Whatever. As I said before, I'd rather be relaxing outside in the fresh air with people I care about than studying for some test to prepare for some future I'd rather not think about at the moment. Perhaps it is easier to take life as it comes rather than preparing yourself constantly, securing a healthy, happy life for the future. However, as I have come to realize, even those who prepare themselves so thoroughly are not always the most healthy or happy. Instead of planning my life, I find it so much more appealing to let the spontaneity of living lead me in the direction best for me, as even in my young age I have realized that I don't always know what is best for me, and this way I will be much less likely to ignore the roads which may be more entertaining, yet did not seem to follow my narrow minded path. So this may be the lazy way of living, but it is also more care free and allows more appreciation for the impulsiveness of living.

I am a very lazy person, just like Unoka. "In his day he was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow" (4). When Unoka asked the oracle why his farms were so poor, she replied that the other farmers would "cross seven rivers to make their farms; you stay at home and offer sacrifices to a reluctant soil. Go home and work like a man." I, too, am this lazy. After being encouraged to get a summer job instead of sit around all day, I chose the latter, and what a wonderful summer it was! I did what I pleased, went where I wanted to go, and visited those who I felt like visiting. I couldn't even muster the effort to appear as though I were trying to get a job, considering I only applied to two places, both of which were not hiring. However, I wonder, why don't I have any money? This approach to living is most certainly the result of letting tomorrow worry about itself, for why wear yourself out doing things you don't want to do if everything will be all right in the end? The farm isn't that important, somehow you won't starve. Getting a job doesn't matter, my parents will still look after me if I am broke. Which leads me to my next unfavorable characteristic.

Unoka and I share the great ability to accumulate debts. Unlike Unoka, my debts are not of money, but of love. I am in debt to my parents, in more than money or love. They've given me life, care, love, worry, nourishment, fear, protection, love, money, opportunity, and love, among many other things which I never could repay. I could try to reimburse them, but where could I possibly begin? I could never be their definition of a perfect child, so no matter what, I will fall short of paying off my debt and only create more. Similar to Unoka, "such a man that he always succeeded in borrowing more, and piling up his debts" (5) I, too, am capable of piling up my debts and causing my parents to take sympathy on me. Of course, I would be happy to repay the debts I have accumulated, but I would never be able to repay them all, just like Unoka could never repay all of his debts. If my parents asked me to do a chore for them, I would do it, but how could that possibly compensate for all that they have done for me? When the neighbor, Okoye asked Unoka to repay a debt, Unoka laughed and agreed. He was happy to give Okoye his money. Pointing to some lines on a wall Unoka said, "I owe that man a thousand cowries. But he has not come to wake me up in the morning for it. I shall pay you, but not today" (7). It wasn't that he wouldn't repay people, which Okoye was afraid of, but that no one ever asked him to. Unoka realized that money just isn't that

important. He was unashamed of his accumulation, as I am also unashamed, as I give back what I can, and let the rest worry about itself. Perhaps in time I will be able to return all the love that is given me, but who is measuring anyways?

Unoka was considered a failure, not only to his tribe but to his son Okonkwo. Unoka “had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt” (8). Unfortunately he was also “an ill-fated man. He had a bad *chi* or personal god, and evil fortune followed him to... his death... He died of the swelling which was an abomination to the earth goddess...He was carried to the Evil Forest and left there to die... he took with him his flute” (18). I hope that I do not have such a *chi*, but one that takes pity on my laziness, for I would rather not end up in the Evil Forest. However, as Unoka had made his decisions and lived with them, I too, have made my decisions and have to live with them. I have chosen my path, against the flow of my society, and I will forever have to deal with that choice in the future. I will not complain, but only love the moments I have left to live, keeping my flute near when there is nothing else.

WORKS CITED

Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart. Oxford: Heinemann, 1996.

RESPONSE TO A TEXT—KENDAL ROBINSON

Grendel

Many characters in *Grendel* have direction and purpose in their lives. Wealhtheow is self-sacrificing, and Hrothgar is out for personal glory. Unferth and Beowulf spend their lives trying to become great heroes so that their names may outlast their flesh. The dragon believed in nihilism, and the Shaper used his imagination to create something to believe in. Some of their philosophies may not have been commendable, but Grendel could not find any direction or purpose for his life whatsoever. Grendel looked for the intervention of a power higher than himself to lay the truths of the world upon him, an experience that the Romantics would characterize as an experience of the sublime. John Gardner portrays Grendel as someone who wants to find a philosophy, whether his own or someone else's, that fits him and gives him an identity or a reason to live. By looking at the text from this perspective we can see how Gardner believes people should pursue, or rather, embrace a power greater than themselves.

Grendel started his search for meaning with solipsistic beliefs, thinking himself the creator of the world he lived in. "I understood that the world was nothing: a mechanical chaos of casual, brute enmity on which we stupidly impose our hopes and fears. I understood that, finally and absolutely, I alone exist. All the rest, I saw, is merely what pushes me, or what I push against, blindly—as blindly as all that is not myself pushes back. I create the whole universe, blink by blink" (21-22). However, after speaking to the existentialist Fire Dragon, Grendel realized that aspects of his first theory didn't make sense and that even after his death things will continue to exist. "Every rock, every tree, every crystal of snow cries out cold-blooded objectness" (172).

When Grendel notices that events occur before he can think them into existence, his theory that he creates the world "blink by blink" is undermined. "...I think, trying to suck in breath, and all that I do not see is useless, void. I observe myself observing what I observe. It startles me. 'Then I am not that which observes!' I am *lack*. *Alack!* No thread, no frailest hair between myself and the universal clutter! I listen to the underground river. I have never seen it" (29). Because Grendel realizes his solipsistic theory does not hold true, he searches for a new theory, discovering one where he is nothing to the world but an object taking up space. "Then little by little it dawned on me that the eyes that seemed to bore into my body were in fact gazing through it, wearily indifferent to my slight obstruction of the darkness" (16-17). With this new faith, Gardner shows Grendel's pursuit of truth based solely through reason, and through its failure suggests that his pursuit would only conclude if he could trust in faith, as not all things can be explained.

With the introduction of the Shaper, the reader sees the impact another person's views have on Grendel's own ideas. The Shaper is able to show Grendel that he can have an identity and not just be a mere obstruction in the dark. The Shaper created his own theories and stories about life and fed them to the people in a way that enabled them to follow what he said as truth. "He sang of battles and marriages, of funerals and hangings, the whimperings of beaten enemies, of splendid hunts and harvests. He sang of Hrothgar, hoarfrost white, magnificent of mind...He would sing the glory of Hrothgar's line and gild his wisdom and stir up his men to more daring deeds..." (42-43). The Shaper gave the Danes a purpose by telling them what great feats they had overcome and his

words excited and encouraged the men to become even more magnificent. “He built this hall by the power of his songs: created with casual words its grave mor(t)ality” (46-47). Grendel noted that “the man had changed the world. Had torn up the past by its thick, gnarled roots and had transmuted it, and they, who knew the truth, remembered it his way-and so did I” (43). It is apparent that Grendel is captivated by the Shaper’s perspective on life.

