**Leon Lines**

**2014 Edition**

**Contents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Chapter 1** | | |
| **Writing To Remember And Reflect** | | |
| Fran Ervin | **"Sticks And Stones..."** | 2 |
| Douglas Shotwell (2011) | **Out of Rope** | 3 |
| Allie Jackson (2012) | **Holes in the Floor of Heaven** | 5 |
| Anonymous (2011) | **I Hate You** | 7 |
| Chase Mamatey | **Light And Loose** | 8 |
| Carilyn Powers | **Shattered Glass** | 10 |
| Patrick McGarry (2013) | **It’s How You Say It** | 12 |
| Sid Bigham | **The Mud Girl** | 13 |
| Kelsey Owen (2011) | **Fearfully and Wonderfully Made** | 15 |
| Tim McArthur | **ACL** | 16 |
| Audrey Schueren | **Confrontation Point** | 17 |
| Leigh Kelly-Knight (2013) | **Mother Knows Best** | 18 |
| Kellyn Wilcox (2010) | **Dependency** | 20 |
| Conor McBride | **Grapes And Gratitude** | 22 |
| Bradley Yost | **"The Lord Gave And Hath Taken Away"** | 23 |
| John Clarke | **Going Clean** | 25 |
| **Chapter 2** | | |
| **Writing To Gain Admission** | | |
| Austin Zorn | **Oceans Of Change** | 28 |
| Todd Wimberly | **My High School Career** | 29 |
| Brendan Santry | **"Just Do It"** | 30 |
| David Kennell | **Why Musicians Practice** | 31 |
| Georgia Howard (2011) | **Common Application Topic** | 32 |
| Jordan Raymond | **You Are Cordially Invited** | 33 |
| Mark Logan (2013) | **Message in a Bottle** | 34 |
| Daniel McRae | **University Of Florida Admissions Essay** | 35 |
| Allison Clarke | **Raising The Bar** | 36 |
| Amy Norman | **The Value Of Childhood** | 37 |
| Leah Bailey | **Curls** | 38 |
| Jackson Davis | **Me** | 39 |
| Joy Hinson | ***Lama Sabachthani*** | 40 |
| Melinda Stanley (2013) | **Possessions** | 42 |
| Blanche A. Brown (2011) | **Find X** | 43 |
| Michael Leach | **My Romance With Computer Science** | 45 |
| Keaton Wilson (2011) | **I Am *Vires, Artes, Mores*** | 47 |
| Karen Hoover | **A Question Without An Answer** | 48 |
| Emilee Leslie (2012) | **Stereotypes** | 50 |
| Kade Needham | **All In The Cards** | 51 |
| Robert Braden | **Survival Of The Fittest** | 52 |
| Laura Been | **Who Am I?** | 54 |
| Ryan Sullivan | **College Essay** | 55 |
| Virginia Gladwin (2010) | **Special Ed** | 56 |
| Daniel Aldridge (2012) | **Reverse Psychology** | 57 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Chapter 3** | | |
| **Writing To Analyze And Change** | | |
| Callie Watkins (2010) | **College Application Process** | 59 |
| Georgia Howard (2011) | **What Message R U Sending?** | 61 |
| Joe Meyer (2010) | **Everyone's A Critic** | 62 |
| Madeline Brezin (2011) | **Bathroom Bothers** | 64 |
| Kelsie Moore (2012) | **Disgusted** | 65 |
| Josh Record (2012) | **Tennis Team Troubles** | 66 |
| Ian Kirby (1997) | **Problem Letter** | 67 |
| Mary Beth Waddill (2009) | **Driveway Dilemmas** | 69 |
| Heather France (2013) | **Journals** | 71 |
| Wesley Burns (1998) | **Service With The Speed Of Sound** | 72 |
| Lori Jackson (2001) | **An Intruder** | 73 |
| Laura Robson (2010) | **Show And Tell** | 75 |
| Trevor Faulkner (2005) | **Shotgun** | 76 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Chapter 4** | |  |
| **Writing To Inform** | |  |
|  |  |  |
| Kaitlyn Koetz (2012) | **Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass** | 79 |
| Judy Audie (2000) | **Wisdom Teeth** | 80 |
| Tyler Teagle (2010) | **Shoe Selections** | 82 |
| Vince Schueren | ***Doo’s* and *Dah’s*** | 84 |
| Ashton Shippy | **Survival Of Attendance** | 85 |
| Chris Harrison | **The Fairy Pays A Visit** | 86 |
| McKenzie Smith | **Lefties Do It Right** | 88 |
| Gavin Grigg | **It's A Tough Job** | 90 |
| Cecelia Graham (2011) | **Musical Trashcans** | 91 |
| Matt Sullivan (2011) | **The Transporter** | 93 |
| Tony Audie | **Trash Talking 101** | 101 |
| Savannah Watson (2013) | **Soap Box Derby** | 96 |
| Mary Phillips Smith (2013) | **The Bare Necessities of Tennis** | 98 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Chapter 5** | | |
| **Writing To Evaluate** | | |
| Rachael Pennock | **Comma Problems? Give Me A Break** | 101 |
| Taylor Seay (2011) | **Float Like A Butterfly, Sting Like A Bee** | 103 |
| Kaley Barnett | **Case Number 1101** | 104 |
| Amy Helms (2012) | **On My Own** | 106 |
| Stephanie Hunter | ***Thing* In The Hat** | 107 |
| Andrea Caspary | **Introduction Insights** | 109 |
| Anna Teagle (2011) | **Making Sense** | 110 |
| Bennett Skilling | **Story Of The Procrastinator** | 112 |
| Allison Burtoft (2013) | **Zero to Hero** | 115 |
| Eli Powelson (2008) | **How To Get Your Essay Into Leon Lines** | 116 |
| Patrick Manderfield | **Editing For The Hopeless Romantic** | 119 |
| Cassidy Chrestensen (2011) | **Punctuationality** | 120 |
| Annemarie Robins (2013) | **Your Life Depends on It** | 122 |
| James Graham  Vince Schueren (2012) | **Hey *You***  **Comma Found Dead in Alley** | 123  125 |
| Jackson Davis | **How To Not Suck** | 126 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
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**Chapter I**

**Writing To Remember And Reflect**

**"Sticks and Stones..."**

Fran Ervin

One does not always need a gun, knife, or strong fist to hurt someone. Words can be a very fierce weapon. They can pierce faster than a bullet, stab deeper than a knife, and blow harder than even the strongest punch. Physical wounds are the easier ones to heal. It's the emotional ones that stay with a person. That's why one may forget how hard a slap hurts but remember forever the sting of an insult.

I sat up straight in my desk. It was my first day at a new school. I had that nauseated feeling that I get in my stomach when I am nervous and excited at the same time. I was twelve, that age when appearance is everything. I spent what seemed to be forever getting ready for my first day of middle school. I remember it had taken me hours to decide upon the blue dress that I had chosen to wear. My brown hair was pulled back in a neat French braid. The gold heart necklace that I had saved up to buy glistened in the classroom's light. I was determined to make this a great year.

Our teacher was outside talking to a parent. I was terrified! Everybody in the class seemed to know each other, and they all chatted among themselves in little groups. I sat there alone. I didn't know a soul. Then the boy in front of me turned around and smiled. I could feel my heartbeat speed up! Was he going to talk to me? Would he be the hero who would rescue me?

The boy was very handsome, that type of guy who looked like he would be the quarterback or class president. He had wispy, light brown hair and friendly, blue eyes. I felt the butterflies beat against my stomach as my heart pounded against my chest. My head raced with a hundred thoughts at once. Was my hair OK? Maybe I should have worn my red dress instead. Boy, he was cute!

The boy looked me over. He grinned, and I grinned back. I will never forget what happened next. He looked deep into my eyes and said, "You're the fattest girl I've ever seen." The circle of guys around him exploded with laughter as he turned around.

I didn't know what to do. I was speechless. Feeling a sharp pain in my chest, I gasped for breath. The many Welcome Back signs around the classroom became blurs as tears swelled up in my eyes. I brushed them away. I refused to let those boys see me cry. I hid the pain. The teacher walked in, and I concentrated on her typical welcome back speech as though my life depended on it. I laughed at her corny jokes, and I nodded when she asked us if we were thrilled to be out of elementary school. I put the biggest smile I could on my face.

I tried to forget the boy's remark. I prayed that he would go away. Praying didn't work though. The boy's voice kept echoing in my head. I was fat. I was ugly--no matter how hard I tried to cover it up with new clothes, jewelry, or a fancy braid. I would never look like everyone else. I was a freak. I was disgusting. The boy was right, or at least I believed that he was.

With one sentence, the boy had stolen any ounce of confidence I had. He had snatched away any courage I may have possessed. He had managed to make me think that I didn't deserve to speak to anyone. I didn't deserve friends. I was gross. I was a beast.

I never told anyone this story. Those words still hurt me each time I think of that day. I can feel that same pain inside my chest when his voice echoes in my head. Sure, life goes on, but I never fully got my self-confidence back. I have tried to put that experience far in the back of my mind. There are times, though, when I look in the mirror and can't help but remember that day. Am I really that bad? He placed this insecurity inside of me that gnaws away.

I remember being told that sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. I know now that's not true. Words can hurt. Broken bones mend. Cuts and scrapes will heal. Bruises will fade away. Scars from cruel words, however, will stay with one for a lifetime.

**Out of Rope**

D.J. Shotwell

“…DID YOU HAVE TO GET HIT, HUH?” my Uncle Raphael screamed, ”’CAUSE NOW I HAVE TO TELL YOUR MOTHER WHAT HAPPENED, AND YOU **KNOW** ALL HELL IS GONNA BREAK LOOSE WHEN THAT HAPPENS! ¡CHRIST NIŃO! TU MADRE ME VA A MATAR. ¿QUÈ HE-”.

So I’m sitting in a newly refurbished 1969 Mustang, the owner of which is cursing fluently in Spanish and looking for ways to get some distance between us. I try my hardest not to smile with pride, concentrating instead on the “Low Rider” song that’s playing on the radio.

We pass the house for the third (maybe fifth) time and take a left at the end of the street. Mr. Samuel, an old, retired, professional pencil-pusher, confusedly waves at us from behind his treasured gladiolus and achillea flowers once again. The crunch of the gravel under the car gets louder and the ride gets pretty bumpy, not that we care. Knowing the hell that is about to unfold, neither of us is eager to go up that driveway. That woman is scary when she’s mad. But as I sit there, feeling my left eye throb and slowly swell shut, I review what progressed that day in my head. *Could have been worse,* I thought.

As cliché as it may sound, the day started like any other. I got up, brushed my teeth, and ate some breakfast (two chocolate chip waffles with scrambled eggs on the side, thank you very much). I put on my Spiderman shirt, cargo shorts, and flip-flops (it’s always sunny in Miami), and prepared myself for another day of second grade. Doing the everyday every day, you know? I then obediently got in the car and headed to school, just like all the other children with no control over their lives. No big deal, right? Right.

After dropping off my lunchbox and Pokemon cards in my school cubby, I went outside to the playground. Now, most boys would be looking for other boys to play with, jumping off swings or possibly re-enacting the latest Power Rangers episode, but not me. I had grown accustomed to a much different activity. Every day, under the big, newly blooming jacaranda tree, a little Columbian girl played alone with her dolls. Her name was Maria Rodriguez, and she couldn’t speak a word of English, which explained her lack of friends. Her silky black hair was always pulled back into two identical braids brought together by a bright pink Hello Kitty band, revealing a face pretty enough to always make me feel despairingly unworthy, yet desperately hopeful. Sort of like Quasimodo from Hunchback of Notre Dame.

This was the perfect time for me to make myself known to the object of my affection, right? I mean, she wouldn’t have been able to understand a word I was saying, and I have absolutely no affinity for Barbie dolls, but it’s always nice to have someone you can call “friend” (or “amigo,” as it were), right? Right? Right.

If only my feet would **move**.

Unfortunately, this is one of my major flaws: I **suck** at talking to girls. Some guys can go up to just about any girl and strike up a conversation about some inane subject, like the weather or how many clowns it takes to replace a light bulb. Some guys are so good that they can actually get girls to come to them, having the girls themselves start the conversation. I am **not** one of those guys. I freeze up just thinking about talking to a girl I like. I can never act on impulse. If I had to speak to a girl, there was always a strict “three word answer” rule that I stuck to like Moses to the Ten Commandments. So, like good old Quasimodo, I sat at the back of the playground, watching Maria day after day, talking myself in and out of the idea of finally making myself known.

That’s when Michael showed up.

Remember what I said earlier about guys who were good with girls? Well, that was this guy (as good as any fourth grader could be anyway), and he had his sights on my, as of yet, unclaimed prize. He sauntered over with his perfectly maintained, gelled hair, Rugrats watch, and Digimon shoes, and gazed at my Maria as if she were already his. As he got closer, he put on a dazzling smile, showing off his shiny new green and blue braces.

What was I to do? There was no way I, a mere second grader, could win-out against him. This is Michael Hamilton we’re talking about here! I heard that he had already lost all of his baby teeth and could ride a bike with no training wheels. He was just way too cool! I was already turning, knowing the battle was lost before the first stone was even thrown, and wondering if any of the other boys had already claimed the position of the black Power Ranger in their game, when a scream cut the air. Turning back around, I saw Michael throw what looked like one of Maria’s dolls into a neighbor’s yard, laughing as it flopped helplessly back to earth. He didn’t like the fact that Maria was giving more attention to her dolls than to him and decided to get rid of the competition. Maria, for her part, did not seem to share Michael’s enjoyment with her doll’s sudden departure, and smacked his face like a tether ball.

I swear to God, and whoever else out there that may be listening, that to this day my feelings for Maria in that instance have never been rivaled. She had rebuked Michael. Michael! Maybe there was hope after all! Unfortunately, Michael did not appreciate being slapped, and he promptly pushed Maria, whose head collided painfully with the trunk of the tree as she tumbled into the mud.

That’s when the tunnel vision took over. My mind was ablaze with questions and concern: *Did he just…?* ...*No, he couldn’t of… Is she bleeding?… Should I get a teacher? … WWJD? …* Then she started crying.

OH **HELL** NO!

The rest is now only a blurry memory. I remember sprinting to her aid, fists at the ready, eyes wild, screaming like a fourteen-year-old girl at a Justin Beiber concert and jumping on Michael. The ensuing fight consisted of a jumble of punches, kicks, bites, and sticks being smashed across each other’s head (that’s right, I was packing heat back in the day) resulting in the sweet taste of victory for yours truly. As I stood over my fallen foe, I savored my brilliant victory. Let’s see him smooth talk girls now, with a black eye and a swollen lip.

That “fight” lasted a grand total of 25 seconds, give or take a second or two, because a teacher had also seen the act of cruelty that had fueled my rage. She quickly pulled us apart, sent us to opposite sides of the playground, and stooped to check on Maria. All three of us were then escorted to the main office, where they called each of our guardians to pick us up.

I felt terrible. I was finally less than five feet away from Maria, and the only memory she has of me would be spoiled by her lost Barbie and Michael. What do I do now? Do I run? Hide? No, I was taught better than that. I turned towards her (What else could I do? She must hate me!) with an apology on my lips, only to find her already looking at me, with her slightly muddy hair in two unraveling braids loosely held together by a mud splattered Hello Kitty band, revealing a lightly bruised face pretty enough to still make me feel despairingly unworthy, yet desperately hopeful, and said, “Tank Ooo,” smiling so sweetly that bees would swear off honey to get more of it.

My heart soared! She not only spoke to me but had blessed me with her happiness! What was a little pain when the object of my affection deemed me worthy of her sweet voice? What else in the world even mattered anymore? Nothing could possibly go wrong! “Nabugacraduba” (You’re Welcome), I answered in a soft, almost hoarse voice I couldn’t even recognize.

Classic. I was a **real** ladies man.

Shortly after this exchange, my uncle picked me up. I remembered that other thing I had to worry about. What would he do to me? How much trouble was I in? He seemed amiable enough when he picked me up, but adults have a scary way of hiding their true emotions until a more private moment is available. The walk to the car was eerily quiet -- I’m talking “my girlfriend just saw my internet history” quiet.

Once in the car, my uncle turned to me, still eerily calm, and said, “I’ll be completely honest with you, I’m proud of you.” I was stunned! Proud? How could he be proud? I got into a fight which is the one thing my mother would never tolerate. He had to be mistaken. But, after expressing my doubts, my uncle slowly shook his head and proclaimed, “Nińo, I believe that there are some actions in this world that are unforgivable. Raising your hand against a woman is one of those actions, no matter the excuse, and is in every way a hanging offense. According to your actions earlier today, I’d say that you agree. You just so happened to be out of rope.”

I relaxed after hearing this and reveled in my newly discovered moral code. I was only trying to protect what was important to me, and yet I ended up finding something even more valuable. Who knew I had something like scruples? Then, thinking that I would at least have an advocate when approaching my mother (she **was** going to kill me even with my uncles defense), I heard my uncle say, “One problem though,” rage filling his voice, “DID YOU HAVE TO GET HIT, HUH? ’CAUSE NOW I HAVE TO TELL YOUR MOTHER WHAT HAPPENED, AND YOU **KNOW…** “

**Holes in the Floor of Heaven**

**Allie Jackson**

Sixteen years old and living for the minute. That was me … until February 16, 2011. My life was forever changed; the girl that had the perfect family, boyfriend, and friends was the one that was left brokenhearted and helpless on this earth. The unimaginable had happened: my mom, my best friend, my advice giver, and my “Wendy Woo,” was taken from me. She was in a horrific car accident because of someone else’s irresponsible driving. Even though so many people were devastated, I felt like I was the only one in the world hurting. It was my dad, my sister, and me left. That was it, or at least that’s what I thought.

A week after her death, I went back to school, terrified of what was waiting for me when I got there. I was wrong. Everyone welcomed me back, and my teachers were so understanding. That helped, but it still didn’t change anything. I got into my routine: waking up, going to school, going to softball, and going home. That was it. I wasn’t really living, just going through the motions every day. Nothing changed; everything was the same for a little while.

Early in May, the grief hit me. The staff of Gilchrist Elementary held a memorial service for my mom at the school where she worked as a bookkeeper. I loved the Gilchrist staff; they were the sweetest people and like another family to her. Going there, I was expecting more hugs and people asking, “How are you doing?” This event wasn’t exactly what I wanted to do, but as my dad always said, “We don’t do it for us; we do it for everyone else. We are an example.”

So I went with a smile on my face and a good attitude. I walked in and gave a hug to my favorite office people, and my mom’s closest friends there, Mrs. Chetta and Mrs. Julie. Things still looked the same, but little did I know I would hit a brick wall in about ten minutes. We all made our way to the brick garden where I saw a brick that said “Wendy Jackson: 2008-2011.” I sat down on the bench, on the verge of tears and listened as Principal David Solz spoke. He introduced Avis Berry, a very sweet lady I had met once before, who began singing “Holes in the Floor of Heaven” by Steve Wariner.

I fell apart. The song had to have been written for me. I realized that my mom made more of an impact on our family, Gilchrist, and our neighborhood than we could wrap our minds around. She hadn’t left me, and I wasn’t alone. I had my dad, my sisters, my second mommas and second dads, my best friends, my boyfriend, and everyone else who knew her. It would never be just me, and that’s exactly how my mom wanted it to be.

On February 16, 2011, I lost my mom, my best friend, my advice giver, and my “Wendy Woo,” but I gained my guardian angel. She isn’t gone and never will be. She has left too big of an imprint on people’s lives to be just gone. God blessed me with an angel on earth and even though she wasn’t here for long, she raised me to be who I am today. We all miss her so much, but we know everything’s going to be alright when we watch the sun go down and see that she is a part of that beauty.

But there’s holes in the floor of Heaven

And her tears are pouring down

That’s how you know she’s watching

Wishing she could be here now

And sometimes when I’m lonely

I remember she can see

There’s holes in the floor of Heaven

And she’s watching over you and me.

**I Hate You**

Anonymous

People fall in love. People fall out of love. As for me, I fell into pure, unadulterated hatred. I hate you for picking me. Why me? I was dating someone else, someone who really cared about me, someone who I hurt because of you, someone who now hates me. We were the dream couple, we were happy. But then you came along with your magic and your charm and your words. It didn’t take long for me to be yours.

I hate you for making me fall in love. You said all the right things. You did all the right things. How was I supposed to escape? You didn’t just play games, you invented them. We spent beautiful evenings together. We danced under the stars with the moonlight shining until it was two in the morning. We kissed in the rain after having the world’s biggest and messiest mud fight in your back yard. We walked barefoot on the cool beach sand, hand in hand. We slept through the freezing cold December breeze with nothing but the sound of the waves to disturb us. Every moment felt like heaven to me. We had the kind of romance that Hollywood could only dream of creating. It was ours and no one else’s.

I hate you for loving me. I remember the first night you said those three words to me, those three stupid words. We were at our favorite park, and it was past midnight. I was swinging, and you were pushing me. Then, you turned me around and looked at me with those clear deep blue eyes. “I love you.” The world stopped, while you stared. The day you spoke those sweet words to me, I wasn’t nervous anymore; I wasn’t sad anymore. My happiness depended on you, and yours depended on mine. Life was perfect. We were perfect.

I hate you for being ashamed of me. I know I may not be the prettiest girl. I know I may be a little weird for you with my odd sense of humor. I know I may be too outgoing, and that always speaking my mind got under your skin. But I am human. When you told me you wanted to keep our relationship a secret, it tore a small rip in my heart that grew larger with every passing day. You said it would be more intimate if it was private. I disagreed, but my opinion didn’t matter to you. You wanted the world to be left oblivious of me and of us. I tried to never show you how much it hurt me, but you knew. What was wrong with me? You ignored me in the halls, in front of your friends, and in front of mine. All I wanted was to show the world how lucky I was. It wasn’t fair.

I hate you for convincing me that I was nothing. You certainly had a way with words. When we fought, you would bring me down in every way you could. You told me that I was stupid. You told me that I was a slut. You told me that I was atrocious. But worst of all, you told me that I didn’t deserve you. I believed you. I thought I was a terrible person. I thought I was the cause of my own unhappiness. I thought it was my fault that you were so cruel. I was nothing more than. *I hated myself.* I wanted out of my own skin. Nothing I could do could make things better. You insisted that I earned every hateful thing you said.

I hate you for lying. You told me you loved me, and only me. You said that we would be together forever. Soon I found out that you were with another girl; you had been for months. You were whispering to her the same sweet nothings that you had tickled my ears with so many times. I gave you my whole heart, and you just threw it away like flavorless gum. *But, I loved you.* I wasn’t about to give you up. You were my everything. And you *promised* things would be different. I trusted you.

I hate you for stealing my body. We always talked about having sex, but had decided it was for after high school. But when you said you loved another, things changed. You wanted to now, but I didn’t. I told you I was too you, that I wasn’t ready for that kind of commitment. I could hear you thinking, “Well, she is.” I told you I didn’t want to. *I told you I didn’t want to.* It happened anyway. I was only 15. I was so young! How could you? You knew how I felt. There was no way out. I was trapped. You took everything from me that I valued. I said no. *I said no.* Without a second thought, you had stolen my life.

I hate you for hurting me. Finally, it became too much. I felt the pressure. I felt the anger. I felt aching pain you had caused me. So I spoke up. I told you that you were treating me wrong. I told you that I didn’t deserve the malicious way you acted toward me, and how appalled and hurt I was that you cheated. I dreaded hearing what you would say next. I hoped for an apology. I hoped for a hug. All I got was hurt. You hit me. You told me to never speak to you like that again. For the second time in my life, the world stopped. I couldn’t help but burst into tears. That was the wrong thing to do. You threw me to the ground and held me down. “STOP CRYING. THIS IS YOUR FAULT,” you yelled. It never ended. My head was ringing, it hurt to breathe, it hurt to look at you. Anger masked your face. Rage took over your body. You demolished my glasses. You knocked over furniture. You were reckless. I was terrified.

Through all the tears, the hurt, and the hatred you have caused, I only have two more words for you: *thank you*. I learned a lesson from you that I will forever cherish and appreciate. I learned to love myself. You helped to mold me into who I am today. You allowed me to believe in myself, and not just in other people. I know that when something is wrong, I can speak up for myself. I can defend myself. I can fight back. I can say no. Depending on people in normal; learning how to balance it is the hard part. I can make things happen for myself, by myself. Because of you, I won’t ever be hurt like that again. I don’t need to be controlled to be happy. No person should be hurt the way I was, but now I have learned. I am a strong person. I am a confident person. I am my own person, all thanks to you.

**Light and Loose**

Chase Mamatey

I loathe crayons.

It was my second first day of kindergarten, and I dreaded what this year would hold until Mrs. Joanos' "Good morning, Chase" helped soothe me. While waiting for the rest of the class to arrive, I thought of the upsides of being held back. I daydreamed about the perks that my previous year’s worth of experience would surely provide. *I mean, I have already gone through the class once; how hard can it* *be? I can simply cruise through the school year, and it will all work out, right? Right?*

*Wrong.* This year I met one of my greatest obstacles in life: perfectionism.

Mrs. Joanos concluded her self-introduction for the new class and explained our first activity. She gave each of us a brand new eight-pack of trusty Crayola “crowns,” and directions to color the picture. When we finished the picture, we could go out to play until she called us in. *I’ve been through kindergarten once already, so I’m sure I can do a better job than the rest of the class.*

I pulled the red “crown” out of the box. It would be my color of choice. I found my grip with my right hand, and I stuck my tongue out to the left, as any good colorer should. I was going to do this right. I mashed my red “crown” down on the paper and began to color thoroughly and methodically. As I worked, one classmate, then another, stood up and walked outside. By the time I was halfway finished, eight more students stepped outside. *I have to keep it inside the lines. I can't leave any white spaces.* At last, I finished and strutted outside, confident my drawing was the best in the entire class. I found a group of boys to play with on the playground, but my mind was still on my wonderful drawing instead of our games. My glory was cut short, however, when Mrs. Joanos called us in after I had enjoyed only a short venture outside. *How is this fair? I drew the best one, so why do I get the least playground time?*

The following day started much the same: the same comforting greeting and the same awful coloring activity. *I’ll do better today.*

I pulled the yellow “crown” out of the box. It would be my color of choice. I found my grip with my right hand, and I stuck my tongue out to the left, as any experienced colorer

should. I may have messed up yesterday, but today I was going to do it right. I crushed my yellow "crown” down on the paper and began to color slowly and deliberately. Again, one classmate, then another, stood up and walked outside. By the time I was halfway finished, ten more students stepped outside. *I have to keep it under control. There can’t be any white spaces.* Soon enough, I was the last person in the room, and I was still working. I finally finished and strolled outside onto the playground. Again, I was sure my drawing was the best in the entire class. Again, I found the group of boys to play with. Again, my mind was on my drawing instead of our games. Again, my success was cut short when Mrs. Joanos called us in after only a short time outside. *How is this fair? I drew the best one, so why do I get the least playground time* ***again***? *I am going to talk to my parents about this injustice.*

I presented the dilemma to my parents. Laughing at my dreadful situation, my dad told me to keep my coloring “light and loose.” “If you want more time on the playground, you have to finish faster, which means you have to be less detailed.” I was not sure how this would fix anything, but I figured I would give it a try.

The next day started much like the first two: the same comforting greeting and the same god-forsaken coloring activity; only this time, I had a spark of hope: *light and loose.*

I pulled the green “crown” out of the box. It would be my color of choice. I found a new, looser grip that felt foreign to my hand, and I stuck my tongue out to the left, as any experienced colorer should. Today was the day I was going to get this right. This time I gently pressed my green “crown” down on the paper and began to color lightly and loosely. Everything I colored looked too faint. I had to go over it again and again so that the drawing was dark enough and tight enough to meet my satisfaction. Again, one classmate, then another, stood up and walked outside. Once *again,* I was the last person in the room, and I was still working. *My daddy's advice failed me.*

After what seemed an eternity, we stopped coloring. I barely improved my speed and finished last every day. While my classmates were at best learning to recognize the names of the basic colors, I was learning to recognize a flaw in me that would nag me the rest of my life.

At the end of the school year, when the students' drawings were hung on the wall, my collection stood out from the rest like a set of masterpieces. That is when it dawned on me that perfectionism has an upside after all. Perhaps one reason perfectionism is so hard to

shake is that, even though perfection is unattainable, perfectionism consistently produces quality results. The stresses of perfectionism combined with the rewards make for a mixed blessing that is both the most useful asset and the most weakening curse.

I still loathe crayons.

**Shattered Glass**

Carilyn Powers

Alcoholism is a disease, and even those who know this can’t understand it. I will never be able to fathom why somebody picks up a drink and can’t put it down for the life of him or her. My dad is one of those people. I could tell him to put down the drink, but there was no way he’d listen. I could tell him that I hated being around him, but it wouldn’t change anything. There was nothing I could do that night, or the night before, or the night before.

I opened the door to my house and strolled into the kitchen to find both my parents chatting. I immediately threw in a quick, “Hi, school was fine” to avoid any talking. I slipped right past my parents and up to my bedroom.

I went upstairs, showered, dressed, and made my way back down. I knew exactly what was for dinner. The fragrances of Eggplant Parmesan lingered under my nose; I felt myself pick up the pace. I could taste the food in my mouth, but something made the taste go sour: the drink in my dad’s hand. I stomped past my Dad.

“Is the food ready?” I asked impatiently, wanting to get out of the kitchen as soon as possible. It was, so I started serving myself.

**"Come here and sit down. I need to talk to you about something.”**

“Okay, I’m just fixing myself a—”

**"Now.”**

My heart sank, and my mind raced. It only takes a simple drop of a pin to trigger my dad’s temper, and when the pin drops, so does my stomach. *Did I forget to do the dishes? No. Did I leave my room a mess? No. Think about what you did so you can—*

**"SIT DOWN NOW.”** I could feel the anger in my dad’s voice.

I walked over to the table and sat next to him. He waited what seemed like a lifetime to tell me what was on his mind.

**"Tell me this: While your mother and I were out of town, did you use my four hundred dollar Waterford crystal glasses?”**

I had not used the crystal. There was no way. I knew immediately who used them: my brother. My brother got kicked out of the house though, so I couldn’t say that he used them. I didn’t use them though. I didn’t use them.

"I don’t know. I guess I might have. I don’t really know what glasses you’re talking about.”

**"You mean to say that you don’t know the difference between a normal glass and a FOUR HUNDRED dollar Waterford crystal?”**

The only words I could mutter were, “I...I don’t know."

He slammed his hand on the table and shook the house beneath me. My hands were trembling, and I felt like my head was pounding from all angles. The more he shouted, the closer he got to my face; the more I could smell the vodka on his breath.

The smell of alcohol hung in the air before me as he roared, **“Tell me why someone used my Waterford glasses, NOW.”**

My voice was shaky, and at that point, I couldn’t help but squeeze my fists together and scream, “I DON’T KNOW! PLEASE STOP YELLING AT ME. IT'S NOT HELPING, AND IT NEVER DOES!”

That’s when my mom stepped in. You could tell she was trying to hold back. “Stop yelling at her, Richard. This is NOT a conversation. She said she didn’t use the damn glasses, so cut it out.”

**“Why don’t you let me speak with my daughter and stay out of this?”**

“You are NOT speaking to her. You are screaming just like you always do. This isn’t about your damn glasses.” My mom grabbed one of the glasses out of the cabinet. “Are these the ones, Richard? Are these the precious glasses that you’re yelling at your daughter about? You like these that much?”

I couldn’t believe what my mom did, but I also thought *it's about time.* Her face was so stiff with anger, and I could see her hands shake. She snatched the crystal glasses one by one; she raised them over her head, and she shattered each glass at my dad’s feet.

**CRASH.**

"YOU LIKE THIS ONE?”

**CRASH.**

“HOW ABOUT THIS ONE?”

There were shards of glass scattered on the kitchen tile, but there was something that glass represented to me. It was the anger that my mom and I had bundled up for years, so he could see it. My mom broke the glasses just as he broke our hearts every night that he drank himself into oblivion.

"Well, there you go. Now there are no glasses to worry about.” My mom came over to me, and like many other times in my life, she whispered, “It’s time to go.”

I grabbed my keys, and we flew out of the house slamming the door behind us as we ignored the last drunken comments. I started the car, backed out of the driveway, and yanked the wheel to the left. I clinched the steering wheel like I was on a roller coaster. I tried to hold back the tears, but the burning in my eyes wouldn’t let me. The objects through the windshield turned to colorful blurs.

“Pull over,” my mom muttered.

I pulled to the side of the road and turned off the car. Silence.

“I know your brother was the one who used the glasses; I’m sorry it got taken out on you--again.” There was nothing else my mom could say to me that she hadn’t said before.

After avoiding the house for a couple of hours, my mom and I went home. We tip-toed into the house to find my dad passed out in a chair with his head slung back as though his neck was broken. The overwhelming odor of alcohol and disappointment hung in every corner of the kitchen.

That night was the worst it has ever been with my dad--the worst it has ever been with the alcohol poisoning his brain. When I woke up the next morning, he didn’t even remember the night before: a memory that I will have to live with forever. Watching my dad, drink by drink, has taught me to never let alcohol reign over my life. Alcoholics put drinking above everything. My dad has put it above his family for the past thirty years. Through the rage that the alcohol brings him, he has broken windows, doors, and, most of all, he has broken his family.

**It's How You Say It**

Patrick McGarry

As a child, I was always careful about what I said. My parents brought me up to use my manners, be polite, to not talk bad about people in front of or behind them, etc. If there was one thing my parents were proud of in their children, it was their exceptional behavior. However, even as well behaved as I was in public and at home alike, I was still learning the delicate intricacies of social interaction. One lesson on the subject I came by rather harshly, and to this day I remember the event remarkably clearly.

"It's not always what you say; it's how you say it"

Everyone says this to young children, along with a plethora of other bits of wisdom, but no one seems to process this particular bit until they accidentally use the wrong tone of voice to the wrong person and pay for it. For me, this age-old adage stuck when I was about seven or so. It was bed time, right around 8:30, and my step father, a tall, powerful, almost frightening man, was tucking my younger sister Shannon and me into bed. I very vividly remember climbing over the toddler gates we had set up for my baby sister Kaitlyn, and crawling into the highly coveted and sought after top bunk, as is my right on account of being the eldest child. Decked out in my pajamas that had "Star Wars" written all over them, I made an odd figure in my sister's pink Barbie covered room, which I had to sleep in that night. At one point I made a comment on how her room smelled funny compared to mine, which, in all fairness, with dirty clothes strewn about the entire room, was decently justified. However my stepfather, smart as ever, said, "Well it's probably you," and laughed at his own joke at my expense. Hurt, I sat up from the Barbie comforter on the bed and said, "You wouldn't like it if I said that about you, so don't say it about me."

Oh boy, was that the wrong thing to say. One thing to know about my step father is that he has a very bad, sometimes uncontrollable temper. Some days he's just one push away from totally snapping and going off on the nearest thing he can find a half decent excuse for. This time, it was me. I'm not sure if I actually did say it with an attitude, because I remember I meant to be calm and sincere in how he had hurt me, or if he was just in a particularly bad mood that day. Regardless of which, he whipped around with fire in his eyes and strode over to the bed side. All I could think was "Why is he upset? Why is he mad at me?" Possibly the most vivid memory of my life, he picked me up by my underarms and carried me over the toddler gates we had in the house, in the process hitting my right leg against the wall and bruising it. He took me to his room and threw me down on the bed. I remember bouncing once before he pinned my shoulders and just started screaming. I wasn't afraid, I knew he wouldn't hit me or hurt me in any way. More than anything, I was just confused. I couldn't make a connection in my mind between the innocent comment I had made and his sudden fit of anger. The rest is mostly just a blur: his yelling, my mother crying, his hands digging into my shoulders, the spittle flying onto my face... And then it was over. He let go and turned away, saying I could go back to bed. And so I did.

