THANK YOU!

To the English Teachers — Laura Wright, Christina Wilson, Emily Dolan, Lori Carriere, Michael Bartch, Sarah McIntyre, and Ivy Linton-Stabell. Your professionalism and commitment to student success are an inspiration.

To our English Tutors — Jennifer Dodwell, Greg Souza, George Moore, Jarred Wiehe, Matt Jones, Christiana Betts, and Christiana Salah. The students depend on your insight, encouragement, and willingness to listen.

To the SSS Residential Staff and Counselors — As always, we thank you for the kindness and support you provide throughout the summer. You are the pillars of this program.

To Bidya Ranjeet and Leo Lachut, Co-Directors of Student Support Services, and Maria D. Martinez, Director of the Center for Academic Programs — The passion you invest in this bears fruit each year in the success of each SSS student.

To all of the CAP office staff — Without your work behind-the-scenes, we’d surely all come undone.

And a special thank you to the students whose well-wrought words you read in these pages, as well as to ALL of the SSS students who strove for excellence in their writing this summer.

With the exception of font and spacing, all student essays appear exactly as they were submitted. My thanks to you all for your enthusiasm, for your exploratory thinking, and for your willingness to share your thoughts in print.

Amanda Smith, English Coordinator

Table of Contents
First Place: Kadijah McGehee
Second Place: Schneider Jean-Baptiste
Third Place: Andrea Roman
Honorable Mention: Lucas De Castro

Gabriel Bachinelo
Trishana Bunsie
Melisa Cardona
Sade Cinicola
Stephanie Condori
Deborah Delianne
Marissa Ferao
Vanessa Harrison
Manuela Higuita
Jamol Lettman
Lais Lima
Angel Marrero
Juliana Mendoza
Isaiah Mohammed
Chris Nguyen
Emmanuel Omari
Chris Pineda
Christopher Reyes 103
Sasha Gail Richardson 106
Tania Yvette Rivera 112
Shantaye Taylor 117
Paul Torres 121
Luo Wang 128
When we think about the word “woman” what is the first thing that comes to mind? For me, it is the word strong. Women are involved in a constant battle with society’s negative views of them. This means that, according to social standards, women are only good for their physical attributes and their ability to reproduce as opposed to being respected for their internal intellectual and moral qualities. The worst part of all of this is that these negative views are commonly portrayed throughout America; this is the social norm. William F. Buckley’s essay “Why Don’t We Complain?” reflects my views of American society because more people, including women, are starting to respond negatively when the topic of women arises and no one takes a stand. After reviewing the websites of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, I saw two different takes on the importance of women in this country. Obama displays a commitment to reversing this negative trend of unjust treatment towards women. However, Romney does not include the voices of American women. I identify myself as a woman demanding respect in this world and I am seeking the support of politicians to take this step of activism. Buckley suggests that Americans do not speak up against the issues because we fear the consequences of social and authoritative backlash. President Obama is not the kind of authority we should fear because his actions towards equality show his efforts to work with us rather than against us. As a voter and citizen, I used Buckley’s essay to examine my view of American society because Buckley is saying that we do not speak up against the equality issues. However, as an individual, like President Obama, I too attempt to solve these problems. By using examples of Obama and myself, I am able to see the limitations of Buckley’s arguments about American citizens and political actions. Unlike Buckley, I see American society as willing to speak out against the issues as long as they feel able to get their voice across.

In today’s society women are seen as less competent than men in a lot of ways. When men verbally disrespect each other, many times the words they use are demeaning terms towards women. For example, when a man calls another man derogatory terms such as “bitch” or “pussy,” it shows the upmost disrespect because it says that the accused man is not even a man, he is a woman and...
this means that he is inferior, weak and emotional. The main elements that affect my views, actions, and interpretations are how I was raised, the environment that I grew up in, my past experience with sexism, and how women in society are beginning to accept this disrespect. I was raised by my great-grandmother and my two uncles under one household. Being around my uncles, who were always respectful towards women molded my views at an early age on how men should treat women like queens. This is how the values of self-respect were instilled in me. Then, once I got to middle school and started hearing boys putting girls down, I was very angry. My grandmother taught me to never let it get to me by always saying, “It’s not about what people call you, but what you answer to.” Using this mantra always helped me in situations when I felt blatantly disrespected.