The Shaper’s songs tore at Grendel because he wanted to believe in everything said, but felt ashamed to live his life believing in lies. “I listened, felt myself swept up. I knew very well that all he said was ridiculous, not light for their darkness but flattery, illusion, a vortex pulling them from sunlight to heat, a kind of midsummer burgeoning waltz to the sickle” (48). Grendel wanted to believe in the Shaper and his theories but “I knew what I knew, the mindless, mechanical bruteness of things, and when the harper’s lure drew my mind away to hopeful dreams, the dark of what was and always was reached out and snatched my feet...I wanted it, yes! Even if I must be the outcast, cursed by the rules of his hideous fable” (54-56). It was the Shaper’s skill and imagination that stirred him, but as much as Grendel wanted to accept the Shaper’s tales, he knew they were not the truths he was looking for, but something close, “...a stab at truth, a snatch at apocalyptic glee” (45). His search for meaning through pure reason would not allow Grendel to accept the woven tails of the Shaper but forced him to continue his search for a higher power and greater meaning.

Grendel’s views changed again when he was influenced by the nihilistic beliefs of the dragon. This belief had negative effects on Grendel, making him believe that by killing people he gave them purpose. When Grendel realizes that “it was one thing to eat [a human] from time to time...but it was another thing to scare them, give them heart attacks, fill their nights with nightmares, just for sport,” the dragon replies, “fiddlesticks,” (60-61) encouraging Grendel to commit such cruel acts. “You improve them, my boy! Can’t you see that yourself? You stimulate them! You make them think and scheme. You drive them to poetry, science, religion, all that makes them what they are for as long as they last... If you withdraw, you’ll instantly be replaced” (72-73). If the dragon was telling the truth, then what he was saying gave Grendel an identity. He was the “brute existent by which they learn to define themselves” (73). Wasn’t this what Grendel was searching for? An identity? Grendel “had *become* something, as if born again. “I had hung between possibilities before, between the cold truths I knew and the heart-sucking conjuring tricks of the Shaper; now that was passed: I was Grendel, Ruiner of Meadhalls, Wrecker of Kings” (80). He also believed himself “Grendel the truth-teacher, phantasm-tester” (110). Finally, Grendel believes he has found the meaning and purpose in his life which he had been searching for, however misguided he actually is.

With the influence of the dragon, Grendel seems to embrace nihilism and discard the false, yet creative and hopeful, songs of the Shaper. “I no longer remember exactly what [the Shaper] sang. I know only that it had a strange effect on me: it no longer filled me with doubt and distress, loneliness, shame. It enraged me” (77). What the Shaper sang was not truth, and yet it stimulated the Danes into greatness and gave them hope. The Shaper’s stories begin to irritate and enrage Grendel, showing another alteration of philosophies. With the influence of the dragon, Grendel seems to discard what little happiness he found with the creativity of the Shaper and try on the theories of nihilism, continuously searching for the perfect philosophy, one that would give his life meaning and purpose, and yet Grendel was still incapable of searching within himself for what he sought.

The dragon believed in such things as random chance and an unalterable future. “And even if, say, I interfere-burn up somebody’s meadhall, for instance...even then I do not change the future... So much for free will and intercession!” (63) Grendel will come back to this theory in the end but he was never able to fully accept it. When he said, “I have not committed the ultimate act of nihilism: I have not killed the queen... Yet” (93) Grendel suggests that this act would show his philosophy was correct and that he believed in it. Though Grendel does attempt to kill Wealtheow, he is unable to destroy such a calm, charismatic creature. Grendel’s nihilistic theory was wrecked by his inability to find the cruelty in his heart to destroy such a model of perfection, almost jealous of the faith she had in her beliefs. He is once again stuck without a philosophy. There is an abrupt change in Grendel as he starts writing in poetry. It seems his theory goes back to that of the Shaper’s, and almost becomes the Shaper himself. However, with the death of the Shaper, Grendel once again loses faith in a theory. Lost and confused, he continues his pursuit.

The nihilistic thinking of the dragon did not give Grendel a feeling of importance, such as the solipsistic beliefs had given him, but a feeling of unimportance that no matter what he did, the future would be the same. The dragon made Grendel feel like he gave the Danes purpose by killing them, whereas if he didn’t have that idea he could have grown bored of killing them and quit before meeting Beowulf. Instead he felt that “for old times’ sake, for the old priest’s honor, I would have to kill the stranger. And for the honor of Hrothgar’s thanes” (159). This kind of thinking led to his extinction and encouraged him to meet his death when his instinct told him to stay where he was safe. He seems to go back to the theories of the dragon, which make him out to be more important to the Danes than he is in reality. This contorted view may have led to his downfall for it seems his biggest drive to kill Beowulf was to save the Dane’s honor, where in reality they would be just fine without him, if not better. If Grendel had not reverted to the dragon’s nihilistic role, but had faith enough to trust in a power greater than himself, Grendel would not have been so mistaken and driven to meet Beowulf. Therefore, Gardner emphasizes the doom and loss of self-fulfillment Grendel experiences when he failed to pursue the sublime, due to his little faith, and allowed himself to accept the purpose and meaning that another had found.

Perhaps if Grendel had pursued a different philosophy or meaning to life he would not have come to the end that he did. In chapter four there is an introduction of a voice in the woods, “*Why not?* the forest whispered back-yet not the forest, something deeper, an impression from another mind, some live thing old and terrible” (48). Could this “invisible presence, chilly as the first intimation of death” (50) be the answer to all Grendel’s questions? Grendel was too afraid to embrace this presence, this power outside of him. We see this voice at the peak of Grendel’s belief in the Shaper. The voice could have been encouraging Grendel to follow the Shaper or possibly become like the Shaper by using his imagination to create his own beliefs. The voice could have guided Grendel to the truths he was looking for. Grendel has the chance to listen to a voice, which he had been waiting to intervene at many points in his life. “I ask the sky. The sky says nothing, predictably... The sky ignores me, forever unimpressed” (6). And again, ““Gods, gods!” [Wealtheow] screamed. I waited to see if the gods would come, but not a sign of them” (109). He seems to want a force to intervene and to give him rational proof, but Grendel is too afraid to pursue the presence, when it could have possibly changed the outcome of his life. He has another opportunity to listen to the voice but quite

obviously dismisses it. Gardner shows Grendel listening to voices outside himself, like the voice that warns, "*Beware of the fish*" (149). He notes Beowulf's features and sees they resemble that of a fish, yet he does not heed this warning because he is afraid to trust in something he can not explain, and it is the death of him.