I didn't cry, and I wasn't overly upset. The entire ordeal had simply confused me. Walking up the hallway back to my sister's room seemed to take an eternity, staring down at the white tiles trying to figure what had just happened. In that time my logical little mind finally processed the entire experience as "It's not always what you say; it's how you say it". To this day, I've been even more careful about what I say: always "Sir" and "Ma'am", never less than completely and perfectly polite, especially to my step father. I doubt anyone else remembers it anymore, but I've held onto it over the years, and I honestly believe that it's for the best. Never again did I make the mistake of using the wrong inflection during a delicate conversation.

**The Mud Girl**

Sid Bigham

There's something decidedly awry about the opposite sex. It's not unlike a flaw, a certain ambiguous incompatibility that we have all seen or felt in some way. Perhaps this fact is the very mystery that draws us together; perhaps we are all just searching for the answer to that question so commonly posed about the opposite sex: "What the hell?" I, for one, have had my fair share of these problems, but there is one experience that will stand out in my mind forever as the day I realized that girls truly are different.

It was a warm day in early June, not a cloud in the sky. I arrived at Temple Israel Preschool with the same objectives in mind that I had every day: eat some sand and avoid kissey girls. The day started off badly; my best friends, Lawton and Brian, were nowhere to be found. One might think I was disappointed in the lack of good company or that perhaps I was distressed because there was no one else to share my sand with; in fact, there was a far better reason for my worry than social seclusion. It was the same reason all the guys traveled in packs when venturing away from our monkey bar stronghold. Because at any moment, any guy anywhere could be set upon by a horde of frenzied, kissey girls--a fate worse than death. Only having a few good friends around could save your hide once you were caught. Since I could find no comrades to join me at the sandbox, I was forced to settle at the top of the rope ladder fortress. I didn't usually like being up there. Everyone knew the rope ladder guys were thugs. They would consistently be found loitering about the water hose waiting to soak anyone who wandered too close. Worse yet, they had all done time, hard time. We're talking fifteen, even twenty, minutes of timeout.

I chose a quiet corner of the fort where I could look out over the entrance to the playground. I sat and waited for Brian or Lawton to show up while studiously avoiding eye contact with my malevolent neighbors. There were three or four of us up there. The others were talking in low voices, but they didn't seem to care that I had joined them. I didn't see their usual ringleader, a kid named Jimmy; maybe there would be no trouble today. A few minutes later, I heard someone call from below. "Hey, you guys. Help me lift it up!"

The three kids I was sharing the fort with were big guys, and at the sound of Jimmy's voice, they all jumped up to help. I tried to convince myself that they were just hauling up a

little sand from the sandbox or something equally harmless. Much to my surprise, the four kids hauled up a large green bucket, and it *was* filled with sand. Maybe these guys weren't so bad; they seemed to have their priorities straight anyway. Jimmy came up last holding a plastic shovel. "Now, we need the water," he dictated. The other guys clamored out of the fort each with a bucket, which he filled with water from the hose.

When they returned, each emptied his bucket of water into the larger bucket of sand. Mud! These guys really were OK. Mud was just about the greatest invention ever. As far as I was concerned, it was the single most effective means of getting dirty ever devised, and I took full advantage. Jimmy began stirring the mud slowly, getting it to just the right texture and thickness. When he was done, he smiled. Then, Jimmy looked to me and said, "Hey, Sid, listen to this." I carefully walked over to where he sat and listened as he unfolded the plan. There was a girl outside the fort, maybe twenty feet off. She was facing us, playing in the sand. She was wearing a blue and white plaid dress and a little, red bow in her hair. Jimmy pointed out as much and then told me what to do. "All you gotta do is take this bucket of mud over there and pour it on her head," he told me. It seemed like a good idea at the time. Here you have a girl looking very sad and lonely. She must have been very uncomfortable in that dress. If there was anyone who needed a bucket of mud poured on her head that day, she was the one. I practically laughed out loud at my own excitement; she would love me for this! Perhaps she would become my friend and even earn me kissey-girl immunity.

As I climbed out of the fort onto the ground, I cautiously looked out for any kissey girls who might be watching. The girl was facing me, but not really paying me much attention. I hefted the bucket up by its white, plastic handle and began to stealthily walk a large half-circle around the girl. I was careful to stay well away from her so as not to arouse any suspicion. The bucket was heavy and awkward, and I remember stopping for a moment before sneaking up behind her. I started for her slowly, lifting the bucket by the bottom so that its upper lip came to my chin. I crept slowly, ever closer. The soft, damp sand beneath my shoes made no sound as I stole nearer. I was just behind her. The sun shone at just the right angle so that my shadow stretched far behind me. I heaved the bucket over my head and flipped it upside down in one smooth motion. For a moment nothing happened, and the playground stood still, waiting. Then the mud came, and it was no pathetic trickle. It was a

torrent, an inundation the likes of which that playground had never before seen and surely hasn't seen since. The muck cascaded over her head crushing the little, red bow. It ran along her face and down the back of her neck. The cold, wet ooze seeped into her dress and flowed down her arms in tributaries that collected in her lap. I stood there triumphantly with my bucket held high and beamed at my good deed. This was my moment.

Then, she shrieked. Tears streamed down her face, and she *wailed.* Teachers came running from seemingly every direction. They scooped us both up and swept us away. The entire playground

watched the procession in awe. This was not what I had expected. Sure, I had known in the back of my mind that the teachers would be mad, but why was she crying? It was just mud. Luckily for me, I had plenty of time to think about what was going on. They put me in that time out chair for a full half-hour. I distinctly remember seeing the girl hurried into the bathroom where there was a shower. I can see her walking out of that bathroom, scratching her sandy head, squinting her sandy eyes, and giving me the look of death, if a sandy look it was.

That day, I had a true revelation. Girls are different. They don't enjoy mud, and they don't eat sand. Worse yet, they dress up, and they like it. Since that incident, I have been able to cope with some of the "crazy" things girls do, and I hope that they can be understanding when we guys pour mud on their heads. In the end, I've learned to take things dealing with the opposite sex as they come, and whenever I find myself getting too frustrated or angry, I can always look back on that experience and smile. For I know that girls are different, and that is enough.

**Fearfully and Wonderfully Made**

Kelsey Owen

*“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” – Psalms 139:14*

When children approach adolescence, they become embarrassed by their parents’ behavior in public, old bare-bottomed baby pictures, or stories from their past. These things baffled me too, but I, however, was different. I was most embarrassed by my brother, Drew. Drew has Down syndrome, a genetic disorder caused by an extra chromosome. Through my adolescence, I thought I could completely hide him from my life. When I was thirteen years old, I thought beauty was straight hair, brand-named clothes, and make-up, but over the next three years, my idea of beauty changed. When I was sixteen, I saw beauty in Drew.

  Thecurious but rude stares of people Drew got in public filled me with anger. *Haven’t people seen a person different from them?!”* I thought. What made me even more furious was how Drew was so carefree about it all. He always walked around with his signature smile, fascinated by the outside world.  When I moved to Tallahassee, I kept him away from my new friends, school open houses, and chorus concerts.  All I wanted was to be accepted, and I thought hiding Drew was going to do that.

  When I got into high school, hiding my secret of having a brother with Down syndrome became worse. I would become sick with embarrassment when Drew came up to me during school or congratulate me at homecoming powder puff games. I gave him the cold shoulder and did not care about Drew’s feelings. The funny thing was, Drew kept on smiling and loving me just as he always had.

  When I reached the tender age of sixteen, it was my duty to pick Drew up after school. On the good days, I would take him to the local Circle K where he had $5 in his wallet to buy an orange soda. People with Down syndrome keep a strict routine in their head; and if I disrupted Drew’s, he was not a happy camper. So, every day became a good day after school. It was a day in May when I picked Drew up from school.

  “How was Leon?” he asked, as soon as we got outside every day.

  “Fine. How was scho-?” I responded.

“Good,” Drew interrupted, knowing EXACTLY what I was going to ask him.

  I was not angry; I grinned and thought to myself how funny it was we carry on this conversation every day. We got in the car, drove to Circle K, and he jumped out of the car with his camouflage wallet, anticipating the bright orange, cold drink that would soon be his.

I remember not having a good day because I had my hair up in a messy bun, I wore torn Nike running shorts, a shirt that didn’t match, and had sweated my make-up off. I was driving Drew home, blasting the radio, not wanting to carry on any conversations. That’s when Drew made a bold move to turn the radio down and say one sentence that will stay in my mind forever.

“You have a beautiful face, Sister,” he said, moving his hands around his face.

I paused for what seemed like the longest minute of my life to collect my thoughts and think of what to respond.

“Thanks, Bud, you have a beautiful face, too,”I said to him. We both smiled the whole way home.

  When I got home, I looked in the mirror and realized my hair did not have to be straight, my name-brand clothes did not matter, and my make-up was a waste of time. Drew saw me at my absolute worst and told me I was beautiful. I talked to God when I got home and I told Him that Drew’s look do not matter to me anymore.  God sent Drew to me to teach me the value of beauty and that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Drew is not only my brother who has Down syndrome: he is my best friend. He loves more than anyone I know, and I strive to love and see life as he does. He turns my worst of days into the best of days, and I am a very lucky girl to have someone like him. I look back and think to myself: I was running from the precious love that was waiting for me the whole time. I thank God for my best friend, Drew, and for sending him to teach me the importance of seeing the beauty in others, no matter how he or she appears.

**ACL**

Tim McArthur

**WEE-OOO, WEE-OOO, WEE-OOO**. The buzzer to end halftime shreds the humid, March air. Both teams trot off the field from our warm-up. I take off my helmet to get some water. “TIM! Will you get your dumb ass on the field? I told you that you were starting the second half.” Coach Rice never fails to get our spirits up.

“Sorry, Coach,” I muttered as I threw my helmet on and ran out to midfield to take the face off. The game was going exactly as we all knew it would. We were playing the best team in town and were already trailing by five points. I was playing defense on this scrawny kid who talked way too much trash for his own good. I was determined to embarrass this punk, and thirty seconds later, I got my opportunity. A high, slow, floating pass came from upfield and was going to fly right over my head. *Perfect, I’m picking this one off and taking it straight to goal.* This is not what happened. I jumped and snagged the bum pass, and as soon as I landed, the kid dove at me and put his shoulder on the outside of my right knee. My knee collapsed. Rolling on the ground, writhing in pain, I knew I was done.

It seemed like it took a week and a half for my assistant coach to run out and pick me up off the field. He dragged me back to the bench where the team’s trainer came over and started to try and move my knee. **“STOP!”**I ripped his hand off of my wrecked leg. It just wouldn’t stop hurting. It felt like someone had rammed a knife into the back of my knee. I begged God to make it stop.

The next day held the news I already knew but couldn’t bear to hear. I saw my orthopedist; he knew right away that I had torn my ACL. The MRI later that day brutally confirmed his diagnosis. I was left in a full leg immobilizer and with a spirit-crushing limp. All I had to look forward to was an April 14th surgery date. I finally got home; I was ready to burst. The last 36 hours of my life had been misery at its finest. I hobbled into my living room and was getting ready to begin an endless rant about how horrible was life was. Then, my dad came into the room.

It’s never hard to tell when my dad is on the way; you can hear the hum of his motorized wheelchair from across the house. My dad has MS−−a debilitating disease that destroys nerve function throughout the body. He was diagnosed when I was three and slowly began losing his ability to walk. Four years ago, he finally became wheelchair-bound.

*So this is what it’s like.* I stared at my dad for what seemed like an hour, and I understood. I understood why he seemed so ashamed every time he asked me to reach his cereal on the third shelf; I understood why every time he watched golf on the weekends he looked somber; I understood why every time I walked out on the Lacrosse field in my jersey his face lit up like a Christmas tree; I finally understood. My dad had his mobility, his livelihood stripped away from him four years ago. I had to deal with limping around for a few months, and I was ready to lay down and die. That was my moment of clarity. Walking is the most unappreciated gift we are given. Every morning when I get out of bed and walk to my bathroom to brush my teeth, I look down at the surgery scar on my knee and thank God that my gift was given back to me.

After I give my thanks, I curse my rebuilt knee; I wish I could give my second chance to my father.

**Confrontation Point**

Audrey Schueren

Exhausted, aching, tearstained and enlightened...that was how I felt when I returned from last summer’s mission trip to Tennessee. Going into it, I had hoped only to come away from the experience with an acceptable college admission essay topic and to help some family along the way. I had no idea that I would instead be left with an overwhelming understanding of how little others have, how lucky I am, and how little I truly appreciate the blessings in my life.

After a ten hour ride in the church van with eleven other people and unreliable air conditioning, the Advent youth finally reached our destination: Confrontation Point. I didn’t think much of the ministry’s name at the time; I just figured they were trying to be dramatic. We met with our counselor, Andy, and finally collapsed into our hard and sticky bunk beds.

The next morning, we were up at 6:30 to cook breakfast and set off for the work site. On the ride to our assigned house, Andy briefed us on our schedule for the day. We would be replacing a tin roof and sanding, painting and flooring a recent addition. Our leader tried to prepare us for the conditions we would be working under, but I don’t even think Andy was expecting the house to be as bad as it was. We bounced down a dirt driveway, the van veering to avoid old scraps of rusty metal and rotting, reeking garbage. An ancient trailer with only half a side was propped against a tilting house with a sunken-in porch and a roof that looked ready to collapse at any moment. A mangy, flea-bitten mutt loped over to us as we stepped cautiously from the van.

The family was inside. We could hear them shouting at each other. After waiting a few minutes, we decided to just get started--it was clear they had no intention of coming to greet us. On top of the roof, it must have been over 105 degrees. The 20-year old tin was crackling and bending under my feet, making me extremely uneasy. When Andy’s foot crashed through a thin spot, I knew I had good reason to be nervous. After what seemed like days of yanking out rusty, tar-covered nails, we were called down for lunch.

A petite girl, about 14 years old, with blond hair and blue eyes, stepped timidly out of the house. I found out that her name was Trish, and she lived in the house with her mother and several little brothers and sisters. She tapped my arm, and I bent down to listen.

"Would y'all care to cum in an' set a minit?" She gestured to my friends Aly and Morgan. "I got some Pepsi. It ain't rill cold, but...," Her barely audible voice trailed off, and she stared down at her feet, embarrassed.

"We would love to!" *Anything would be better than this blistering heat.* Wrong. The air inside was thick with flies; if I held still for five seconds, I would have 15 of them on me. There were gaping holes in the walls and the ceiling. Grimy dishes were stacked precariously on almost every available surface. Soiled clothing was tossed indiscriminately around the house, and the stench was indescribable. I was beginning to wish I had stayed on the roof. Trish's brothers, adorable, six-year-old twins, rushed past us on their way out of the house. We had to walk through the twins' room to get to the living room. I counted three massive carving knives on the floor of their bedroom along with lighters, and who knows what other "toys."

When we came to the living room, I chose to rest on the floor with the filthy clothes rather than sit on the moldy couch crusted with dead flies. I am so ashamed now that I could not even humble myself enough to rest on this girl’s furniture. As I started to talk with her, I discovered that she wanted to be an actress, and she wrote her own poetry; she had even won awards for poems she had submitted through her school. I asked Trish to read some of her work, and she agreed. I can’t remember what her poem was called or quote anything from it, but the gist was that she was happy for what God had given her. And it was beautiful. Wow. A girl from a background like hers--father dead, six brothers and sisters, an angry and violent mom, living in extreme poverty in the middle of nowhere--had a clearer perspective than I did. I have two loving parents, a pretty house, a great education, and a million opportunities.

In that moment, I reached my own confrontation point. I realized that I am not the person I thought I was, and I am not the person I want to be. I have everything I could ask for, yet I can’t just be thankful. I never did anything to deserve the blessings in my life, and Trish never did anything to deserve the situation she is in. After Trish left to put away her poems, I sat on that couch, covered in flies and dirt, and just cried. Maybe that’s what it takes for people to learn to shed a tear for a stranger. That moment was the great equalizer for me; it was the moment when I realized that I was no better and she was no less for the lives we had been given. If anything, she had been shaped into a better person than I am. I never saw Trish again. I will never know if she accomplished her dream. I doubt she even remembers my name. But I will always remember the way I felt that day, and I have no doubt that I am a better person today for having met her.

**Mother Knows Best**

Leigha Kelly-Knight

I loved candy and unicorns, princes and dogs, but more than anything I loved to be right, even if I didn’t believe what I was saying myself. I was a contrary little kid like most and would find any excuse to stir the pot. It wasn’t until I literally had the sense knocked into me that I realized mother knows best.

My mother would tell me usual mother things like “time for bed,” “take a shower,” “eat your food,” or “put on a jacket.” I would counter with “but I’m not tired,” “but I’m not dirty,” “but it’s icky,” “but I’m not cold!” But, but, but!Eventually that word was banned from my vocabulary in certain context due to excessive use ….

It was a crisp December day, and I decided to play outside. I ventured out in a fuzzy blue jacket, only because my mother hadn’t told me to put it on, and a pair of purple sneakers with extra traction on the sole. I planned on climbing the giant, leafless, mulberry tree in my front yard. I was never fond of heights and only climbed to the lowest branch and dangle my legs, about four feet up. I started up the tree, fingers sticking to the rough skin of the tree like a squirrel. Hand, foot, hand, foot, hand….

“Please don’t climb any higher than that first branch, it isn’t safe and I don’t want you to get stuck up there,” my mother called to me from the front door. *Oh game on*, I thought to myself.

“I won’t get scared! All the fun branches are at the top of the tree!” I hollered back.

“The lower branches are just as good, and I don’t want you going up there. Now, I am going to make some lunch. I want you inside in 15 minutes.”

“See you in 15,” I yelled back.

I had never intended to climb to the top of the Mulberry tree, and I didn’t really want to. But because my mom told me that I would get scared I had to climb to the top. It was me. I had to win. I had to be right. I had to prove that I could do it! I looked back over my shoulder checking to make sure the front door had closed, and continued my climb. Hand, foot, hand, foot… *Only a few more branches until the top,* I thought. A light breeze had begun to blow and the December air was biting at my fingertips. The more I climbed the number my little fingers got. I could barley feel them against the bark on the tree, and it became harder to hold onto each branch. *I can do it, I will do it!* I said motivating myself to make it the last fewbranches. Then, *I did it and I’m not scared*! I thought triumphantly. I had not yet looked down for fear that I would chicken out. A good thing too because I was a good ten or twelve feet up, and my climbs usually averaged four feet, maybe five if I was feeling extra brave.

I held on as tight as I could and slowly lowered my foot, wiggling it around until I felt the next branch below. I made contact and added pressure, checking to make sure the branch was solid, and then lowered my next foot down. I slid my hands along the bark never letting go of the tree’s solid core. Time was ticking and I had to make it down before mom came out! I decided it was time to man up and look down. I was shocked to see how high I was! My head was spinning and there was no way to deny it; I was scared. I thought the faster I got down the sooner I would feel fine. In my haste I stuck my foot down, made contact and lowered my next foot down without checking the branch first. CCCRRACK! I knew what was coming before it ever happened. A blur of branches passed by, swatting my face as I fell through to the ground. “HELP!” I screamed. I tried to roll over and I heard another crack, this time not from the tree branch. This sound came from within my arm. In an attempt to save my face I had stuck my arm out to lighten the fall. I heard the front door fly open.

“What happened? Are you okay? Where does it hurt?” my mother yelled, not leaving me time to answer before spouting off more questions.

“I was climbing back down and the tree branch broke, and…”

“You climbed to the top after I told you not to?” my mother responded in an, I told you so, tone.

“Yes, and I’m really really sorry,” I mumbled through sobs of pain and embarrassment. My mom bent down and helped me to the car. I buckled up while she went to get her keys. We drove to the emergency room and the doctor declared the obvious: I had broken my arm.

Falling from that tree knocked some sense into me. It taught me a few important things; one that I don’t have to be right and prove a point, especially when I know that I am wrong. Two, that I am not that great of a tree climber. Three, the most important thing, mother knows best!

**Dependency**

Kellyn Wilcox

I was three years old enjoying a typical day on the playground. I skipped past a large red slide and thought to myself, *If I love sliding down the slide so much, why wouldn’t climbing up be just as fun?* As I began my ascent, a girl with curly, blonde hair slid downward, and we ended up colliding and tumbling onto the mulch below. We dusted each other off, introduced ourselves and became the absolute best of friends.

Her name was Logan Vincent, and as we became inseparable, so did our families. Mrs. Jo, Mrs. Vincent as I called her, became my mom’s best friend and something of a second mother to me. I wouldn’t have had it any other way because, as far as I was concerned, she was the most perfect person I had ever met. She was intelligent, beautiful, and compassionate beyond measure. Her curiosity about life and nature was contagious, and soon she had Logan and me addicted to horseback riding, scalloping, and scuba diving. Each passing day was a new adventure that we couldn’t wait to start.

And then came the separation. We were barely thirteen at the time and had little knowledge of the words *affair, divorce,* and *antidepressants*. But we did know that our lives had suddenly veered onto a new course, and it was one headed somewhere we didn’t want to go. The transformations began immediately, right before our eyes. Ms. Jo started smoking again. She stopped singing country songs during car rides and, instead, began talking on the phone with counselors or calling in orders for more Zoloft. This dragged on for months. It was obvious that she was in pain, but her phony smile and her cigarettes created an impermeable smokescreen that hid the extent of the damage. While she was secretly slipping away inside, her calm and at ease façade fooled everyone.

Time dragged on, and the holidays came around. Finally, we had something to distract us from the unsettling, inescapable changes that were happening every day. When I eagerly awoke on Christmas morning, I had a mountain of presents waiting for me. Just after tearing open the last gift, the phone rang. I immediately tensed as I got the eerie feeling that something was wrong. *Who would be calling us on Christmas?*

“Hello?”

I crept into the kitchen to watch for my mom’s reaction.

“Oh, hi! Merry Christmas to you, too.”

I sensed the bad news was coming. I strained to listen, desperate to know what was going on. I held my breath and waited silently.

“No…Please, no.”

My heart sank.

“No! No, no, no, why? *WHY?*”

She fell to the floor with a scream that shattered my heart. I hadn’t heard the other end of the conversation, yet somehow, I knew exactly what had happened. It was unfathomable, impossible. But it had been done. Our best friend, our mother, *my* guardian angel, had slipped away from us in the middle of the night and taken her life with her.

I stood, completely frozen and unsure of what I should do. What *could* I do when it was already too late? My life had suddenly become mere fragments of the life it had been before. *And how had we been so clueless?* The tears began to pour as I thought of how utterly abandoned Logan must feel. I could barely see my mom’s face as she picked me up and held me in her arms.

I was numb for days. I spent the next blur of a week at Logan’s house, where parades of family and friends kept us distracted. Pretending like everything was normal was surprisingly effortless. But each time I let my guard down and thought of that bloodcurdling scream, I could feel the breath being knocked out of me.

Then came the funeral. I decided at the last minute not to wear black. Instead, I wore a skirt that Ms. Jo had bought for me just a few weeks before she died. It was orange and pink, and though I’m sure it seemed inappropriate, I couldn’t think of anything *more* appropriate to wear. I sat in the front row along with the family and cried uncontrollably as we listened to friends share memories of her. But the more stories I heard about the joy she had exuded and shared, the more I realized that though her life had ended, her presence would never disappear. As I looked around at the hundreds of people surrounding me, I heard her ask, “Why sit around and be upset? You have life to live; go take a hold of it.”

After that day, I resolved to use Ms. Jo’s life as a lesson for mine. Experience, though harsh, is often the best teacher. This potent experience taught me the most significant lesson I’ll ever learn, for it is one that I will remember and use for the rest of my life. She showed me just how vital it is to be independent. After seeing how losing a man--just one man--affected such a strong, seemingly invincible, woman, I made a promise to her and to myself to never become too reliant on *anyone* else for my happiness. I know now that no one, no matter how perfect she may seem, can be without flaws, but I refuse to let reliance ever be one of mine

**Grapes and Gratitude**

Conor McBride

The feeling of not being accepted is monumentally crushing. One feels utterly worthless and completely inadequate. Conversely, to be praised by someone is one of the most gratifying feelings. One feels that one has worth and purpose.

I was born with a mild form of Cerebral Palsy called *Clonus*. Simply put, the nerves in my legs do not function properly. To prevent my disorder from deteriorating, I had to wear these ugly, plastic leg braces. I was hardly able to walk in them, let alone without them.

I was diagnosed at the age of eight, and ever since that day, I have struggled to be accepted by my father. Growing up, my father had high hopes for me. He wanted me to be the *All American Boy.* He wanted me to be fantastic at every sport and excel academically. My Clonus killed his hopes and dreams. As I was trapped in those braces, my father’s dreams were trapped inside him. My father never came right out and said he hated me for not being an athlete, but there were always signs. Whenever the parents of other kids praised them for their soccer tournaments or football games, a shadow would pass over my father’s face.

Even when I could walk without the braces at the age of twelve, I still had to fight for my father’s approval. I was not the athlete my father wanted. I did make good grades, but I completely detested sports out of resentment for my leg braces and how they had limited me.

It was a crisp fall afternoon during my freshman year in high school. My father and I were on a quick Publix run for certain essentials.

As I walked through the sliding doors and the *woosh* of the air conditioning, it hit me. Fall is football season. Everywhere I looked: *football, football, football.* The sheer magnitude of football

junk was truly disgusting. Giant inflatable helmets hung like clouds above me; colossal

stacks of soda formed a mock football stadium. I tried to hide my revulsion from my father as we walked down aisle after aisle of flashy football advertisements.

My dad and I split up to find the items on our shopping list. We decided to rendezvous at the produce section once we both gathered all our items. I found all my items but the very last

one, so I headed off to th e produce section to collect my final item--grapes. I walked up to the stand and decided on a bag of small yet very sweet, juicy red grapes. As I admired my choice of grapes, an elderly man approached me.

“You’re a big *boy,"* he spoke in a deep, rich voice, “Do you play football, son?”

“What?... Oh, no sir,” I replied, slightly flustered by the question. I was embarrassed that he thought I was athletic. Obviously he had no idea about my *Clonus* or that I detested sports, but I was still embarrassed. Why did he have to stumble onto my Achilles' heel?

“A big *boy* such as yourself should consider playing football.” He was clearly unabashed by my embarrassment. There was something odd about how he called me *boy.* He addressed me with respect. He addressed me how a proud father addresses his son. The old man’s words made me feel accepted. Why was this feeling so strange to me? Why didn’t my father’s words make me feel this way? I was dazed and confused. Mixed emotions swirled about in my head, and for a few seconds, I found happiness. Then my father walked up:

“He prefers to *use* his head rather than bash it in.” My father said as he came up beside me. His appearance started me back into reality.

“Well, he seems like he’d be good at football. He appears to be a fine *boy.”* And with that, the old man left.

I stood there feeling empty and ashamed. My father had defended what he hated most about me. I was sure he hated my existence. He probably wanted me to disappear into the cool tile floor more than I did.

“I don’t care what he says.” My dad said as he turned to me. “Athletics aren’t the measure of a man. I don’t care if you can or can’t play football. I’m still proud of you.”

I didn’t cry at that moment, but later I went home and cried myself to sleep. I cried tears of joy. All those years that I had fought for my father’s acceptance had finally come to an end. Not only did my father accept me, but he told me he was proud of me.

My father’s acceptance allowed me to be comfortable with who I am. The years I struggled to be something to him made me into the young man I am today: someone my father can be proud of.

"**The Lord Gave And The Lord Hath Taken Away"**

Bradley Yost

*"A mother is she who can take the place of all*

*others but whose place no one else can take.*”

Cardinal Mermillod

A mother is the most influential person in a young boy’s life. She is supposed to be there to teach life lessons: how to deal with success and failure, love and heartache, joy and sorrow. Having to live without a mother is one of the hardest obstacles I have ever had to overcome and one of the most difficult lessons I have ever had to learn. My lesson began quite simply..."The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away (Job 1:21 ).

I open my eyes slowly. The blur of a human figure is sitting by my side, and it immediately catches my attention. The figure sits silently as my eyes adjust to the morning light seeping through the bedroom blinds. I recognize the blur as my father.

“I don’t know what to do,” he says. I see the tears in his eyes as he looks at me, but my mind remains dormant from slumber. I lay there, silently watching him. “I don’t know if you should go to school today.”

“Why? What’s wrong?” I mumble.

And then I hear it, the labored breaths of a dying woman coming from my mother’s bedroom. The sound engulfs every part of me. I feel it more than I hear it. Deep inside, the realization of what is happening hits me like a ton of bricks. My mind snaps to attention, and I jolt out of bed. I’m down the hall in seconds, and I see my brother Heath huddled over the edge of my mother’s bed. A hospital bed, on loan from Hospice, has been my mother’s permanent residence for months now, and there she lay still.

My mother: her battle with cancer has been long and hard, but she has never let it get the best of her. Cancer has taken her hair, her energy, her youth, and even her ability to get out of bed. She lays there paralyzed, her body burnt through and through by radiation, her cheeks swollen from chemo, yet she is still the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. At that moment, lying in an almost comatose state, she literally exudes love. She gives off a feeling of security, stillness, and peace even as she lays there dying. That feeling could calm any boy’s soul.

The scene does not surprise me. We had been warned about this morning for years, and it was finally here. There is no preparation for this, though. I have spent my entire life with her, and I have been loved by her even longer than that. I am only fourteen, and my mother is my best friend, my Gibraltar, my anchor in the storm, my everything; she is *my mommy.* This cannot be happening. This battle with cancer has been a long dream, and it is sure to end soon. I desperately need to wake up.

But I am not asleep. I am standing in my mother’s room watching my world collapse with every gasp of air she takes. And standing in that very spot, at that very moment, I realize my mother is leaving forever; this is all the time I am ever going to have with her.

The three men in my mother’s life sit beside her quietly. Time is running out quickly; that’s all we know. I grasp her hands. *Cold hands.* They send chills down my spine, ice water into my veins. Her forty-seven-year-old heart is aged and tired from her battle; it cannot keep up much longer. I try to be strong for her. I refuse to cry. I hold her hands, and I wish I could hold her back from death itself. *I can’t.* The three of us sit there and say our good-byes for the last time. The last “I love you's" leave our lips. I lean in and give her a kiss on the cheek, and then there is silence.

Breaths become far and few between. We count the seconds between each one, then the minutes. It’s a slow roller coaster of pain and relief. No breath for a minute and a half, no breath for two. We stay like that forever.

12:15 p.m. *“The Lord hath taken away.”*

Everything speeds up after that. A Hospice nurse arrives to pronounce her dead; an ambulance pulls in to take her away, and a flood of family and close friends appear within hours. No one is capable of saying anything that can bring my mother back. Nothing can stop the deluge of emotion overwhelming me. There is no outlet; there is no way to cope. *It never hits you all at once. Slowly it sinks in through the cracks until you’re drowning in it... and then it seems like it hits you all at once. It does not feel like a ton of bricks anymore; it feels like a wall.*

The day finally ends; all the commotion dies down, and everyone leaves the three men alone in the living room. The apartment transforms into a cold, harrowing prison of memories and reminders. It is empty without her. We are empty without her. But then, out of nowhere, a thought comes to my mind. The Lord *Gave...*

I do not know where the inspiration came from. Maybe it came from an angel, or maybe it came from my mother. Maybe it came from both. As we sit in desperation, confusion and anguish, I say only one thing. It is a phrase seemingly out of place at such a time, but it was exactly what needed to be said.

“Let’s play cards,” or rather, *Let’s stop thinking about all that we have lost today, and let's just take some time to remember all that we were privileged enough to have.*

My mother always loved to play cards, so we play in her memory. We take time to stop and remember her; we play, tell stories, and *laugh.* We sit around the living room table, and if only for a few moments, the love and happiness my mother provided us during her lifetime filled that house once again. She filled our hearts, and the sense of stillness, security, and peace that only a mother can give calmed my heart and soul.

I didn’t know the “right way” to handle the death of my mother, and I don’t think there is one. I only know what I learned that night: more important than mourning the loss of my mother’s life was celebrating her life. The only way for me to continue living, the only way for me to fill the emptiness that her departure left, is to fill it with the love and memories she gave me before she had to leave. I still play cards; I still take time to remember and appreciate. I owe an immeasurable amount of gratitude for the time I was given because my mother was my best friend, my Gibraltar, my anchor in the storm, my everything...and she still is.

**"The Lord Gave, and the Lord hath taken away**."

**Going Clean**

John Clarke

It is very difficult to compare my life while using drugs heavily to my present condition. Many people think of an addict as a trashy pervert who has nothing to offer society. I must admit, it is hard not to think of myself as having been that. However, I enjoyed life to the fullest for a significant time while doing drugs. I was looking at life from a totally different perspective. My friends sold stolen cell phones and drugs for their future, while I sold drugs to buy more drugs. School was no answer to my future--my future was the next day. I woke up around noon every day, got stoned, saw my girlfriend, jammed out with my band, maybe did a line or two in the afternoon, then tripped off LSD for the rest of the night. Life was good. People hate to hear it, but junkies live a great life.

Today I did something I thought I would never do; I woke up. What the hell does that mean? I wake up every morning. However, I have never really noticed the world around me until today. I am 18 years old, and I have been completely clean for a full year now. Of course, that is a lie--very typical of a person who has severe substance abuse. Denial is a part of my everyday life--who I am, what I have done, what my future is. Honestly, I have been clean for six months. Cocaine, LSD, alcohol, and pot are among the many drugs that I have battled with for the past seven years. My world relied on the junk I fed it. Going clean is the most challenging obstacle I will ever face in life. It has been horrific.

During my freshman year in high school, I was heavily dependent on drugs. It became very difficult to keep my 3.6 GPA without my Ritalin and joint every morning.

Circumstances became very ominous that year. Partying was my life on the weekends. The majority of the money I made from my new fast food job went towards the next buy. All of my friends were overdosing and being arrested weekly, and I nearly totaled my mother's car on a drug run. Then came the big blow: my family moved. Though I knew about the move a year in advance, I pushed it out of my mind with drugs. The closer the moving date came, the deeper I sank into addiction and denial. Even my half-wit friends began to notice that I was setting myself up for a major breakdown.

I totally crashed. The move f----d me up beyond recognition. I moved from the rich-ass suburbs of Ft. Lauderdale to the backwoods of Tallahassee. My mother and I lived in a crappy,

run-down rental house infested with cockroaches. I lost everything that had been important to me: my friends, my band, and the luxury of a nice house. The people I first met in town were not supportive, except to my habit. All I could do for the first couple of months was go out and get trashed. But it was not until my long-time girlfriend broke up with me that the walls really came down.

I distinctly remember sitting in the bathroom crying and screaming. My mother was pounding on the door, worried and confused. The strangest thing happened to me atthat time. I guess one would call it an epiphany. I decided to stop using drugs. The reasoning was silly: to get back at my girlfriend who had always wanted me to get my drug use under control. However, going clean was not as easy as it sounded.

For six months, I completely lived in a hole. I attended school, and I went home. When I arrived home, I would go to bed hoping for nothing more than to never wake up again. I would sleep through dinner and the rest of the night. The next day I would start the whole routine over. My body and mind could not operate without the substances it depended on for so long. During that time, I was often sick, and I lost 15 pounds. How ironic it is to think that I was more of the stereotypical junkie when I was coming off drugs. My mind was in a state of emotional chaos. Sleep to die; that was all I could think. Crying and fits of violence came without cause or notice, and suicide was my most intimate fantasy.

It would be almost another year of off-and-on depression, drug binges, and counseling sessions before I became absolutely clean. I am scarred for life emotionally and intellectually. My experience has left me with a cold sense of emptiness and indifference. I would like to experience a relatively enjoyable life without drugs. Today, I struggle through each minute of the hour, cursing myself for the pain I have inflicted. The fear and despair of the past few years have left me apathetic to life. I wonder about who I am, what my position in life is, and where I am going. I also wonder why so few people are sympathetic to what I have experienced. Is it because drugs are illegal and should not be used in the first place? I sold and used them. When I watch television, I see commercials with inner-city school kids talking about drugs. These actors suggest that their life was that of a Nobel Prize finalist after going clean. Going clean is not romantic or easy. It saddens me to think that I am the only one of my friends able to look back on my life.

They have all turned to dust, and there is no help for them. However, sometimes I think of them as being the lucky ones. There is no pain in their past. There is no past for them. On occasion, I ask myself if going clean has been worth the insecurity, anger, and loneliness.