Being around sexist men, even some of whom are my acquaintances has also impacted my views. I remember specifically during my sophomore year I was having a conversation with one of my male classmates. We were discussing our future aspirations and I mentioned my goal to become valedictorian of our senior class. He told me, “No, I am going to be valedictorian.” When I asked how he was so sure of himself he replied, “Because I refuse to lose to a girl.” This initially infuriated me because he was insulting my intelligence solely because I was a female. However, instead of giving him a piece of my mind, I let my hard work do the talking for me. Needless to say, I graduated number one in my class, a female classmate graduated number two, and he graduated number three. One of the primary reasons why women are subjected to such disrespect in our society is because we display hypocrisy. For example, why is it okay for my gay best friend to call me a bitch in jest, but not okay for a guy that I am romantically interested in to joke with me in the same manner? Neither circumstance is acceptable because they both imply disrespect to women. Situations like these are a part of what makes men think it is okay to treat women like subordinates, instead of equal individuals.

William F. Buckley Jr. spoke to me in his essay titled “Why Don’t We Complain?” He addresses an issue that he felt was a large problem in American society: as Americans, why are we so afraid to stand up for ourselves and speak up when there is something wrong? When Buckley speaks about his experience on a hot train in the dead of winter, he recalls, “The conductor had nonchalantly walked down the gauntlet of eighty sweating American freemen, and not one of them had asked him to explain why the passengers in that care had been consigned to suffer” (61). Why is it that when I am with a group of female friends and we overhear boys refer to women in a derogatory manner, such as calling them bitches, hoes, or sluts during their conversation, we just ignore it? Why don’t we stand up to them and say, “Do not talk about women like that; that is not
who we are. Show some respect.” It is because we do not want to make a scene. We do not want to be the ones seen as being overly sensitive or bitter towards men. It would be more socially acceptable to either pretend like we cannot hear their conversation or join in on the disrespect. Buckley’s essay relates to me because, as a woman, I see that not enough of the female population is willing to take a stand. I understand that going against the social norm is hard but we have to go against the cruel ways women are portrayed by men.

After visiting mittromney.com, I went to the “Women for Romney” section, expecting to see women being involved in the campaign process. I was unpleasantly surprised. After scrolling down the web page, the first header I read was “Honoring Veterans and Military Families this Independence Day” (“Women for Romney”). The fact that this header was first shows that Mitt Romney’s campaign links women’s values with being family-oriented and only sees the importance of women as being mothers. The headers that followed were “Hispanic Communities” and “Contact Voters for Mitt, Earn Free Mitt Gear” (“Women for Romney”). These paragraphs had nothing to do with women and they seem to have been placed here to manipulatively fill up space. I also observed that there were a few photos of female supporters of Romney at his campaign events. These women were not speaking or acting; they were just smiling and looking pretty. This relates to Buckley’s essay as well because the portrayal of women on Romney’s website takes away their voices, which can contribute to a social norm of women remaining inactive when injustice arises. The structure of the women’s section on mittromney.com suggests that not only do women not have a voice in the Romney campaign, but they also are placed in the campaign’s ideal role of being mothers above anything.