Grendel is pathetic, trying on the ideas of everyone else, taking bits and pieces of them all and confusing himself even more. He tries too hard to find the right philosophy, yet refuses to search within himself. The dragon died happy with his nihilistic beliefs, the Shaper died happy with his imagination, Wealthow and Unferth have their life giving faith, but Grendel died with indecision and a muddle of many beliefs. Grendel could have found happiness if he had allowed himself to embrace a power greater than himself, but instead he found a gloomy death. Gardner uses Grendel's death to emphasize what destruction may come if one refuses to pursue the Romantic sublime. His happiness lay right before him and yet he dismissed it. His life would have had more beauty and purpose if he had only listened to the voice. "*Beware of the fish*" (149).

WORKS CITED

Gardner, John. Grendel. New York: Random House, Inc., 1971.

COMPLETE PORTFOLIO—MATTHEW SKOMOROWSKI

In his reflective letter, Matthew Skomorowski describes the intimate relationships he has experienced through reading and the reflection he has learned to enjoy through writing. In his short story, “Finding Time,” Matthew tells the tale of a town too concerned with marking time and following routine to see the world around them. “Operating Enduring *Freedom?*” is an effective persuasive essay due largely to the careful incorporation of quotes from reliable sources and strong statements of opinion. Matthew also uses quotes very well in his exploration of “the evolution of the black man struggling to be free in American society,” through an analysis of Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn and Richard Wright’s Native Son. As a whole, this portfolio is clearly written, and the author has shown his ability to write with purpose and focus.

REFLECTIVE LETTER—MATTHEW SKOMOROWSKI

Dear Miami University Writing Professors,

Each of us needs a place to sit and think. Read. Write. Reflect. Thoreau had Walden Pond. My sanctuary, my marrow chamber, my “mom please close the door, I’ll clean my room later” screen is the seldom used second floor guest room at home. That’s me under the light on the chaise, wearing lacrosse shorts and an over-sized airport mechanic’s headset, wrapped in a blanket and total silence. I spend quality time here, writing a bit, reading a lot, accruing library fines.

I’ve done some pretty cool things sitting in my chair. I’ve journeyed to battlefields with Crane, listened to the bells with Poe, and still made it downstairs in time for dinner. Anderson asked me if I was a Grotesque. I hated, and then respected Bigger Thomas, fought with Fitzgerald at the Baby Party, then ran a 5K marathon. I split a pizza with Twain’s Jim. *We still have a long way to go.* I tried to reason with Chillingworth, and then cried when the Chief traded one *Combine* for another. Hemingway, Miller and I played a round of golf. We talked about war. *None of us see the point.* I fought for civil rights, opposed Vietnam, and forgot to pick up my cousin from soccer practice all in the same day.

A while back my family out-voted me and put a desk and the household computer in the guestroom. Over time, this unwelcome encroachment seemed to blend in with the other furniture and items in the room. No longer in my space but now a part of it, the keyboard, quieted by my headset, is always ready to accept my thoughts. Now I reflect, read, write, and type too. This letter and the following works were crafted and polished on that keyboard.

As you ride along in the rickety buggy in “Finding Time,” I urge each of you to take a short break from your routine. Do something you like. Go to the park. Sleep in tomorrow. This story, written after viewing the play Our Town in AP English, is a pun about our punctual, “time is money” society. After writing this piece, I stopped to smell the roses. In fact, I probably stayed in the garden too long, missing a few homework assignments and collecting several tardy notices. But finding time continues to be a priority.

My next piece, “Operation Enduring *Freedom?*” should prompt the A.C.L.U to cheer and cause John Ashcroft to bite his lip. In this selection I criticize America’s post September 11th rush to assault any unpatriotic sentiment. Following the terrorist attacks, America needed to take a deep breath. I needed to take a deep breath. This piece was a tonic for my anger.

My last piece, “You *Could* Fly” takes the reader on a troublesome journey of racism in America. Our society’s transition from slavery, to legislated freedom, to freedom of choice, to freedom of opportunity is clearly a work in process. As I leave my white suburban neighborhood for college and eventually a profession, I look forward to impacting the process rather than just reading about it.

My lacrosse shorts, airport headphones, and blanket are coming with me next year, but mom’s gotta stay home.

Sincerely,
A New Miami Student

A NARRATIVE OR SHORT STORY—MATTHEW SKOMOROWSKI

Finding Time

Growing up in the once thriving mining town of Steubenville, Henry and Obadiah Harrington worked in their dad's clock and watch store after school and most weekends. Mr. Harrington was a celebrity because he re-created the famous Big-Ben Clock in the town square. The townspeople were proud of the clock; its chimes could be heard for miles. The good times passed when the mines closed and nearly everyone departed, leaving only a few dozen families in the community. Obadiah married and then moved away. Henry stayed on to run the general store. When Mr. Harrington died, the townspeople were left with no shopkeeper to repair their watches or clocks. After a while, everyone started and ended their daily schedules by listening to the ringing chimes that counted the hours. The important task of winding the town's timepiece fell to the watchmaker's remaining son, Henry. Each day at midnight he climbed the spiral staircase to the top of the tower, and with his large brass key carefully cranked the clock's springs until they were tightly coiled. The clock literally ruled the town's people, chiming at sunrise, lunch, the end of school or work, suppertime and finally bedtime. Mr. Harrington's clock and Henry's dependability insured that the fine people in Steubenville would always be punctual and organized.

For over fifty years Henry never missed a midnight appointment. But when the news came that Obadiah passed away, he decided to travel to the funeral. His rickety buggy and tired horse would be dependable but slow--three days away from town. Prior to his departure, Henry carefully considered each citizen in Steubenville to select as a suitable and responsible replacement to wind the clock during his absence. After much deliberation he chose Samantha Abington, an "A" student at the high school. Her proven ability to balance school, friends, family and community service convinced Henry that she appreciated the value of time and would tend to the important task each midnight until his return.

As midnight approached on the third day, Samantha carefully put her book down, blew out her reading candle, put on her shawl and slippers, and lit a lantern before she quietly walked to the town square. She appreciated Henry's faith in her, but she also felt the weight of the entire town on her shoulders. As she carefully made her way up the spiral staircase leading to the clock, a cat darted in front of her. The surprise caused her to fall forward and hit her head on the stairs, knocking the glasses off her nose to the bottom of the staircase and crashing the lantern to the floor. A dazed but determined Samantha stepped backward to retrieve her glasses only to hear a sickening crunch under her feet. Undaunted, she again tried to ascend the darkened, blurry staircase. Guided solely by the crescendo of the ticking clock, she joyously stepped on the top landing only to stumble squarely into the clock itself. This second trauma proved too much as her limp body crumbled at the base of the clock. The brave Samantha lay unconscious as the minute hand slowed to a silent stop.