Sometimes, I answer no.

**Chapter 2**

**Writing To Gain Admission**

Topic: In his autobiography, *A Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela writes, “There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.” Tell us about an unchanging place to which you have returned. In what way has the place never changed? How does its constancy reveal changes in you? (University of Chicago)

**Ocean Of Change**

Austin Zorn

There is something about the ocean. Day in and day out, brutal consistency washes away temporary deformities until the smooth sand and the quiet waves become friends again, talking in small splashes and tiny ripples. It has never been controlled, directed, or defeated, and just the sight of the ocean drives curiosity on a blind rampage. Yet in the middle of all this action, the ocean has the ability to calm the nerves--giving way for personal reflection. The magic never wears off, and the consistency will always calm those struggling to stay afloat in the changing storm of life.

I’m four years old and vacationing with my family. This will be my earliest memory of this place. I am playing in the sand; even the slightest thing distracts me. “Mommy, look what I found.” A shrimp boat passes in the distance, and fantasies of pirates, cannons, planks, and hooks invade my mind. “Son, wave to the captain,” my mother suggests softly. To me, the ocean means sunscreen, shovels, swimming with Dad, sharks’ teeth, and sand.

I’m thirteen years old now. We are still vacationing in the same spot. I am swimming all day. “Make sure you get out at sunset,” one of my concerned parents warns. I am sure I heard that, but I won’t listen. Massive sand empires take shape on shore. A fishing pole is used frequently though unsuccessfully. I see girls now and spend parts of the day chasing them. The ocean is late nights, summer loves, first kisses, guitars on the beach, and freedom.

I am seventeen now--almost a man. Vacation is still the same and yet different in so many ways. I spend most of the day reading in a chair and enjoying the serenity that so often avoids me. My family is playing a bigger part in my life now. I enjoy their company. I try to make them laugh in my own stupid ways, and they do. Early sunrise leads me instinctively from my bed to the water as I watch God paint another masterpiece. The ocean is long talks with Dad (both serious and lighthearted), long walks with Mom, encompassing myself in a literary world, star gazing, and staring over the deep blue as the cool water nips my toes. Now I turn to go.

I begin to entertain these thoughts in my head: *The ocean has changed so much since I was four. Maybe it’s not all that steady. Maybe everything about the ocean has changed.* But even as I say these words, my mind can seize the truth for a single second: The maturity I have gained over the years is understood best when compared with a constant that is greater than mankind.

Topic: Please describe a situation that has shaped you.

**My High School Career**

Todd Wimberly

SETTING: Stanton College Prep, a public prep school in Jacksonville, Florida. It is my freshman year.

FLASHBACK: "Defense. Defense. Defense Devils Defense." I accepted a dare to join the J.V. cheerleading squad at Stanton College Prep, in Jacksonville, Florida.

CONFESSION: I enjoyed it.

FAST FORWARD: To my complete surprise, I make the varsity baseball team as a freshman and received much unwanted flak for being a "sissy cheerleader."

INSIGHT: I had very long hair, and due to a scheduling problem, I was taking Dance I. This little combination also caused me a bit of trouble with my baseball teammates.

MORE INSIGHT: I am forced to cut my hair by the team, and I actually like it much better short. This action allowed me to be accepted by the baseball "clique." However, the cheerleading and dance class jokes keep coming. These jokes are also helped by the fact that I go on to Dance 2 in the second semester.

FAST FORWARD: I become academically motivated by some unknown force and decide to apply to an even more prestigious prep school.

SETTING: The Bolles School, a private institution, Jacksonville, Florida. My sophomore year.

FLASHBACK: Male cheerleaders are not allowed, so I resort to clubs to fill the baseball offseason.

INSIGHT: Spanish Club: *muy interesante.*

Interact: involving and worthwhile.

MORE INSIGHT: The academics here are more demanding than I have ever faced. Home work: never-ending. Tests: relentless. Determination to succeed: see Tests.

FAST FORWARD: It is second semester, and I make the Dean's List. However, on the athletic side of the spectrum, I only make the J.V. baseball team, but I am the star.

FAST FORWARD: My father is transferred; we move.

SETTING: Leon High School, Tallahassee, Florida. It is my junior year.

INSIGHT: I am terrified. I know no one, and I fear that I will not make friends in this completely unfamiliar town and school.

FLASHBACK: Start out the year much too shy and wonder why no one talks to me.

INSIGHT: I resolve to become more outgoing.

EPIPHANY: If I talk to people, they will talk back.

MORE INSIGHT: I make another resolution to devote the entire year to academics, baseball, and communication skills.

RESULTS: Good grades; starting spot on the Varsity team; friends.

FAST FORWARD: Senior year is now upon me.

INSIGHT: It seems like just yesterday I was frolicking around in short shorts and yelling cheers. I wonder where the time has gone.

MORE INSIGHT: I take the same resolution as junior year.

RESULTS: Too early to tell yet, but the outlook seems to be highly favorable.

STRESS ATTACK: I need to be accepted into a good college.

REACTION: This essay.

Topic: In the space provided, please write a concise narrative in which you describe a meaningful event, experience, or accomplishment in your life and how it will affect your college experience or your contribution to the UF campus community. You may want to reflect on your family, your school, or community activities, or your involvement in areas outside of school.

**“Just Do It”**

Brendon Santry

Shoes say a lot about a person. Perhaps they show the panache of the wearer, his/her personality and self-confidence. Perhaps they are a general statement of attitude for the whole world to see. When I discovered the NikeID.com program, where I can design and build custom soccer shoes, I knew this would be a chance to express myself. When I built my pair of shoes, I wanted them to represent the most meaningful experience of my life, my high school years.

First, I thought to create a lively color combination to represent my outgoing, positive personality. The online pictorial failed to communicate the desired effect. I needed colors to represent the pride I have in myself and for the people who surround me. I chose my high school colors of red, white and black for their symbolic meaning: red for passion, white for wisdom, and black for introspection. These colors said, “I love Leon High School and acknowledge the opportunities I received there.”

When creating my shoes, I started with sturdy soles. I began Leon High School with the foundation my family gave me. Strong-willed parents taught me values including respect, empathy, integrity, gratitude, self-discipline and reliance on intuition. These soles helped me walk on the right path.

Above the soles, I attached the inserts that fit well and support the feet; the teachers at Leon provided this component. They supported and cushioned me with their extra effort, not for a paycheck, but for the sheer satisfaction of helping a student reach his potential to succeed. I remember my U.S. history teacher spending his lunch periods recommending improvements to my history fair project for district competition. This extra support helped me absorb the intensely academic environment at Leon, expanding my intellectual and ideological limits.

My friends at Leon form the vamp, the upper portion of the shoe that covers the foot from heel to toe. The strength of the shoe depends upon how well the vamp is stitched to the sole. With all the wear and tear that high school presents, it is imperative to pick enthusiastic, loyal, trusting and strong friends. If a stitch is damaged, the others must hold the shoe together until it can be repaired. My friends are built to last. They always support, encourage and inspire me.

In high school, I took my sole and affixed it firmly to the insert. I stitched the vamp to the foundation and decorated it in bold red, black and white. By my ankle, *LEON* is neatly embroidered in the color yellow, which signifies inspiration. I slipped my feet into the shoes and secured them firmly with strong laces. In the end, I still had room to wiggle my toes.

My new Nikes carry great meaning for me. I hope to walk in these shoes from Leon High School to the University of Florida. Perhaps the next pair I construct will be orange and blue.

Topic: For almost one hundred years, the Latin words *Vires, Artes, Mores* have been the guiding

philosophy behind Florida State University. *Vires* signifies strength of all kinds--moral, physical, and

intellectual; *Artes* alludes to the beauty of intellectual pursuits as exemplified in skill, craft, or art; and

*Mores* refers to character, custom, and tradition. Describe how one or more of the values

embodied in these concepts are reflected in your life.

**Why Musicians Practice**

David Kennell

Most people don’t understand why I practice the way I do. If I get to school fifteen minutes early, I head straight to the practice room. After school, I’m either practicing until band practice or taking my horn home to practice. As for lunch, I can’t remember the last one where I actually ate. Whenever anyone points out the health hazards of malnutrition to me, I quote Rodney Jordan, the jazz bass professor at FSU: "Man, I eat *music*.”

*Vires: Strength. Focus. Pushing oneself to the limits. Above all, strict self-discipline.*

*Again*, I lick my lips, put them on the mouthpiece of my saxophone, inhale and play a difficult, four-second phrase. As I finish, the steady beats of the metronome echo throughout the empty practice room. I turn the dial up one “click,” an all but imperceptible increase in speed. My lips hurt, and I have a cold sore that’s killing me, but I push it from my mind. *Again.* I inhale and play the phrase again over the next four seconds, focusing on evenness and shaping a clear phrase. I stop and move the metronome up another click. *Again.* Click, breath, play. *Again.* Click, breath, play. *Again.* Click, breath, play. *Again.* Click, breath, play… This is how I practice.

*Artes: Exposing humanity in its rawest form and trying to define beauty without words, since it can't be defined with them...*

Artistry, genuine artistry, is something that I can only honestly claim to have wielded a few times. Many people think they understand artistry, but once a person becomes an actual artist--if only for a few minutes--the meaning of the word changes. For me, making art comes after analyzing an entire piece of music note by note and deciding how to play each individual note, then each collective phrase, then the silences in between and then the piece as a whole. When all of these are strung together successfully, I’ve communicated something with sound that others can’t convey without words or images. I’ve just barely touched, with my

very fingertips, the edge of the world of art. The day that I convey in sound that which cannot be conveyed in words or images, I'll know I’m an artist. This is my life’s goal and what I desire above anything else.

This is why I practice.

*Mores: Humility. Respect for the past and a realization that we all stand on the shoulders of someone else.*

Any tradition that survives for no reason other than to perpetuate its own existence is worthless. Any worthwhile tradition becomes a tradition simply because performing the same action over and over again actually has benefit. No fraternity ritual or pep-rally tradition has ever held weight for me; what *has* is the realization that musicians have done for centuries what I do now. Countless others have practiced the same way I do now, sweated in a tiny practice room the way I do now, worshipped their metronomes the way I do now. This is a tradition I carry on--the custom I inherited. It is an ageless ritual we musicians constantly perform, all for those small, golden moments of artistry that we base our entire lives around.

This is why musicians practice.

**Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you. [Common Application]**

Georgia Howard

I take issue with this. This here, in your hands (or perhaps on your screen), is an issue. It has been intricately planned, carefully worded, frowned at by the teacher, crunched into a ball, tossed in the waste basket, reworded, soaked with sweat, wounded with pens, reworded, edited by unwilling peers, stuffed into the backpack, stared at, screamed at, cursed at, reviewed, revised, despised, printed, sent, and received. Now it is yours, and I pray that you are pleased. I have been to hell and back so that you, the man or woman with whom my future resides, will like me.

I think you will be satisfied with my grade point average, my extracurricular activities, and my SAT scores, but I know – and have been reassured many times – that these past four years of eyelid-dropping, head-lolling, late night study sessions, Tallahassee- hot marching band practices, and tossing and turning the night before that be-all end-all test pale by comparison to this particular manuscript. My multiple mission trips to Communist Cuba, involvement in psychopathy research with Florida State University’s Department of Psychology, and traveling and hosting in a French Exchange Program carry little weight as your eyes scan this page for personality, clarity, and a strong sense of voice, focusing solely on this single moment in time.

I am told that I am supposed to show you all of my greatest qualities in this one, concise piece, so that by the end of my closing paragraph, you want nothing more than to shake my hand, welcome me to your school, and perhaps invite me over for dinner or a healthy game of chess. Therefore, I must be certain that I come off as cultured, inquisitive, ambitious, and creative. You must chuckle at my wit or nod slowly with my reflections or raise your eyebrows at my insights.

But here is my problem. You and I are two different people from two different walks of life with different hobbies, quirks and concentrations. How can I attempt to find our common level of interest? How can I correctly discuss that which interests you most when I have only a few pages to share and I am confines by my lack of knowledge about you, my reader? Not to mention, research shows that human mood deeply affects human decisions. You may be severely burned or irate due to the coffee you are wearing because the idiot in the Camry doesn’t know how to use his turning signals. It may be your son’s sixth birthday, in which case the only thing on your mind is getting home to give him his very first baseball glove. You may have promised a student a thorough letter of recommendation by three this afternoon and just realized that you have not begun to write it. You are human. This is precisely my issue. Where is the science involved in reading these essays? What is the fool-proof method of deciding – based on less than one thousand words – if I am the right fit for your school? Your choice – your human choice – determines my education, my salary – my future.

How is it possible that after all the labs, the books and the mnemonic devices, my future comes down to the choice of one human being based on one paper centered on one topic? I cannot wrap my mind around it. The concept terrifies me.

Regardless of my concerns, I recognize that as it stands, it is my job as a prospective student to prove myself fit for your intuition. My topic must become your primary interest as you read about it, I must make you feel as if you know me despite our limited knowledge of one another, and in the midst of my work, you must forget about the now lukewarm coffee setting into your shirt.

Unfortunately, I have already used the entirety of my allotted space to relay my distress about the essay itself. Please admit me anyway.

Topic: You are hosting a brunch for historical, literary, or other disreputable persons. What is your menu? Who are your guests? In answering this question imagine a scenario. We want some exposition, serious or silly; we would accept some dialogue, and we are willing to trust you to respond in such a way that your brain power, your imagination, your sense of taste, and your capacity to tell a story reveal something true about you. University of Chicago. (no word count)

**You Are Cordially Invited**

Jordan Raymond

*You are cordially invited*

*What: Brunch*

*When: Tomorrow at noon*

*Where: The beautiful bungalow in the bay of the Bermuda Triangle*

*Why: Why not?*

*Attire: Casual*

*Please bring one dish to the party for everyone to enjoy.*

First to hobble down the cobblestone way is Johan Bach. He brings with him the first delicious course on the menu, for what is a party without music? This dish can be served baked and seasoned, but I like mine raw and juicy. The hard outer shell puts off some of the guests, but Bach knows that what is inside is worth the time it takes to crack open the shell. With his help and a little perseverance, I have found the gift of music, a priceless jewel that no one can take away.

Next to come strutting down the path is Thomas Jefferson. He brings with him a heaping plate of intellect, for no party is worth attending without a course of knowledge and know-how. A dash of reason, a pinch of wonder, a spoonful of smarts, and a sprinkle of intuition make this an exquisite dish. It can be served hot or cold, but the important thing is that I will always have room for more.

Sauntering through the doorway now is a new friend who calls himself Kurt Vonnegut. This gentleman brings with him a bubbling bowl of personality, for a party without a little character would simply be dull. Vonnegut warns to proceed with caution because his dish has some kick to it. A perfect mixture of bluntness and comedy, mingled with sarcasm, then drizzled with cynicism certainly stirs up a party. There is no need to fret because Bach can resolve any dissonance that may arise.

Finally, the star of the party is escorted in with the main dish. Queen Elizabeth I herself brings in a fire-roasted platter of independence. The air fills with an aroma of confidence as the guests gather round the table to delight in the main course. It is rich and sweet and gushing with magnificence, and, of course, it must be served with a side dish of leadership.

The party is coming to a close, but one final guest slips through the back door with a most delectable dessert. William Shakespeare brings with him a pan of passion, for no party is complete without it. All of the flavors of the night are meaningless if passion is not on the menu. Other guests may have a preference, but I take mine rich and strong but still pleasantly sweet.

The guests must be going, but they are always welcome back. Together, the courses of music, intellect, personality, independence, and passion made up an impeccable menu for the occasion. There will always be room for more guests, and my menu will never be full; for now, the party is over, and the story must come to a close.

**You just put a message in a bottle and threw the bottle out to sea. What is the message?**

Mark Logan (2013)

To whom it may concern:

To be honest, I wasn’t very prepared to write this message. Whenever you think of messages in a bottle, you think of inspirational advice, or interesting stories of your life; and I’ve got nothing. I’m 17, a senior in high school, and my greatest accomplishment to my name is surviving one level of education with enough merit to continue onto the next. I haven’t cured cancer, helped orphan children in a third-world country, become an eagle scout, biked across the country to raise money for a failing elementary school, or saved someone’s life. In retrospect to the world, let’s just say that my impact hasn’t been made, yet.

With that being said, I’ve pondered on what to write. What words can I put on this piece of paper so that the person at the receiving end is changed, even in the slightest? For inspiration, I thought of my family, and how appreciative I am of their never-ending support. I thought of my friends, and how through the years they have been the constant to keep me grounded. I thought of all of my interests that have shaped me as a person; be it countless hours on the marching band field, studying Roman customs until I fell asleep for weeks on end, or the full-time job of being a high school student.

After all of this soul-searching and questioning, I decided that the best advice that I can pass on is one specific quote from a song I first heard when I was in the 4th grade, and it’s stuck with me ever since. “Why be different when you can be yourself.” From first-hand experience, you cannot get caught up with the societal implications of your identity. The idea of forming your own image, rather than being molded by others has become a novelty. I have come to terms with the fact that I am not some life-saving, orphan-helping, cancer-curing eagle scout, and I shouldn’t have to be. Sure, all of those things are great accomplishments, but if that isn’t you then don’t force it. Live whatever life you choose to live, but don’t waste it on wishing for a different one.

Too often we lack the ability to be content. Of course you can have your goals, and your aspirations but it reaches a point. If you want to be in the chess club instead of playing lacrosse, go for it; if you want to pursue art instead of a normal college experience, go for it. Why choose to do something you don’t want for other people’s approval, when you can just be yourself? I promise you, the most relieving, free and generally inspiring action you can do for yourself is to not listen to anyone. Just once, don’t take any advice, tips, or suggestions; there is only one turn in life, and choosing your own path is the best thing you can do.

How’d I do?

Mark Logan

Topic: Describe the most challenging obstacle you have had to overcome. Describe its impact and

write about what you have learned from the experience.

**University Of Florida Admissions Essay**

Daniel McRae

Is the function f(x) = -5x3+4x-17 continuous? Not if the running back gets tackled in the backfield.

I am proud to be balanced. My type of balance is rare, and it surprises many. My balance requires that I overcome people’s expectations of me; I strive to prove I am more than what people see or hear.

Stereotypes exist. There are football players who are dumber than a box of hair and geeks who bury their noses in a workload so large it takes the place of social interaction. In a Venn diagram, those two worlds don’t exactly intersect. People who move in these circles hardly interact.

I see myself as an exception to this rule. I am a dedicated scholar who devotes myself fully to my schoolwork and an athlete who always finds time to enjoy the extra-curricular I love most: football.

Throughout my middle and high school careers, I have played many sports. People who see me only as a football player don’t truly know me. I’ve always excelled in school, especially in math, as is evidenced by the calculus class on my course list. The people who see me solely as an excellent student don’t truly know me. I believe equal accomplishments in all areas are the key to success--whether it's balancing school with sports, friends with family, or college with newfound freedom. Overcoming people’s one-sided expectations is a major obstacle in my life, but it is one that I enjoy.

The circumstances in which people meet me lead them to make assumptions. Last summer, I spent a week in Washington, D.C. for the National History Fair competition. When people discovered I was a member of my school’s football team, the looks I received were incredulous. Everyone was shocked to learn that someone who advanced to such a level of academic competition devoted a large part of his life to football. When people make assumptions about my character, it's very frustrating; it makes me desire to prove I am more than what they expect.

I realize that stereotypes are a part of our culture. I cannot change this, but I can do my part to make people think twice. I relish the look on people’s faces when they realize my duality. I have worked hard to establish myself as what I am: the epitome of a “student athlete.”

Topic: We tend to spend our time doing the things we know we do well--running because we're good runners or painting because we're talented artists. Tell us about a time when you tried something for which you had no talent. How did it go?

**Raising The Bar**

Allison Clarke

Running at top speed down the runway, she lifts her arms to place a pole in the metal box. She grips the pole as it catapults her body towards the sun. She gracefully pivots over the bar set at 14 feet and then allows gravity to carry her down to the mat. I watch in awe as the pole vaulter on the television creates a spark in my mind. Someday, that will be me.

I do not personally know anybody that vaults, and my experience in the field is non-existent. I contact the school track coach only to find that nobody coaches pole vaulting at my school. I talk to those I know in the track community and discover that instruction is offered at a local school three times a week. I contact the coach and start two days later.

I show up to my first practice petrified. I don’t recognize any of the students who are running down the track with 20 foot poles. The coach matches me with The Big Stick. It happens to be the smallest pole they own. He teaches me how to hold and rotate it. I fumble to imitate what the coach shows me (launching your body into the air with a fiberglass rod does not come naturally).

After two hours of awkwardly maneuvering the pole, the coach advises me to practice holding and rotating a broomstick at home to allow the basic motion to become engrained in my mind. That evening, I locate our broom and perform the drills in my backyard. I practice these drills throughout the weekend. When Monday comes, I have mastered the rotation of the pole. The coach states I am ready to attempt the sand pit bungee jump. I am unsuccessful at this next challenge and leave practice a sandy and hopeless mess.

Despite my lack of talent, I soon master the beginner drills. I graduate from the once intimidating bungee and face a new challenge: jumping over the bar. I come in last place at the first track meet, but after continuing to work hard, I raise the bar each meet. Each time I vault higher, I set a new record for girls’ pole vaulting at Leon High School (being the first girl to pole vault for a high school has its perks). I end the season by qualifying for the .regional meet. I give my best attempt to qualify for the state meet, but I wasn’t even close.

I may never reach 14 feet, but I gained so much more than bar heights. I use my experience of pole vaulting as a precedent for the challenges I take on. Regardless of the obstacle, I always exercise initiative. If my skills prove to be insufficient for the task, I simply work harder. I always set the bar high and follow through with my best attempt to clear the height I set for myself.

Topic: Tell one story about yourself that would best provide us, either directly or indirectly, with an insight into the kind of person you are. For example, the story can simply relate a personal experience or a humorous anecdote; it can tell about an especially significant encounter or about an unusual test of character.

**The Value of Childhood**

Amy Norman

At the mischievous age of two, I sat comfortably on my mother's hip, one hand fiercely clutching her ponytail. I nestled one stubby finger deep in my nose just because it seemed like such a perfect fit. (What else could these holes in my face be for?) Bored of shopping, I figured *why not dig around until* I *found something interesting*? I ignored my mother's gentle reprimands and faithfully continued my search for something of value.

Intent on my mission, I rode the bouncing hip for a few laps around a small jewelry shop. My mother was immersed in conversation with the man behind the counter when, at last, I extracted my own gem. Excited, I tugged at my mother's sleeve.

“Mommy! Mommy, look!" No response. She was apparently absorbed in her conversation.

“Mom‑mee...look!" I begged.

Offering only an abrupt "Hush,” she continued speaking to the clerk. Frustrated, I silently admired my jewel for a few moments, and then, since no one seemed to appreciate it, I discarded it with a defiant flick of my finger. It sailed through the air and landed with a final "plink." The man and my mother were able to marvel at it as it rested contently on the shiny, glass counter with the other jewels.

Satisfied with myself, I let out a little giggle, but at the time, my mother didn't seem to find it funny. I felt her flinch as she watched a look of disbelief spread across the salesman's face. I could feel the tension in the air as the two cautiously attempted to ignore what we all three had witnessed. When my mother and I left the shop, the tiny gift remained on the counter.

To this day, I still love to hear my mother laugh about her embarrassment. I realize that we're all still children deep down. Now, as I prepare for college and the “real" world, I see that my task is to find a way to balance the child within me and the adult that has gradually imposed on my life. To hold onto that inner child, I must keep a sense of humor, treasure my memories, and maybe even learn from them. For instance, I'll remember to keep my nose clean; I won't be afraid to draw a little attention to myself, and I'll be sure to leave my mark on the world.

**Topic: What qualities or unique characteristics do you possess that would allow you to contribute to the UCF community**

**Curls**

Leah Bailey

Coffee brown, fierce, tangled, loud, full, and hectic--my hair has its own personality. It’s grown with me; it’s changed with me; it’s who I am today.

When I was younger, my mom did my hair. She controlled the brush. She weaved and molded my rebellious tangles into docile and humble works of art. She put her best into my hairstyle adding beads and bows to a different style each day.

At the age of six, I became curious. I practiced the finger motions and slowly learned to braid on my own. My mind smiled as I realized my new freedom. I parted my hair down the middle and perfected my specialty: two pigtails. Day in and day out throughout elementary and middle school, I owned those pigtails. They represented me: routine, docile, and tame.

As I grew, so did my hair, and we both yearned for something new. I unbraided the pigtails and my hair curled, twisted, and spiraled into a fierce blizzard of curls cascading down my back. I stood out too much! I noticed how everyone else’s hair was straight and calm. I steamed, brushed, and greased religiously trying to will my hair to look like everyone else’s, but it refused. It represented me: complex, excited, and refusing to conform.

These curls were who I was. I stopped fighting and began to embrace. My curls represent me and refuse to be molded to anyone else’s standards. My hair showed me to be organized and demonstrate my style; to be outrageous and fantastic, sophisticated and complex. My unique flair gives me an abundance of enthusiasm, initiative, and drive--which I can contribute to UCF’s community. Among the thousands of straight strands within this world, I am happy to embrace the curl.

**Topic: What qualities or unique characteristics do you possess that you could contribute to the university community?**

**Me**

Jackson Davis

Call me Jackson.

I am quick-witted, incurably old fashioned, musically gifted, effervescent, stubborn, persistent, hopelessly romantic, idealistic, emotional, brutally honest, totally open to inquiry, fairly light, very bright, novel, deep, allergic to scallops, always the designated driver, hungry as usual, a middle child, a good brother, the family taxi service, recalcitrant, accident-prone, absent minded, happy to oblige, left handed, spontaneous, physically flexible, morally rigid, just trying to help, always late but rarely too late, about 5'8", seeing the Dave Matthews Band in five days, a slow typer, terminally disorganized, easily amused, a Mathlete, an athlete, ceaselessly loyal, introspective, empathetic, sympathetic, polite, and--most importantly--content.

I’m good at guessing, breaking things, Reading, Riting, Rithmatic, fixing things, dealing with children, dealing with adults, video games, logic problems, objective tests, building fires, rowing, making mashed potatoes, writing haikus, working under pressure, physics, public speaking, making mountains out of molehills, making molehills out of mountains, making friends, keeping friends, music, catching puns, peer editing, brainstorming, resisting peer pressure, math, keeping secrets, and pointing out the obvious.

I love nature, being alone, not being alone, cool weather, technology, playing guitar, rock climbing, rappelling, Florida State football games, live music, dancing, girls, playing piano, sunrises, sunsets, popcorn, philosophy, long conversations, debates, passing notes, famous opening lines, life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, playing steel drum, books that make me laugh out loud, books that make me cry, summer camp, the mountains, the beach, road trips, airplanes, Wisconsin, croquet, sleeping in on weekends, bonfires, campfires, hearty meals, commas, wet hair, big words, silliness, little words, big cats, swimming, Frisbee, medium-sized words, mud football, Natalie Portman, bundling up in warm clothes, fresh air, peace, love, Phish, going barefoot when I can, wearing flip flops when I can’t, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Catch 22*, getting mail, sending mail, a girl I can never have, chewing on things, back handsprings, dressing up, friends, friends of friends, tie-dye, Calvin and Hobbes, Paul from *The Wonder Years*, dressing down, soft clothes, regattas, rivers, good theater, sports highlight films, DVD format, ideas, daydreaming, snow, singing in the shower, diving boards, *Harry Potter*, Djibouti, Labor Day Weekend, hot breakfasts, spoofs, gadgets, getting scared, anyone, and everyone.

I dislike rigid schedules, bad teachers, expensive food, litter, pop-up ads, frozen peas, frozen computers, printers, any kind of tea, restringing guitars, dishonesty, essays, egocentricity, foolishness, traffic, socks, loud trucks, exhaust fumes, being hot, junk mail, workouts that make me sick, excessive organization, spandex, peer pressure, statistics, stereotypes, too much responsibility, due dates, stress, haircuts, dial-up modems, chauvinism, fascism, things ending in “ism,” politics, television, product placement, working late, waking up early, busywork, run-on sentences, war, current events, mass media, pop music, wet books, wasted talent, uncertainty, semantic arguments, losing friends, catching up, stubbing my toes, condescension, and hate.

I want to go to college, enjoy myself, fall in love, live in a quiet suburban home with a loving wife, have a couple of children, raise a happy family, watch my children go to college, grow older, have grandchildren, reflect on my life, and--most importantly---remain content.

**Topic: Entry for the Young Christian Writer's Contest (Scholarship)**

***Lama Sabachthani***

Aramaic for "Why Have You Forsaken Me?"

Joy Hinson

The child screamed as the car slammed into the oak tree. Then silence. Always silence. That eerie stillness when no one dared utter a word for fear that reality might be true. Time stood still. Then slowly, gradually, the icy grip of terror thawed and flooded the area with mass confusion. Somewhere in the midst of pandemonium, a small, muffled voice cried out for help.

And I answered.

As a volunteer first responder with the regional ambulance service, I respond to many types of emergencies. We in emergency medicine learn to distance ourselves from our patients in order to think rationally and make clear decisions. Pediatric cases always test that ability and strain our minds, our emotions, and our faith.

As my partner and I raced to the scene, my ears reverberated with the pulsing of the siren. We tried to make small talk, but everything seems superficial when a child is hurt and we are too far away to make it better. I prayed that God would calm my nerves. I prayed that I would do everything correctly. I prayed that we could drive just a little faster, get there a little quicker. Time is critical in an emergency. Often, mere seconds can make the difference between life and death, and those seconds were ticking by.

The ambulance finally arrived, and I opened the doors to a scene of carnage. The broken body of a little girl lay on the ground before me while her parents remained entrapped in the crumpled heap of metal that was once their car. I knelt and carefully wrapped my hands around the girl's neck to stabilize her spine while the firefighters powered up the extrication tools to cut the parents out of their steel prison. My partner and I yelled to each other over the commotion of organized chaos as we fully immobilized the girl and, on the count of three, put her into the back of the ambulance. I closed the doors, attempting to block the sound of chain saws against metal from my patient's ears. But she heard, and no matter how hard I tried, the starkness of truth, the reality of impending death, could not be hidden.

"What's your name, sweetheart?" I asked, as I applied a blood pressure cuff on the child's arm.

"Shelby," she answered in a diminutive voice.

"My name's Joy. Are you scared, Shelby?"

"Uh huh."

"It's alright to be scared. It's alright to cry, too," I said. Patients like Shelby, who are more confused and scared than they are hurt, usually receive greater benefit from psychological first aid than they do from physical treatment. I gently brushed the caked mud from her hair, then took her little, bruised hand in mine.

"Where's my mommy?" she asked with the calm of innocence.

"We're helping mommy." I glanced out the window and said, "She's still in the car, but she should be here soon."

"Where's my daddy?"

"He's in the car, too."

"Are they gonna be okay?"

*(What can you say?)*

"We're going to take really good care of them."

"What's gonna happen?" asked Shelby, her precious hand shaking beneath my own.

"Well, at the hospital, the doctors are gonna take lots of pictures of you with the x-ray machines, and that won't hurt at all. Then if everything is okay, they'll take you off of that hard board I just put you on, and you'll feel much better."

"I gotta go to the bathroom."

I smiled and asked, "Can you hold it for a little while?"

"I guess so. What's that popping sound?"

"That's the helicopter. Your mommy and daddy might get to fly to the hospital."

Shelby's eyes grew wide, "They're leaving me? Forever?' *(Dear Lord* ...)

"No, honey, you'll see them at the hospital." I answered, not really knowing if I was telling the truth.

"Joy, are you gonna leave me, too?"

My stomach lurched as her words struck my heart. Her mother and father were slipping from our grasp with every minute that passed, and, yes, Shelby, I will have to leave you, too. I must leave you in a place where everything is scary, and where nothing will ever be the same again. I will leave you, so that I can care for other innocent people hurt by the careless actions of others. Thoughtless actions. Terrible actions.

Pity, frustration, and anger welled up within me. My soul cried out to God, "Don't you see what's going on down here? How can You turn Your back on her? Where are You when we really need You?!"

My patient whimpered; the jaws of life roared, and the helicopter lifted off carrying a belligerent, drunken man who had destroyed this family with a six-pack of beer. Yet even with all that noise, a still, small voice gently whispered an answer to my spirit: "Look around."

I turned and saw strength and power in the arms and tools of the firefighters. God was there. I saw skill and compassion in the eyes and hands of my partner. God was there. I saw love and caring in the face of a bystander as she stroked the hand of the terrified mother. God was there. Everything moved with a purpose.

I suddenly realized that I am only an instrument used by the Great Physician in a fervent operation expertly conducted for the good of those who are called according to His purpose. I had been so concerned about my skills and speed that I had forgotten the very One who gave me the ability to perform those procedures in the first place. God had not abandoned us at all, and He had not walked out on Shelby. He was the One who was picking up the pieces. He was the One who was putting her life back together. And, Shelby, He is the One who will never leave.

**Topic: “Simplify, simplify, simplify,” intoned Thoreau. If you were to follow Thoreau’s advice and scale back your possessions, what would you keep and why? –Stanford**

**Possessions**

Melinda Stanley (2013)

Today’s world is very superficial. We focus so much of our time and energy into the items we own. Possessions, things we can touch and show off, are what we take pride in. Undoubtedly, we all have many belongings that serve no purpose and that we keep simply because they belong to us. If I were to keep only a few of the items I currently have, they would be silly little ones with little to no “surface value.” A grass-stained rubber ball, a tiny triangle of plastic, a pair of shorts, and a rusty railroad spike may seem pointless to the world, but to me they’re priceless.

I am not athletic. I'm a safety hazard to myself because of how frightfully clumsy I am. I’ve never been a huge fan of sports, possibly because I lack the talent needed to play them. However, I have been known to doll myself up, and “Yay team!” my way through various games when the proper motivation is dangled in front of me. A close friend of mine talked me into attending his lacrosse game last year, and I thought I’d be bored the whole night. To my surprise I enjoyed the evening, walking the track and singing with a couple girl friends, and of course cheering on our Lions. Halfway through the game a ball flew off course, and in a silly moment of impulse I scooped it up. After the game my friend told me that I had to keep it forever, and I jokingly promised I would. Now I smile every time I see it, and I can’t imagine getting rid of it.

Everyone reacts to loss and grief in different ways. Some people throw out everything that reminds them of the pain. Others cling to the remaining objects. I’m one of those who holds on. My brother passed away recently. I have a pair of his shorts. They don’t fit me very well, and they don’t match anything I own. They’re my favorite piece of clothing. I’ve never played guitar except the occasional playful strumming. Scott did. I have one of his old picks. It’s faded and scratched up, and serves no purpose to me. I have it with me at all times.

When people grow up together they turn out very similar or very different. As small children my partners in crime were named Morgan and Casey. We met when we were five years old and with-in two weeks we were inseparable. If the sun was up we were off causing mayhem. There’s a railroad near our houses, and for years we dreamed of the days when we could walk there alone. When we finally got the parental green-light we spent all our free time walking those tracks, talking about anything and everything. Morgan is 17 now, with Casey and I close behind, and we couldn’t be more different. We also couldn’t be closer. Those tracks watched us grow up, supported us when we cried, sheltered us from our fears, and offered a sense of privacy. We each have an old, rusty spike taken from those old, rusty tracks. To me they symbolize the journeys we’ve taken, both together and personally, the little girls we were, and the women we’re turning into.

The items I hold dearest are far from practical. None of them are of much use. To an outsider they may even be viewed as garbage. However, they’re all very important to me, because they tell a story. My story.

**Topic: Find *x*. (University of Chicago)**

Blanche Amelia Brown (2011)

The ceaseless rain of the South American rain forest falls diligently from the gray sky, obstructing my view. I lean forward in the passenger seat of the all-terrain vehicle, scouring the horizon for any sign of my destination: nothing but the green blur of vegetation**.** It could take days to find X.

My quest began years ago in the mega-metropolis of Tallahassee, Florida, in the 106th Year of the Machine. I was working in the Department of Education purging the database of ancient virtual school accounts dating back to the beginning of the 21st century, nearly 150 years ago. It is not permitted to read outdated files; The Guidelines read (Article IV, section VII) that “everything not completed on official government technology must be deleted.”