However, after visiting barackobama.com, I discovered that Obama’s campaign’s views of what are important to women line up with my values and identity. For example, Obama’s website has a section titled “Women’s Health” that specifically promotes health issues women face such as, getting coverage for contraceptives, mammograms, and screenings thanks to the “Affordable Care Act” (“Women for Obama”). According to barackobama.com, “The Affordable Care Act will also prevent insurance companies from discriminating against women so that being a woman is no long considered a pre-existing condition” (“Women for Obama”). Discrimination from insurance companies has been a large issue in the United States. In the “Women for Obama” section, Michelle Obama says, “Before my husband signed the Affordable Care Act into law, insurance companies could actually charge women up to 50% more than men for their health care premiums, simply because of their gender. The new law will end that unfair practice” (“Women for Obama”). This
shows progress towards equality for women, which coincides with my sense of identity as a socially engaged woman. Obama’s website also features short biographies of a few chosen female citizens on the home page of the “Women for Obama” section. Using testimonials from actual American women not only shows that Obama hears our voices, but is proof that he is taking action to get our voices heard by society. This also shows his method of engaging individuals to speak out. One of the women, Sonja, stood out to me when she said, “I know what it’s like to be discriminated against because I’m a woman, and that’s why the Lilly Ledbetter Act is so important to me. When I was in college, I walked into my adviser’s office and he laughed and said, ‘we’ve never graduated a woman in science.’ I don’t want that to ever happen to my grandchildren, in school or in the workplace. It’s a matter of right and wrong” (“Women for Obama”). The Lilly Ledbetter Act is also an advancement towards equality. It guarantees the right for women to get equal pay when their work is equivalent to that of men. This relates to the Equal Pay Task Force; its primary purpose is to “enhance enforcement of equal pay laws,” according to barackobama.com (“Women for Obama”). Barack Obama’s website speaks to me more accurately than Mitt Romney’s by focusing on the advancements of women in today’s society and allowing their individual stories to be heard.

Because of Barack Obama taking up for the women of America, I can see the limitations of using William F. Buckley’s essay to think about how political campaigns imagine their voters. Buckley’s views on Americans do mirror my views on women. As women, we do not speak up because we gave our voice away to society’s critical standards of women. We are so conscious of people viewing us as aggressive that we forget about the concept of assertiveness. We can get our points across without turning into irate monsters. Or better yet, we can stand up to these horrible views of us nonverbally. In Buckley’s essay, he talks about how he “cannot complain softly.” (62). He mentions his initial urge to let things go when a public problem arises, but once he gets to his boiling point, he becomes “unbearably and unconscionably sarcastic and bellicose.” (Buckley 63). After that, he is ready “for a showdown.” (Buckley 63). Just as Buckley cannot speak his mind assertively, women do not let their actions represent their defense against society. However, Obama is trying to give us back our voice. Women in society who are still afraid to speak out will be reassured by the “Women for Obama” section where he demonstrates his advancements towards women’s healthcare and their equal pay in the workforce, as well as keying in on women throughout the country with different backgrounds who all share support of him. He represents these issues by getting women to speak out as well as showing women speaking on the issues through their
perspective. It is through these accomplishments that Obama shows promise of enabling the power of not only me, but all of the women in America.

By visiting the women’s section of barackobama.com and mittromney.com, I was able to get a deeper look into different views of conservatism and liberalism. Aspects, such as seeing the position of women in the candidates’ eyes, are what really speak out to me as a voter. Mitt Romney and Barack Obama clearly have different values and beliefs that will influence how they run the country. Obama’s liberal views include being broadminded, nontraditional, and progressive. This provides a platform for him to fight for equality. Using the Declaration of Independence as a prime example which states that “all men are created equal,” (Jefferson 147) as a unified nation, we want to incorporate this notion in terms of every citizen. The Declaration of Independence is a part of our fundamental rights as American citizens, women included. So a candidate like Barack Obama would be adequate in using his liberal views in showcasing why it is important to take action for women’s equal rights in society. This is what provides limitations for Buckley’s point of view on identity because Obama is taking control as our leader to provide that voice for the female citizens.