Miles away, Henry Harrington had begun his lonely ride back to Steubenville. Still saddened by the death of his brother, he was indifferent to the crisp morning air. However, as he approached the outskirts of the town, his heart began to race. It was eerily quiet. There were no farmers in the fields, women hanging up laundry, or children starting their long walk to school. Something was

terribly wrong. Urging his plow horse to gallop, Henry awkwardly raced toward town. A short distance later, he came upon Mr. Smith sitting under an oak tree and gazing leisurely at the sunrise. Henry nervously shouted, "Did anything happen during my absence?" Mr. Smith looked up and quietly said, "No, but Henry do you remember the last time you watched, I mean *really* watched the sun rise in the morning? Watched, and enjoyed the feeling as the sun slowly rises above the earth's edge, melting away the morning dew. Experienced the warmth of the sun on your face and listened as nature and the world around slowly come to life from the sun's penetrating rays." A perplexed Henry responded, "No, not really, I've been pretty busy...don't you have a lot of work to do?" Now smiling, Mr. Smith whispered, "No, not today, my friend." Now more curious than concerned, Henry allowed his aged steed to slow to his usual rambling gait.

Farther down the trail, Henry came upon the town's fishing hole. Children of all ages were scattered around its banks, each with a rod in his/her hand anxiously awaiting a bite. Henry fondly remembered the many hours he and Obadiah spent fishing together. He could almost feel the mosquitoes eating at his neck as he tightly gripped his wooden fishing rod with one hand and tried to slap them away. He missed the sweat dripping down his face, the scorching sun, his squinting eyes tired and dry from staring at the same spot in the water...then the almost silent tweak of the line by the fish followed by his instinctive jerk of the rod up to the sky. His heart jumped, then raced as he fought to reel in his catch. Now wide-eyed and encouraged by Obadiah screaming, "bag 'em," the youngster knew of nothing more important in the world than that moment.

Henry awakened from his nostalgic trance to cheerful voices and the effervescent melodies of the town choir and orchestra. Bumping along at a full trot into the town square, Henry pulled up as his friends and neighbors were singing in unison. Rather than just listening to the music, everyone participated. Women and children were dancing and clapping to the beat of the drums. Distinguished men were humming and tapping their toes. Grandmas and grandpas were softly singing and snapping to the cheerful beat. While watching the townspeople *really* enjoy the music, Henry's eyes wandered toward his father's legacy. Its hands together, resting at slightly past twelve. "That's what felt so strange on the way into town...no chimes, no sense of time."

Henry vaulted from his buggy and raced to the tower and up the spiral staircase. There, curled up in a ball, lay a sleeping and bruised Samantha still grasping the brass key in her hand. As Henry lifted her head, Samantha awakened and regretfully told him about her mishap and her failure to wind the clock. She was surprised to hear Henry laughing loudly as he helped her to her feet and invited her to have a strawberry milkshake. That morning proved special. For the first time, two very different generations came to like and appreciate one another. As they sat and talked at the diner for hours, sharing memories and dreams, an old man and a young girl discovered that time is precious and should be savored.

Henry wound the clock that night. Things returned to normal the next day. At sunrise the chimes sang out as the farmers went to the fields and mothers awakened their children for school. Samantha left for college later that year. But Henry and Steubenville were never quite the same. Instead of sitting in the rear of the church on Sundays, he was on stage with the choir singing loudly and out of tune. The general store opened an hour later so that he could watch the sun rise and hear the birds awaken. Most afternoons he could be found fly-fishing at the pond and yelling out

“bag’em” to anyone who might snare a trout. After Henry passed away, the clock became more of a landmark than a useful timekeeper. Samantha returned for many years to lead a parade on the town square. On parade day, the Harrington Clock was stopped, and work and school closed... time was a gift to be enjoyed.

AN EXPLANATORY, EXPLORATORY, OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY—

MATTHEW SKOMOROWSKI

Operation Enduring *Freedom*?

Look around you America. Your world is changing. Suddenly it's no longer safe to fly in airplanes, attend sporting events, or just open your junk mail. Almost daily, news of threats and security breach's litter the airwaves, leaving many asking the same question. "How can we make our country safe again?" Unfortunately, there isn't a simple answer. America is united in the cause, but divided over the methods of preventing terrorism. At this time of uncertainty, many are urging Americans to "give up" some of their freedoms and privacy in exchange for safety. Regrettably, this wave of patriotism has spilled over, and is beginning to infringe on our fundamental liberties as outlined in the Bill of Rights. Since the September 11th terrorist attacks those who have made comments contrary to popular beliefs have prompted much debate about free speech. When America experiences some great trauma, our freedom of speech often faces its own trauma.

Across the country, people are expressing opinions unpopular with American culture post September 11th. In Colorado, school officials demonstrate the new rush to suppress any un-American sentiment by "forcing a student to remove an upside down American flag sewn on the seat of her jeans [calling it] an obscene insult to Americanism" (Leo). Blinded by their patriotism, these school officials disregarded the student's first amendment rights. This same eagerness to attack free-speakers also occurred at the University of New Mexico. In this highly publicized incident, Prof Richard Berthold told his class "Anyone who can blow up the Pentagon has my vote" (Leo). Upon hearing such an outrageous statement, many Americans are demanding the professor be suspended or fired. Americans' post September 11th actions reflect a new readiness to attack any expression deemed "Un-American."

High profile members of our media are also realizing the hazards of disagreeing with a traumatized America. Following the September 11th terrorist's attacks, Bill Maher, host of the controversial late night television show Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher, outraged an already shell-shocked America. During the show he attacked our military by saying "We have been the cowards lobbing cruise missiles from 2, 000 miles away. That's cowardly" (Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher). He continued by essentially expressing respect for the hijackers, saying "Staying in the airplane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, [is] not cowardly" (Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher). Not surprisingly, Maher has been publicly ridiculed since making these statements. Two of the show's sponsors pulled their advertising, and several local affiliates have taken the show off the air. The reaction to Maher's statements has been swift: apologize, praise America and maybe you'll get to keep your job.

The reluctance of America to "speak up" became obvious after "the government bungled the poisonous anthrax letter sent to Sen. Tom Daschle" (Gergen). Instead of taking proper precautions for everyone at risk, our government chose to provide "immediate protection to the politicians and their staffs while neglecting the safety of the postal workers" (Gergen). This blunder cost two postal workers their lives. Yet, both the public and media remain silent. Dissenters today dread the wrath

of an America all too willing to label them anti-American and essentially ruin their public and private lives.