During one of my nourishment breaks at the Department, I lost concentration on the task at hand. As the ancient proverb says, “Curiosity was let out of the bag.” Suddenly, I had the files open before me and began to read the work of a “Brandon Young,” in a subject referred to as “Algebra.” It was utter gibberish. What were these ancient magistrates teaching? Was it some nonsensical religious exercise? “15x + 2xy = 12 Find x.” What can it mean?

The alarming part was the mysterious search for X was not an anomaly. Every file labeled under the mysterious title of “Mathematics” followed a similar pattern. The 21st century is known as the beginning of proper civilization; its computers, although primitive, were precursors to the iMasters we use today. Falsities, by this point, should have been eliminated. Before I could examine the files further, my iMaster reminded me that these were historical documents, for restricted use only, and promptly shut off my access. Why should the government be concerned about the security of these documents if my sole job is to delete them? My administrator asked me to leave early that day, in the hopes that a little rest would improve my “concentration abilities.”

I did not plug myself into my iMaster on the shuttle home. Curiosity still commanded my full attention. What was x? How could I find it? As I failed to find an answer, I looked at the other citizens sharing my cabin. Every one of them was wearing an iMaster. I realized the cabin was eerily silent. I had never noticed before, and it made me feel strange. Even citizens who were clearly joined in a union were separately engaged in their iMasters. The walk home from my stop revealed a similar circumstance on the streets: no conversation, no eye contact, no smiles.

I returned to work the next day convinced that finding X would somehow explain the disparity between actual reality and the one promoted on iMaster. My administrators, however, had other plans for me. X was not to be found. Instead, I was assigned a different section to delete and was prohibited from accessing any mathematics files.

I began the slow work of removing Florida Virtual School English documents. Again, my curiosity overruled my sense of civic obedience, and I looked at one paper labeled “Acquainted with the Night: A Personal Vignette.” The author talked some twaddle about feelings in something referred to as a poem by a Robert Frost. The words were strange and hard to understand. Nothing was proven, except that the paper’s author “related to the feelings of an exile portrayed by Frost.” I could not fathom what purpose this exercise served. The student was not being introduced to new technology or being trained to operate any program.

Yet, I felt something like recognition resonate inside me when I read, “O luminary clock against the sky/Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.” The author explained the “loneliness” he felt and I realized this is what I had experienced on the shuttle. Was this X? Loneliness? Feeling neither wrong nor right?

My access was continually restricted, and I was assigned a new subject each day. I came up with a million definitions of X: truth, gravity, love, the Pythagorean Theorem, evolution, light, the Golden Rule. My administrators, however, fired me for insubordination before any conclusive evidence was found.

So, what am I doing in the rain forest?

I have abandoned both my iMaster and apartment, now under close surveillance by government officials. I move around, continue my search for X, and for the first time in my life observe what occurs around me. Citizens trudge from point A to point B with their heads down. Not much information remains to be found about the past. It is as if our society exists only in the present, denying any previous truths.

I manage to remain in the shadows. I stray through streets and across cities. I pick up snippets of history. I read texts on archaic Kindles. I separate fact from fiction. Slowly, dust and grime is sifted, and the world begins to unfurl.

I am not actually in the South American rain forest. I doubt such a place still exists. It is just an apt location for the type of search I have been conducting. An ancient vacation pamphlet hailed it as a dying wonder of the world that still held mysteries, a more fitting atmosphere than a dimly lit cellar.

X is still an unknown, but I have come to believe that its importance lies in the search for it. X is not one single thing; it is many things. X is freedom. X is truth. X, put simply and purely, is knowledge, and I have dedicated my life to finding it.

Topic: Please submit a one-page, single-spaced essay that explains why you have chosen your major, department or program. This essay should include the reasons why you’ve chosen the major, any goals or relevant work plans and any other information you would like us to know. If you are applying to more than one college or program, please mention each college or program you are applying to. Because our admission committees review applicants by college and programs, your essay can impact our final decision. Please do not exceed one page for this essay.

**My Romance with Computer Science**

Michael Leach

/\* Please note:

This essay is also a simple, modular Java program. I recommend asking someone from the School of Computer Science to compile and run it for you, the admissions officer...after reading it, of course.

*The actual essay is within the one-page limit.* The code uses about a page more.

A bit of programming humor: I was tempted to write an infinite loop printing “ACCEPT ME!\n”...but I didn’t. If you don’t understand what an infinite loop is, congratulations, you are not a nerd!

To the compiler: I am using the Eclipse IDE, which may display formatting differently than your environment of choice due to the small size of the Java console in Eclipse. Please forgive formatting errors...It looks neat and pretty when I run it!\*/

import java.util.Scanner;

public class MajorSelectionEssay

{

public static final String APPLICANT\_NAME = “Michael Leach”;

//notifies the user that the applicant has been accepted

private static void accept(String applicant)

{

System.out.println(”\n\n\n\n’n \tApplicant“+applicant+“ has been accepted!\n\n”);

//notifies the user that the applicant has been denied

private static void deny(String applicant)

{

System.out.println(”\n\n\n\n\n \tApplicant“+applicant+ has been denied.. .\n\n”)

}

//prints the essay, then passes the sequence to decide()

public static void main(String args[])

{

Systeout.println(

“\tMy SAT score, grades and family history tell me that I should become an English professor or a history major, yet my soul craves the black and white world of Computer Science. Coding is my calling.”

+“\tln seventh grade, a teacher assigned me to find an interesting major and the leading university for that subject. Being an avid gamer, I thought *what better job is there than making video games?* I found that Carnegie-Mellon University has the nation's premier School of Computer Science, and I submitted my report, thinking nothing more of it until I was in the midst of high school.\n”

+“\tDuring the summer between tenth and eleventh grade, I received another letter from Duke’s Talent Identification Program (TIP) that "hoped I would take advantage of [their] wide range of courses.” It described several semester-long, online courses offered by TIP. Scanning the list, one class in particular caught my eye: Java for Video Games. I quickly enrolled and, after receiving the textbook in the mail, delved into the joys of programming.\n”

+“\tI quickly mastered the basics of computer structure, and after completing the first chapter, I realized I was studying more diligently and enthusiastically than ever before. This course, which corresponded with the real Duke class coded 4.F03, provided me with hope for what I had written off as a silly fantasy: I could actually make video games for a living.\n”

+\tOf course, the concept is not as easy as the course name implies. I once heard that games, along with artificial intelligence, are the most difficult applications of Computer Science. However, because of my strange, unprecedented attraction to the subject, I found joy out of that frustration.\n”

+“\tEven while taking this class (and others like Calculus and Physics), the numbers have steadily proven that I have more skills in English or Social Studies. However, this doesn’t deter me. Owning or leading a major video game studio remains my ultimate dream, and I can’t think of better way to use a degree from Carnegie-Mellon. I hope to go through graduate school and eventually acquire a doctorate in Computer Science.\n”

+“\tAlthough I can pick out an error in the very prompt I’m responding to (hint: preposition at the end of a sentence), I would much rather write a program to do so. While I do see the beauty of Vergil, I can also see (and use) the power within a high-level programming language like Java. I give more respect to a flawless program and the brilliance of computational theoretics than some people offer to their god. This is the reason I would like to major in Computer Science...not because of my perceived strengths or weaknesses but because of my irrational and absolute love of the subject.\n”

);

decide(APPLICANT\_NAME);

}

//asks users if they wish to accept or deny the applicant and then does so. private static void decide(String app)

{

System.out.println(”\nDo you wish to admit”+app+"?/n/t");

boolean cont = true;

while (cont)

{

Scanner in = new Scanner(System.in);

String response = in.nextLineO;

//checks the response and does the appropriate action

if (response.equalslgnoreCase(’no))

{

deny(app);

cont = false;

}

else if (response.equalslgnoreCase(”yes”))

{

accept(app);

cont = false;

}

//if response !=yes or no, the error will print and the loop repeats else

{

System.out.println(”Error! Please enter 'yes' or 'no':

}

**Topic: For almost one hundred years, the Latin words *Vires, Artes, Mores* have been the guiding philosophy behind Florida State University. *Vires* signifies strength of all kinds--moral,physical, and intellectual; *Artes* alludes to the beauty of intellectual pursuits as exemplified in skill, craft, or art; and *Mores* refers to character, custom, or tradition. Describe how one or more of the values embodied in these concepts are reflected in your life.**

Keaton Wilson

My whole life I have strived to be normal, fit in, and be like everyone else. I am not normal.

I was born in Hanoi, Vietnam, where I lived in an orphanage for a year but was then adopted. Seventeen years ago adoption was not as common as it is today, and kids like me did not understand the purpose behind it. Kids would crack jokes about it on the playground, and I was forever known as the girl bought at the local Wal-Mart for $13.99. Comments like these made me angry and want to cry, but I did not cry. I was strong. I was *Vires.* Until high school,I attended a private preparatory school where all the students enrolled were white – except for me. I was Asian. I was different. I was not normal.

As I entered middle school I learned about stereotypes. They said that Asians were smart and made good grades; Asians made straight A’s. I did not make straight A’s. *Did this mean I was no longer Asian? Or was it a given that I wouldn’t even fit my own stereotype?* I grew up around white people, my friends were white and my family is white. It wasn’t until high school that I was even exposed to a racially diverse environment. I didn’t like to be called Asian. I took it as an insult from anyone who did call me that. *Why would someone call me Asian when I don’t feel Asian? I don’t have an Asian accent, and I don’t have Asian parents.*  With maturity and age though, I have accepted my tan skin and black hair. Accepting my ethnicity has given me strength and shaped my character. I am *Vires.*  I am *Mores.* I don’t fit my stereotype. I am not white. I am not normal.

In grade school we learned how to write our names. I however, could not only write my name, I could write my name with my right hand, left hand, both hands, backwards, forwards, upside down, right side up, and even with my eyes closed. I thought everyone else could do that as well. It turns out they couldn’t; I was a freak. When I was nine I picked up the violin. Within a year I had surpassed most of my peers and joined the Tallahassee Symphony Youth Orchestra (TSYO) under the direction of Dr. Alex Jimenez. My friend hated me for this, and playing the violin was no longer fun. Now my friends called me an “orkdork” as well. Through playing with the TSYO though, I have gained strength, developed character, and mastered skills like few have ever done. I am *Vires*. I am *Mortes*. I am *Artes*. I am a freak. I am an orkdork. I am not normal.

Florida State University prides its self in standing out from other colleges and universities. From its academics and its sports, to its fine arts and its campus, Florida State University excels in all it does. I know for a fact that the last thing any college is willing to settle for would be the title of average, standard, or normal. I am different. I will never be normal.

**Topic: Describe an experience in your life that has been particularly meaningful to you.**

**A Question Without An Answer**

Karen Hoover

As I stared down into her coffin, a million thoughts ran through my head. But none was so strong as this: ***Why?***

Four years later, I still don't have an answer to that burning question. I've come to the conclusion that I never will know why my sister and best friend was taken out of my life.

**Saturday, September 28,** **1996:**

8:00 pm: Nancy and I sit down in front of the TV and stuff our faces with Daddy's best hot wings. We compete to see who can eat the most; I win with 15 wings.

9:15 pm: Steve, Nancy's boyfriend, calls begging her to come over. I try, unsuccessfully, to get her to stay at home and hang out with me.

9:25 pm: Nancy and I go back to our bedroom to find something for her to wear. She wants to be casual but adorable. After changing outfits at least ten times, she decides on ***my*** jeans, her navy sweater, ***my*** black shoes, and a black belt.

10:00 pm: Nancy leaves for Steve's house. She promises me that she will be home when I wake up for church in the morning. As she walks down the stairs, she calls out a casual "Bye," and I return it with an unenthusiastic "See ya in the morning."

My sister's gone.

**Sunday, September 29, 1996:**

9:00 am: Beep, beep, beep...my alarm wakes me up. I roll over to tell Nancy she can have the shower first. To my surprise, her bed is empty. I decide that she must have spent the night with her best friend, Stacia. I am a little frustrated that she lied to me. I'll try and call Stacia's house after I take a shower.

10:30 am: I'm sitting in church when I remember that I forgot to call Stacia. Oh well, surely Nancy will make it to church. She knows that Mama will be a little more than upset if she doesn't.

12:00 pm: Church service is over, and Nancy never showed up. Mama is aggravated. She informs me and my brother that our afternoon plans have been changed; we have to go straight home and eat leftovers while we wait for Nancy's explanation.

2:00 pm: After calling all of Nancy's friends, we find out that no one knows where she is. Mama and Daddy are worried, so they call and report her as missing. Because it hasn't been twenty-four hours, the police are unable to take any action. Mama goes driving around town looking for Nancy.

10:24 pm: We still haven't heard anything from anyone, but Mama tells me not to worry, to just go to bed. As I am walking back to my room, I hear someone at the front door. The second I hear "It's TPD," my mind races through all of the horror movies I have ever seen. I know that the police don't come to a house unless it is bad news. Mama tells me to go on back to bed. I stand hiding behind a door so that I can hear what the officers have to say. They ask Mama if they could sit down. (Things aren't looking hopeful; I've seen *Unsolved Mysteries* a few too many times.) "Ma'am, we've found your daughter's car. Lying near it is a female's nude body." He didn't have time to finish. Mama begins screaming, "No! No!" and runs outside.

11:15 pm: The next few hours are hazy. In a matter of moments, our house is full of ministers, family, and friends. I just want them all to leave. I just want Nancy to come home. I sit outside in the driveway for most of the week waiting for Nancy to drive up. She never did.

**Sunday, October 22, 2000:**

Four years later, I still wake up in the middle of night thinking that I hear her breathing across the room. I get up to turn on the light, hoping that maybe, by some miracle, I've had a *really* ***long*** nightmare, and maybe, just maybe, my sister will be lying there asleep. When the lights flash on, I always find an empty bed. With that empty bed comes an empty room, an empty life, and a broken heart.

**Topic: Common Application Topic for The University of Tampa: Evaluate a**

**significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical**

**dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

**Stereotypes**

Emilee Leslie

Stereotypes exist. There are the nerds who spend countless hours with their noses shoved in a book. There are, of course, the athletes who cannot be seen around a book. Then there are the musicians who stare into a book all day, but one that is filled with Beethoven’s Sonatas or Bach’s Preludes. Is it possible to balance these worlds and achieve great success in all of them? Society says no, yet I have done it. Pushing through the boundaries that stereotypes have placed on society has made me who I am today. I have learned to put aside people’s doubt to accomplish the goals I have set for myself.

Knowledge and understanding have always been important to me. I will not accept the status of an average student. I strive to challenge myself with my course levels, taking honors, AP, and dual-enrolled classes. I have spent countless hours studying, drunk many pots of coffee, and sacrificed sleep to make sure that I understand exactly what I am doing in all of my classes to succeed. When people hear that I am able to maintain my GPA, it is hard for them to believe that I am a varsity athlete and a musician as well.

Though knowing the answer to “What’s the frequency of a wavelength from blue light that is 4.5x10^7m?” may help me in honors physics, it may not help me when trying to stop a breakaway on the athletic field. While training for the varsity soccer team, varsity golf team, or for a travel soccer team, my mind is solely on the sport. However, I do have to calculate the angles for which I need to cut down in order to block a shot or for which I need the club face to rotate to get the best flight on the ball. I do spend hours a day training to have the ability to analyze every situation during a game quickly and effectively. By using my hard work ethic during training, I locked in the starting goalkeeper position on both the varsity and travel soccer team. From this, those who know me just from athletics can tell that academics are equally, if not more, important to me.

However, those who know me as a student-athlete still do not know me completely. Music has been a major part of my life for the past eleven years. There was just something about classical guitar that grasped my curiosity at the age of six. I have enjoyed playing ever since and continue to strive to get better. My hard work paid off when I was accepted into the inaugural All-State Guitar Ensemble of only 28 students during the 2010-2011 school year. When others in the ensemble asked me how I enjoyed spending my free time, they were not surprised when I told them much of my time was spent studying, but they were extremely surprised when I told them that I spent the remaining time participating on varsity sports.

I am not just a student. I am not just an athlete. I am not just a musician. I am me. So yes, it is possible to be a student-athlete-musician and to succeed in all three. I crossed the boundaries set by society with its stereotypes and took many by surprise. I learned to set goals and to never let myself stop until I have reached or surpassed the goals. I am considered a rare breed by society because I have figured out how to balance the three different worlds at once. I have overcome the biggest obstacle set by society: stereotypes.

**Topic: For almost one hundred years, the Latin words *Vires, Artes, Mores* have been the guiding philosophy behind Florida State University. *Vires* signifies strength of all kinds - moral, physical, and intellectual; *Artes* alludes to the beauty of intellectual pursuits as exemplified in skill, craft, or art; and *Mores* refers to character, custom, or tradition. Describe how one or more of the values embodied in these concepts are reflected in your life. Your essay should be no longer than 500 words.**

**All in the Cards**

Kade Needham

Inside a drawer in a wooden table in my grandparents’ house, there are stacks of worn playing cards. Each deck is bound by a tight rubber band and laid carefully beside blank score cards, a handmade cribbage board, an official Scrabble dictionary and a battered copy of Hoyle’s Common Rulebook for American Card Playing. The contents of the drawer taught me all I really need to know: respect for **tradition**, the **ability** to take risks, and the **strength** to laugh while losing.

Card playing has taught me the need for convention. My grandmother habitually raps her long fingernails against the dark wood of the table as I finish my turn. She always does this, the tapping, and it’s become the music of every Christmas, Thanksgiving and birthday. We return to this melody because it’s part of us; we, the Doyle family, play cards. And, having some solid identity, even one as simple as a card enthusiast, can be an anchor on which to cling in difficult times. All my true family memories involve a deck of cards, and this consistency shows me that **tradition** is important so that we will always be able to return to our roots.

Card playing has taught me to adapt. From the first time I held a deck, my grandmother has espoused the unspoken rules of card playing, and my grandpa has championed adjusting to the current game and taking a risk. In blackjack, he’ll hit on eighteen; in euchre, he’ll call with a single trump; in chess, he’ll sacrifice a queen for a pawn. Because he understands when to challenge rules and when to comply, his strategies often work. Though, that doesn’t matter to him. His **skill** of adapting to the current challenge teaches me that success is knowing when to abandon the numbing predictability and take a risk.

Card playing has taught me how to lose. My mother smiles, despite her pathetic score, and her amusement illuminates the room. Our cards are dismal; our scores are pathetic, but that means nothing, for we’re only playing as an excuse to be with one another. In the end, playing cards is not about winning. It is about losing and laughing about it. My mom reminds me that it doesn’t matter what you’re dealt or what the final score is; it only matters that you’ve laughed. My mother’s smiles taught me the **strength** to laugh, joke and smile, despite the hand I’m dealt.

For me, a deck of cards is my family album. The kings, queens and jokers are photos of my childhood. The queen is my grandmother, gentle and strong, setting the beat of the house and bringing everyone together. The king is my grandfather teaching me the importance of taking chances. And the joker is my mother smiling and laughing through all her hands. These cards taught me all that I really need to know: respect for **tradition**, the **ability** to take risks, and the **strength** to laugh while losing.

**Topic: Of your many personal experiences, describe the one that gave you the feeling of greatest achievement or satisfaction.**

**Survival Of The Fittest**

Robert Braden

Usually, the man is the head of the house, but not in my case. My household is led by estrogen... lots of it. I am the only boy in a family with three sisters. Ever wonder what three sisters can do to you over the course of your childhood? TRAUMA. I spent my entire childhood dealing with all the issues that they went through--from guys, to hair, to clothes, to dating. I know anything any guy would want to know, and more, even the things I could live my whole life without knowing.

When a person grows up, he or she looks back and remembers all of his or her personal accomplishments. They range from Eagle Scout, to Valedictorian, to captain of the football team. That is a usual person; I am not one of them. My greatest achievement was growing up with three sisters and surviving to tell people about it.

I have found a few rules in surviving with three sisters. They seem to work; I am still normal.

1. Do not think the bathroom is yours. The only time the bathroom is yours personally is from 11 p.m. ‑ 5 a.m. Any other time, you have to wait. How long am I supposed to hold it? I am only human. I'm glad God equipped us guys to take it outside.

2. When one of your sisters asks you how she looks, lie. It works every time. Even if they know that their hair or makeup is messed up, tell them it looks great. Once a negative remark comes out of your mouth, you will never hear the end of it. My philosophy: the safe way is the sure way.

3. Spend the night at a friend's house when one of your sisters has a sleep over. The only thing worse than three sisters telling you what to do is three sisters AND their friends telling you what to do.

4. Never leave the toilet seat up! (I still am not sure about this one area. Why do I need to put the toilet seat down when I am going to use it the next time?) And never, I mean never, pee on the toilet seat. It's good for a few laughs; then it's time to hide.

5. Don't think you can dress yourself. You only thought the 30‑point inspection was for your car; you never met my sisters. The only 30‑point inspection they know of is for what you are wearing. They inspect me every time I leave the house. I’m never allowed to wear my favorite pants. You know the ones...mine are the black sweatpants with a neon green stripe down both legs. They are cool. (So I thought.)

6. Never bring a date home when three sisters are present. Schedule to bring your date to the house when no more than one sister is at home. If they are all there, they will break out the scrapbooks to show how they used to play dress up with you. They always seem to know where those pictures are showing me dressed up as a girl. It is as if they plan to embarrass you when you have a date.

7. What is the worst part of summer? Not going back to school...going back‑to‑school shopping. School shopping is not just a day‑long event with girls; it lasts all of August. I can buy all the clothes I ever need before lunch. My sisters spend an entire day in the mall going from store to store and not finding anything. The only good thing about shopping is that I am not shy anymore. While in the stores, I would sit on the couches and talk to all the other guys whose girlfriends and mothers brought them along shopping. So try as hard as you can to avoid this heartache. Hardly any good can come out of it.

8. Whenever you plan to go somewhere with a girl, plan ahead. My sisters would say, "I'll be ready in five minutes." Guys know what that means. Five minutes to a girl is like a guy's five minutes of football, which doesn't take into consideration timeouts, penalties, commercials, and injuries. If they say five minutes, get comfortable.

9. Television. Ahh, the best invention ever...only when you have the remote. During elementary school, that's all kids talked about. Who won the football game, or did you see that catch? I was saying, "Did you see that episode of *General Hospital*?" Not exactly popular with the guys if you catch my drift.

Learn early and learn quickly. It's a woman's world. You're just in the back seat along for the ride. You can't change this fact, nor will you ever. Savor the little things in life: football, father‑son time, standing up to pee‑-they help keep your sanity.

**Topic: How has your family history, culture or environment influenced who you are?**

**Who Am I?**

Laura Been

I am a teacher. I was taught.

My afternoons are spent at the Magnolia School. UFTs (unidentified flying toy) are sailing through the air. Katie has decided she’s a leech and attaches herself to my right leg. Jessica thinks it looks like fun and attaches herself to my left leg. I stumble slowly across the room--these girls are not *that* little--to try to find out where exactly the UFTs are coming from. Andrew is tapping my shoulder. Well, really my elbow, which is as high as he can reach. I try to focus on one thing at a time. No throwing allowed. Who needs this reminder? Andrew’s tapping doesn’t slow down.

“Laura! Laura, Pete’s locked himself in the bathroom!”

“Attention please. Everyone—CALM DOWN.” The room goes silent. I’ve learned how to say what I mean. Say it simply and loudly.

My Wednesday nights are spent babysitting Lily, Jacob, and whatever extra children happen to be staying with them. Everyone thinks Lily and Jacob are twins with their identical straight blonde hair and clear blue eyes, but they don’t even have the same mother. They do share a father, but Lily is two years older than Jacob. As soon as I walk in the door, Lily’s asking me, “Can we art? I haven’t arted all day!” Jacob plays with his trains. Jacob doesn’t talk much; Lily talks more than enough for both of them.

Their grandmother left a video for them to watch while they play. I slip it in; Jacob ignores it completely. Lily begins her questions within the first five minutes of the movie. "Why did he do that? Why did he say that? What does that mean?” Lily never closes her mouth. “When he said that, when he said that then, did you hear it?" "What was

it he said?" "Why?" "Why did he say it like that?” she continues throughout the entire film.

I’ve learned to be patient. I’ve learned to listen not just to the words, but past them to what the kids really need.

The kids I spend my time with are like any other kids...almost. After school, I work with bright, enthusiastic, happy, autistic kids. They are loved and wanted and cared for, but they struggle. I teach them to communicate with each other and with me. On Wednesdays, I baby sit for joyful, creative, curious, abused kids and foster children. They have been raped, beaten, and lived in unstable home after unstable home, but they manage. I teach them to allow others to love them and to love themselves.

I’ve learned it’s necessary to move on. I’ve learned that what is important isn’t the experiences people have, but how people let them affect them.

These kids may call me their teacher, but they are the one who have taught me.

**Topic: Why do you want to attend New College?**

**College Essay**

Ryan Sullivan

Every day I attempt to lose my mind and replace it with a better one, one that is more open and more knowledgeable. I am not seeking a mind that understands the world but instead a mind that can change the world. The Beatles once sang, "The farther one travels the less one knows--the less one really knows," and I believe this. The "truths" that I have been taught could all be wrong. I am not interested in New College so that I can accept age-old truths; I want to attend New College so that I can question the "truths."

It was once **known** that the earth is flat. Now it is known that the earth is round. How do I know this? At most schools, I would "know" this because the instructor said so, and the other thousand students agreed with him. That is a great technique for passing a test, but true understanding is more important than a semester's grade. Anyway, why should I accept someone's beliefs when I cannot discuss his reasoning behind them? Should I blindly trust him just to receive a 4.0? That number means nothing to me. A few digits written authoritatively on a piece of paper do not make me superior to my fellow students. Besides, I don't want to be better than my peers. I want to be the ruler of my personal world; I want to do things and know why I am doing them. I don't want a report card to tell me that I performed "better than average." Average is relative, and average is a force that holds people down. I want to know my strengths; I need to know my weaknesses. I crave an education that enlightens me.

The educational system I seek is one without limits imposed by others. I want to select my classes in regards to interests I hold, not to standardized curriculum. I want to be labeled as a person, not as a faceless drone. I want to measure my achievement according to how good I am at what I do, not according to the failures of my peers. Although, in the land of the blind, a one-eyed man is king; I do not want to be a king. I want to have two eyes, and I want my vision to be the best that it can possibly be.

Unfortunately, most colleges care about how well student number *376-56-1432* does compared to the rest of the herd. Luckily, I don't believe that New College does. It is well known that New College praises the individual. It is also well known that New College cares about personalized education and freedom to learn. But then again, how do I **know**?

**Topic: Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.**

**Special Ed**

Virginia Gladwin

Every year one out of three children are born with a disorder. These disorders range from minor cases such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Auditory Deficiency Disorder to more serious cases such as Scoliosis and Down Syndrome. I was unfortunate enough to be a child born with a disorder, and it has changed my life.

**January 29, 1991, 9:58 a.m., 8 pounds, 8 ounces: Birth**

My parents named me after the state of Virginia because of its meaning of love and beauty. As a toddler, I was shy and quiet, but my sense of adventure and determination never abandoned me. My best friend, until I was three, was a pacifier, which my mom would confiscate and hide on top of the refrigerator. In my eyes, this wasn’t a punishment; however, it was more of a quest in search of a lost treasure. Every object was a new gem, and every person needed to be evaluated to fulfill my curiosity that raided my mind.

**April 23, 1999, 12:36 p.m., 36 pounds, 40 inches: Diagnoses**

By second grade, I discovered a new form of art: competitive gymnastics. This was the key to my heart. When I wasn’t swinging from the uneven bars, I was nose deep in a book on gymnastics **without** pictures; other seven-year-old girls were at Brownies and reading pop-up books. While reading my favorite book on Dominique Dunn, an Olympic gymnast in 2000, Mrs. Robson, my second grade teacher, began to notice I was having difficulty pronouncing words. Mrs. Robson suggested to my parents that I get tested for a learning disability. My parents took me to Florida State University Multidisciplinary Center for a series of aptitude tests. After several tedious hours, I was diagnosed with Auditory Deficiency Disorder.

"Auditory Deficiency Disorder is a learning disability where the child cannot understand certain vowels and consonants; this makes it difficult for the child to read, pronounce, memorize, and spell words,” explained Greg Beaumont who works in the Speech and Auditory Clinic at FSU. “In most cases, the child will grow out of the disorder, but there are a few cases where the child will always struggle.” For three years, I attended a speech

and language class in addition to my public school classes. I started at an early age to double my school efforts in order to keep up with my classmates, and my grades reflected the time and effort I put in. My teachers often requested that I be placed in a “special” class to make school easier for me. Because I was determined to overcome this disorder, I refused.

**August 10, 2002, 8:26 a.m., 56 pounds, 56 inches: A new setback**

In fifth grade, I was retested to see if I still had Auditory Deficiency Disorder. The test came back positive; I would always have it. Upon hearing this, I tripled my work ethic and was still determined more than ever to defeat this obstacle. In class, when the teacher would ask for someone to read, my hand was the first in the air. Some of my classmates would giggle at my stutter; I ignored them and continued to learn, still just as strong-minded and persistent as I always was.

**September 23, 2008, 4:55 p.m., 117 pounds, 63 inches: College Admissions Essay**

Each day is a constant struggle for me because of my disorder, but I do not regret being diagnosed, for it is a blessing disguised as a curse. I have developed studying habits that my siblings are jealous of. I view college as a new obstacle to overcome. I make a tremendous effort to finish everything I start. I have neither requested nor required special treatment, except for occasional spelling or pronunciation assistance. I am determined more than ever not to succumb to Auditory Deficiency Disorder, so I focus on what is important: my education and my future.

**Topic: Don’t write about reverse psychology. (University of Chicago)**

Daniel Aldridge

*Is this a trick? It must be. Then what is the answer?! Hurry, hurry, your future is depending on this. By asking me not to write about reverse psychology, am I being asked to write about reverse psychology? No, that is exactly what they want me to think! They must be trying to test my ability of perception by placing the answer right in front of my face, and thus the answer is a literal translation of the prompt unless they expected me to make this conclusion, and thus the test is of my analytical skills. But I will not fall for that trap! The answer is clear to me now. Expecting me to have come to all of these conclusions, they must have assumed that I would overanalyze the problem, but what they do not know is that you never go against a Tallahasseean when his future is on the line! Therefore, I choose……NOT to write about reverse psychology, for the simplest answer is usually the correct one. Unless…..by writing about not writing about reverse psychology, am I not still writing about reverse psychology? If the negative of a negative is a positive, is the positive of a positive a negative? What?! No! What did that even mean? Oh no, I’m speaking gibberish! Now I will never be accepted. Goodbye hopes, goodbye dreams, goodbye attractive future wife…WAIT! Maybe I can save myself if I abandon ship now. All I have to do is end this talk of psychology and start with a new topic…but what? What can I talk about that will describe who I am? I mean, it’s not as if I can just write about myself…oh.*

I do not claim to be a genius, although some might call me so, but what I lack in brain power I make up for in willpower. I manage to make the grades I make not by sheer talent, but by the sweat of my brow and many (and I mean MANY) sleepless nights. Show me a challenge, and I’ll show you my best attempt at overcoming it. Place an obstacle in my path, and I will show you my pocket bulldozer. When I set my mind to a goal, there is very little in this world that can stop me from achieving it (a nuclear bomb might do the trick, though). However, I do try to balance my drive with a sense of humility, for I know that even when I give my all, someone will still be better than my best. This reality is crushing for someone who wants to be the best that he can possibly be, but it is a reality that we all must face.

What I believe that truly defines me, though, is my hunger -- my hunger for knowledge, my thirst for information, my desire to not know just the “what” but also the “why.” These traits drive me forward when the path looks bleak, for I know that the reward is great. The reward of knowledge is both a blessing and a curse, but I intend to bear the weight of both so that one day I might be able to better the world around me.

Wow. I’m looking pretty good now, aren’t I? You’re thinking, “Hey, we could use a guy like this at our school,” aren’t you? If not, then I have only one thing left to say: Don’t admit me into the University of Chicago.

**Chapter 3**

**Writing To Analyze And Change**

**College Application Process**

Callie Watkins

December 15, 2009

Guidance Department

Leon High School

550 E. Tennessee Street

Tallahassee, FL 32308

Dear Leon High Guidance Department:

I compliment our Leon High Guidance Department for working so diligently with our extensive student population. I am thankful to have a counselor willing to help me with various issues. However, there are several problems with the college application process, and I have simple suggestions concerning your organization.

PROBLEM #1:

At the beginning of this year, I started applying to colleges. I needed my high school transcript sent to all the colleges I applied to and a guidance evaluation form completed. Since nobody told me how to handle this, I figured the guidance office would help me. Subsequently, I asked a helpful volunteer in the guidance office if I needed an appointment with my counselor to accomplish this; she told me I did, so I prepared an organized folder to help my counselor. I understood that guidance is very busy, and I wanted to make the process undemanding. I prepared four envelopes, each with a college’s admissions office address for the four colleges I was applying to. Each envelope had a sticky note on it that indicated *please add high school transcript and mail by…*(whatever date application is due). I gave my counselor a copy of the guidance evaluation form and my resume, so she could easily fill it out. To be sure to give guidance plenty of time, I delivered all of these items a month in advance. My counselor, impressed with my organization, promised she would do everything right away.

I was proud and reassured until October 1, the day my first application was due, when I discovered that the guidance office failed to send my high school transcript to Auburn University. Since I worked so hard for the past four years with the desire to go to college (making all A’s and B’s and maintaining a 3.7 unweighted GPA), I was frustrated that a mistake that I had no control over penalized me.

I am not the only Leon student who experienced difficulties with the system; the majority of my peers had similar problems. In order for Leon High School to assist graduating seniors with the college admissions application process, I offer the following proposals.

PROPOSAL #1:

The guidance office should keep a record of tasks regarding college admissions. Create a chart for each counselor with columns including the following:

1. Student name
2. Task
3. Date request submitted
4. Required date of completion
5. Expected date of completion
6. Date of completion
7. Additional information

When a student asks for something to be done, simply record his/her request in the chart. When you complete the task, make sure to check it off the list. Keep a copy of the chart in the guidance office lobby, so students can easily check the status of their request without bothering the staff. The chart will benefit both the guidance counselors and the students. Students can see how much each counselor has to do, and we can be sure every task gets done with no critical mistakes.

PROBLEM #2:

Mr. Hassler, one of our superior guidance counselors at Leon, talks to senior English classes about applying to college. He gives us an extremely helpful handbook that contains everything seniors need to know about applying for college. I am very impressed; there is nothing I would change about the handbook or presentation. However, seniors receive this information two days before the Florida State University application is due. I already knew the majority of the book’s information because I submitted all four of my college applications by that time; I applied for early decision, and the deadlines had already passed. I was forced to figure out everything Mr. Hassler told us without the handbook’s guidelines. Receiving the handbook sooner would be extremely beneficial.

PROPOSAL #2:

Have the guidance counselor talk to senior English classes no later than the first or second week of school (as soon as the guidance department finishes schedule changes). Leon’s goal is to get as many students to attend college as possible, and it is easier to get into college if the student applies for the early decision option. By having the guidance counselor talk to seniors earlier, the students can get a head start on applying and will be encouraged to apply for early decision. It will give seniors more time to meticulously prepare their applications.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my proposals. Keeping a log of tasks and getting in touch with seniors sooner would make the guidance department much more efficient. A simple organization strategy would make your hard work more effective.

Respectfully,

A College Applicant

**What Message R U Sending?**

Georgia Howard

October 29, 2010

My Contacts

LG LX370

My Back Pocket

Dear Texters of the Inconsiderate, Unreceptive, and Just Plain Irritating Variety:

If you are receiving this letter, I like you as a friend. I like you as someone to share popcorn with at the movies. I like you as a hand to hold and a shoulder to lean on. I even like you as a face-to-face happy birthday wish rather than a thank-god-for-Facebook happy birthday wall-post. But friend, I do not like you as a texter.