Even though President Obama has shown us that it is okay to speak up, realistically, many women still do not because of the fear of receiving negative responses. There are still people in power, such as in Congress, who do not support women. For instance, many times Obama has attempted to make supportive changes in favor of Americans, but his ideas were constantly vetoed by Congress. In addition, the struggle with past experiences may still impact women’s confidence. There have been many instances where women have tried to take a stand and received negative responses from society. However, political campaigns can always encourage activism. These kinds of tactics include testimonials from real women, as Obama does on his website. Also, using social networking sites to encourage political engagement, as Romney does can also have a positive impact. However, Romney’s tactic can be further expanded by encouraging citizens to leave comments rather than just hitting the “like” button. This stimulates engagement between authority and citizens, which would be the ideal political discussion.

Work Cited
Entertainment vs. Hip Hop

Hip Hop is a genre that expresses itself throughout the community in a very vivid and articulate way. McBride states in his essay “Hip Hop Planet,” the following: “At its best, hip-hop lays bare the empty moral cupboard that is our generation’s legacy. This music that once made visible the inner culture of America’s greatest social problem, its legacy of slavery, has taken the dream deferred to a global scale” (McBride 472). Hip Hop artists from the old school to modern day use lyrics in order to depict the struggles that they go through to either make it in the industry, or they experience in their lives. What McBride has failed to mention in his essay is the matriculation of the meaning of Hip Hop in modern day. Within the modern day industry there has been a lot of Entertainment music that focuses on the sound of the beat rather than the content of the lyrics. This essay will juxtapose the song stylings of famous hip-hop artists such as Tupac, Run D.M.C. J. Cole, Common, Waka Flocka Flame and Soulja Boy in order to see how they differ in the music they produce. People often confuse Hip Hop with entertainment when they actually belong in completely different genres because, Hip Hop presents a lyrical problem that people often face in life, while entertainment is meant for the pure pleasure of the audience through sound.

Tupac Shakur and Run D.M.C. were great Hip Hop artists who conveyed social issues through their music and embodied the culture of Hip Hop music. Tupac was a man that spoke about religion, life, and struggles he encountered throughout his existence. One of Tupac’s greatest and most inspirational songs is entitled “Keep Ya Head Up.” This song really talks about the struggle that people often go through throughout their life in this world. Tupac raps the following:

    I was given this world I didn’t make it
    And now my sons gettin older and older and cold
    From havin the world on his shoulders
    While the rich is driven Benz
    I’m still tryna hold on to my survivin friends
And it’s crazy, it seems it’ll never let up, but
Please... you got to keep your head up

In this particular quote, Tupac raps about how life is hard and how bad things pop into your life that you did not anticipate or ask for. He talks of how citizens are only subject to things that happen to them in life. Parents cannot control the world their children live in. People see how rich folks drive around in high priced cars such as the Mercedes Benz, while their friends are around the block being drawn to wrong things such as gun violence, drugs and many more. And here Tupac uses his words very carefully by not associating rich with white thereby opening the spectrum of his audience to any race that feels as if they cannot deal with the financial hardships they go through. And finally he tells people no matter how bad the situation is, you cannot control what goes on in the world, you can only control the way you react. From this portion of the verse so much inspiration is built within the listener. Tupac focuses on those going through hard times in life and then he gives them advice, as simple as it may seems, he tells the listeners to keep their heads up and keep fighting the fight. This shows how a successful and well-respected artist in the industry demonstrates hip hop through his number one song by identifying a struggle that people can relate to, the definition of Hip Hop during the old school. Another example of hip-hop culture is expressed through a top hip-hop group that reigned supreme during the 1980s, Run D.M.C. They had songs that talked about problems in the world, and situations they deal with, and one that stood out is entitled “It’s Like That.” In this song, this group discloses problems that go in in this world. Run D.M.C. states:

When you feel you fail, sometimes it hurts
For a meaning in life is why you search
Take the boys on the train, drive to school on the church
It’s like that, and that’s the way it is

Here the group shows how everyone in life is searching for a deeper meaning and purpose in life. A lot of people can feel this way whether you’re an adolescent going through changes of which you cannot comprehend, or you’re a 30 year old who does not know what to do with his/her life. Both Tupac and Run D.M.C. spoke about feelings and problems that everyday citizens ranging in all ages go through. And these problems do not cease in old school hip-hop, but they continue into some of the modern day music that fans listen to in 2012.