Attitudes regarding freedom of speech change with the political and social atmosphere. At peacetime, it's generally acceptable to oppose the government. But, during war or following a major trauma, we consistently attack anyone that says or does anything that might be considered "unpatriotic." This practice must stop. Ignoring the Bill of Rights during a crisis sets a dangerous precedent of inconsistency. This lack of respect for laws can snowball into a total disregard of freedom and liberty. The public and press cannot become the judge and jury, deciding what's socially acceptable. Everyone looks and thinks differently. There will be bitter conflict and debate. Sometimes tears need to be shed. Let the girl wear her jeans, admire the history professor for his bravery, question government action when warranted, and keep Bill Maher on the air.

WORKS CITED

Gergen, David. "Tending to the home front." U.S News & World Report. 5 Nov. 2001: 84.

Leo, John. "Don't tread on free-speakers." U.S News & World Report. 5 Nov. 2001: 59.

Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher. ABC. WSYX, Columbus. 17 Sept. 2001.

A RESPONSE TO A TEXT—MATTHEW SKOMOROWSKI

You Could Fly

Throughout history, great authors have served as sentinels for racism and prejudice in American society. The Mark Twain novel, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, a graphic story of 1840s America that depicts the plight of an uneducated black slave named Jim moved many to empathize with African-Americans. Compassion against the evils of slavery soon spread across the country. A war-torn America abolished slavery in 1865. However, Richard Wright's 1940 novel, Native Son, a compelling story of the life and death of another black man, Bigger Thomas, makes a convincing argument that slavery in America was still very much alive during that period. Civil rights legislation and enforcement would not come until years later. A generation apart, Jim and Bigger embody the evolution of the black man struggling to be free in American society.

On Twain's Mississippi of the 1840's, slaves are regarded more as property than human—there is no freedom for the black man. Jim is trapped in a society that trumpets racial hatred; for example, Huck's father said, "they told me there was a state...where they'd let the nigger vote...I says I'll never vote again" (Twain 35). Early in their travels, Jim and Huck mirror the chasm in black and white relations that plagues America at the time. Blinded by prejudice, Huck seems incapable of recognizing that, much like himself, Jim is scared and running from a life of few choices, towards a dream of independence. Instead, he can only see what society allows him to—the blackness of Jim's skin. He is reluctant to be seen with Jim because he knows "People would call [him] a low-down Abolitionist and despise [him] for keeping mum" (50). Even after Jim explains his fears to Huck by saying, "I noticed dey wuz a nigger trader roun'...en I begin to git oneasy...I hear old missus tell de wider she gyen to sell me down to Orleans," (50) Huck still remains hesitant and only agrees to keep Jim's secret because earlier he gave his word. To Huck, a slave is another's property or investment; so consequently, he believes Jim is wrong to run from his master. Living in a society tolerant of such deep-rooted racism and prejudice, Jim's generation is challenged merely to survive. To Jim, freedom's goals are simple—the opportunity to be with his family and live without fear of being captured or killed.

By the 1930's, an imaginary freedom fills black men with dreams and aspirations that society still refuses to allow them to achieve. Unlike Jim, Bigger receives an education and is taught what every white child is taught, but the moment he leaves school, he knows that "the white boy [goes] one way and he [goes] another" (Wright 394). Education presents Bigger with obstacles Jim never faces. It makes Bigger's life even more difficult to accept because knowledge simulates him and develops "impulses which all of us have, but then [makes him] realize that he [can't] act upon them" (394). Bigger's generation is led to believe a promise: earn an education, don't make trouble and you can better yourself. But even with an education, Bigger finds himself in a position similar to Jim, with no opportunity; in fact, his friend tells him, "If you wasn't black and if you had some money and if they'd let you go to that aviation school, you *could* fly a plane" (17). To Bigger, freedom is having the ability to choose, to succeed and be recognized for who he is rather than what he looks like.

To Jim, freedom is as simple as being released from human bondage. However, a generation later, Bigger expects much more. Jim knows that he is a slave and not free, so consequently, his actions and beliefs can carry no weight in society. Bigger knows that although he is legally free, his actions still have very little importance in a white society that tells him “what to do; where to live; how much schooling he [can] get; where he [can] eat; where and what kind of work he [can] do” (Wright 394). Bigger’s society collectively denies him freedom to better his life with “restrictions placed upon Negro education,” authorities “that make it plain in their every act that they mean to keep Bigger Thomas and his kind within rigid limits,” and real estate operators who have “agreed among themselves to keep Negroes within ghetto-areas of cities” (394). Unlike Jim, Bigger can’t escape his slavery by running to the free north. His slavery is all-encompassing. Jim only sees freedom at face value, so his can be achieved. He can only hope for freedom in its simplest form... release from the physical shackles of slavery. Bigger’s freedom begins where Jim’s leaves off.

WORKS CITED

Twain, Mark. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. New York: Harper & Row, 1885.

Wright, Richard. Native Son. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940.

2002 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 assess the quality of a 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
- Use language imaginatively and effectively.
- Shows when appropriate by creating scenes, using dialogue and interior monologue when appropriate.
- Supports assertions and generalizations with evidence, examples, and details.
- Recognizes complexities in issues and positions.
- Explores larger social or cultural aspects.
- 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

Your portfolio will be scored by readers using the following scale:

UPPER RANGE PORTFOLIOS

6 range: Excellent portfolios. These portfolios' many significant strengths outweigh their weaknesses. **Excellent** portfolios encompass the characteristics of very good (5-range) portfolios but also display other strengths. They convincingly demonstrate the writer's ability to handle varied writing tasks successfully, and the writing is substantially developed, often moving beyond the predictable and clichéd in approach, style, or subject matter.

5 range: Very Good portfolios. These portfolios' strengths clearly outweigh their weaknesses. **Very good** portfolios show an awareness of audience, and show substantial development of ideas often by integrating evidence, examples, and details to support assertions and generalizations. **Very good** portfolios successfully demonstrate the writer's ability to handle varied writing tasks.

MIDDLE RANGE PORTFOLIOS

4 range: Good portfolios. These portfolios' strengths outweigh their weaknesses. **Good** portfolios articulate a purpose and provide moments of sustained exploration of a question through the use of evidence. Compared to **competent** portfolios (3-range), **good** portfolios (4-range) demonstrate more awareness of global/local organization appropriate for the writing task and more consistent evidence of the writer's ability to handle varied writing tasks.

3 range: Competent portfolios. These portfolios' strengths and weaknesses are about evenly balanced. **Competent** portfolios demonstrate some awareness of global/local organization appropriate for the writing task. Evidence of the writer's ability to handle varied writing tasks is uneven. Some pieces may be too brief, underdeveloped, general or predictable, but the language use is generally competent. **Competent** portfolios (3-range), unlike lower range portfolios, show some awareness of audience.