**Objection #1**: As most people would agree, the word “you” is quite short. So, in fact, are “to,” “are,” and “why.” Even “thanks” is not staggeringly lengthy. So why do you insist on typing lk ths? How much time r u saving by leaving out these rly important letters? And do you realize how these shorthanded “words” make you sound? To be blunt, “dense” is the answer. Please take the time to add these essential letters back into your texting vocabulary. Believe me, this adjustment will make all the difference in giving you a more scholarly, appealing image and can only benefit you as well as the recipients of your texts.

**Objection #2**: The fact that you’re typing rather than talking does not mean that social graces lose their importance. If you ask for my help by way of the texted word, I will respond as promptly as possible, assisting you to the best of my ability. After I do so, it’s entirely reasonable for me to expect some evidence of your appreciation. However, in a recent exchange, this is what I got:

You: Do you know what the Government assignment is?

Me: That worksheet?

You: No, the book work.

Me: Sorry, no idea.

You: No response. Exchanges like this should end in at least an “oh, okay” or a “thanks anyway.”

Here is a good example of one such exchange:

Me: Hey, Mr. Hassler told me that I should ask you how to print out the guidance recommendation form on Common App. Can you help me?

Good Friend: I can! Scroll down on the “invite” page. There should be a box containing a link to the forms.

Me: It doesn’t show up on mine. I think I’ll have to re-invite him. Rats. Well thank you!

Good Friend: Aw I’m sorry! Maybe he hasn’t actually done his part?

Me: That’s what I think. But he seems to think that he did and that I am incapable of finding the form. Ha. I’ll work it out.

Good Friend: What a freak!

Me: Ha for real.

Here I am sure to include a statement (e.g., “Well thank you!”) that displays my appreciation even though my friend was unable to assist me. This is a necessary element of any conversation, including texts. Just as you would never turn around and walk away after asking someone for help, you should never leave a helpful texter un-thanked. Forgetting this key component of the conversation could mean that the next time you have a question, you’ll have one less friend to ask.

**Objection #3**: Since no one is ever going to text you the words, “This conversation is now over, Please don’t respond,” you must learn to detect the end of a conversation on your own. If you are reading this letter, it is probable that you over-text your welcome on a regular basis. You should read the following very carefully:

* A lone smiley face [ :) ] signifies the stagnation of the conversation. If you receive this message, it’s probably because the person you are texting finds it taxing to drag out the conversation and is ready to say goodbye. However, he or she does not want to make up an excuse for leaving or to seem rude in any way. He or she uses this smiley face as if to say, “That was a pleasant conversation, and now it is over.” My request is that you respect the smiley face. You may, on some occasions, respond with your own smiley face, but please, do not pulverize the conversation with uncalled-for questions or comments. Just let it be.

I like you as a person, and I don’t want to lose your friendship over trivial frustrations. Please consider these revisions and, on behalf of your entire contact list, make the change. :)

Sincerely,

A Promoter of Texting Awareness

**Everyone’s A Critic**

Joe Meyer

October 30, 2009

Mrs. Betty Harrison, Instructor

Leon High School

550 East Tennessee Street

*Tallahassee, FL 32308*

Dear Mrs. Harrison:   
 There are certain days that I have come to dread in your class: peer editing days. I have no issues with the actual process of editing; however, I do have a problem with the product. It is not fair that a handful of students slave the whole class period over a peer’s draft, filling as much space as they can with earnest suggestions, and get their essays back with little to no feedback. Most frustrating of all, you have done your part; you give us sample edits; you are quality control; you print out a step-by-step editing instruction; and you even test your classes on what a quality edit should be, but this still does not seem to improve the collective effort or quality of editing. Poor editing is becoming a detrimental issue that compromises the most critical part in the development of an effective essay.   
 I hope we both will agree that a quality edit is one that highlights flaws, offers suggestions to strengthen and improve an essay, and goes beyond generic comments (e.g. “I like this,” “rewrite this,” and so forth). Thus far, your syllabus has allotted for each individual to peer edit at least eleven drafts. At this moment, I have received six useful, quality edits (to put that in perspective that is a 54% success rate). Peer editing is a student’s only time to get distance from his/her essay and have critical problems identified. If students cannot get that distance, their paper can stagnate at a draft stage. While the grade the student earns is entirely their own responsibility, essays filled with vague, halfhearted comments can mislead a student to believe his paper is better than it actually is.   
 To get a student to fully comply, one should put pressure on his grade. That being said, the best solution to this peer editing dilemma is a system already implemented—peer editing critique sheets. While the execution of the critiques is done well, I do not believe you are using this system to its fullest potential. To get the most out of the peer-critiquing, you should:   
 (1) Introduce this system during the second draft of the first major essay. Starting early will lead to a solid foundation and strengthen future editing habits. By waiting until week eleven, you have missed eight weeks worth of potential improvement. However, please warn your future classes beforehand that it is in their best interest to follow the editing directions carefully.   
 (2) Randomly choose edit sessions (i.e.: Draft #1, Draft #2, etc.) to give out these critiques, or if to give any out at all. By doing so, more students will feel the need to be consistently strive for an A effort in case of an unexpected critique.   
 (3) Tweak the schedule. Push back test #4 to week three, and in its place add the first critique (currently test #7). This is a perfect slot because it follows shortly after identifying quality edits, but this will test if students can apply it.   
 (4) Change the grading system. Introduce an average peer-edit critique grade to weigh five percent of the overall grade. This five percent can be taken from journals’ total ten percent. It will be just enough to keep students serious about editing, and ensure they will get the cushion as long as they follow instructions.   
 You have done your part to provide your classes with an excellent learning environment. You have given us the tools. However, you gave a sample of a very powerful tool, and I do not believe you are aware of it‘s true potential. Through frequent and careful planning, you can give your classes the opportunity to locate and improve their problem areas.   
 Sincerely,   
 An Agitated Editor

**Bathroom Bothers**

Madeline Brezin

October 29, 2010

To The Young Ladies of Leon:

I am sure in your years at Leon High School you have had the unfortunate experience of entering the nightmarish room on every floor commonly referred to as the women’s restroom. As far as public restrooms go Leon’s are some of the worst I have ever encountered, but this is not the janitorial staff’s fault. The biggest problems are the direct result of the careless attitudes of Leon’s female population. I identified what I consider to be the most effective quick-fixes and hope you will take them in to account in the future.

Problem #1: Graffiti on the stalls and walls

Solution: Think before you write. Is a public bathroom really the correct place for such thoughts as, and I quote, “Orange Ave foreva Bitches!” or “class of 2013 rulz! the rest of yall r skankz and hoez!” and a timeless classic, “for a good time call (insert phone number here)” ? If your parents wouldn’t let you write it on the walls at home then you probably should not write it at school. Perhaps you can start a creative writing journal or a blog to channel your ideas.

Problem #2: Hair

The floors and sinks of the bathrooms constantly have a layer of hair on them and it is just disgusting. Loose hair that falls in the sinks clogs them and makes them unusable for everyone else and as a fellow girl I can tell you I do not want your hair, real or fake, in the sink when I’m trying to wash my hands.

Solution: Do not brush you hair, yank it out in chunks, or whatever you are doing to give our bathrooms a carpeted look. You should especially refrain from this behavior over the sinks, but if t is an emergency brush your hair over the trash can. However if you forget, it is easy enough to pick up your hair when it falls out and throw it in the nearest trash can. Although brushing your hair at your house would be best for everyone.

Problem #3: PBA

Public Bathroom Affection is becoming an increasing problem here at Leon. Several times I have walked in on young couples (same and different sex) enjoying heavy make out sessions during class time in the restrooms. Every time without fail I receive a death glare from the couple as if I had no right to be there! Well I’m sorry bathroom lovers if I wrecked the mood but if you didn’t notice already YOU ARE IN A PUBLIC RESTROOM, Have some self respect!

Solution: Don’t be creepers who make out in the girls bathroom! That is just so obviously gross I can’t believe it is an issue!

I apologize if I made you feel awkward during this letter but if it makes you feel ashamed to see the things you do written down in a TCC assignment you should probably stop doing them. I understand that it is not the entire female population of Leon that is contributing to these problems but it is enough to ruin our generally nice facilities for rest. We are girls, that fact alone means our restrooms should be way nicer than the guys, but sadly it is not so. I hope now that you have heard what a fellow female student has to say you will change your ways.

Sincerely,

Madeline Brezin

**Disgusted**

Kelsie Moore

27 October 2011

Leon Student Body

550 E. Tennessee St.

Tallahassee, FL 32308

Dear fellow students:

Thanks to Leon, my high school career has lived up to everything I thought it would be. I am proud to say I attend a school with such pride and tradition, and one that has been around for over 100 years. I have supportive teachers that are always there when I need help, and Leon always has an event going on to keep students involved. As much as I love Leon, there is one flaw that I have picked out since freshman year. It does not come from the faculty, or staff; it comes from the student body. I have to deal with it when I walk up to school in the mornings, in between classes, and walking to my car in the afternoon. Public display of affection or PDA is not classy and should not happen at school. I have identified what I think are the biggest problems of PDA and hope you can take them into consideration in order to stop this shameless show.

**Problem:** Every morning and afternoon, there are couples in between the old gym and newspaper room showing PDA. Couples are evenly spread out along the wall making out as if no one else is walking by them. This is common occurrence in the hallway during the day, and it is not a pleasing sight. Ladies, standing in between your boyfriend’s legs and making out with him is not classy or cute.

**Solution:** I understand high school couples are “in love,, but there are other places where you can show your affection and the whole student body does not witness it. There is always your car, which is not total privacy, but it is more so. If you don’t have a car you can always resort to your house. This way nobody else has to witness your PDA, and you get some privacy. By changing your location, you will no longer have people walk by and stare at you.

**Problem:** On many occasions I have walked in the bathroom to find couples making out in the stalls. The fact that people even consider doing this disgusts me. I give you props because you are trying to find a more private place not in plain view, but I still know what is going on in there. Guys should be embarrassed they will stoop so low as to make out with their girlfriend in the girls’ bathroom. The bathroom, for me, is an escape out of class for five minutes, and I am tired of it being ruined by PDA couples.

**Solution:** Nobody wants to be known as the girl who makes out in the bathroom, and there is one simple solution. Stay in class! We go to school for a reason, and you are not receiving a proper education skipping class in the bathroom. If you stay in class, your grades will improve because you are learning the material you need to succeed. Your grades in high school are critical for getting into college. Staying in class would improve your GPA, and colleges are more likely to accept you.

The pride and tradition at Leon is why I love it so much, but the PDA is not working for me. I would greatly appreciate it offenders would keep it down to a minimum, or if it did not happen at all. I hope you understand my biggest problems with PDA and can take them into consideration. I should not dread walking to classes and going to the bathroom during the day.

Sincerely, A disgusted student

**Tennis Team Troubles**

Josh Record

October 28, 2011

Dear Mr. Hanna:

In my three years at Leon, I could not have asked for a better principal. You have done a fantastic job leading us through the good times and the bad. Not only have you been a great leader, but you genuinely care about all of the students at school and want them to be successful and happy. It has not gone unnoticed that in the last three years you have attended a majority of the home varsity tennis matches and cheered us on every step of the way. However, in those three years there has been something missing from the tennis program: a locker room. Leon boys’ and girls’ tennis teams are the only two sports who practice on campus that do not have a locker room. This is an inconvenience for all players on both teams and I believe this problem could be solved within the next 12 months.

**Solution 1:**

Putting a portable on the west side of the tennis courts would be the simplest of these solutions. Although that area is prone to flooding, the portable could be put on stilts and avoid the possibility of flooding. We don’t need anything too big, just a place for the boys and girls teams to put their racquets and clothes. Lugging around racquets and clothes is quite a hassle for our younger players who are forced to walk around school all day with their extra belongings. Not only is this an issue for them, but for upperclassmen, like me, as well. I have a tendency to forget my things at home because I am so worried about tests and homework that 6th period tennis is the last thing on my mind. If I had a place to keep extra clothes and racquets this problem would be solved.

**Solution 2:**

Applying the same concept to the east side of the tennis courts, we could put a portable or a stable structure in the senior bowl. This would require us to take out about ten parking spots, but both tennis teams would have a place to call home. Though this area doesn’t usually flood in the bowl, we could still use the stilts idea to prevent any chance of flooding. A locker room to change in, hangout, and keep our belongings would mean so much to the tennis team. There would be no more days that the girls team was forced to change in their car before practice, and the guys would no longer have to strip down in the middle of the senior bowl to get ready for practice. Although this idea would take a toll on about ten parking spots, it is an easy and efficient way to give tennis what it deserves.

Overall, building a tennis locker room would bring so much to the tennis program. You may be thinking that the school and the county do not have enough money to fund a locker room for a couple of tennis teams, but we can take care of the financial part. Leon Tennis has done a great job of fundraising over the years, and I know if we had a chance to get a locker room we could raise the money.

Mr. Hanna, I cannot tell you how much I appreciate what you have done for Leon High and myself in my time here, but building Leon Tennis a locker room would mean the world to me and all of my teammates. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and I hope we can find a solution to our locker room problem.

Sincerely,

Tired of changing in the parking lot

**Problem Letter**

Ian Kirby

September 30, 1996

My Mind

6867 Heartland Circle

Tallahassee, FL 32312

Dear Mind:

Over the course of our lifetime, you have performed your job with care and dedication. You never hesitate to form an opinion for me or to come up with a good excuse or white lie when necessary. I can't commend you enough for the high standards that you have set for me and helped me meet for our first seventeen years on earth. However, as perfect as some of us may seem, we all--you included--have small imperfections.

Do you recall August 24 of this year? I certainly do. We were at work, teaching tennis, and our boss approached us with an unfamiliar look on his face. Without consulting with me first, you went ahead and blurted out an excuse concerning the golf cart that we had broken a few days earlier--the one that the boss didn't know about. If you recall, he had come over to tell us that we were getting a raise, but instead I had to stay after work and repair the golf cart. While I lay choking on Pennzoil and Slick 50, you rested comfortably in the hammock between my ears. You didn't even apologize.

We're all entitled to our little mistakes, however, and I can't totally blame you for that incident. But how about Monday, May 16, 1996? That was the day before the grade-determining AP Biology test. Do you remember what grade we received on that test? We got a C. I wouldn't blame this on you, but I have no other choice. You used to do so well in these types of situations, but these days you let your lazy side get the best of you. On this occasion, every part of myself wanted to study except you. You distracted my rationale, grabbed me with your greasy little hands, and dragged me to the gym. And when we got home, you convinced the rest of me that we were too tired to study and that the test was going to be easy anyway. Wrong again.

We have seen this instance over and over again, and I do have to credit you for simple things such as waking me in the morning, tying my shoes, stopping me at red lights,

and taking me to the gym. But lately, you always seem to fail to perform in intellectual situations. For example, last semester during our analytical geometry final exam, you went blank. In fact, I'm not even sure if you showed up. **I** was there. **I** was sitting in a puddle of sweat at my desk. **I** was gnawing on a number two pencil with a blank test in front of me that was staring through my eyes and down into the heart of a nervous, mindless, clueless lifeform. **You**, on the other hand, opted not to assist me in the effort to pass. **You** were across the street at the Swanee Swifty smoking a pack of Marlboro 100s, or just watching the cars pass by. I don't care where you were or what you were doing; it doesn't matter. What matters is that you weren't there for me in a time of need.

Most recently, it seems that your greatest fault involves decision making and procrastinating. Last week, Ms. Harrison assigned us to write this letter. For six days, you constantly burdened me with the question of what to write for the assignment. Finally, on the night before the first draft was due, you squeezed out of me a pathetic complaint about Tallahassee's courageous police officers. When we got the edited letter back, we received only negative remarks. But rather than holding your head up high and making an effort to make the letter better, you wallowed in your own pathetic sadness. You are the main reason why experts say that the average human only uses ten percent of his or her mind. What do you do with the other ninety percent of yourself?

For these reasons, just four examples of the many, I have decided to disown you. You are no longer part of me; you have evolved into a separate being. You have your own arms, legs, head, and set of fully functional sex organs. I have tried on numerous occasions to meet at a neutral point with you, but you refuse to work with me. I'm sorry, but our relationship just can't go on like this anymore. And so, I will travel on through this life simple, content, and mindless.

Yours Truly,

Brainless

**Driveway Dilemmas**

Mary Beth Waddill

October 24, 2008

Mr. Rocky Hanna, Principal

Leon High School

550 East Tennessee Street

Tallahassee, FL 32308

Dear Mr. Hanna:

I am writing to you to address a few serious problems that I, as well as many other students and faculty members, deal with on a daily basis. All of these problems stem from the driveway in front of the school. Although it is clear to me that there is a THRU TRAFFIC lane and a DROP OFF lane, others seem oblivious. I’m sure when the driveway in front of the school was painted, the yellow words, intended to direct traffic, seemed sufficient; on the contrary, they obviously are not doing their job.

**Problem #1: The Morning Hold Up**

After driving through all of the traffic between my house and school, I should be relieved to arrive at Leon; however, that is not the case. Instead, I have to brace myself for a long and incredibly frustrating wait in the THRU TRAFFIC lane. Why must I impatiently wait in this line of cars morning after morning? The answer is simple: parents overlook the yellow words meant to direct traffic and drop off their children in the wrong lane, thus, causing a morning hold up. Parents fail to notice the fact that there is a THRU TRAFFIC lane and a DROP OFF lane because the words do not stand out enough. When parents drop off their kids in the morning, they have a lot going through their minds—they are late for work; they have to do this and that; what are they going to buy at the grocery store—and the yellow writing on the road just doesn’t grab their attention. Also, some parents don’t even know the two designations exist because cars cover up the words THRU TRAFFIC and DROP OFF by stopping over them.

**Solution #1: BIGGER And BETTER Than Before**

If you look at the current paint on the driveway, the words THRU TRAFFIC and DROP OFF are yellow and capitalized; nevertheless, parents do not notice them. Luckily, this dilemma can easily be fixed. Repainting the words and increasing their size is more likely to catch a driver’s attention. Salesmen use this tactic in order to grab a buyer’s interest, and in most cases, it works like a charm; an advertisement that is large and brightly colored is the key to catching a person’s eye. Keep the yellow paint, but make the words THRU TRAFFIC and DROP OFF bigger to grab parents’ attention. Since road space limits the size of the words, cars can still cover them up. No problem; putting signs beside or over the driveway, right where it splits into two lanes, that read THRU TRAFFIC and DROP OFF will fix this problem. Both repainting and putting up signs are feasible, easy ways to make the driveway’s traffic flow smoothly.

**Problem #2: Student Safety**

Cars aren’t the only objects disrupting the flow of traffic; the students being dropped off get in the way as well. After parents drop their children off, the kids have to walk across the THRU TRAFFIC lane. Not only does this hold up traffic even more—as students slowly lug their heavy backpacks and books across the street, turn around because they forgot their lunch, and then look around to make sure no one saw their mommy blow them a kiss goodbye—but it is also unsafe for students to walk in front of moving traffic. One of your students could get run over that way. Imagine a student trying to get to his/her parking spot who has been waiting in the THRU TRAFFIC lane for over five minutes. The bell is about to ring, and the student has Mrs. Miller first period, so s/he is in a hurry. The car in front of the student, which is in the wrong lane, finally moves. The eager student presses the gas pedal a little too hard. At the same time, another student who just got dropped off steps in front of the impatient student and gets hit. Obviously students’ safety are highly at risk.

**Solution #2: The Switch**

Conveniently, there is yet another simple fix to this issue. While the words THRU TRAFFIC and DROP OFF are repainted, why not switch the two lanes so that the DROP OFF lane is the one closest to the school? In doing so, you could save a student’s life.

**Problem # 3: Self-interested Drivers**

Although I try to give people the benefit of the doubt, it is evident that some parents know which lane they are supposed to be in but do not care. These drivers are self-interested. They see a car in the DROP OFF lane and that the THRU TRAFFIC lane is

open, so they stop in the wrong lane without one speck of remorse. This presents a huge problem because once the child starts to get out of the car, there is no turning back. These self-seeking drivers cannot simply move so that THRU TRAFFIC drivers can proceed, for their children would be hanging out of the car door. Consequently, a growing line of cars with fuming drivers forms.

**Solution # 3: Traffic Patrol**

To solve this problem, I suggest getting the school Resource Officer (who is on campus all day), one of the hall monitors, or any other willing faculty member to patrol the traffic. This would consist of directing people into the correct lanes, kindly reminding drivers which lane to be in the next day if they manage to end up in the wrong one, and, of course, waving to parents as they drive by so they feel welcome at Leon High School. Also, you could include in a Parent Newsletter, which is already in the budget, that traffic is a problem and you would appreciate parents using the DROP OFF lane so that THRU TRAFFIC can progress efficiently.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, Mr. Hanna. Hopefully, you will take into consideration these three problems. I know that if a change is made, it won’t happen until I’ve graduated from Leon, but for other students’ sakes, your fellow faculty members’ sakes, and your sake--I’m sure that even you have gotten stuck in the “Up Top” traffic--please make a change in the driveway in front of Leon by repainting and/or putting up signs, switching the lanes, and getting an authority figure to patrol traffic.

Sincerely,

A Victim Of “Up Top” Traffic

P.S. I’m sure Mrs. Harrison will be the first to volunteer for traffic patrol duty, and she will do so willingly!

**Journals**

Heather France (2013)

October 26, 2012

Mrs. Garrett

Leon High School

Classroom 394

550 East Tennessee St.

Tallahassee, FL 32308

Dear Mrs. Garrett:

ENC 1101 has been one of my favorite classes even though I am not the best writer. Although I like the class, I have encountered a problem. Journals are an essential part of this class, but writing in pen on only one side of the paper is not acceptable, in my opinion. Also, the late penalty is outrageous. Mrs. Garrett, please consider my suggestions to fix these two concerns.

Writing journals in blue or black ink on only the front of paper is an issue. Not only does this waste paper, but when I make a mistake, I have to scribble it out instead of just erasing. Writing on the front of the paper is, of course, reader friendly, but please consider the environment. In order to get the desired length of journal entry, I can only fit two or three entries on each page. We have about eight entries every assignment; therefore, I end up using at least three sheets of paper. This may not seem like a lot of paper, but since we have ten journal assignments that is about thirty sheets of paper total. Pertaining to writing in pen, when I make a mistake, I cannot erase. My mistakes make for an untidy paper, but rewriting would just waste more paper. The solution would be to let us write on the back of the paper and use a pencil.

Everyone makes mistakes; forgetting to turn in assignments is one mistake that happens to many students. I have personally forgotten to turn my journal assignment one time. The result? Thirty points were taken off of my would-have-been-perfect score. Granted, the missed deadline was my mistake, and I deserved to lose the points, but is three letter grades really what should be lost? I propose that the thirty-point deduction be scaled down to ten points per day which is the same as late essays. Although journals aren’t the biggest part of our grade, taking a 100% and turning it into a 70% does hurt a student’s grade. Of course, continuous forgetfulness should result in a more severe penalty, but for a first offense a deduction of only ten points is reasonable.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. Perhaps you would consider revising the guidelines for journals in the future. Writing on the back of the paper, using a pencil, and scaling down the late penalty are just three of the small issues that would improve ENC 1101 tremendously.

Sincerely,

A One Time Late Student

**Service With The Speed Of Sound**

Wesley Burns

October 2, 1997

Sonic

1510 North Monroe Street

Tallahassee, FL 32312

Dear Sir or Madam:

I was a daily customer of your restaurant.

As a Southern citizen, I enjoyed the atmosphere your business set to resemble the American drive-in. The music of the '50s playing in the background and the girls on roller-skates add to the captivating surrounding. There are more options on the menu than any drive-thru in Tallahassee. However, I am sure the original owners of the franchise, Charles Pappe and Troy Smith, would be as disappointed with your restaurant as I am.

Before Sonic existed, Troy Smith owned a drive-in restaurant with 24 intercoms called The Top Hat. The Top Hat's slogan was, "Service With the Speed of Sound." Your company derived its name from this slogan when Pappe and Smith formed a partnership.

As my first complaint, your company is not what it claims to be. It is the slowest fast-food restaurant in Tallahassee that I have ever been to. It is not slow just one day or the next day; it is laggard every day. For about two weeks, I had lunch at your restaurant, and not one day did I receive my meal in less than fifteen minutes. Most days I waited over twenty minutes. Now I am not one usually to complain, but your service is absurdly slow. I tried waiting at tables, in the car stalls, and in the drive-thru. Not one method was fast. Even when the drive-thru was empty, it still took more than twenty minutes to receive my order. One day after paying for my meal, I waited at the window for at least ten minutes, and then an employee asked me to park my car and wait some more. The workers did appear to be slightly busy, but how long should it take for an order of cheese fries and a shake?

Having to wait a long time for my order is one thing, but waiting for a faulty order is another thing. Usually, I do not have time to check my order, but I had to adjust after being disappointed several times by the employees' mistakes. When I pay extra for a "cherry" limeade, I expect to get a cherry. At your web page, a fact was stated: "Last year,

Sonic served 78 million cherries to customers--enough to stretch from Fresno, California to Oklahoma City." Cherry limeade without a cherry is just limeade and a mad customer. Another fact listed was: "Last year, Sonic purchased nearly 23 million pounds of French fries. That's enough to give one large order (4.5 oz.) of Sonic fries to every person in New York City every day for 11 days!" I have never received a full basket of fries. It is either three-fourths full or halfway full. Customers like to get a full basket of fries. We like to get what we pay for. It makes us happy to find our fries overflowing and a few fries at the bottom of our bags.

The carhops are usually nice until they do not receive a tip. Is a tip expected? Are the carhops paid less than minimum wage and, therefore, dependent on tips? Shouldn't they be courteous and nice for the company's sake? I tip when I receive fast and pleasant service. It should not be expected of me to tip the carhops if they bring my meal out slowly and curtly.

The intercom system appears to be a good idea. When I am ready to order, I push the button but most often receive no immediate response. A few minutes later, an employee asks me for my order. After pushing the button, how do I know someone receives my signal? The intercom could be broken, and I could be wasting my time. A quick response, such as, "Please wait" or "Please hold" will assure the customer that his/her order is important.

To improve your business, I suggest you solve these small problems. Give the customers what they order. Give them their cherries and a basket full of fries. Tell your employees to improve their attitudes. Most importantly, please live up to your name "Sonic"--meaning the "speed of sound."

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours Truly,

A Sonic Customer

**An Intruder**

Lori Jackson

October 3, 2000

My Family

4104 Alpine Way

Tallahassee, FL 32303

Dear Family:

There is a member of our family who is causing many unneeded problems in our lives both individually and as a family unit. He has often been known to dominate conversation and cause the rest of us to stare silently into his nonexistent soul. He demands our attention and forces us to rely solely on him for information, rather than communicate as a family. He crept innocently into our lives, but now he can not be silenced. He steals our productivity; he impairs our literacy; he abducts our time together. He is the focus of the only time our family is all together in one place, our evening meal. His name is Teli Vinson, better known to you as TV, and he is stealing our most valuable possessions. He doesn't mean to be a pest, but slowly he evolved from a 30-minute, relaxing entertainer into a five-hour, mind-draining thief.

He has taken away our productivity. Now, instead of writing letters to far away friends and relatives, helping out the neighborhood kids, doing the laundry, or working in the yard, we plop down in front of Teli. We ask him to tell us what is going on in the world, thinking it will only take half an hour. By the time we get the news, Teli has grabbed our attention and has no intention of letting go. He uses the foot-in-the-door phenomenon, and it works. He now has every piece of productivity that we once possessed, and he refuses to give it back.

Teli Vinson has also stolen our literacy. Rather than read a book, we tune into Teli because he requires no thought. We can watch him hour after hour and never once have to think. He gives us stories and pictures to go along with them. The sitcoms he shows brainwash us into believing that, "At least I'm not as dumb as that guy." He convinces us that, as long as he's around, we have no need to read. We don't need novels; he can tell us stories. We don't need newspapers; he has a whole station devoted to the news. We don't need history books, biography books, or comic books; he has history channels, biography shows, and a wide variety of cartoons.

Most horridly, he has stolen precious time. He has become the sole occupier of every free moment in our lives. He has taken away our home-cooked, sit-down meals and replaced them with heat-up-between-commercial TV dinners. Though the home-cooked meals were nice, it is the time we spent while eating together that we are truly missing.

Also, after eating dinner with Teli, he begs us to listen to him on into the night. Not wanting to hurt his feelings, we oblige until we can no longer keep our eyes open. Then we put on the sleep timer, informing Teli that we are tired and that his bedtime is in thirty minutes. We have focused on Teli and ignored each other for an entire evening. Night after night, we follow the same routine and then ask ourselves why our family has trouble communicating.

We could solve the issue of Teli quite simply. If we were to each decide what we wanted to watch each night and if we were to each limit ourselves to one hour, Teli would not be left out, but he would no longer have complete control over our lives. Also, we should no longer invite Teli to dinner. We should have dinner by ourselves and save Teli for later. By doing this, Teli becomes an invited guest rather than an annoying intruder. By following these simple suggestions, our lives would become more balanced; we would not have to exile Teli, and we would get to spend more time together.

We spend far too much time trying to entertain Teli and far too little time being productive, reading, and being involved in each other's lives. It is time to demote Teli to merely an appliance and no longer treat him as a superior or even as an equal. He has held reign long enough, and he has done nothing to improve the quality of this household. If anything, he has stolen from our family and caused us disunity. I am not asking that we disown him, simply that we remind Teli Vinson, and ourselves, of what is most important: each other.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Family Member

**Show and Tell**

Laura Robson

October 30, 2009

Dear Mrs. Harrison:

One way that ENC 1101 could be improved would be to have an activity that helps students with show and tell writing papers. The peanut butter activity was a great learning experience. By having to follow the exact directions that students wrote on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, they learned how important it is to write clearly and with lots of details. If a student left out any detail, they ended up paying for their mistake. This activity helped the students learn so much about their writing. Every time they write a paper now, they think, *Although it is clear to me, am I being clear to my reader? Am I leaving anything out?* They will remember this one forty-five minute lesson forever. If ENC 1101 were to incorporate an activity for the mistakes the students often make when writing essays, they would learn and retain the information much better than they would simply by listening to a lecture and taking notes.

One of the most important skills for a good writer to grasp is being able to write a good show paper. In ENC 1101, there are not a lot of exercises that deal with the differences of show and tell papers. If there were an activity on the difference between a good paper that shows the essay versus a paper that simply tells the story, students could master this skill better, and it would be plastered in their memory for much longer than it would if they were to simply take notes on the differences. To clearly show these differences, students would do an activity where they would have to turn a tell paragraph into a show paragraph. Here is an example of how the transformation should look:

Tell paragraph:

I have a puppy. His name is Charley. He is black and white. Charley has a red collar. I got him two months ago when he was one month old. I got him from the Animal Shelter.

Show paragraph:

I have a rambunctious, three-month-old Labrador/ Pit bull mix puppy. He runs around the house like a Tasmanian devil knocking down anything and everything in his path. His name is Charley. He is mostly black but has white paws that look like he is wearing socks, white on the tip of his tail, and white on his stomach. He has a bright red nylon collar that fits snuggly around his neck. I got Charley from the Leon County Animal Shelter off of Easterwood Drive on August 5, 2009, when he was only one month old.

Many students have trouble writing show papers; for this reason, it is very important that more activities are given to students so that they can fully understand the concept. Show papers make the story easier to read and help readers get a visual image of what’s going on in their mind. They also make the essays more interesting and make the reader want to keep reading. If more exercises are given on these types of papers, more students will learn to be more effective writers.

Sincerely,

A Worried Student

**Shotgun**

Trevor Faulkner

October 24, 2004

Lucas Warford

Driver’ s Seat

Vibe, Pontiac 502\_FRS

Dear Respected Driver:

Any good passenger knows that being the driver is a huge responsibility. As the driver, it is your duty to ensure the safety of all passengers from point A to point B and to deliver them to their destination in a timely fashion. Therefore, it is only fair that the person in this position gets everything s/he needs in order to perform this job as efficiently as possible. As a passenger who is constantly forced to ride “bitch” (the back, middle seat), I have noticed that you, the driver, are not getting this respect. A grave injustice is being tolerated in your car, and because of it, all the occupants of the car are suffering. Safety is becoming an issue; in the time it takes you to change a CD or adjust the radio, all of our lives could be lost in a brutal, head-on collision. Additionally, it is taking us twice as long to use the drive-through window during lunch, which is causing us all to be late for our sixth period class. I also regret to say that the music in your car is sub-par at best. All of these discrepancies can be easily remedied, however, and can be traced back to one place. Shotgun, the most coveted passenger position in the car, is not acting to his/her highest level of competence. I intend to fix this problem.

If by some fluke you are unaware of this term, allow me to elaborate upon it. *Shotgun* is a reference to the front passenger position of the car. This term dates back to the American frontier. On trips aboard covered wagons, the driver would hold the reins and keep his concentration on the horses. Meanwhile, a person would sit next to him and keep an eye out for bandits and thieves. If such villains approached the cart, it was the job of the person sitting shotgun to defend the wagon while the driver attempted to reach a safe location.

My humble friend, your car is being overrun by bandits, and your co-pilot has forgotten all the ammo.

Although the threat of bandits is no longer a pressing issue, the modern-day

Shotgunner still has some important tasks:

1. The person in the shotgun position must count out exact change at all drive thru windows and must distribute the food throughout the automobile in a timely, yet competent, fashion.

2. The person in shotgun must choose all music in the car if the driver delegates this task to him. In the case of a radio, the shotgun position must ensure the absence of all commercial interruptions.

3. The person in shotgun must ensure the comfort of the driver at all times in order to achieve optimum automotive precision. This includes, but is not limited to, feeding him, keeping the car environment pleasant via the A/C, and providing helpful navigation tips when necessary.

4. Finally, the person riding shotgun must possess the ability to insult all drivers adjacent to his window. Concordantly, he must also be able to entice all ladies into proceeding to the driver’s current destination.

I regret to inform you that lately I have received the wrong food, listened to bad music, witnessed your needs go unattended to, and watched countless “hotties” being overlooked by your current shotgun companion. Additionally, I have yet to hear one uncouth comment or obscenity bellowed at any competing driver since I began riding in your car.

There is only one solution to this atrocity. I am requesting that you grant me supreme power of shotgun so that I may serve you and the other members of the car in a much more efficient manner.

Furthermore, I have many talents I could contribute to the front seat position. I have been a sales clerk for the past six months, and I have taken four years of math classes at Leon High School. With these merits to my person, I would be able to count change and distribute food at a faster pace and still maintain the precision that the other passengers have grown to expect. Moreover, I have a wide musical background, spanning from many genres such as 80’s rock, 90’s rock, classical, jazz, punk, techno, modern rock, hip-hop, alternative, and so on. With this kind of resume, I can assure you that no one will ever have to listen to Ashlee Simpson or Mandy Moore forever henceforth. I also do not fear controlling the A/C and am proficient with directions. I would even be willing to take up the task of feeding you if it became *absolutely* necessary. Finally, I have been blessed with not only an unusually sharp tongue, with which I would smite all opposing drivers, but I also have the good looks to entice *all* the ladies over to our grandiose cause.

In addition to these skills, I find that I have followed the rules of shotgun extremely well. I always defer shotgun to a beautiful woman, for that is a common shotgun courtesy. I have never pulled on the handle at the exact moment the driver unlocks the doors, causing no unlocking to occur. I know this is the biggest insult a driver must face, and you have never had to endure this abuse with me.  *Vis-à-vis,* I have never attempted to usurp the shotgun position by initiating the right of Rock, Paper, Scissors. I encourage you to look over these credentials and answer this question: do you want a co-pilot that is a chauvinistic, premature handle-pulling tyrant, or do you want a courteous, ravishingly handsome expert?

With the ideas and information I have proposed, I hope we can come to some sort of understanding and fix this most grievous of issues. I can only imagine how many commercials we shall be forced to listen to and how many “fine honeys” we will pass up if this problem continues to go unaddressed. I look forward to your reply and hope to see you in the front seat.