J. Cole and Common are artists that are currently apart of the Hip Hop industry who express social inequalities through lyrical ability, which draw audiences in that can relate to or feel the pain that hip-hop artists speak. J. Cole came out with his debut album on September 27, 2011 entitled
Cole World: The Sideline Story. This album was extremely successful during its first week, receiving the number one spot on Billboard 200 chart, which proves that many people enjoy his music. One song in particular that was on this album is called “Breakdown,” and in this song he breaks down what his father meant to him. Cole states the following:

So many things you could have told me
And saving the troubles of letting my mistakes show me
I feel like you barely know me
And that’s a shame cause our last name is the same
That blood type flowing through our veins is the same

Here we see that J. Cole speaks of how the relationship between him and his father is not healthy. A father teaches his son how to be a man and instructs him on how to be a well-respected gentleman, but here Cole says that his father did not do that. Even though they come from the same DNA essentially they cannot connect and talk to each other on the personal level that a father & son relationship should be on. Many children in America growing up without a father can vouch that these times are hard and often one feels lonely during this particular situation given that there is a significant figure missing in their life. Here Cole offers that he too has been through the same situation thereby equating him with the listeners that went through the same struggle thereby justifying McBride’s statement. J. Cole has taken struggles felt across the world and made it global through the use of Hip Hop. Common is another influential hip-hop rapper who speaks about his experiences through his lyrics. In the song “Restrospect for Life” he harps on the pain of being a father to an unexpected baby. Common raps:

I’m sorry for takin your first breath, first step, and first cry
But I wasn’t prepared mentally or financially
Havin a child shouldn’t have to bring out the man in me
Plus I wanted you to be raised within a family
I don’t wanna go through the drama of having a baby’s mama

Here Common highlights a very controversial topic in life, religion, and politics, and that is abortion. With this example he decided to abort the baby due to his mental and financial standpoint. Common offers a perspective in which he does not want the baby to grow up without a stable and coherent family and he also does not personally want to be anybody’s “baby daddy.” This suggests that Common is avoiding all the drama that comes with being a forced parent as opposed to a proud father. Being a parent suggest responsibility in regards to taking care of the offspring while being a
father requires more of a personal connection to the child. Common along with J. Cole both further expand on McBride’s statement of making social issues global through the use of Hip Hop. But what McBride did not touch upon is how in modern day music Hip Hop has falsely grown to include a genre based on Entertainment.

Entertainers should not be mistaken for Hip Hop artist since they are performers that make instruments that people can hear and dance as opposed to listen to the content of its lyrics. A perfect example of someone who is classified under Hip Hop but does not rap about any social inequality or struggle is Waka Flocka Flame. He is an artist that talks about smoking, drinking, getting money, and about females in a misogynistic way. Nonetheless people still listen to his music and enjoy it a fair amount simply because of the nice beat that accompanies the lackluster lyrics. A perfect example of a song that demonstrates this would be the song “No Hands.” Flame raps the following:

DJ this my favorite song
So Imma make it thunderstorm
Blood want it flocka yeah throw it f*** it I don’t care
Glasses flying everywhere tap my partna Roscoe like bruh I’m drunk as hell

In this song Flame talks how drunk he is at party. Flame suggests that he is getting wasted to one of his favorite songs, which all in all does not convey any serious problem that people can truly care about. Nonetheless this type of music is falsely considered Hip Hop, which strongly differs from McBride’s definition. Soulja Boy is another artist that is a pure entertainer instead of a Hip Hop artist. “Speakers Going Hammer,” is one of his greatest singles that also does not talk much about social inequality. Soulja Boy raps:

My speakers out of space like E.T.
Cops watch me all day like T.V.
SOD hit da club we so deep
Mine on D and I grind like a OG