LOWER RANGE PORTFOLIOS

2 range: Fair portfolios. These portfolios' weaknesses outweigh their strengths. There is little evidence of the writer's ability to handle varied writing tasks successfully. **Fair** portfolios are usually thin in substance and undistinguished in style although they may be clear and error free.

1 range: Poor portfolios. These portfolios' many weaknesses clearly outweigh their strengths. **Poor** portfolios may lack development and/or evidence of effective global and local organization. **Poor** portfolios may have substantial grammatical errors that impede reading. Focus may be unstated and/or unclear.

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 readers demands that we, as writers, be responsible for what we say and how we say things. Realizing this, most of us have already rid our vocabularies of offensive language that labels people on the basis of race, ethnic origin, and 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 with our 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.

III. 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 the field 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 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.

YOUR 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) and opinions 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.). Evaluators suggest repeatedly:

Consider your audience. We're real people who can see through stereotypical and clichéd 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 Scoring Scale.) 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 FROM PORTFOLIO SCORERS

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 basic, impersonal 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 how you perceive your own writing, and, most importantly, why you perceive it the way you do. 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. Portfolios that are five or six pages long are not fully developed, and do not demonstrate fully your talent as a writer. 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 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’s got a fresh angle. Also, when using outside sources, work from your own viewpoint instead of simply retelling other peoples’ 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." If you do decide to be creative and take some risks with your writing, it would be a good idea to explain such aspects of your writing in your cover letter.
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. Use both spell check and get a trusted person to proofread. Give pieces titles, number pages, and use a legible, plain typeface or font (we recommend Times New Roman). 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: 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, or persuasive essay and a response to a text?

Yes. Some teachers assign writing to students that is “multi-genre” and that fulfills many of the expectations we have of the separate pieces we ask you to submit. If you have such a “multi-genre” paper, it must be substantial enough to fulfill all 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 (found in the brochure) asking you to reflect critically 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 submit in your portfolios in which you use others’ ideas or refer to outside sources.
- Be sure to follow the “essential instructions” listed in the brochure for both portfolios (such as including drafts for both portfolios, removing all identifying information, staying within page number limits, 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 in 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 and his or her talents; offers reflective information about each of the works included (i.e. it provides a context for each work and explains why you included it in 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, or your own writing—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 to maintain a focus on your writing.

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 that 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 like 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 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 different 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 explanatory/exploratory/persuasive essay or your response to a text will likely be much longer, maybe even 5 or 6 full pages. One of your pieces may be $3\frac{1}{4}$ pages, while another may be $4\frac{1}{2}$; instead of being credited in that case for 4 pages and 5 pages respectively—which might put you over the limit—we would count the fractional pages together as one page, which would either give you one more page to work with, or maybe keep you within the 12-page limit. In other words, use the 12 pages in a way that helps you produce 4 pieces each with which 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.

2003 PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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 by introducing both the writer and the individual pieces. 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. You may find that you've written an essay for a class other than English which fits this category.

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 should 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 (*not* all four pieces), label all draft material and paperclip it to the end of the appropriate essay. Portfolios lacking draft material will not be scored. (*Notecards will not be accepted.*)

Your name, hometown, school, and teacher's name cannot 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.*

Do not staple or bind your portfolio. Paper clips are okay.

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 2, 2003, 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 also sign the form.

The portfolio submission fee is \$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 2, 2003, and sent 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 _____

HOME ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

HOME PHONE(____) _____ EMAIL: _____

Will you be (check one):

- an entering first-year student a transfer student
 an upper-division Miami student other

At what campus will you enroll:

- Hamilton Middletown Oxford

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 2, 2003. 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 _____

SUPERVISING TEACHERS 2002

Ginny Allen	Louisville Eastern High School	Louisville, KY
William J. Allen	Kenston High School	Chagrin Falls, OH
Sharon C. Alloway	Bishop Watterson High School	Columbus, OH
Bryan Ammer	Oakwood High School	Dayton, OH
Mrs. Lila B. Ansley	Padua Franciscan High School	Parma, OH
Christopher Aquino	Wheaton-Warrenville South High School	Wheaton, IL
Nicole M. Arendell	Benet Academy	Lisle, IL
Alissa Oliver Ayres	Beechwood High School	Fort Mitchell, KY
Molly S. Bardine	Chaminade-Julienne High School	Dayton, OH
Bryan Bartosik-Velez	Centennial High School	Champaign, IL
Anne L. Benington	Bishop Fenwick High School	Kettering, OH
Thomas Bennett	Charles F. Brush High School	Lyndhurst, OH
Gary Bents	Lincoln High School	Manitowoc, WI
Mrs. Kathleen A. Berwanger	Loveland High School	Loveland, OH
Gayle Bloom	Homestead High School	Fort Wayne, IN
Karen L. Blount	Hamilton High School	Hamilton, OH
Kevin Bond	Niles West High School	Skokie, IL
Frances L. Borchers	Sylvania Northview High School	Sylvania, OH
Fumie Bouvier	Daviess County High School	Owensboro, KY
Sylvia Bower	Hilliard Darby High School	Hilliard, OH
Kerry Brennan	New Trier High School	Winnetka, IL
Cynthia K. Briggs	Wyoming High School	Cincinnati, OH
Angela M. Brill	Mt. Healthy High School	Cincinnati, OH
Cynthia Burkhart	Fairfield High School	Fairfield, OH
Marcia D. Burnett	Mount Notre Dame High School	Springboro, OH
Angelique Burrell	Hinsdale Central High School	Hinsdale, IL
Karen Cameron	Maumee High School	Maumee, OH
Nancy A. Canfield	Olentangy High School	Lewis Center, OH
Shirley A. Carmony	New Castle Chrysler High School	New Castle, IN
N. Darlene Carpenter	Cambridge High School	Cambridge, OH
Regina M. Chambers	New Richmond High School	New Richmond, OH
Tad Chitwood	Louisville Male High School	Louisville, KY
David V. Clapp	St. Xavier High School	Cincinnati, OH
Janet Coakley	William H. Harrison High School	Harrison, OH
Deborah G. Cohn	Homestead High School	Mequon, WI
Valerie Combs	Archbishop McNicholas High School	Cincinnati, OH
Carol Lee Cornwell	Sycamore High School	Cincinnati, OH
Robert A. Cox	Ridgefield High School	Ridgefield, CT
Lana L. Cuzick	Home Schooled	Dry Ridge, KY
Rita Dailey	Mount Vernon High School	Mt. Vernon, OH