Sincerely,

A Dejected Back Seat Passenger

**Chapter 4**

**Writing To Inform and Research**

**Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass**

Kaitlyn Koetz

“Good afternoon, guys! My name is Mrs. Peck and I teach Concert Chorale. I know that you are all eager to get to singing, but I’m going to spend the next few minutes explaining to you the four different parts that we sing in this class. This is our mixed choir made up of mostly sophomores. Some of you sang in Freshman Girl’s Chorus and Leon Men last year, but this class is much different. About 68 percent of you have never been in a choir before, and most of you have never sung with members of the opposite gender.

“Boys, you guys are at the age where your voice is constantly changing. I will be vocalizing, or checking your range, many times throughout the year. Let’s start with the basics: voice parts. I will split you into two parts, tenor and bass, after I vocalize you tomorrow. Tenors sing the highest men’s part in a piece of music. It is a very important part in a mixed choir, for the inner voices help to complete the chords. For the most part, tenors sing in the treble clef, the same clef that the girls sing in. Don’t freak out; composers usually do this because it is much easier to read a tenor part when it is on a treble clef than a bass clef. It doesn’t mean you are girly or anything, trust me.

“Basses, you are the lowest voice part in the whole choir. Though it is sometimes hard to hear the bass section- that’s pronounced like “baseball,” not the fish, by the way- you are the part that keeps everyone else on track and singing in the correct key. You even get to sing in your own clef- the bass clef. This means that your notes are in different places than on the treble clef, but once again, don’t freak out; it isn’t hard to figure out at all.

“Girls, let’s talk about your voice parts. Despite what most of you believe, every single one of you is a soprano. *Alto* isn’t actually a voice part; it is what we call a choral part. But we’ll go more in depth that that another day. We’ll start with sopranos. You are the icing on top of the song-cake, so to speak. You usually sing melody, which is nice, because melody is usually the easiest to figure out in a song. You are the highest part in the whole choir, and don’t be surprised if you see notes that are above the staff. You’re part can get very high, but it’s okay because you guys can handle it.

“Altos, you girls are usually called mezzo-sopranos. This means that you sing soprano, but it happens to be lower than what we usually think of soprano being. We call you altos to keep the confusion to a minimum. You are the lowest girl part, and as a middle voice, you also are very important to giving the chord the full sound that it deserves. Some of you have such low voices that you are considered contraltos though. This is the absolute lowest part that a woman can sing. Your notes will probably stay on the staff for the most part, but we may sing some songs with a pretty low alto part with some notes below the staff.

“I know that this is a ton of information, and it probably freaked some of you out, but it is actually not as difficult as it sounds. I have faith that you will not let me down this year because it seems that you are all very intelligent beings. We’re going to have a great time in Concert Chorale this year. And with that said, let’s sing!”

**Wisdom Teeth**

Judy Audie

November 12, 1999

Dental Patient

000 Molar Lane

Toothsville, Florida

Dear Prospective Client:

So, you are finally getting your wisdom teeth out. This is probably not your idea of fun, but it is mandatory because your other teeth are at great risk. Chances are you have had braces at some point in your life, and you can reflect upon the hell you went through during that time. Remember the orthodontist appointments every two weeks, the tightening of rubber bands, or how about the bleeding gums? Removing wisdom teeth is crucial because, in most cases, there is not enough room in your mouth for them. If wisdom teeth are left in the mouth to grow, they can easily cause your other teeth to shift. You would then have to re‑live the whole experience of having braces.

Here are a few commonly asked questions about pre‑operation jitters and post ­operation remedies.

It is the night before the operation; do you?

(a) Go out and get drunk

(b) Smoke a cigarette

(c) Eat a huge Guthrie's Gut Box at 1:00 am

(d) None of the above

The answer is D. A and B are totally out of the question; no consumption of any alcohol or tobacco products a week before. Sorry. C is also wrong; you cannot eat or drink anything after midnight of the night before the operation. Try to schedule an early appointment so you do not starve all day.

The morning of the operation you will want to dress:

(a) In a costume

(b) Like a slut

(c) In a cute outfit (You always look cute.)

(d) None of the above

Once again, the answer is D. The morning of the operation, you will want to dress comfortably and bring a sweatshirt in case the operation room is chilly. Remember that you are getting teeth removed, not trying to get a date. Girls, if you have long hair, make sure you pull it back and no fingernail polish (I will tell you why in a minute).

So here you are. Your stomach is empty; you are wearing comfortable clothing, and you are lying in the operation room. A nurse will almost immediately place a gas mask over your nose and mouth. You will sound like Darth Vader. My advice is to inhale as much as possible; this is good stuff. After a few minutes, everything in the room will appear to be vibrating. This is when you will probably start smiling although nothing is apparently funny. The nurse will ask stupid questions, and when you answer, your voice will sound like an echo. This is when the laughter begins. The nurse will then place chip‑clip‑looking things on the tip of your fingers to monitor your breathing. (Remember the no finger nail polish rule?) Then, in comes the doctor, and he too will ask you stupid questions like, "How's school?" You will probably continue to laugh without even answering him. He will then put an IV into your wrists, but you are so out of it you will not feel a thing. Then, all...of a sudden...you...

After an hour of being under sedation, the doctor taps you on the shoulder, and you wake up...sort of. Imagine the most tired you have ever been in your life and multiply it by infinity, and that is how tired you will feel. The nurse will tell you to sit up and keep your eyes open, but you will not care. As you go to lay back down, two more nurses appear out of nowhere and put you in a wheelchair. Walking is out of the question. They wheel you outside where you are greeted by your smiling parents. (Or in my case, my father laughing at my swollen cheeks.) They help you in the car...and...all of a sudden...

You are awakened, again, by your parent(s) helping you get out of the car. Do not try to walk by yourself because you will not be able to. Getting into your bed is the best feeling in the whole world. Your parent will prop your pillows up so you are almost sitting up, but you will not care because all you will...want to do...is...

When the medication somewhat wears off, and you wake up, you should:

(a) Call your friend and tell him/her about the operation

(b) Eat a Sugar Daddy

(c) Drive your car

(d) None of the above

How did you guess? The correct answer is D. Answer A is incorrect because when you do finally wake up, your lips and tongue will be numb, and your face will be swollen. This makes it hard to talk. Answer B is incorrect because you will be lucky if you can even eat Jell‑O. Answer C is incorrect because your medication will still be in effect causing your judgment to be impaired. Your parent will remove the bloody gauze from the sides of your mouth that you did not know were there. You must try to eat something. Smoothies are great tasting and go down easily. If you want to try to eat soft fruit, cut it into small pieces, and use your tongue to smash it up against the roof of your mouth. This is an easy way to break down foods enabling you to swallow. After you have eaten, replace the gauze, and take your medication. Try to get Percocet. It not only gets rid of the pain, but it also knocks you out. Try not to get addicted.

It will be a day or two before you can eat regularly again. The pain goes away; however, your cheeks will be swollen for a couple of days. Should you have any problems, do not hesitate to call your doctor. Chances are it will be something he can fix.

So, that is it. Not as bad as you thought, huh? Right now, you are still probably feeling like this is stupid, but in all honesty, it is in your best interest to have these teeth removed. Just remember to follow all of the doctor's instructions, and the operation will go smoothly. Good luck.

Sincerely,

Missing A Few Teeth

**Shoe Selections**

Tyler Teagle

John ventures into the shoe store. He is on a mission. He must obtain a pair of running shoes. He is naturally drawn to the vibrant Nike rack. Here, in the midst of Sports Authority, he selects a gaudy pair of Shox and gladly prepares to pay $130 for the performance sneakers that will, no doubt, enhance his stamina and agility tenfold. Fortunately, at the last second, as he nears the register, a customer service representative with running experience untold rushes to the forefront, deftly preventing the inevitable gimmick entrapment. Instantly, he produces a mystic menu that reads, “There are three main varieties of running shoes that buyers should be informed about: Trainers, Flats, and Spikes.”

**Trainers**

Suggested Brands: Adidas, Asics, Saucony

Avoid: New Balance, Nike, Reebok

Target Price Range: $65-130

Synopsis: Trainers are vital and potentially the most dangerous shoe selection one can make if executed incorrectly. They have more cushion than other types of shoes as they are worn for longer distances over extended periods of time. When selecting a trainer, be careful not to fall into a gimmick trap. Common traps include: Shox, Air, etc. These features, which include springs in the soles, pockets of air, and wild foams, are money-making schemes devised by companies that allow them to charge more for a shoe. The gimmicks do not actually improve performance and, in most cases, will lead to injury for the athlete. Be wary of price. Higher is not always better. Be sure that the shoe’s arch fits foot’s needs exactly. The arch should fit the natural contour of the foot almost exactly. The biggest mistake an ill-informed runner can make is selecting an expensive shoe with the wrong arch type. Buyers need to know if their feet experience pronation (inward twisting), supination (outward twisting), or if their feet are neutral, as there are shoes designed for each type. A trained sales representative will be able to help identify the type of arch support that is right for any customer’s foot. Avoid Nike trainers at all costs, for Nike has a nasty reputation for causing injuries due to malformed construction and non-ergonomically formed insoles that don’t match up with ANY arch types. The weight of a trainer will be significantly heavier than a track spike or a running flat. Trail trainers, a more specialized type, are often variants of standard models, and they generally have more support and tread at the cost of added weight so as to provide more stability on rougher trails. Trainers last 300-500 miles, which will convert to anywhere from 1.5 months to 4 months, depending on intensity of training (shoes must be replaced and maintained to avoid injury).

**Flats**:

Suggested Brands: Adidas, Nike

Avoid: Asics, Saucony

Target Price Range: $50-70

Synopsis: Racing flats are one of the least understood and most overlooked shoe type. They’re light, cheap, and effective. The reason for the lower price than trainers is that a pair will generally last only 7-12 5k races. Flats are used for races in which a runner is exposed to concrete or asphalt conditions for extended periods of time or in longer cross country races. They have more cushion and support than spikes; they are lighter, and therefore faster, than trainers. They are never worn competitively in track, for support and cushion are less of a demand on the soft track surface. The cushioning is thinner than that of trainers, but it still covers the entire shoe unlike on spikes, where cushioning is partial.

**Spikes**:

Suggested Brands: Nike

Avoid: Asics, Brooks, New Balance, Saucony

Target Price Range: $80-120

Synopsis: Spikes are the pinnacle of the running shoe. They are the fastest, lightest, and most famous for their performance. Spikes are the reason flats are so often overlooked as spikes are much quicker. They also receive much more attention as they are worn exclusively in the track world, which receives much more publicity. Good spikes are generally quite expensive, as the lightest spikes can weigh as little as 3.2 oz. Spikes have the potential, with training, to shave as much as 15 seconds off a runner’s time (an eon in running time). Spikes last even less time than flats, being viable for only 5-7 5k races, for they sacrifice structural integrity and cushioning for a lack of weight. Fortunately, the metal spikes in the sole are replaceable, extending the track life of the shoe extensively as the metal spikes wear down over time. Spikes are generally made of lighter cloth materials and experimental synthetic components which reduce durability for the sake of speed. Spikes put much more strain on the calves of a runner than flats or trainers, so any runner looking to try them out should be prepared for mild to moderate discomfort. This pain is existent in flats but to a much smaller degree.

Thankful that the mystery sales associate swooped in to the rescue, John promptly returns the pair of Nike Shox he so eagerly selected to its rack and sets off in pursuit of a pair of Asics Nimbus 11, never to be foiled by the gimmicks of the shoe market again.

***Doo*’s and *Dah*’s**

Vince Schueren

It all starts with the *doo*’s and *dah*’s. Perhaps some *jum*’s, or maybe even a few *tin*’s. Oh! And a strategically placed *zeer* will really stand out from the rest. Excellent. Now, for the volume variation, a steady beat, a little showmanship, and the finished product is? Your jam. That’s right, your favorite pop song! The one that gets hopelessly stuck in your head, the one to which you jam out, the one you hear just before you instinctively crank up the volume. Except the *doo*’s replace the piano part, the *dah*’s take the place of the guitar, and a smooth blend of voices ring out in lieu of that synthetic radio sound. This is the essence of an increasingly popular musical genre: pop *a capella*.

In Italian, *a capella* means “without instrumentation,” so pop *a capella* simply means pop music without instrumentation. The task is to make voices sound like instruments, and the key is to choose appropriate syllables. For instance, many *a capella* choirs use *jum* as the guitar sound because the *j* sounds like a strum, and the *m* sounds like the lingering sound. If a choir wants a note to stand out from the rest, it may assign to that note a syllable with a bright vowel and a percussive consonant. *Dee* would be a good option. While the “lyrics” are important, the music doesn’t truly become interesting until dynamics (changes in volume) are added. For a louder sound, choirs use open vowels such as *ahh* or *oh*. Conversely, if a choir wants to have a softer background, it may opt for smaller vowels like *ooh*. There are no specific guidelines concerning the nature of effective dynamics. *A capella* groups usually just feel in the music where it’s appropriate to increase or decrease the volume.

Another essential component of pop *a capella* music is the beat boxer, also known as the vocal percussionist (VP for short). The VP takes the place of the drums. He or she uses a *P* sound for the bass drum, *K* for the snare, and *tsss* for the cymbals. The VP is vital to the mix because percussion is what makes audiences get into the song and really “groove” to the music.

There is just one more main element of pop *a capella*: showmanship. As a general rule pertaining to almost every form of entertainment, performers must appear to be enjoying themselves. Any member of a quality pop *a capella* group knows what must be done, even if he or she received a $200 speeding ticket on the way to concert. The singer *must* look like he or she is having a good time. This can be accomplished by smiling and mastering the “a ca bop” (AH-cuh-bop). The a ca bop is simply subtle dancing, set to the beat of the music. A ca bopping may involve, foot-tapping, arm-swinging, and even shimmying. However, the only necessary movement is a simple, light bounce.

Pop *a capella* is a wonderfully energetic, refreshingly unique, and highly entertaining genre of music. In recent years, it has begun to elbow its way into modern culture with television shows like *Glee* and *The Sing Off* (a pop *a capella* competition). One can expect to see many *doo*’s and *dah*’s in the near future, as pop *a capella* music continues to gain popularity and recognition.

**Survival of Attendance**

Ashton Shippy

"Hey girl, you must be Jackie. Welcome to Gilchrist Elementary. I heard that you’d be working with me today to watch and learn everything. Are you excited? This job is actually really fun once you get the hang of it.”

“Excited? I guess you could say that. I mean, what could be easier than being an after-school teacher? We’re getting paid to watch kids.”

“Ha ha, I figured you’d say that because that’s how most people perceive after-school teachers. In reality, it’s an absolute lie. Nothing about this job is easy, and nothing is done without breaking a sweat. Just taking attendance is a job in itself."

“I doubt it’s that difficult. All you do for attendance is call roll and mark down who's there and who's not; right?"

“One would think it’d be that easy, but it’s not. If you can’t make it through attendance, then you won’t be able to make it through this job at all. Attendance is...wait...here come the kids. Just stand back, and I’ll explain everything to you.

“Each teacher is assigned to a class. For every grade, there are three classes. Every class is given--**'NO, CAITLIN, WE DON'T TAKE FIVE SNACKS AT ONCE. WE SHARE'**--snacks and cups of juice. You should probably know about that first off. Normally, kids actually eat a snack or drink juice, but that is not the case with the kids who stay in the after-school program. Of course, kids like to play with whatever they can get their hands on, which includes food, but these kids take playing to a whole new level. They like to throw the food, smash the food into tiny pieces, stick the food up their noses or into any hole in their bodies other than their mouths, put the food in their pockets, or spit the food at each other. Rarely will you see a child--**‘JERAMIE, WE SIT AT THE TABLE AND NOT UNDERNEATH IT. PLEASE HAVE A SEAT’**--actually consume a snack. It’s the same with the juice. They will spill it, spit it out, pour it on the table, or even dump it on one another. There is a trick to stopping this behavior: deeply bury any feeling of sympathy you possess. Quickly snatch snacks and juice away as soon as you see a child inappropriately handling them. S/he will fuss and say that he’s hungry and thirsty, but don’t give in; remain strong. Calmly explain to

him that if he is so hungry, then he would have already eaten the snack and drank the juice. He will stomp away crying, but do not pay attention to him, or you’ll feel sorry for him which will end in nothing but disaster.

“Now, at the beginning of attendance, you’ll have a paper with the names of all the kids in your class. As they arrive, check off their names. Simple, right? The catch to it is that--**'WE DO NOT THROW FOOTBALLS INSIDE, BRYAN’**--during the time you’ll be trying to make the checks, the kids decide to run buck-wild. A few will be making a mess with their snacks; others will be playing tag; some will be off talking to kids in other classes, and a couple will be crawling around the room. No matter what, don’t show your anxiety or stress.

“Bribery works wonders to keep them calm and in line. Mention that whoever is the best behaved can be the line leader and another can be the door holder. That will keep them good for about five to ten minutes, and then remind them again. Candy is the best bribe, though. The kids will do anything for a piece of candy. Tell them at the beginning of attendance that--**’DANIELLE, WHAT HAVE I TOLD YOU ABOUT POKING PEOPLE IN THE EYE? THAT IS NOT A NICE THING FOR US TO DO’**--if they behave, they will be allowed some candy. Don’t award candy to kids you had to get onto more than once because then the candy bribery doesn't work; they think they will get it regardless. But the most important part to consider when giving them candy is making sure it’s sugar free. If not, they become twice as rambunctious, and it was all for nothing.

“So do you think you have it down? I know it was a lot to take in, but I’m sure you’ll catch on quick. You have to, or you’re pretty much done for. Just remember what I’ve told you, and you can get through attendance--**’ALISHA, WE DO NOT HIT PEOPLE JUST BECAUSE THEY WON’T BE OUR BEST FRIEND’**--without too many problems.”

“I, umm...wow...this is intense, but you seem to know how to keep control pretty well. Thanks for the advice. How much longer does attendance last?”

“That’s it; I’m finished.”

“That was only ten minutes, and it was exhausting.”

“I know. Now try to imagine the other three hours and 20 minutes.”

**The Fairy Pays A Visit**

Chris Harrison

Will someone please unlock these chains? Anyone? I'm really scared, and I feel alone. Is anyone out there? Does anyone know what I'm going through? BBBBBEEEEEEPPPP. It's the alarm clock, 6:20 a.m. as usual, which means another day in Hell. Whew, I was hoping that I remembered to set out my clothes. Hanging perfectly on the closet door is my shirt, belt, and pants. Looking down to the floor, I am relieved to see my deodorant, cologne, wallet, keys, shoes (socks in left shoe), and finally my undershirt. Oh my God, what if I forget my routine, the one I've done since the first day of ninth-grade? Here goes nothing. On goes the deodorant, undershirt, and dress-shirt. Now that the upper body is covered, I'll put on my pants, socks, belt and shoes. Three sprays of cologne, wallet in back right pocket, and keys in front left pocket. Whoa, I barely made that one. This hill has been conquered, but now I'm standing at the foot of a very deadly mountain, the mountain that makes me count. Count what? I'll count just about anything that walks, talks, breathes, moves, and has a number pattern. Maybe I won't count today. Please don't count today. I think it's starting to work; I'm not counting. Nope, it's too late. There are 398 steps from my car to my first class. There are another 21 steps from the bottom of the front steps to the top--another 45 steps from the first floor to the third floor. Of course, I could count ceiling tiles. Nah...33 tiles in first period. Those odd numbers drive me insane. Wait a minute. What am I talking about? Does anyone know what I'm talking about? Is there anyone out there that knows what I'm going through? Please, someone help me. Please.

*Here I am.*

Who are you?

*I am the OCD fairy.*

The who?

*Oh, sorry, OCD is short for Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.*

What are you doing here?

*It seems you have a problem that you need assistance to get rid of. I think I could be a reliable person for the job.*

That's great and all, but I don't think you have any idea what I go through. No one does.

*Maybe I can convince you otherwise. I know more than you think I know. I know how you have a problem counting everything, usually in even numbers by two. I know that the room will start spinning if you eat or drink after anyone. I know that you wake up several times a night just to make sure you set out your school clothes. Most importantly, I know that you feel all alone. You think you're the only one with these off-the-wall habits.*

How do you know so much? No one else could have known about any of that; I never told anyone.

*I told you I was a fairy.*

I guess I believe you now. I just want to know why I'm so different. Am I the only person with these crazy obsessions?

*This is where I can make you feel a lot more secure about your little problem. Over six million people have what is called Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. It is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. This imbalance is what makes the brain partake in unnecessary tasks which results in being obsessive-compulsive.*

How do I know if I have OCD?

*Generally, people are unaware of the disorder affecting them. They feel like what they do is completely normal.*

What are some of the normal symptoms of OCD?

*Some very common symptoms of OCD are counting, doing everything in patterns or repeated sequences, always needing to be neat, turning off and on lights even though you've checked them previously several times, fearing contamination, and having constant worries or impulses that aren't relevant to real-life problems.*

How do the obsessions and compulsions go together?

*Obsessions such as fear of contamination can be mediated by the compulsion to repeatedly wash hands. Another example is the obsession of being injured or even killed. This causes the compulsion to never leave the house. These are two prime examples of how obsessions and compulsions go hand-in-hand.*

Is OCD treatable?

*Yes, OCD can be treated, but is usually never cured. Psychiatrists prescribe medication and time as the most favorable options to suppress the disorder. Psychiatrists deal with the mental aspects of OCD and help patients overcome this life-controlling disorder. Medications such as Prozac and Zoloft are used to help the physical aspect of OCD. These medications re-align the chemical make-up of the brain and can totally change the brain's effectiveness in fighting off obsessions and compulsions.*

Why do I feel so trapped and alone?

*In most cases, OCD victims are afraid to tell people about what they are experiencing. They feel like they will be made fun of or people will think they are crazy. The trapped feeling is not knowing when the repeated actions will stop and when a normal life can be lived. Luckily, you have a mild case of OCD. If you hadn't addressed your problem when you did, it could have escalated into years of traumatic stress. Catching this disorder early and treating it are crucial in preventing it from controlling your life.*

So I'm not the only one. There are over six million people with the same strange habits as I. That's a relief. Your help has been most appreciated.

*No problem. I would love to stay and chat, but I've got a few million other cases to attend to. People these days are becoming more obsessively compulsive every day.*

Good luck and thanks again.

**Lefties Do It Right**

McKenzie Smith

?disability a or gift a handed-left being Is

Does this sentence seem backwards? It probably doesn’t for a left-handed person. Approximately thirteen percent of the world’s population is left-handed with more men than women. Reading, writing, reaching, grabbing, catching, and throwing are many of the difficult tasks that require extra thought for a left-handed person. This is because interaction usually occurs with a right-handed person. As a result, most people are not aware of how left-handed people manage to function in a world configured for the right hand.

Being left-handed had sinister connotations in the past, drawing looks of doubt and apprehension. Negativity is often associated with *left* because it is the opposite of *right.* People think of *left* as backwards, counter-clockwise, or clumsy. Whereas, people think of *right* as correct, accurate, or truthful. Even Biblical passages suggest impurity when referring to *left* but associate *right* with spirituality and goodness. Although using the left hand is still not allowed in some cultures because of the stigma of being wicked or unsanitary, throughout most of the world, it is accepted.

Despite crude references to left and left-handedness, it is the use of the left hand that sets the select few apart from what is considered *normal.* Right-handed people take their dominating world for granted, and “Lefties” spend their whole lives conforming to a world that was not designed for them. Every day is filled with challenges for Lefties to *do it right*.

First of all, Lefties use the right side of the brain, the side that is more intuitive and directed towards creativity, patterns, spatial awareness and content rather than logic. The right-hand world imposes an alternative way of thinking and performing during every minute of every day. Therefore, Lefties are generally better at adapting to life situations than right-handed people. They are able to accomplish the same tasks, but from a different perspective and sometimes with better odds.

For instance, sportsmen who use their left appendages have a tremendous advantage over their right-handed opponents, taking them by surprise in tennis, soccer, and baseball. A left-handed/footed tennis player can deliver a slamming backhand with a forehand swing. A left-handed/footed soccer player can move the ball with the opposite side of the body making it difficult for the other team to retrieve. Also, a left-handed baseball pitcher can throw the ball from the south angle of the ball field, making it extremely difficult for batters to hit, thus coining the label “Southpaw.” (This term has evolved as the general reference for left-handed people and does not necessarily refer to sports anymore.)

It is widely thought that left-handedness is associated with higher intelligence. Many people who have made incredible contributions to society are Lefties: Leonardo daVinci, Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, Mark Twain, Paul McCartney, and Oprah Winfrey.

Although some offered brilliant ideas and works, some endured mental illness throughout their lives. Unfortunately, scientists suggest that people who are left-handed encounter more mental problems converting to the right-hand world. Research shows that many left-handed people over the age of fifty suffered abuse from teachers who insisted on strapping down the left hand with a vengeance. Some were teased unmercifully for being different. Others developed speech impediments and suffered further mental anguish while struggling under oppressive and unyielding authority.

Even though this forced use of the right hand is archaic, a left-handed person must always adapt to the right-hand world, which can be very stressful. For example, operating equipment or machinery can cause physical injuries for left-handed people. Ergonomically, a computer mouse contributes to repetitive stress to the weaker right hand. Machine handles and buttons, which are generally located on the right side, make it extremely dangerous to reach over to turn off or on.

Performing one of these seemingly simple tasks is routine for a right-handed person, but think of all of the Lefties in the world when you read the list below:

• Cars - Consider opening door handles, putting keys in the ignition, stick shifts, brakes, and using the right foot for the gas pedal--a really scary thought!

• Notebooks - Impossible to write on without removing the paper.

• Ink - Smears as you write from left to right, especially with gel and ballpoint pens.

• Math problems - Lefties cover up the problem while trying to solve it.

• Manual pencil sharpeners - Yeah, right!

• Scissors and can openers - Another "*right*!"

• Desks - The left hand hangs off while the body contorts to write--in one of those damn notebooks!--and the body turns away from the teacher.

• Golf - Left-handed clubs are a must.

• Dance - Choreography begins with the right foot.

• Dining - Elbows constantly knock with the neighbor who is generally right-handed.

• Knives - Have an asymmetrical cutting edge to benefit right-hand use.

• Watches - Worn on the left hand but gets in the way for Lefties.

• Belts - Want to put on going right--is this upside down?

• Rulers - Result in upside down measurement.

• Shaking Hands - Seems unnatural reaching for someone’s right hand.

• Playing cards - To see numbers, cards must be fanned in a right-hand manner.

• Ice cream scoops - Good grief a *pinky* scoop?

Thankfully, western society wholeheartedly accepts left-handedness. Almost everybody knows a Southpaw, or Lefty (noticeable by the tell-tale ink stains on the left hand). Just remember, though, that the left side of the brain controls the right side of the body, so ONLY left-handed people accomplish tasks in their *right* mind! Think about this for a while....

**It's A Tough Job**

Gavin Grigg

"All right, you little runts, line up for warm-ups and give me 100 push-ups. You look like a bunch of pansies. Go to your positions: defensive backs with Coach Moore, defensive line and linebackers with Coach Carter, offensive line with Spence, wide receivers and running backs with Coach Rice and fullbacks with me.

“If you are afraid to hit or be hit, you need to find another position. If you think you are just going to walk over here and be a fullback, you are in for a rude awakening. To be a fullback, you have to be the meanest, most aggressive, cockiest son-of-a-bitch on the field. Son, what are you laughing at? You think I'm funny? I can be funny: give me 50 push-ups.

“A fullback’s main reason for being on the field is to lead block for that fast, puny halfback lined up behind his ass. A hole is going to open up between the guard and tackle, and then a big, ugly linebacker, looking to rip your head off, will be waiting on the other side of that hole. An effective lead blocker puts the linebacker's rear end into the ground. Then the halfback scampers by and scores a touchdown. He may get the glory, but you made the play.

“After ya’ll master the art of lead blocking, we’ll move on to pass blocking.”

“When do we get to run the...?"

“Shut up! Give me 60 push-ups this time. Where was I? Oh, pass blocking. When the ball is snapped, the fullback has to get out of the way of the quarterback and look for that same linebacker coming on a blitz. Once you see him, put his face in the dirt and tell him to come back for more!

“If you block your tail off and don’t complain, you just might get to touch the ball. The first way you are going to get that pig skin (football) under your arms is through the air.”

“What?”

"Catching the ball! Through the air, the quarterback is going to throw you the ball. Give me 70 push-ups! When he throws the ball to you, it is not going to be a pretty pass that gets your name in the newspaper. No, it will be you sneaking a couple of yards down the field, catching the pass and hopefully driving your feet hard enough to get a first down.

“If you show me that you can lead block, pass block and catch the ball, then I just may let you carry the rock (football) a couple of times.”

“Finally...”

“Holy Crap! You always have something to say! Give me 100 push-ups. When you are done, sprint your big rear end over to Spence and tell him that he has a new offensive guard! Now where was I? Oh yeah, if you work your tail off, you will be able to get a couple of carries a game. When you run the ball, you have to stay low and run behind your pads. If you stand straight up when running, you will get ripped into two pieces and embarrassed. Fullbacks aren’t jukers or speedsters, not spinners or leapers, not striders or track stars; no, fullbacks are big, bruising machines. *Three yards* *and a cloud of dust,* that’s our motto.

“I think ya’ll learned a lot considering this is your first day of Pee Wee football. Wait, are you ... crying? There is no crying in football! What? You want your mommy? Fine! Go ahead; go to your mom, all of you. I'll see you next week, same time, same place.”

**Musical Trashcans**

Mary Cecelia Graham

As a college town with a large music school, Tallahassee has the pleasure of being home to all kinds of musical ensembles. As citizens of this diverse area, people are exposed to many things that would not be available anywhere else. It is not uncommon to walk around downtown and see an instrument that most people never knew existed. However, one type of instrument seems to have nestled into our cozy city and made it its home.

Tallahassee is now proud to be home to a grand total of three steel drum bands, which is quite rare in the United States. Leon High School established the group Lion Steel 21 years ago, and in recent years FSU and Raa Middle School have followed suit. Surprisingly, citizens of Tallahassee still know very little about the genre of music that it is housing.

**What is a steel drum?**

A steel drum is a musical instrument that originated off the coast of South America, in Trinidad. There are a variety of types of steel drums, but each follows a basic pattern. They are usually made from large steel barrels (used for holding oil in most cases) and are about two feet in diameter. Most steel drums (also called pans) are cylinders with a concave top where it is struck to make notes and an open bottom to allow the sound to project.

**What types of steel drums are there?**

 Because the world of pan is still young and expanding, there is a lot of variety in types of steel drums. However, there are 5 primary types of pan that are being used in the Tallahassee area today.

* **Tenor** (right) - This is the smallest of the steel drums and the highest in pitch. They maintain the average diameter of about two feet, but the vertical length is only about eight inches. If compared to a symphonic band, the tenor would take the place of a flute. It usually carries the melody of the tune.
* **Double Tenor**- This drum is actually a set of two drums played by a single musician. Double tenors are like clarinets in the fact that they usually have the melody with the tenor pans, but sometimes play a harmony to complement the melody.
* **Double Second**- Like the double tenor, double seconds are a set of two drums played by one person. Double seconds are slightly larger and lower pitched than their cousin the double tenor, and could be compared to a saxophone in the traditional band setting. Double seconds usually play the harmony line, or join lower instruments in rhythmic strumming.
* **Triples**- Triples are just what they seem, a set of three large drums. Each drum is about two feet long, and is much lower pitched than the tenors or double tenors. Much like a trombone or string base, triples most commonly strum chords in a rhythm that gives the tune its groove.
* **Bases** (below) - Bases are a set of six large drums. Instead of hanging on a stand as the rest of the drums do, these drums are placed on the floor and stand about three feet high. Similar to the tuba, a set of bases plays the baseline in a tune. Bases are seldom consciously heard, but their presence gives the band the foundation it needs to stay together.

**What kind of music does a steel band play?**

Traditionally, steel bands play music from the Trinidadian Independence Day festival called Carnival. This genre of music almost always falls into one of two categories: Calypso or Soca. Calypso was left over from the African slaves brought over to Trinidad to farm the sugar plantations. It was used as a way for slaves to communicate with one another and mock their masters. Decades later, Soca branched off from the old traditions of calypso. While Calypso was known for being very socially conscious, Soca applied the same bouncy, offbeat rhythmic styles to less serious lyrics to become the fast-paced “party music” that is common in Trinidad today. Together, these two types of music make up most of a steel band’s repertoire.

As steel drums become more and more popular in the Tallahassee area, the question of “why are those people banging on trash cans?” seems to echo through town more and more often, despite the sweet sounds that emanate from said “trash cans.” On behalf of all the musicians involved, go see one of the shows being performed around town periodically and tell fellow citizens that these instruments are not trash, nor are they being carelessly “banged on.”

**The Transporter**

Matt Sullivan

Driving to lunch commences long before any keys are in the ignition. Taking people off campus to lunch requires a great deal of prior planning. Meet Phil, a student at Leon. For Phil, driving to lunch begins at several different steps. His first step he sets out five business days before the day he drives to lunch. This day is dedicated to asking any women he would like to invite to lunch. Women make plans way in advance, so Phil must make his plans as early as possible in order to insure any of the desired women can attend. Once Phil has at least one female going in his car, he is set.

If he hasn’t already, Phil’s next step is to confirm a place to go to lunch. This is best done four business days before the desired lunch day. Phil asks the women if they would like to go to a place where they can eat healthy. Phil asks the women before the rendezvous not only because he does not want to risk the females dropping out due to a poorly selected location, but he also wants to make sure all women are able to attend without being annoying. Phil’s best bet is to stay away from Tennessee Street. Tennessee Street, though providing many options, is a mistake because there is high traffic on the road and many people in the restaurants. Phil’s best bet is North Monroe Street. North Monroe has a mix of both locally owned, healthy places, and the standard fast food establishments. Thomasville Road is also a safe place to go, though it does not have as many venues.

Three business days before Phil’s desired lunch day, he asks any men if they would like to go. Because men do not plan as far in advance as their female counterparts, three days guarantee enough time to plan for lunch without risking the possibility of forgetfulness. Phil must always leave at least one seat open though, just in case one of his lady friends decides to bring one of her lady friends, or , more commonly, a last-minute-luncher shows up. Now that Phil has a set roster, he can move to the next step.

Phil’s next step is choosing an appropriate spot. Finding a spot begins the day of his lunch event. This step does not apply to people who have top spots but is of the utmost importance for those who do not. Even though Phil has a first period, he should leave his house at least ten minutes earlier than his usual time. These ten minutes allow more options on where to park. If he does not have a first period, there will be very slim pickings on spots that have reasonable proximity to his classes. The best spots are the first ones on Tennessee Street, but they go faster than Twinkies in Rosie O’Donnell’s pantry. If Phil is not early enough for a Tennessee spot, he can try to get one on Miccosukee or Meridian Street. Miccosukee and Meridian are high priority spots as well, so it is always best to check these spots first. If all of the Miccosukee, Meridian, or Tennessee spots are taken, Phil can try Georgia Street of Cherry Street. If all else fails, Phil can always park in the infamous Junior Bowl. Once Phil has selected his spot, he must park next to cars smaller or the same size as his. If Phil is driving a Mini Cooper, he best not park next to an F-350. When Phil finds his perfect spot, he backs in. If Phil cannot back in, he parks in the spot regularly.

Between third and fourth period, Phil texts all of his friends who are attending the lunch; Phil does this to tell his passengers where his car is parked and to tell the people to meet him at his car. Another mistake that some people make is telling people to meet somewhere on campus, wasting valuable time. During fourth period, Phil tries to sit close to the door. Phil gathers his stuff ninety seconds before the bell rings, so that he can be ready but does not have to endure the teacher’s speech about why students should not pack up early. The bell rings and Phil walks hastily to his car. When everyone arrives, Phil decides who will sit shotgun. He picks a guy because women always comment on people’s driving abilities when women are terrible drivers themselves. Once everyone is buckled up, Phil goes to lunch. While at the pre-selected restaurant, Phil orders first because he is the driver and doesn’t want to eat while driving. Everyone orders his or her food to go. It is the best to always order food to go in the event of service being slow. At 11:40, Phil tells everyone to go to his car. 11:40 Eastern Standard Time is the universal time for which all Leon students are to leave any establishment. On the return trip, Phil chooses whatever spot he can. Phil chooses a spot with the same guidelines as before. Phil parks his car and everyone goes to class. With a successful lunch completed, Phil can now begin planning for the next time he drives.