Dorinda Danz	Downingtown High School	Downingtown, PA
William DeAngelo, Jr.	Canfield High School	Canfield, OH
Dr. Carl J. Demarkowski	St. John's Jesuit High School	Toledo, OH
Kimberly A. Demeny	Ashwaubenon High School	Green Bay, WI
Carol M. Denney	Westerville North High School	Westerville, OH
Diane L. DeVries	[Parent]	Grosse Pointe, MI
Nick Dingleline	New Bremen Local High School	New Bremen, OH
Carol Dion	William H. Harrison High School	Harrison, OH
Susan G. Dixon	Elyria High School	Elyria, OH
Paula M. Dolloff	Lakota West High School	West Chester, OH
Mrs. Patricia L. Drake	Centerville High School	Centerville, OH
Joseph Drouillard	Sylvania Northview High School	Sylvania, OH
Donna Duffy	Utica High School	Utica, MI
Robert A. Dvorak	St. Francis DeSales High School	Columbus, OH
Lorelle K. Elberly	West Ottawa High School	Holland, MI
Robert V. Erhart	Miamisburg High School	Miamisburg, OH
Eric C. Ervin	Hudson High School	Hudson, OH
Peter Ferroy	Lake Forest High School	Lake Forest, IL
Mrs. Suzanne E. Fowley	Warren G. Harding High School	Warren, OH
Jill K. Fritz	Lebanon High School	Lebanon, OH
Tom Gaffigan	Sycamore High School	Cincinnati, OH
Melissa Gambill	Oakwood High School	Dayton, OH
Mrs. Janice K. Gasser	Kalida High School	Kalida, OH
Thomas R. Geier	Mt. Notre Dame High School	Cincinnati, OH
Ellen Geisler	Mentor High School	Mentor, OH
Elizabeth A. Glenn	Westerville North High School	Westerville, OH
Giovanna Godby	Christian Academy of Louisville	Louisville, KY
Debbie Goddkin	West Windsor-Plainsboro North HS	Princeton Junction, NJ
Eric L. Graf	North Allegheny Senior High School	Wexford, PA
Dr. Joy M. Gray	Kenston High School	Chagrin Falls, OH
Mary Sharon Gregory	Homestead High School	Mequon, WI
Donna S. Guith	Troy High School	Troy, MI
Michael A. Gunther	Dover High School	Dover, OH
Hank Haake	Glenbard West High School	Glen Ellyn, IL
Vivian Habrat	Holy Name High School	Parma Heights, OH
Judith Hackman	Walsh Jesuit High School	Stow, OH
Diane Haddad	Upper Arlington High School	Upper Arlington, OH
Ms. D. J. Hammond	Madeira High School	Cincinnati, OH
Beth M. Harding	Princeton High School	Cincinnati, OH
James M. Harris	Mayfield High School	Mayfield, OH
John (Jack) S. Hay	Boardman High School	Youngstown, OH

Bill Hays	Bloomington High School North	Bloomington, IN
Michael D. Hebenthal	Garaway High School	Sugarcreek, OH
Linda Cassiere Heile	McAuley High School	Cincinnati, OH
Becky Heitzler	William Fremd High School	Palatine, IL
Jane B. Hennessey	Taylor High School	North Bend, OH
Marilyn R. Herring	Ursuline Academy	Cincinnati, OH
Christine Hill	Greengates School	Mexico, D.F.
Dan Holt	St. Joseph High School	Saint Joseph, MI
Jean A. Hoogewind	Brentwood High School	Brentwood, TN
Charles F. Hoover	John F. Kennedy High School	Warren, OH
Megan R. Horncastle	Lakota West High School	West Chester, OH
Robin Hren	Mount Vernon High School	Mt. Vernon, OH
Karen L. Hull	Big Walnut High School	Sunbury, OH
John F. Hussong	St. Xavier High School	Cincinnati, OH
Michelle M. Jeffries	Ballard High School	Louisville, KY
Barbara F. Jones	Marian High School	Omaha, NE
Samantha A. Jones	Saint Ursula Academy	Cincinnati, OH
Dr. Linda A. Karazim	Springfield High School	Holland, OH
Barbara K. Karol	Lincoln High School	Gahanna, OH
John Keller	Neuqua Valley High School	Naperville, IL
Ellen M. Kelly	Shaker Heights High School	Shaker Heights, OH
Douglas Kile	Marion Harding High School	Marion, OH
Jacqueline Sherman Kim	North Allegheny High School	Wexford, PA
Dianne S. Klein	Bowling Green High School	Bowling Green, OH
Donald T. Klever	Maumee High School	Maumee, OH
Cinda Klickna	Springfield Southeast High School	Springfield, IL
Shawn D. Knodell	Ottoville High School	Ottoville, OH
Kathleen H. Knox	Elyria Catholic High School	Elyria, OH
Carol G. Kolar	Parkway West High School	St. Louis, MO
Edward W. Kramer	Solon High School	Solon, OH
Dianne Kruszynski	Brecksville-Broadview Heights HS	Broadview Heights, OH
Mr. Greg M. Kurtz	Dayton Christian High School	Dayton, OH
Evanthia E. Lambrakopoulos	Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School	Bethesda, MD
Mrs. Genevieve Leesemann	Little Miami High School	Morrow, OH
Mrs. Carol Leforge	Fostoria High School	Fostoria, OH
Carol A. Lenk	Medina High School	Medina, OH
Janet E. Look	Carl Sandburg High School	Orland Park, IL
Carol Kirker Low	Pickerington High School	Pickerington, OH
Therese D. Lustic	Hudson High School	Hudson, OH
Jennifer Luzar	Midland High School	Midland, MI
Cynthia K. Mahin	Walnut Hills High School	Cincinnati, OH

Anthony D. Maite	Hilliard Davidson High School	Hilliard, OH
Greg Malling	Walt Whitman High School	Bethesda, MD
Virgil C. Mann	Lima Senior High School	Lima, OH
Patti Marshall-Doane	Brighton Senior High School	Brighton, MI
Amy B. Martin	Springfield Shawnee High School	Springfield, OH
Sean C. Martin	Upper Arlington High School	Columbus, OH
William Marton	Homestead High School	Mequon, WI
Steven Michael Mason	Edgerton High School	Edgerton, OH
Donald Mastrobuono	Charles F. Brush High School	Lyndhurst, OH
Cathleen McBride	Cleveland Heights High School	Cleveland Heights, OH
Theresa L. McClain	Greenon High School	Springfield, OH
Karie J. McCrate	Dover High School	Dover, OH
Rebecca McFarlan	Indian Hill High School	Cincinnati, OH
Elizabeth A. McIlwain	Springfield High School	Holland, OH
David McKay	Cary-Grove High School	Cary, IL
Kevin McKenna	St. Ignatius High School	Cleveland, OH
Barry McRaith	Northside College Prep High School	Chicago, IL
Roberta Mellberg	Notre Dame de la Baie Academy	Green Bay, WI
Ralph R. Menning	Maumee Valley Country Day School	Toledo, OH
Susan F. Merrill	North Olmsted High School	North Olmsted, OH
Charles J. Mescher	Marion Local High School	Maria Stein, OH
Penni J. Meyer	Kettering Fairmont High School	Kettering, OH
Lisa R. Milano	Twinsburg High School	Twinsburg, OH
Leah Miller	Upper Arlington High School	Columbus, OH
Brendan Molahan	[Parent]	West Lebanon, NH
Barbara J. Moore	Minster High School	Minster, OH
Honor Moorman	International School of the Americas	San Antonio, TX
Alice M. Morgan	Solon High School	Solon, OH
Sandra K. Morgan	Thomas Jefferson High School	Bloomington, MN
Thomas E. Mulhall	Brecksville-Broadview Heights HS	Broadview Heights, OH
Elizabeth H. Murphy	Home Schooled	Loveland, OH
Mr. Robin Neal	Lafayette High School	Saint Louis, MO
Doris Nell	Lebanon High School	Lebanon, OH
Mary B. Nicolini	Penn High School	Mishawaka, IN
Paris Nikolas-Gulino	Amos Alonzo Stagg High School	Palos Hills, IL
Angie Noble	Archbishop McNicholas High School	Cincinnati, ,OH
Jane Champion Norman	duPont Manual High School	Louisville, KY
Sarah N. O'Connor	Pittsford Mendon High School	Pittsford, NY
Richard H. Orndorff	William Mason High School	Mason, OH
Rita J. Palmer	Hoover High School	North Canton, OH
Abigail A. Pavell	Upper Arlington High School	Columbus, OH

Mary C. Pearson	Tippecanoe High School	Tipp City, OH
Barry Peters	Centerville High School	Centerville, OH
Elaine Peters	North Allegheny High School	Wexford, PA
Robert Polk	Our Lady of the Elms High School	Akron, OH
Donald R. Poynton	Glenbrook North High School	Northbrook, IL
James D. Query	Grand Haven High School	Grand Haven, MI
William Race	Glenbrook North High School	Northbrook, IL
Edward M. Raines	The Buckley School	Sherman Oaks, CA
Virginia K. Reade	William V. Fisher Catholic High School	Lancaster, OH
Peter N. Reed	Louisville Eastern High School	Louisville, KY
Mary Sue Reimueller	Avon Lake High School	Avon Lake, OH
Carla Douglas Repass	Paul Laurence Dunbar High School	Lexington, KY
Mr. Cary Rice	Christian Academy of Louisville	Louisville, KY
David W. Riegel	Springboro High School	Springboro, OH
Brian P. Riley	St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School	Alexandria, VA
Kellie Ann Ritchey	Lexington High School	Lexington, OH
Karen Roberson	Centennial High School	Franklin, TN
Marcianna Lane Rodriguez	Greengates School	Mexico, D.F.
Melissa A. Ross	Brookville High School	Brookville, OH
Mr. Alfred Ruesch	Great Neck South High School	Great Neck, NY
Kevin P. Ryan	Bishop Hartley High School	Columbus, OH
Cheryl A. Salzman	Colerain High School	Cincinnati, OH
Helen Samolis	Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School	Broadview Heights, OH
Henry Sampson	William Fremd High School	Palatine, IL
Rikki Santer	Upper Arlington High School	Columbus, OH
Robert J. Sauerbrey	La Salle High School	Cincinnati, OH
Dottie Saye	Lassiter High School	Marietta, GA
Sarah Schaeffer	Beavercreek High School	Beavercreek, OH
Sally Duus Schlaff	Canal Winchester High School	Canal Winchester, OH
Sally G. Sebastian	Centennial High School	Roswell, GA
Janice M. Shade	Groveport Madison High School	Groveport, OH
Kellie Shepherd	Lakota East High School	Liberty Township, OH
Floria V. Shofae-Mogbadam	B.O.O.S.T. [Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training]	Newport, RI
Joyce E. Shrimplin	Wadsworth Senior High School	Wadsworth, OH
Marilyn Shultz	Taylor High School	North Bend, OH
Stanley Siedlecki III	Mayfield High School	Mayfield Village, OH
Sr. Mary Hope Sieron	Bishop Watterson High School	Columbus, OH
Jeffrey D. Simpson	Hamilton High School	Hamilton, OH
Susan Sinkler	Minnetonka High School	Minnetonka, MN
Connie S. Smith	Sycamore High School	Cincinnati, OH

Timothy L. Snook	Highland High School	Medina, OH
Lana Sorensen	Urbandale High School	Urbandale, IA
Susan M. Sparks	Germantown High School	Germantown, TN
Linda O. Specht	Strongsville High School	Strongsville, OH
Clare E. Squance	Talawanda High School	Oxford, OH
Michael Stratton	Middletown High School	Middletown, OH
Kristine A. Stronz	Jamestown High School	Jamestown, NY
Larry S. Sweeney	Olentangy High School	Lewis Center, OH
Tracy Thiel	Whitefish Bay High School	Whitefish Bay, WI
Peggy K. Thoma	Piqua High School	Piqua, OH
Cherie A. Thompson	Hawken Upper School	Gates Mills, OH
Helen Trares	Archbishop Hoban High School	Akron, OH
Jill M. Vick	J. R. Tudar High School	Richmond, VA
Diane Vogtsberger	Bowling Green High School	Bowling Green, OH
Jennifer Vollbrecht	Naperville Central High School	Naperville, IL
Dorothy Vudrogovic	Buckeye Local High School	Rayland, OH
Nancy Wallace	Mother McAuley High School	Chicago, IL
Linda Wallenberg	Eden Prairie High School	Eden Prairie, MN
Michael L. Wasilewski	Grosse Pointe South High School	Grosse Pointe Farms, MI
Kalinde C. Webb	Talawanda High School	Oxford, OH
Regina A. Webb	Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin School	Chardon, OH
Kelly S. Wegley	Worthington-Kilbourne High School	Columbus, OH
Matthew Weseley	The Trevor Day School	New York, NY
Jack White	Seven Hills School	Cincinnati, OH
Linda White	University of Cincinnati	Cincinnati, OH
Dr. Patricia L. Wilk	Paramus High School	Paramus, NJ
Celena Williams	Bishop Fenwick High School	Middletown, OH
Thomas C. Williams	Howland High School	Warren, OH
Mrs. Marilyn J. Wills	Wapakoneta High School	Wapakoneta, OH
Michael Witlin	Saline High School	Saline, MI