In the event of not being able to find a ride or having everyone cancel during the last five minutes of fourth period, Phil can do one of two things. Phil can try to go to a high traffic area, such as the steps to the Senior Bowl, and try to find a ride there. All Phil needs to do is find one casual acquaintance he knows and see if that person has room. If all else fails, then he waits until everyone around his spot has left, so nobody sees him alone, and drive off. Phil can then go to a drive through, usually McDonald’s or Whataburger, or got to a place that is likely to have nobody he knows there, such as Qdoba or Super China Buffet. Whether Phil has a car full of people or is alone, Phil knows from experience the art of driving to lunch. Phil follows these rules religiously. Phil has learned the rules of lunch from many years of experience and uses them to make Leon Lunches very pleasurable experiences.

**Trash Talking 101**

Tony Audie

A husband and wife are watching their son play football on a cool, crisp Tallahassee night. This is a big game for their son, for it’s the city’s biggest rivalry of the year. Suddenly, the wife leans over to her husband and says, “Honey, why is our son shaking his head and pointing his finger at the other player?”

“Well, dear, our wonderful son is trash talking.”

“Trash talking? What’s that?”

“If you really want to know, I will tell you.”

“Yes, I do; I want to know what our son is doing.”

“Ok, but I’m warning you now that you might not like some of the things I tell you. First of all, what is said on the field stays on the field. You are a totally different person once you step on that field. I don’t care if your best friend is on the other team; you will still talk trash.

“Now, the only purpose of trash talking is to get into the head of your opponent. Different players respond differently to trash talking. There are generally two types of reactions. Either he’ll get so mad he will try to kill you with his cleats, or he will be scared out of his mind. Both of these reactions are good because once you stop thinking about the game, you’re dead in the water. Let’s watch.

“Look now as our son is moving his head up and down. I bet he’s saying something like, 'Hey man, I’m kinda tired because I was f\*cking your mom’s brains out last night.' And the opponent would then return in rage, 'F\*ck you, mothaf\*cker. I’m gonna kill you.'"

“Oh dear, was our son really doing that last night?”

“No, Sweetheart, but because of the trash talking, our son has made the perfect block for his runner. You see, our son got into the defender’s head, and when you let your emotions get the best of you, you tend to make mistakes.”

“I think I’m starting to understand, so right before the play there is trash talking. Is that all the trash talking that goes on? I mean just before the play?”

“Oh, sweetie, there is *always* trash talking. Right now there is trash talking, but

players have to be careful not to let the referees hear them because it’s a personal foul and a 15 yard penalty. Like right now, our son might be saying, 'Is that the best you can do? Man, you hit like some bitch ass f\*ggot.' The other player doesn’t respond this time because he was beaten on the previous play.”

“Ok, now I understand trash talking in football, but is there any in other sports?”

“Oh, my goodness, yes, in almost every sport there is. The best trash talker that comes to my mind is Muhammad Ali. His trash talking was so effective that it pretty much won him every fight because of the things he would say to his opponent. He used it the same way it is used in football.

“There are many ways to trash talk, but if you use these two rules, then you can’t go wrong. If you plan to trash talk, you must either use: #1--the mother/daughter routine or #2--name calling. When using the mother\daughter routine, you must state that you have had sexual relations with either one. This has endless combinations because of the countless number of comments you can say that are sexually oriented. For example, 'Hey man, I think I saw your sister last night, in an alley, getting gang-banged by four huge guys.' Name calling is good when you don’t have time to go into detail, but when using name calling, it’s best to call your opponent something weak or feminine. Like, 'Hey, Sunshine, you're gonna be my bitch all night long.' The reasoning behind this is you want to make him feel inferior to you. The result is total domination on your part. Now do you understand?”

“I think so, bu- HEY! THAT LITTLE SH\*T JUST HIT MY SON! YOU MOTHAF\*CKER!!! I WILL HUNT YOU DOWN AND BEAT YOUR GIRLIE ASS IN FRONT OF YOUR FAMILY!”

“Now *that's* trash talking, dear."

**All-American Soap Box Derby**

Savannah Watson

One of America’s favorite pastimes is racing cars. The freedom of being behind the wheel of a car is what every child dreams of. Although The All-American Soap Box Derby cars are not dependent on motors, this gravity racing allows kids to fulfill their dream. Since 1934 the program gives boys and girls, ranging from 7 to 17, the chance to compete. “The goals of the Soap Box Derby program have not changed since it began in 1934. It is to teach youngsters some of the basic skills of workmanship, the spirit of competition and the perseverance to continue a project once it has begun” (All-American).

Soap Box Derby racing began in Dayton, Ohio, by a man named Myron Scott. Scott was a newsman and after seeing a race put together by neighborhood boys, decided to copyright it and started an official race. In 1934 Akron, Ohio became the official location of the All-American Soap Box Derby race. The 954 ft track hosts the third-oldest 'car race in the States after the Indy 500 and Pikes Peak (Most fuel-efficient). Boys and girls come from all over the nation to compete at Derby Downs along with international racers. The race is held every year at the end of July.

There are two different ways that a racer can qualify for the All-American Race. Rally Champions are those who travel around their region and accumulate points in hopes of making it to the 180 points to qualify. The country is divided into different regions by numbers to divide the racing areas. The other way a racer can qualify is to win the local race. Local races are held in June and are single-elimination races to declare the winner faster than the double elimination rally races.

Stock, Super Stock, and Masters are the three types of cars that are used to race in. Stock cars are the beginner cars. Children from seven to thirteen compete in the division. The racer sits in his car and leans forward as far as he can to create the most aerodynamic position. Stock drivers are approximately five feet, three inches tall and 125 pounds. Super Stock cars are one step up from the Stock cars. They have similar body styles, but the Super Stock body styles are rounder as opposed to the more square style of the stocks. Racers from ten to seventeen years of age and up to six feet tall and 160 pounds. The Master Division is for the most experienced racers. Unlike the Stock and Super Stock cars, the Master cars require racers to lie down on their back and look out of a one inch opening

Kits are ordered from the All-American website. The car-building process gives children a chance to spend time with a parent or mentor and become involved with the local derby community. Participants receive instruction on the various stages of car construction, which on average takes approximately five hours to complete, and close out their day by customizing their cars (Gravity Racing).

The Stock and Super Stock bodies are made out of hard plastic and come in red, blue, white and pink for body colors. The Master cars are much more different when it comes to constructing them. The body of a Master car is molded out of fiber glass and then sanded down to fit the shape of the floor board and measurements of the racer. With each division comes specific total weight requirements of the car alone and of the car and driver combined. Each racer is required to wear a helmet when racing. The Stock and Super Stock drivers wear bicycle type helmets that have the All-American logo on the side. Master helmets are much different with hard plastic tops that fit into the headrest when lying back and have a chin strap for safety.

“The goals of the Soap Box Derby program have not changed since it began in 1934. They are to teach youngsters some of the basic skills of workmanship, the spirit of competition and the perseverance to continue a project once it has begun” (All-American). Over the years, Soap Box Derby has created countless memories and lifelong friendships between kids who live in different states. From the beginning in 1934 the All-American Soap Box Derby has been able to bring people together all in the name of racing.

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**The Bare Necessities of Tennis**

Mary Phillips Smith

Tennis is truly a lifelong sport; some people play from the age of four until the age of ninety or longer. Tennis is a wonderful sport for staying in shape throughout life and simply staying active. Anyone can play tennis; the game is “popular among persons of all ages […] with millions of participants” (“Tennis”). Abilities range from those of Roger Federer, possibly the greatest tennis player of all time, to those of someone who has never touched a racket in his life. No matter where a person is in life, all it takes is the courage to pick up a racket and start playing. However, before starting, there are a few pieces of equipment every player needs: a racket, tennis balls, and tennis shoes.

The first and most important piece of equipment is a racket, which is absolutely necessary to tennis. There are many different varieties of rackets that range in price, size, and weight. For beginners, a light racket is highly recommended. This will reduce soreness in the beginning and allow for much needed racket speed. As a player becomes stronger and accustomed to the stroke motions he may increase the weight of the racket for added power and control. Beginning players may also wish to have a bigger sweet spot so that they are able to hit the ball more cleanly, a racket with a larger head circumference will accomplish this. According to a recent buyer’s guide published in *Shape*, the Prince Airo Lite Ti OS racquet is ideal for beginners because it has “an oversize head (for hitting the ball squarely) and a weight of only 10.5 ounces” (Schlinger). The brand a player wishes to use is purely personal choice. Every company makes a comparable racket. If a Head racket is first used, but a player prefers the Babolat logo because he is a huge Andy Roddick fan, a similar Babolat racket can certainly be found. The best idea is to demo different rackets to determine what works best. A player must also consider the price he wishes to pay. The bigger name brands that the professional players use are often more costly than the lesser known brands.

The next piece of equipment needed is tennis balls. As with rackets, there is a large variety of tennis balls to choose from. If a player will be playing on hard courts he should buy extra-duty felt balls. These will last longer than the regular duty felt, and hold up better to the constant grinding of the hard court. However, regular duty felt balls are recommended for clay court players. They will provide a truer bounce and last longer for clay court play. The brand often matters when choosing which type of tennis ball to use. Penn and Wilson balls typically hold their compression for the longest amount of time. They may be purchased in cans, boxes of cans, or even bags, the best value is the box because it comes with multiple cans for a lower unit price. The bag is not highly recommended because they typically lose their compression very quickly. A player may also wish to invest in a hopper, which holds a large number of tennis balls and thus will decrease the amount of time spent chasing after mishit balls.

Among beginning players, a common misconception is that all they need is a racket and some tennis balls to play tennis; however, tennis shoes are essential. Beginning players often do not invest in tennis shoes and end up playing in their running shoes, which is terrible tennis etiquette. Running shoes have black, marking soles which leave huge, black skid marks on the court. The tennis establishment and future users of the court do not appreciate this. Most tennis brands have their own line of shoes that a player may choose from. When choosing tennis shoes, a lot should be considered, including: weight, durability, and, of course, style. How much a given shoe weighs can have a tremendous effect on a player’s game. Light shoes will provide better maneuverability on the court and cause less fatigue in the legs. Nike shoes typically run the lightest out of all tennis brands. However, many brands are coming up with new technology to decrease the weight of their shoes. Durability is also a key factor, if a player does not invest in a durable shoe he will end up spending a lot of money on tennis shoes. It is a good idea to look for a shoe that comes with a warranty. Many companies offer warranties that provide for a free pair of shoes if the purchased pair is worn out in a specified amount of time. These warranties decrease the amount of money spent on tennis shoes. The final thing to consider is color and overall look of the shoe. Some players could care less how their shoe looks, so this is something a player has to decide on their own. Caroline Wozniacki, a top ten player on the Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) tour, believes “it is essential to wear products that combine performance and style” she prefers “breathable apparel and footwear that is lightweight, stable and well-cushioned” (Lockwood). On the whole, neutral colored shoes are a safer choice; they go with more clothes and sometimes do not show as much dirt. However, colorful shoes can really spice up a tennis outfit and make a player feel as if he is a pro.

Tennis is a great sport for anyone. It is something that people are able to enjoy their entire lives. Some people are fortunate and fall in love with the game at a very young age. Others are not so lucky and wait their whole life to discover the wonderful sport. However, it is never too late, or too early, to start. All that is needed to begin playing is a racket, tennis balls, and proper tennis shoes. With these few items, a player will be well on their way to a more enjoyable, fulfilling life. Tennis has the ability to complete a person’s life and is a source of happiness for many players throughout the entire world.

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**Chapter 5**

**Writing To Evaluate**

**Comma Problems? Give Me a Break**

Rachael Pennock

Commas**,** the chubby**,** roundish symbols that indicate a pause**,** are incredible. In particular**,** they create better flow and give readers some breathing space. While some writers may avoid commas**,** like Caroline Cooper**,** author of “Comma Problems” in Leon Lines**,** I embrace them. Since I have learned about and mastered commas**,** my papers have improved immensely. Those writers who misuse commas are unskilled**,** unqualified**,** and unsophisticated. The **1-2-3-4-5-6** rules of the comma are fantastically simple**,** and they are absolutely essential to fine writing.

**1.)** Commas help keep sentences with lists comprehensible**,** simple**,** and clean. Readers may confuse meanings**,** misinterpret information**,** or have to reread a passage several times if it lacks appropriate commas. Pauses in lists are necessary**,** helpful**,** and convenient. Writers can use the optional Oxford comma before the conjunction *and* if they think commas are truly amazing**,** fantastic**,** and beautiful. I am always consistent with that extra comma to ensure my papers appear formal**,** planned**,** and neat.

**2.)** Coordinate conjunctions are great**,** for they allow sentences to be longer and less choppy. A conjunction fits between two complete phrases**,** and a comma must always sit right before it. Many elementary school teachers do not emphasize this necessary addition**,** nor do they punish students who forget it. Some people go their whole lives with incorrectly punctuated coordinate conjunctions**,** but most realize the flaw somewhere down the line. They may receive bad grades in high school for it**,** or it may take until an appalled college professor notes it in an otherwise great paper. I made many coordinate conjunction errors in my earlier works**,** yet I managed to get my punctuation act together this year. I love commas now**,** so I am always certain to use them.

**3.)** I’ve also learned that there are wonderful**,** versatile words called coordinate adjectives. These helpful**,** expressive words come in pairs; the specialty phrases help create descriptive**,** dynamic papers. They’re separated by a small**,** clear comma. Writers can be sure of accurate**,** appropriate comma usage by replacing the comma with *and*. The sentence is correct only if the author can easily exchange the word *and* with the smaller**,** preferred comma. Every writer wants to be a fine**,** fluid one; this necessary**,** simple punctuation is important to succeed.

**4.)** The next time to use a comma**,** which is possibly the most important time**,** is before and after interrupting phrases. Writers**,** often times**,** need to define a word that readersmay not understand. Authors**,** especially those who like punctuation variation**,** can also interrupt themselves with parenthesis and dashes. I**,** however**,** prefer the comma. The unnecessary information**,** which usually offers more specific description or clarification**,** is enclosed by commas. This helps readers recognize that the author**,** the very fine writer who s/he is**,** is making a side note to be more helpful.

**5.)** Furthermore**,** introductory phrases also require commas. After writing a paper**,** an author should always check to make sure all beginning phrases are followed by a comma. If the author has made a mistake on this**,** she should be sure to correct it before turning in her work. Oftentimes**,** writers are confused and unsure about whether or not to put a comma. According to some**,** shorter introductory phrases don’t need a comma. However**,** it is common practice to always use one.

**6.)** I was at Leon High School**,** 550 Tennessee Street**,** Tallahassee**,** Florida**,** when I learned all of these rules for commas. Students**,** this last rule is the trickiest. The lecture was on August 26**,** 2009. I walked the 1**,**543 steps to Portable 8; Mrs. Harrison lectured**,** “The last rule is really a conglomeration of rules for conventional purposes.” She wrote “Dear Santa**,**” on the board to model how to correctly open a letter. That memorable example ensures that not one of the 6**,**000**,**000**,**000 people on Earth could ever forget that part of the rule.

Commas are helpful**,** important**,** and plain cute. It is almost impossible to write a paper without them**,** and I don’t ever want to try. All of my works are comprehensible**,** well-written papers because of the useful**,** little mark. This is**,** in large part**,** because of the grammar rules I have mastered. Clearly**,** it’s easy to see the brilliance of commas. To commas everywhere**,** thank you.

**Float Like a Butterfly, Sting Like a Bee**

Taylor Seay

*The hefty clusters of fans make their way into the crowded stands, hoping for a good fight tonight. The roar of a hundred cheers begins as the announcers come on the mic and commence the biggest fight in history: Intro “The Catchy” Duction v. The Conquering Conclusion.*

**Announcer #1:** “Ladies and Gentlemen, the brawl we’ve all been waiting for! This notorious night will be one talked about for the rest of our lives. Finally pitted together, the most effective part of a major essay will come out on top.

**Announcer #2:** “Introducing-ing-ing-ing… Standing at 4 sentences, 79 words; the one who will catch your attention like a theif in the night, Intro ‘The Catchy’ Duction!”

**Announcer #1:** “And standing in the right corner at 5 sentences, 72 words; the one who won’t leave your essay open-ended, The Conquering Conclusion!”

**Announcer #2:** “What a set up tonight. We really are going to see some fireworks tonight folks!” *DING! The bell marks the start of the fight and both paragraphs strategically move to the heart of the ring. Both eye-to-eye, ready to make their move.*

**Announcer #2:** “Oh wow, Duction started off with a heavy left hook. Right off the bat he stated his purpose here and he definitely caught this audience’s attention. Man oh man, the readers out there are might proud.”

**Announcer #1:** “But wait! The Conquering Conclusion just recapped and summarized his whole essay in just one swing. What a response!”

**Announcer #2:** “Is it any surprise? The Conclusion’s purpose is to help the reader get the general picture of an essay in a short period of time.”

**Announcer #1:** “I guess your’re right about that, but this paragraph know exactly how to leave a last good impression. I just thought Intro ‘The Catchy’ Duction would have made a better transition into this fight, that’s what he does in his essays.

**Announcer #2:** “Well, I’m quite curious about Duction because I’ve seen his previous work. That paragraph knows how to keep the reader wanting to read more. That’s how I know this fight isn’t over.”

**Announcer #1:** “What another impressive hit! Conclusion just knocked Duction to the ground by highlighting major points in the long essay! Will this be a knock-out or does Duction still have a fighting chance?”

**The Referee:** “One…Two… Three… HE’S OUT! It’s a K.O.!”

**Announcer#1:** “Intro ‘The Catchy’ Duction just got knocked out by The Conquering Conclusion! Duction’s thesis just wasn’t a strong match for Conclusion’s final say in the essay. We now see what difference a conclusion can make!”

**Announcer#2(fading out):** “The last thing these readers saw was the iron fist of the invincible conclusion.”

*The Conquering Conclusion blithely climbed out of the ring with another win under his belt. He walked away knowing that the power of his words left the reader with the final connections of the information discussed in the essay, and what he needed to say was the last thing the reader read. He had the final impact of the reader’s thoughts and judgment.*

**Case Number 1101**

Kaley Barnett

OFFICER:“Freeze! I said freeze, punk. Put your comma splices where I can see them. Drop your exclamation points. Drop them NOW. You’re under arrest for bad writing. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you write or publish can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an editor. If you cannot afford an editor, one will be provided for you. All right, gentlemen, cuff him, book him, and bring him to the station for questioning."

*The handcuffs are heartlessly slapped on his wrists; and the suspect is quickly whisked away. He is shoved into the squad car. After a head push, a door slam, and a mug shot, he is taken into room number 12 for interrogation. The officer walks in with a cup of black coffee and an equally dark expression. He sits at the table across from the suspect.*

OFFICER: “Where were you on the night before essay number five was due?”

SUSPECT: “I...I was writing my essay."

OFFICER: “Ah ha! Just as I suspected. You were writing a paper and, no doubt, committing MURDER--murder of the English language.”

SUSPECT: “I killed nothing."

OFFICER: “I hope you have a good editor since this file suggests otherwise."

*Sweat drips slowly down the suspect's forehead and onto the table with a loud splat, disrupting the awkward pause.*

SUSPECT: “You have no proof...y...yo...you can't make these allegations stick.”

OFFICER: “We will see about that, son. It says here you were previously arrested on two counts of comma abuse. You had a grammatical order filed against you. How do you explain that?”

SUSPECT: “That was a trying time, sir. I was a different writer then. You have to believe me. I’ve changed my literary ways. After that, I never misused a coordinate conjunction or slipped in a comma splice again.”

OFFICER: “Well, how do you explain that incident with essay number one? I have documented evidence which refutes your claim to be a changed writer. In essay number one, you wrote: ‘My heart was pounding, my adrenaline rushed, and the excitement flowed through my body like an electric current.’ You know you cannot connect two sentences with a comma alone. You must have a semi-colon or period to finish the deal. I certainly hope you’re grounded. If you try another comma splice stunt like that again, you will have a different electric current flowing through your body.”

SUSPECT: “You proved your point, Sir, but you can’t send me to the chair on comma charges alone.”

OFFICER: “You are right. Fortunately, we received a tip regarding your involvement with local exclamation point trafficking. The department followed up on this lead, and our men discovered you dealt exclamation points up and down the TCC circuit. You have a problem; you are an addict. The law allows one per semester, but you abused this privilege. Boy, you put 13 exclamation points in your last paper alone; that is 12 too many.”

*The room becomes eerily quiet. The suspect squirms in his seat. He frantically searches the room for something to distract his attention from his inevitable fate--incarceration.*

OFFICER: “Are the lights too bright, son? Are you having trouble handling the heat?”

SUSPECT: “N...no, Sir.”

OFFICER: “All right, let’s take another look into the folder. I have proof of repeated examples of neglect. Son, you simply cannot neglect your examples. You are responsible for adding details and support to every essay. You have to provide support for every point you make. Examples are not toys; they are literary obligations. It’s no wonder you have unsupported points. You raise your examples in an environment laced with exclamation points."

*The suspect can no longer look the officer in the eyes. He hangs his head in shame as a single tear falls from his eyelashes.*

OFFICER: “Have you had enough?”

SUSPECT: “Yes”

OFFICER: “That is just too bad, son. You are also wanted for concept laundering. You used counterfeit topics all semester. Don’t think I forgot that incident with essay number three. I caught on to your operation. Did you think you could get away with using ideas from Leon Lines? You stole topics for almost every essay this semester.”

SUSPECT: “That’s not fair, Sir. I came up with my own idea for essay number two.”

OFFICER: “Your own idea, eh? Everyone and his/her mom wrote about the devastation resulting from his grandmother’s death. You must be creative. Mundane topic choices will blow your cover faster than you can say *cliché*. With topics like yours, you are headed nowhere fast. What do you have to say for yourself?”

SUSPECT: "Okay, I admit it. I’m guilty. I’m a horrible writer."

OFFICER: “I’m going to see to it that you spend the rest of your days rotting away at the TCC Writing Center. You will correct pronoun agreement and vary sentence structure to the brink of insanity. If you’re good, I’ll even let you suggest alternate formats. I’ll see to it that you become an excellent writer, but for now, I'm pleased to see another piece of scum taken out of the classroom.”

*The suspect is escorted out of the room, and he is promptly placed into a cell. The cell door slams. The suspect's cellmate, Butch, convicted for abusing a thing or two, guides him to his work table. As Butch places a stack of essays in front him, he thinks to himself, “I wish I could've just taken an F."*

**On My Own**

Amy Helms

*\*Note: This essay really is about me and my strengths and weaknesses as a writer. I chose to write it in third person in order to obtain a more creative angle\**

Leah had always thought of herself as a good writer, and her grades proved it. Throughout her 11 years of school, she had never received anything below a B on an essay. So naturally, she was looking forward to showing off her writing skills in the first semester of TCC English. Leah felt that she would be successful in ENC1101, especially with the help and support that she had from her family.

However, when it came time to write the first few essays in ENC1101, Leah was at a loss; she didn’t know what to write about. With essay one, she felt like nothing of extreme importance had ever happened to her, and there certainly was not a single event in her life that would provide her with enough information to write a worthy paper. In her college admissions essay, she had no idea whether she should write about her leadership skills, the importance of learning, or how much pride she takes in community service. She switched back and forth from one subject to another at least a hundred times before finally settling on one. For essay three, Leah didn’t feel like she had any major problems with her life, nor did she think that she could come up with any good proposals to fix the few minor problems that she had. In essay four, her problem was that she didn’t know how to begin writing about a topic she knew really well (music) and construct it so others could understand. Thankfully, her family was always ready and able to provide her with possible topics, and nine times out of ten, she would pick one of the ideas her family liked or suggested for her essay.

Leah had a similar problem with impromptus. Whenever her teacher gave out the topic the day before, she could always pick her side on the topic, but she rarely could come up with sufficient examples on the spot. Thankfully, she had 24 hours before she actually had to write her argument. Every time, she would go home and present the topic to her family for their help. They were always willing to help her come up with plenty of examples to choose from so that when Leah walked into the computer lab the next day, she simply had to decide which examples she wanted to use.

Because of her previous grades in writing, Leah became a perfectionist when it came to word choice. While she was never overly fancy or sophisticated with her vocabulary, Leah always wanted to word everything in just the right way. So when she finally selected a topic, she would sometimes write a sentence ten times before she was satisfied with it. When she had absolutely no idea how to word something, Leah would once again turn to her family members. She would express what she was trying to say, and her family would spit out suggestions of how to word it in her essay. Eventually, one of them would suggest an idea that she liked, and she then put the idea into her words within the essay.

Leah was also very reliant on her sister, Lindsey, as an editor. Lindsey was an English major at Florida State, and she had a special interest in editing. Ever since Leah began writing essays on a regular basis in high school, she would ask Lindsey to edit the final draft of her paper. Lindsey would sit down with Leah and offer new ideas and suggestions. Leah would then decide what she wanted to change and what she wanted to keep within the draft.

Then the time came for Leah to write essay five. She had absolutely no idea what to write about (again) and turned to her family for assistance. With an idea in mind, Leah sat down to write and realized that her family had helped her to form the ideas associated with each and every one of her essays. That’s when it hit her. While the grades she got were hers and the words she used were hers, she owed a lot of her success to her family. Leah thought that she was a good writer and that she had no major weaknesses, but in fact, she did. She relied too much on her family for help when it came to writing. They helped Leah come up with her topics in both impromptus and the major essays, provided her with a countless number of sentence ideas, and helped her with the editing. Leah recognized that her family was her lifeline, and she would be forever grateful to them for their help. Still, she wanted to be a more independent and confident writer.

A now determined Leah sat down and began essay five with a confession about her previous reliance on her family as she approached her writing assignments. She ended up writing the entire essay without an ounce of her family’s assistance. It then dawned on her that she had written each new essay and impromptu within ENC1101 with increasingly less input from her family. What had changed? Leah realized that the difference was not within the technical aspects of her writing but in her own inner confidence about her writing. Throughout her first semester of TCC English, Leah gained more and more confidence as a writer and now had a willingness to express her feelings, thoughts, and ideas in writing. She realized that good writing is very hard work, but it’s also a way to reflect her point of view in words. More importantly, she discovered that she could do it on her own.

***Thing* In The Hat**

Stephanie Hunter

What is a *thing?* Is it a ring? A doorbell ding? A chicken wing? In any piece of writing, using *thing* is bad. Amongst ENC 1101 students, it is a fad. A fad so bad it makes no sense at all. It even causes grades to fall. *Thing* is a plague. A plague so vague, *thing* could range from a spring to a bee sting. Dr. Seuss is an expert on *thing* nonuse. The only time he uses *thing* is to name the members of a mischievous duo labeled Two and One and who are always on the run.

"'I call this game FUN-IN-A-BOX,'

Said the cat.

'In this box are two things

I will show to you now.

You will like these two things,'

Said the cat with a bow."

**Thing One:** “Why are we called Thing One and Thing Two? Why not Kevin or Drew? What are we, Thing Two? Am I Dr. Seuss’s son? Or maybe even an emu?”

**Thing Two:** “Well, Thing One, I don’t exactly know what we are. You could even be a star. Wait a sec, I think we are the stars of Dr. Seuss’s book Cat in the Hat! What if other stars in other Seuss books were just that--*things* like us? Wouldn’t that cause a fuss?”

**Thing One:** “Green Eggs and Ham was one of Dr. Seuss’s most famous books. I am not Sam, but I don’t think Sam-I-Am likes to eat green eggs and a *thing*. Do you, Thing Two?”

**Thing Two:** “No, he doesn’t want to eat green eggs and a *thing*. That would mean Sam wants to eat one of us, and that would cause me to cuss. I sure hope that’s not the case. Boy, you should see the look on your face! Do not worry; Sam-I-Am is only pleased with green eggs and ham. We might be tastier than spam but not ham. If Dr. Seuss replaced *ham* with *thing*, it would sound even more disgusting! Sam wouldn’t know what he was eating!"

**Thing One:** "Right. What if Dr. Seuss changed The Foot Book to The Thing Book? How boring it would be to read:

Left thing

Left thing

Right thing

Right

Things in the morning

Things at night.'"

**Thing Two:** "It sounds like Dr. Seuss is directing us. Not only would we be confused about which way to go, but Dr. Seuss would be leaving out specific info. Readers are supposed to realize how many feet we meet not how many things we greet. We all have many right and left things, not just feet.”

**Thing One:** “How The Grinch Stole Christmas was made into a movie. Isn’t that so groovy? What if the Grinch was a *thing* like me? How The Thing Stole Christmas...wouldn’t that be a sight to see?"

**Thing Two:** “Then people will think one of us stole Christmas! I would never do that, and I hope neither would you... Especially to cute, spirit-filled Cindy Lou Who.”

**Thing One:** “I’m glad we are the only two who can break this rule. One who uses *thing*, not in reference to us, deserves to be called a fool."

**Thing Two:** "I very much agree. The name only suits us well, you see.”

“Now you do as I say.

You pack up those Things

And you take them away!

Then he shut up the Things

In the box with a hook.

And the cat went away

With a sad kind of look."

It is easy to be lazy, but one should specify *things,* so they don’t seem hazy.

**Introduction Insights**

Andrea Caspary

When a new essay is assigned, I usually find myself sitting in front of the computer not having the slightest idea how to begin. I’ll type a few sentences, read them aloud, and then erase everything. Frustrated, I resort to typing a few mediocre statements and then move on to my body paragraphs without ever writing a solid beginning. I’ve received numerous handouts with directions on how to write an effective introduction, but Leon Linesis the first to provide me with quality examples. If you too are cursed with this problem, pay careful attention to the introductions of the essays written in Leon Lines.

Suggestion #1: *Begin with a question, a quotation, or a surprising and controversial statement to grab the reader’s attention.*

**Example #1:** “AQuestion Without An Answer” by Karen Hoover begins with the enticing statement “As I stared down into her coffin, a million thoughts ran through my head. But none was as strong as this: Why?” Those powerful two sentences are all Hoover needs in order to interest the reader. Adding anything else to this introduction takes away from the powerful statement creating the readers curiosity.

**Example #2:** “The child screamed as the car slammed into the oak tree. Then silence. Always silence.” Joy Hinson’s “*Lama Sabachthani*” immediately captivates the reader with a statement so gripping s/he will find himself eagerly reading the rest of Hinson’s essay to find out what happens to the child in the accident. Suggestion # 2: *Keep the introduction brief by staying away from long-winded explanations.*

**Example #1:** “My Center” by Kate Leland begins with the most basic introduction, “Bubbly blisters, calloused feet, and solid muscles symbolize the life of a ballet dancer.” The reader is immediately informed of what the rest of the essay is about without the need of a lengthy, distracting paragraph.

**Example #2:** “I loathe crayons.” In **“**Light and Loose” by Chase Mamatey, Mamatey begins his essay by immediately luring the reader into wanting to know why someone would dislike such simple objects. Mamatey makes it a point not to write a summary of the essay but instead provides for an interesting three word outline of the subject matter: loathing crayons.

Suggestion #3: *State a clear thesis to reveal the main point an essay.*

**Example #1:** Robert Braden’s thesis statement in “Survival of the Fittest” is “My greatest achievement was growing up with three sisters and surviving to tell people about it.” This one sentence shows the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper. The reader is immediately aware that the paper will explain a male’s view of how females work.

**Example #2:** Amy Norman states her thesis in “The Value of Childhood,” as: “I ignored my mother’s gentle reprimands and faithfully continued my search for something of value.”Norman clearly shows the reader the basic purpose of the essay without giving too much away. The reader is astonished when finding out that Norman’s essay is all about picking her nose because the thesis is simple, clear, and doesn’t spoil the surprise.

Suggestion # 4: *Finish with a final statement or question leading naturally and automatically to the main body of your essay.*

**Example #1:** The introduction of“A Lesson Well Learned,” anonymously written, concludes with the compelling statement, “I learned this the hard way.” With only six words, the writer’s impacting statement fluently provides a transition into the body of the essay, for it entices the reader to eagerly read until the end.

**Example #2:** The introduction in “Food Stamps” by Gaia Abell ends with the sentence, “We constantly judge, and are being judged, on the basis of appearance without even the slightest regard as to the pain this can cause.” This statement smoothly leads to the next paragraph enabling Abell to explain the reason behind why judging based on appearance may cause pain. The reader identifies with Abell’s thesis because, although one may not like to admit it, everyone has judged a person.

Reading Leon Lines helped me realize that the introduction of an essay is the most important part. An effective introduction grabs the reader’s attention, acquaints him with the topic, and ultimately captivates him to continue reading the rest of the essay.

**Making Sense**

Anna Teagle

In conclusion, organizing my essays is a battle. Thank God, gods, and all divinity for computers and the “cut” and “paste” functions. Every paragraph of every essay I ever write gets a chance to sit in every seat in the house. I play musical chairs with my sentences. I inadvertently write puzzles that I have to painstakingly attempt to solve. I write like a “choose your own adventure” book. I might have 52 fantastic ideas, but I shuffle them and spew them out like a game of 52-card pick up. I arrange paragraphs like deck chairs on the Titanic while the ship- my would- be essay- sinks into the swirling ocean of disorganization. Yet, somehow I am able to bring order to this chaos.

Knowing what to say, how to say it, when to say it, and in what order is crucial in writing and can be tricky. Deciding on subject matter, then effectively presenting it takes a lot of forethought. This decision process can sometimes take up the entire week given to write the essay. Once I select a topic, decisions on exactly how to write about it come next. I have to make choices about using the word “you” in order to make this feel more personal or keep a professional distance in the third person. Or maybe I should step out of it completely and use “one” and “the reader”. All of these things are swirling through my head when I sit down to write an essay, but somehow I have to try to make sense of it all.

Forth, organization is necessary for a reader to better connect with the thoughts of the writer, allowing the reader to understand and appreciate the work. I have a hard time judging order to relay ideas and information in. My train of thought is quick and sporadic. I think of new ideas and details in a method that can be described as a “mental tornado”. Often times I think of more than one great idea at the same time, and while trying to write down one as fast as I can before I forget the other … oh wait, yes, I’ve forgotten. My writing process is a disaster. I begin to write; Stop. Delete it all. Think of something! I start to write again; I have a great paragraph … oh no this isn’t an intro. Hmm. I’ll leave it. Make this a body paragraph. Go back and figure my thesis later. This body paragraph is really flowing. My essay is turning out great … TIME OUT; everybody lets take five for a synonym check … grand, impressive, remarkable, outstanding, distinguished, exceptional—brilliant. Perfect. Ideal, faultless, impeccable… And I start to think, “What will my next paragraph be about? What did I not just cover here? Oh great those things I said, I can break that paragraph up into two. And then I cut and paste and flip and change. Divine intervention salvages my essay against the torrential downpour of swift realizations and cloudy recollections.

I can’t write introductions. It takes me hours to write them. I try to begin a poignant stand-alone sentence that brings the reader in with its intriguing focus. The next step is to make quick allusions to what I will be writing about while giving insight into my impressive ability to have variations in syntax and style. I have to finish my preamble with a masterful thesis sentence just as mechanically and rhetorically pristine as the first. And it must all precede my actual essay and be able to hold its place in the reader’s mind. I have hope that it won’t be daunted by more impressive body paragraphs. Often I’m not even sure exactly what I’m going to say in the body, what rhetorical devices I will, no doubt, tactfully employ, what style, what diction. I am suddenly overwhelmed by the seeming importance of this single paragraph. It becomes life or death. I begin to think, “How could I possibly write such a thing?” The title “Introduction” incites expectation for what is to come. I always have to write my body paragraphs before I can write my intro. Always.

Organizing essays is truly difficult. I have trouble organizing both of my thoughts and sequencing my paragraphs logically and coherently. Despite the struggle I am always able to pull through by remembering several important points. An effective essay writer must establish a focus with a carefully crafted introduction, make good word choices, organize supportive body paragraphs and wrap up points summarized succinctly in a conclusion. If I would ever follow these crucial steps I might have an intelligible final product. In the meantime, in this essay I will illustrate my disastrous writing process.

**Story Of The Procrastinator**

Bennett Skilling

NARRATOR: "This is a true story about an 18 year old boy who is a full-blown procrastinator. Though it's never really hurt him before, one can see, as the story progresses, how our character's laziness is ultimately his downfall. We begin this tale at Leon High School in portable number eight."

SETTING November 16, 1998, ENC 1101 writing class, fourth period.

MS.HARRISON: “All right class, today we are going to start our fifth essay. (Cheers arise in the background.) It's a personal evaluation essay about this class. (The class boos in unison.) Here is the instruction sheet; final drafts are to be turned in on December fourth at the beginning of class.”

NARRATOR: "After class our protagonist, let's call him Benny, meets up with a group of friends."

BENNY: “Man, this paper's not due until December, dudes. That's so slack. We've got so much time.”

FRIEND #1: “I know, man.”

FRIEND #2: “That’s soo dope, dog.”

NARRATOR: "Benny returns home." (Enter the devil and the angel on Benny's shoulders.)

DEVIL: “Benny, you've got plenty of time to do this paper, so let's go play Nintendo 64, dude.”

ANGEL: “Benjamin, I do not think that would be a wise decision. Maybe you should start brainstorming now.”

DEVIL & BENNY: “SHUT UP, YOU LOSER!! Nintendo it is.”

NARRATOR: "Two weeks pass, and it is now the night before the first draft of Benny's paper is due."

SETTING November 30, 1998; 8:30 p.m.; Benny's home.

BENNY: “Crap, where's the instruction sheet for this stupid paper. I don't know what the hell I'm going to write about or what I'm allowed to write on.”

DEVIL: “Benny, Benny, Benny, don't sweat it, man; you don't need that sheet. Just whip something out of your butt and make it look like a draft. That way you won't have to do a real copy until tomorrow night. The editors won't even know the difference, dude.”

BENNY: “Hey, that sounds like a good idea.” (Benny gazes at the sky while scratching his chin.)

ANGEL: “Noooo, Benjamin. Do it now. It will save you a lot of time down the road.”

DEVIL & BENNY: “SHUT UP DORK! Let's watch some TV.”

NARRATOR: "Two nights later the angel finally convinces Benny to write his first draft, while the devil was outside smoking a few Camel unfiltereds."

SETTING December 2, 1998, 10:00 p.m., Benny's home.

BENNY: “Man, this is going to be such a good change of pace paper. I've decided to write about my problem with procrastination.”

ANGEL: “Good choice, Benjamin. I'm sure your imagination and creativity will earn you an A.”

BENNY: “Then I'll close by writing about my strength of being able to pull things off at the last second, like I'm doing now.”

ANGEL: “Good buddy, I'm sure it will be great. Keep up the good work.” (After sucking down his last cigarette, the devil re-enters.)

DEVIL: (Yawning with arms outstretched.) “Man, I'm tired. Aren't you tired, Benny?”

BENNY: “Actually, I am kind of tired.”

DEVIL: “Good, let's go to bed.”

BENNY: “But my paper is due in two days.”

DEVIL: “Look, dude, all you have to do is finish writing it tomorrow, and then your dad will edit and type it for you. It's that simple.”

BENNY: “Good plan, let's get some sleep.”

ANGEL: “Benjamin, don't quit now; you were doing so well.”

DEVIL & BENNY: “SHUT UP! We're trying to sleep.”

SETTING December 3, 1998: D‑Day.

NARRATOR: "Today is like any other day. Benny goes to school, practices a little baseball, goes to work, and returns home. Upon his arrival, Benny is greeted with a huge surprise."

6:35 p.m.

BENNY: “I'm home.”

ANGEL: “Hello, Benjamin, how was work?”

BENNY: “Work's work.”

ANGEL: “Are you ready to get crackin'on that paper, buddy?”

BENNY: “Sure am.”

ANGEL: “Yippee, let's go.”

BENNY: “Wait a second--where is my folder? (Turning his head and looking around.) OH NO, I left it in my girlfriend's car.” (Smacks his forehead.)

ANGEL: “Oh boy, you better call her.”

BENNY: “I did, and no one's home.”

ANGEL: “We'd better go to her house then.”

NARRATOR: "Benny and angel drive to his girlfriend's house to look in her car."

7:35 Girlfriend's house

BENNY: "It's not I here. (Rummaging through the car.) She must have taken my folder inside." (Enter the devil.)

DEVIL: Dude, don't sweat it. She'll probably be home any second. Just go home, relax, and don't sweat about it. When she gets home, all you've got to do is get your draft and have your dad type it up."

BENNY: You're right; let's go home."

ANGEL: "Nooooo, Benjamin, find out where she is and then you can…"

DEVIL & BENNY: "SHUT UP!"

NARRATOR: "Benny returns home and proceeds to play Nintendo. But the later it gets, Benny begins to doubt his ability to pull off last-minute essays. As the sweat builds on his brow, it dawns on Benny where his paper really is."

9:25 p.m.

BENNY: “OH SH\*T! I left my folder in my locker." (Sirens go off.)

ANGEL: “RED ALERT! RED ALERT! All units report, initiating operation SBA--Save Benny's Ass."

DEVIL: “See ya later, Suckers, hee, hee, hee, hee, hee." (Devil vanishes in a black puff of smoke.)

BENNY: “Angel, what am I going to do? It's 9:30 at night; I've gotta write an entire paper; I don't know how to type, and Dad is already in bed."

ANGEL: “Well, Benjamin, it looks like you’re just going to have to bite the bullet and write the best you can. I've called in some extra prayers for you because you're going to need them." (Curtain falls; Benny and Angel exit stage. Narrator stands alone in front of curtain.)

NARRATOR: “As I said before, all of this story is true. As Benny went on to write this paper, he realized that his strength in writing his essays at the last minute was actually his greatest weakness. Too bad he only realized this when he began to write this story."

1:44 a.m. The end.

**Zero to Hero**

Allison Burtoft

Many great stories and myths have derived from the battles and triumphs on Mount ENC1101. Mount ENC1101 is home to all the gods and goddesses of grammar, mechanics, and writing rules and guidelines. Though it seems glamorous, it takes much work and effort to impress the grammar gods and reach the top of Mount ENC1101. Every individual has his or her own obstacle to overcome in this land, but my own struggle was my first interference with the six gods of comma rules.

I thought that my journey through Mount ENC1101 would be easy. I survived the wrath of the AP gods last year and assumed that my entrance to ENC1101 would be a breeze because I was told that it is a similar accomplishment. However, I was oblivious to how simple grammar errors could affect a paper entirely. As I approached the fifth week of my journey on Mount ENC1101, I had my first interaction with the comma god of organization and lists. He flew from above and greeted me with a smile. “I am the comma god of organizing items in a series. I’ve noticed that you haven’t struggled with this, but keep up the good work and do not dare to forget to always use commas to separate words in a series. Now, I hope to see improvement in your sentence structure, word choice, and development in the near future,” and with that statement he soared away.

I proceeded to make my way through Mount ENC1101 until I was faced by one of the most treacherous gods of the comma rules: the god of conjunction rules. With a deep, loud voice he roared, and made the ground shake “I am the conjunction god, and I have seen you break my rules time and time again”. I trembled in fear as he came closer to my face. “Do you see this?” he asked while holding a piece of paper in front of me. “This is your first paper. Have you ever even heard of FANBOYS?!” I could tell that he was outraged. Of course, how could I forget the FANBOYS? The god of conjunctions continued with his rant “For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, and So. You left the FANBOYS out in so many sentences. Here you said “Once it started it couldn’t stop, this time it was all my fault.” You know that needs the word “and” or a period, right?” I nodded. “Just correct these mistakes, and end this nonsense,” and with that he disappeared.

I continued my journey on Mount ENC1101 to find the comma gods of coordinate adjectives and introductory material. With them I learned how to reach the great, beautiful areas of Mount ENC1101, by better describing things with coordinate adjectives. Then the god of introductory material showed me how to properly use a comma without making a sentence a comma splice. “If you start a sentence with the cause of what happened later in the sentence, you have every right to use a comma,” he informed me. The god of added, unnecessary information showed up out of nowhere. “Did you know that adding information, especially unnecessary information, calls for two commas? It requires one comma before the information is added and one after it.” I gladly put this advice from the gods to excellent use by improving my skills at using commas and writing sentences such as: “Through all of the efforts put in to make it to school on time, it is a waste to take an extra ten minutes sitting on campus at the school, or right outside of the school, because of the number of cars bumper to bumper pulling on to campus.” Then he let me continue on my journey, only to meet the last god of commas, and perhaps the most detailed. The last comma god was in control of all things of business: titles, dates, addresses, letter parts, direct addresses, and quotations. “Dear student, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the top of Mount ENC1101” he said with a deep, comforting voice. “You have almost arrived to 550 E. Tennessee Street, Tallahassee, Florida, which is where your journey will come to an end,” and with that he smiled and opened the golden gates to the top of Mount ENC1101.

Though my journey through Mount ENC1101 was faced with many corrections from the comma gods, I have learned how to properly use commas. I now know that I can always turn to the six rules on how to correctly use commas if I ever forget. I can easily organize anything I want to in a list, or combine two sentences with a coordinate conjunction. I’ve learned how to separate coordinate adjectives thanks to these straightforward, simple rules. Because of my journey through Mount ENC1101, I will forever use introductory material correctly. Not to mention I can add in unnecessary, but sometimes helpful, information. The fact that I can use commas properly now is worth the obstacles I encountered while learning how to use them.

**How To Get Your Essay Into Leon Lines**

Eli Powelson

December 7, 2007

The Class of 2009

Leon High School

550 E. Tennessee St.

Tallahassee, FL, 32308

Dear Future Leon High School Seniors:

Congratulations, for you have made it through your hardest year of high school English. Your senior English class, ENC 1101 (or “TCC”) will most likely prove to be less difficult than the class you took in 11th grade. Despite this, there is still one area of the course that is likely to give you trouble: essays. While some students write their essays in hopes of simply making a good grade, the majority of us have one goal in mind: having one of our essays inducted into Leon Lines. As you will soon find out, Leon Lines is the textbook for TCC; it’s a collection of the best essays (as selected by Ms. Harrison and voted on by her students) written by members of ENC 1101 from 1998 to the present. While some may try to downplay the importance of getting an essay into Leon Lines, it’s a pretty big deal: your essay will be read by every ENC 1101 student for years and years; you’ll be known among your peers as “that kid who got his/her essay into Lines.” You might even end up with a free T-shirt.

This may sound like a lot of pressure; luckily, I am here to share the knowledge of the methods you can use to almost assure your essay’s inclusion in Lines. At this point you may be thinking, *What methods could there possibly be? Shouldn't I just try to write the best essay I can?* That’s where you’re wrong; you will soon discover after reading Leon Lines that the majority of the essays voted in do not exhibit fine writing. Making it into Leon Lines is about knowing what Ms. Harrison and the students in her class are going to want to read, and there are a few tips and tricks you can use to give yourself a better shot.

**Method #1: Write an essay that contains absolutely no substance, but has some weird format that gets everyone talking.**

This is perhaps the easiest and most sure-fire way to get an essay into Leon Lines. All you have to do is think of a few phrases like *“I am,” "I love,"*  or *“I can,”* and then list a bunch of random, meaningless information. This method actually allows your essay to be no more than a few sentences long. Don’t believe me? Check out Jackson Davis’s essay, “Me.” It's the best example of the use of Method #1. Davis’s essay contains six sentences. Six! All he didwas come up with five phrases--*“I am,” ‘I‘m good at,” “I love,” “I dislike,"* and “*I want*”--and then listed whatever arbitrary nouns or verbs that came to mind. *“Chewing on things,” "pop-up ads," "wet hair,”*--you name it--if it’s random, it’s in this essay. No introduction. No conclusion. Just fluff. Jackson Davis’s essay took him all of 20 minutes to write, and it was rewarded with the first spot in Chapter 2 of Leon Lines, indicating that Ms. Harrison felt it was among the strongest in the entire section.

Remember to make this type of essay as long as possible; you don’t want it to be too obvious that you wrote six sentences. Don’t worry about your classmates frowning upon your randomness; they will be too busy commenting on your essay’s amazing and unique format to notice.

**Method #2:** **Tell a semi-interesting story that ends with a completely ridiculous conclusion.**

Ms. Harrison will tell you that your conclusion is the part of your essay that sticks with the reader the most. If this is true, then the logical action is to compose an unforgettable conclusion. By unforgettable, I mean ridiculous. Take John Bickley’s “Peace on Bear Tooth Mountain." Bickley had a mediocre story about meeting a troubled teen girl in a small town during a cross-country road trip, yet the story did not have a fascinating ending. His solution was to end it with this:

*“God said something to me as those lights massaged my eyes. He said, 'Look what I can do. I can make the midnight sky light up with colors you can't describe. I can make the heavens rain down crystals of white in the summer....You've seen the hope built on pointless dreams, the lives scattered from ripped-out seams. Look, young man, and see.'"*

While this may make the reader feel all warm and fuzzy inside, the fact remains that this event *didn't actually happen.* Yet when this essay was discussed in class, the overwhelming consensus was what makes it so great is its mind-blowing conclusion. No one mentioned anything about the " meat" of the essay--the story that dragged on and on with no real point--just Bickley’s earth-shattering ending that never happened. Had Bickley chosen to omit the part about God appearing on a mountain with a poem prepared to recite, his essay would be nowhere near Leon Lines. Keep this in mind: if your true story lacks a compelling ending, make one up, and make it over-the-top.

**Method #3: The use of clichés or cheesy statements is never a bad idea.**

*“Sticks and stones may break my bones; but words will never hurt me."* Fran Ervin

*“Never judge a book by its cover."*  Scott Campbell

*‘Never judge a book by its cover."* Gaia Abell

*"I’ve already felt the consequences [of drugs], and I didn't even have to take a hit."* Karin Devick

"*I am truly one of the luckiest people in the world."* Kara Keith

*‘Never will I forget the smiles of Cameron and Drew."* Kyle Cobb

*"My life was determined by the flip of a coin."* Rebecca Beitsch

“*Life is what you make it.*" Maggie Arrington

Get the idea? Don’t be afraid to type something you think is corny--the cornier, the better when it comes to getting into Leon Lines. What you and I think is “lame” Ms. Harrison most likely thinks it's “effective” or “powerful.” If you need ideas, turn on NBC or CBS at around 3:00 or 4:00 o’clock in the afternoon. A little daytime TV soap opera should give you plenty of material for entry into your ENC 1101 essay. It is also a good idea to include a corny statement in both your introduction and your conclusion; this way, the reader’s initial reaction and final thoughts both feel the wrath of your melodramatic writing. In fact, each additional cliché or cheesy line you add to your essay doubles its chances of making it into Lines.

**Method #4: When all else fails, just make stuff up.**

Can’t think of any odd formats, zany conclusions, or overused statements? Don’t worry; the simplest approach for any essay topic is to make everything up. Ms. Harrison doesn’t strap a lie detector to your wrists while you write, so why not? Even if you have a superb idea or story that is true, it never hurts to stretch the truth in at least a few places in your essay. Scott Campbell had the right idea; after describing how unfair it is for a pretty girl to cry her way out of a ticket from a cop after being pulled over, he followed it up with this gem: *“In fact, she has been pulled over a total of nine times and cried her way out of every ticket.”* Okay, it’s possible that this girl once--or maybe even twice--cried her way out of a ticket. But nine times pulled over and nine times saved by tears? I don’t think so. Nevertheless, when the ENC 1101 students discussed this essay, they all made note of how much the part about the girl getting pulled over nine times greatly strengthened it. Lies can also be useful when you need to add a “lesson learned” at the end of an essay that is describing a meaningful event or an event that has shaped you. If you’re a drug user and you write an essay about the dangers of drugs, it’s still okay to end with: *“Thanks to him, I say no to drugs.”* in your essay. You can always save your lack of a powerful statement or stellar ending with a well-thought-out fib.

Consider yourself lucky, Class of ‘09, for I have just revealed some of the best tricks in the book to get your essay into Leon Lines. While your classmates will sit at their computers struggling to think of strong thesis statements, specific examples to support their ideas, and effective closing remarks, you will be on your way to becoming part of Leon High School history with your six-sentence, cliché-ridden, chock-full-of-lies essay with an outrageous conclusion.

Best of luck,

Mister E

**Editing For the Hopeless Romantic**

Patrick Manderfield

In the words of Napoleon Dynamite, "Girls only want boyfriends who have great skills." Now I’m not one for computers or nun-chuckas, but during my first semester of ENC 1101, I have improved the most important skill in picking up those of the opposite sex: editing. I no longer leave comments of minute importance and useless suggestions; I impress authors with detailed direction. It’s my way of saying, “Hey, Baby, want me."

I haven’t always been such a smooth-talker. Entering senior year, my knowledge of editing lacked the necessary techniques. I used to think that comments such as “This is bad” and “Great paper, no changes necessary” might actually woo a girl; I was wrong.

In my first days in ENC 1101, I discovered that editing is a language--a romance language to be exact. It takes time and constant practice to master, but I have narrowed the art down to six simple rules of editing etiquette that will most definitely ensure all ungifted players a second edit.

1. No girl’s first draft is flawless. Saying that her paper is “already perfect” and that it’s “hard to edit something that’s so good the way it is” is not going to cut it. However flattering it may seem, it will only make her angry. When receiving an edit, girls want to know any and every error or critique that one can find. They want their imperfections to be pointed out and underscored.

2. Be descriptive. Descriptive comments are what separate the boys from the men when it comes to editing. Be like me. Inform her EXACTLY what she should do to make her paper better: “Listen, Babe, no one walks these days. Since you were obviously upset after falling off your bike so many times, you probably *trudged* up that hill instead of *walked*.” As in writing, show; don’t tell.

3. Talk dirty. “This introduction is terrible. I’m sorry, Sweetie, but your vocabulary needs some work. Get a clue; you need specific examples!” Girls love it when guys leave critical comments. An edited paper full of positive comments is nice, but in the game of editing, nice guys finish last. The girls will understand that the comments are meant to be constructive although they sound negative.

4. Be suggestive. The more suggestions left on a paper, the higher chance of a girl wanting another edit. This does not mean that one should smother her with uselessness; these suggestions need to be thought-provoking and helpful to the paper’s improvement. For instance, when I want to impress a girl, I say, “Baby, you desperately need to move this conclusion paragraph to right after the introduction. It will sound so much better.”

5. Ask questions. Not feeling her flow? Then say so. DO NOT ask her what she was wearing, but DO ask questions at confusing or awkward parts of the essay in order to help the flow: “So did your father call the police, or did you? How did you get from the car to the hospital with your broken leg?” Sometimes girls can get carried away, and this is the moment to bring them ever-so-politely back to earth.

6. Last, but not least, check her grammar. Any comma splices, misspelled words, run-on

sentences, pronouns that don’t agree, misused coordinate conjunctions, or incorrect

quotations must be marked and corrected. Courteously leave a little lovin’: “Hey, Honey, you need a comma before *and.* In this sentence, the subject should be *they* because the verb is plural." Pay close attention to these errors and become her hero.

Editing used to be a frightful experience for me; I thought flattery was the best way to get a girl, but now I know better. There is truth in what Mr. Dynamite said. I'm living proof of it; others can be also. Editing comments should be vivid and colorful, informative and suggestive, and, in terms of grammar, correct and accurate. Anyone can be an editing pimp through helpful annotations and proper critiques.

**Punctuationality**

Cassidy Chrestensen

People will express themselves through various avenues: from style of dress to the arts, music and literature. These all send different messages, some of which are unintentional. Song lyrics and the content of literary works allow their readers (listeners) to peer into the authors’ souls by exploring tone and metaphors. What about the punctuation? Punctuation is rarely scrutinized outside of checking for grammar mistakes, and while you may not have much to say about it, it had much to say of you. In fact, a punctuation evaluation serves as a unique personality test.

Complete the following sentence: “My most frequently used punctuation mark (ignoring the period unless it is the only one you use) is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

If you overuse the:

* Semicolon (;) – You are insecure. Unlike the common and period users, you cannot make a sound decision. You cannot chose between these two, so you resort to using the combination of the two. You are a punctuation pleaser! You cannot say no, even if you mean no. You don’t wish to connect two sentences, but you don’t think they should be completely separated either. You have selfishly assumed these sentences to be like yourself: neither dependent, nor independent.
* Dash (-) – You are slapdash. You cannot omit information, yet you cannot take the time to properly present it. You just throw it in- in the middle of a sentence, at the end of sentence- dashing from one point to the next, so long as you get to express every thought you have on a matter. If the information is necessary, that’s one thing, and commas and parenthesis allow you to present such in a formal manner. If it is introductory or subordinate, again commas and/or colons are more suitable. Furthermore, if this information could stand alone, let it. Don’t be so impatient and careless. The dash can be used, and it can be overused—thus becoming misused.
* Exclamation Point (!) – You are childish. You’re always screamin’ and hollerin’ to get your point across. You think this is the only way people will listen to you, and that shouting will somehow make the information seem more imperative or exciting. You are the little boy who cried, “Wolf!” Your energy level is extremely high, until all of a sudden you fall into an abrupt, but solid, rest.
* Question Mark (?) – You are manipulative. Instead of coming right out and saying how you feel, contort your statements into questions, so that your victim will succumb and empathize with you. It is a form of false boldness, stemming from your insecurity that someone might not agree with you and/or get offended by you if you make such a statement. Be honest and own your feelings. Think you can handle that?
* Comma (,) – You are a busybody: you are all over the place and you never stop talking. You need to be as involved as possible so you’re never alone because, let’s face it, you are dependent. You say whatever comes to mind, whenever. You are constantly reiterating yourself with your *and’s, but’s, or’s, for’s, and yet’s* in an effort to appear more credible, but you only tire your listeners who wish you would just be straight forward.
* Period (.) – You are independent. You can stand alone. You do not need to “fluff” your speech because you believe what you are saying. You don’t care what anyone else may think. You are simple. You do not need many words to express your thoughts. Be careful that you do not become too isolated though. It would do you well to associate with other punctuation. Your writing can be complex without being over-complicated.

Punctuation is more than grammar or a representation of the maturity of a writer. Punctuation is as much a reflection of his character as his voice. If a writer has a predominantly used punctuation mark, his personality is highly likely to be dominated by similar traits. While you may not thoroughly examine your punctuation examines you. So next time you are asked to write about yourself, remember that even if you leave out half the story, your punctuation might just tell it for you.

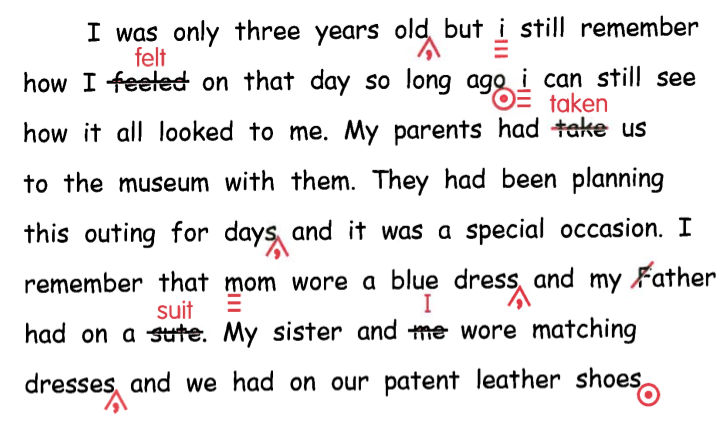
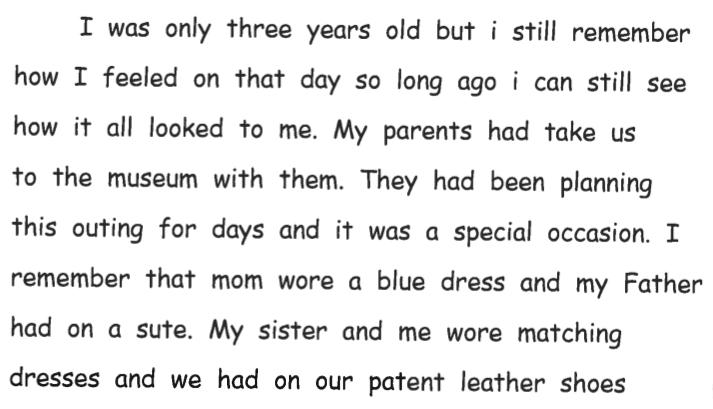
**Your Life Depends on It**

Annemarie Robins

Future ENC1101 Students:

In ENC1101, your life depends on your essays. Having someone edit your essay is one of the best ways to improve. Editors see mistakes that you would not otherwise see; an edit can be the difference between a magnificent essay and an atrocious one. However, if you do not receive a good edit, you may feel lost. All students expect their peers to provide an amazing edit, but put little effort into editing. Throughout this course, I have received less than acceptable edits. You are guilty of giving a horrific edit. To help the future lost souls, I am going to provide you with the information to become a master editor.

* Check for MLA format, easy to find and can be a grade saver.
* Read through the whole essay before making any marks. You need to understand what the essay is about in order to properly help.
* Always use pen, ink is professional and stands out.
* Be honest, without being rude. Give firm advice and keep their self-esteem up.
* Tell what they did right, as well as what they did wrong. Positive reinforcement is more helpful than negative.
* Check for grammar. It is easy for an author to miss and it is easy for you to help with.
* Check for run ons, fragments, and awkward sentences. The author doesn’t read the same as you; tell how it sounds to you.
* Check for spelling errors. You are spell check.
* Provide as many tips as possible. Don’t be shy; tell every thought you have.
* Write all over the paper; make sure you have ink on every inch of it. It shows that you care.
* Ask questions. Chances are that if you don’t understand, a grader wont either.
* Try; don’t be lazy. Give an edit that you would like to receive.



Help out your peers and provide them with the edit they deserve. The key to a writer’s success is in your hands, don’t let them down. Editing is your chance to express your true feelings, without being criticized for your opinion. Essays are a major part of your grade and without decent edits your grade could plummet. Give an edit that you would like to receive. Not only will you be helping someone else, but also while editing another paper you may realize problems in your own. Your edit can help a lost writer find their way and can save an author’s life.

Yours truly,

Desperate for a Decent Edit

**Hey You**

James Graham

Hey **you.**

Yeah, **you**. Don't look around--don't even bother looking up. This paper is talking to **YOU.** With only one word, you have been drawn into my paper. *You* rings a personal feeling of understanding and emotion to each individual sentence, yet *you* is the single most misunderstood word not used in the written world.

It's very hard to explain why *you* is so misunderstood. When I use it in essays, editors say it "draws them away" from the paper. These editors must not be human then, for the word *you* is nothing but inclusive. *You* brings the reader into the paper. It gives readers a chance to imagine themselves in the same circumstance; it truly turns reading into an interactive experience.

I have personally used *you* for ten years. It has helped me to maintain a score of 6 in allof my Florida Writes essay tests, as well as draw together many of my short stories. Since enrolling into ENC 1101, though, my efforts have unceasingly been attacked by evil, tempestuous beings known as "editors." Poor *you* has been virtually obliterated, X'd, circled, underlined and crossed out time and time again for nothing better than trying to be a friend and include the reader.

For instance, in an essay I wrote about the goals of a writer, I stated, "...in writing, by using my words to show **you** my world, my heart, and my soul, I make what is my own **yours** as well." This sentence was viciously hacked and slashed in a fit of rage by red marker-wielding editors. In another essay, I wrote, "Use these words to see my soul and my home, for even if these words only create a world of **your** own in **your** mind that I cannot see, I have still achieved my goal as a writer." This sentence was met with a most ungainly question: who is this unidentified *you*? I was astounded. This *you* is exactly that: **YOU**! How can there be such a thing as an unidentified *you*? It is the king of oxymoron; *you* are whom I am addressing. If I could reach out, point at you, and poke at your chest just by using a single word, that word would be *you*.

The number one goal of any writer is to involve the audience and cause the reader to have some emotion for the document in question. What better way to do so than point specifically at the reader, *while he or she is reading,* and say, "Hey! What would **YOU** do in this circumstance? How do **YOU** feel about the problem? Can **YOU** see what I am trying to say?" There is no better alternative to fully involve the reader in a paper.

The word *you* is not only identifying, but explanatory and encouraging as well. In a sentence that was nearly executed by a ruthless editor, I told the reader to "Hear the cries of the hidden phoenix; feast **your** eyes and **your** mind on the embodiment of total peace and balance." This is a command that forces the reader to envision for himself what I am talking about. Because I point out the reader specifically, each phoenix, each embodiment of peace and balance is different, for each reader can then form his own opinion and use his own imagination to picture the vivid scene set before him.

*You* also encourages readers to use their own imagination when reading. The biggest argument I've faced in using *you* has been in examples that may not totally relate to the reader. An example my conscionable, yet devil's advocate-playing teacher gave me was the sentence, "Have **you** ever been so drunk **you** couldn't even stand?" While neither she nor I have ever been in such an intoxicated stupor, I can certainly imagine the scene taking place. *You* and imagination are so closely joined in relation, I envision them as almost the Siamese twins of literature: **you** cannot use one without acknowledging the other. And *you* gives each reader the individuality to see it for himself all the while keeping the readers as a whole together in a uniform content.

But remember those beings armed with great weapons of mass literary destruction--leveling pronoun and adverb alike with a simple X of the red pen. Those beings, who made you squirm and shiver every time they touched your paper, have multiplied and multiplied, breeding faster than rabbits could ever dream and have become...**YOUR** peers!

If ever I've seen a class full of propaganda and rhetoric, it's ENC 1101. The peer editors, whoonce never thought twice about being able tosee for themselves via the unjaded eyes of *you*, now growl mercilessly and scribble with their little, stubby fingers over the once-famous word of *you*. For each class of ENC 1101, the numbers of brainwashed peer editors grow. Comments like "You used *you* here," while contradictory in itself, line innocent papers, forcing *you* to flee into hiding. *You* has become an outlaw in a land of literature, where a word used by the people, for the people, is now hunted and persecuted by the people.

How can you hate *you*? How can you not use it? *You* is a staple of American literature--not some filthy parasite like *ain't* or *thing* feeding on the body of good writing. Don't let this essay die in **your** hands. Do not cover it in the ostracizing red ink of the editor's pen. **You** know how **you** can make a difference, and even if this paper falls to death into martyrdom, it will die for a noble cause in the world of literature and good writing: **You.**

**Comma Found Dead in Alley**

Vince Schueren

Authorities recently discovered the lifeless body of an extremely important punctuation mark: The Comma. Police found it in an alleyway near the intersection of Monroe and Park. The case is being investigated as a murder because the body was found with multiple gunshot wounds. Authorities have already taken a few suspects into custody.

; . and () :

**Five of the six suspects. (From left to right) Semicolon. Period. “and”. Parentheses. Colon.**

Number one on the suspect list is the semicolon. Investigators say that the semicolon had a strong motive to commit the murder. The comma was previously used to connect two related sentences as such: *The store was closed[comma] so James returned empty-handed.* The only viable replacement for this use of the comma is the semicolon. Here is how these types of sentences must now be structured: *The store was closed; James returned empty-handed.* It is clear that the semicolon will enjoy increased attention now that the comma is no longer among the living.

Police also suspect the most commonly used punctuation mark: the period. The period may have killed the comma for its useful ability to separate items in a list. Here is an example: *She likes to eat pizza[comma] chips[comma] and cake.* Sentences like this must now be chopped into many distinct sentences: *She likes pizza. She likes chips. She likes cake.* It is plain to see that the period will receive at least three times as much use for each list written in the future.

The suspect list is not limited to punctuation marks; police have also arrested the word *and*. This suspect will benefit greatly from the death of the comma because of the comma’s former ability to separate coordinate adjectives. Writers formerly composed sentences such as this: *The woman sat in her tiny[comma] green chair.* The result is that the word *and* must step in to replace this type of comma. *The woman sat in her tiny and green chair.* It is clear that this version of the sentence is less desirable; separating coordinate adjectives with “and” is extremely awkward. But it is the only grammatically correct option.

Investigators report that they have not eliminated the possibility of *two* murderers. *Two* partners in crime could have easily overtaken *one* helpless comma. This prospect leads police to consider two additional suspects: open and close parentheses. These sibling punctuation marks go hand-in-hand; you won’t find one without the other. The comma was once used to set apart side information. One could form sentences like this: *Loraine[comma] my ex-wife[comma] always knew exactly what I was thinking.* The best way to enclose these interrupting phrases without the comma is through the use of parentheses. One must now write: *Loraine (my ex-wife) always knew exactly what I was thinking.* It is sickening to think that the open and close parentheses would commit murder to satiate their need for exposure.

The independent clause has also been taken into custody for questioning. Its motive is related to sentence structure. Consider the third sentence of this article. “The case is being investigated as a murder because the body was found with multiple gunshot wounds.” I originally wanted to write the sentence like this: *Because the body was found with multiple gunshot wounds[comma] the case is being investigated as a murder.* This version of the sentence begins with the dependant clause and ends with the independent clause. This would have added smoothness and variation in sentence structure. But those days are over. We are now doomed to write sentences with the independent clause at the forefront of the sentence. I only hope the independent clause did not kill for its place at the beginning of the sentence.

The last suspect is the colon. The comma was conventionally used to begin letters. Friendly letters were always opened with the salutation *Dear Jimmy[comma].* These messages must now begin with *Dear Jimmy:* instead. So the colon will also gain from the loss of the comma.

I do apologize for the choppy nature of this article. It’s been extremely difficult to compose flowing sentences without use of the comma. I wish I could tell you that things will go back to normal soon. I wish I could tell you that writing will once again be smooth and easy to read. But alas. This is not the case. The absence of that which we have taken for granted will now be the downfall of all beautiful literature. We should take this time to remember a punctuation mark with so many valuable uses: the comma. May it rest in peace.

**How to Not Suck**

Jackson Davis

In Leon Lines, and in all of ENC 1101 for that matter, there seems to be a very tight focus on how to write a high quality essay. Noticeably lacking, though, is a good set of rules on how not to write an essay. This is a guide that is not designed to teach the reader how to write beautifully. Rather, it is designed to teach the reader how not to write poorly. Here are a few simple rules for avoiding a bad essay:

• One must always take care to stick to your same point of view throughout the entire essay.

Otherwise, you could lead your readers astray, and that is the worst thing one can do.

• Never offend the audience, even if they are a bunch of nincompoops.

• Its also very important never too misuse certain words, as millions of students do everyday.

• Make sure not to mispell anything.

• Always be sure to read aloud. This can prevent words from left out or or repeated.

• Reading aloud can often prevent some word phrasings which may be a tad more awkward

than would otherwise be preferable.

• One of the most important rules in this essay is never talk about the essay.

• Occasionally, foul language is appropriate, but don’t just use it for shits and giggles.

• Be sure the end of every sentence contains the appropriate punctuation

• Don’t overuse exclamation points!!!!

• And never begin a sentence with a conjunction.

• Use simple sentences, for there is no reason for elaborate phrasing or explanation when

three words would do the job just as nicely.

• dON’T FORGET ABOUT THE CAPS LOCK KEY.

• Indeed, rarely is there a purpose for eloquent diction in the fine art of sentence creation.

• Every paper should be proofread after sitting for 24 hours.

• Every paper should be proofread after sitting for 24 hours.

• The passive voice is often better to be avoided.

• Always be sure *it* comes before the pronoun’s antecedent.

• A comma is not an acceptable way to join sentences, this is called a comma splice and it is a grade-lowering offense.

• Also be sure, to put commas in their proper places.

• Run-on sentences are the worst always take pains to avoid them.

• Be sure to use adverbs good.

23. Stick to a consistent format.

• Take care never to be redundant or to repeat things for a second time.

• Also using sentence fragments.

• always capitalize Correctly.

• Every pronoun should agree in number with their antecedent.

• Make sure the verb in the sentence agree with its subject.

• Finally, avoid extensively long numbered or bulleted lists.

Using these rules as guidelines, a mediocre essay is now within the grasp of any author, and that is the first step to writing a high quality essay. It is most important, though, to start at the beginning and teach the reader/writer how not to write, rather than how to write. One last rule should always be followed:

• Never introduce a new idea in the conclusion paragraph.

Good luck and happy writing.