In these lyrics Soulja Boy uses a series of similes to talk about what his speakers are like as well as how the police look at him in a negative way. He goes on to say that SOD, standing for “Stacks on Deck” (company), enters the club with a lot of people. No message, theme, problem, or issue is presented yet this song and artist are still wrongfully placed under the Hip Hop genre. Entertainer such as Soulja Boy and Waka Flocka Flame are modern day “hip-hop artists,” that do not fall under McBride’s definition of Hip Hop music.
Entertainers who make nice beats in music without having meaningful lyrical content should not be classified as Hip Hop Artists. In McBride’s “Hip Hop Planet,” he describes how Hip Hop is a way in which people can discuss struggles or troubles that people face and put in a lyrical/poetic form that is presented to the whole world. Perfect examples of which are Tupac Shakur, Run D.M.C, old school artists that embodied the hip hop culture through songs that expressed how hard it is to raise a kid in this world as well has how hard life is. Modern day artists such as J. Cole, and Common continue the hip-hop tradition in McBride’s eyes through talking about the role of a father within their lives in their respective songs. Finally entertainers that have careers based on a wonderful beat with misogynistic, nonsensical lyrics to accompany it completely differ from McBride’s definition of Hip Hop. And these entertainers include Waka Flocka Flame and Soulja Boy, artists who are wrongfully placed within the Hip Hop genre. This is a common misconception that must not be made given the two completely different styles of music

Works Cited

Multiple Readings of “A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings”: Religion vs. Evolution

In Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s story, “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings,” a man named Pelayo comes back from dumping away dead crabs from his house when he sees that a man is lying on the ground of his courtyard. Frightened, he runs to get his wife from inside the house to see what he has just witnessed. To their surprise, they see that this man is not just any old man; he has wings. No one knows what to think of him. Some think that the man is an angel, while others believe that the man is part of an evil trick the Devil is playing on them. Another idea comes up that he could be a man that has evolved to have wings. Garcia Marquez doesn’t want the reader to have to pick only one interpretation to the story; instead he wants them to see that the story could have multiple meanings by not specifying exactly what each quote means. He lets readers choose how they want to interpret the story. One interpretation could be that the man is indeed an angel and Garcia Marquez is showing the ignorance people have toward “true” Christianity. Another interpretation could be that the man is not an angel, but a human that has gone through genetic evolution to develop wings. Through this second interpretation, Garcia Marquez shows people’s unwillingness to accept or confront evolution.

If readers take from “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” that the man with wings is an angel, then with this interpretation comes a critique in the story that mankind is too ignorant of “true” Christianity. Christians are believers in Christ that have complete faith in him, his father and the holy spirit. However, in this story, the townspeople don’t want to accept that the man that stands before them is actually an angel. This shows that they don’t have complete Christian faith like they should. When Pelayo and Elisenda first see the man in question, they don’t know what to make of him, so they call over their neighbor “who knew everything about life and death to see him” (Garcia Marquez 334). She tells them that he is an angel who was most likely coming for their sick
child, and she suggests that they should beat him to death. However, they do not follow her advice. After this, they still weren’t certain that this man was an angel so they asked Father Gonzaga for a second opinion. After inspection, he too got the idea that this man was bad news and could be an “imposter” just because “he did not understand the language of God or know how to greet His ministers” (335). Not only did Father Gonzaga suspect the winged man of being an imposter because he didn’t know Latin, but also because “seen close up he was much too human...nothing about him measured up to the proud dignity of angels” (335). Father Gonzaga’s doubt greatly resembles the story of Jesus: No one believes that he is the son of God solely because he isn’t rich or born into a noble family. Garcia Marquez is trying to show through Father Gonzaga’s process of inquiry how ignorant mankind is. In front of these people is a man who resembles a messenger from god, but no one will accept it just because he doesn’t know Latin and seems “much too human.”

Garcia Marquez shows mankind’s ignorance when the townspeople harm the angel even after they see that it is possible that he is a messenger from God. It is a possibility that the angel came down as a messenger from God to help Pelayo’s family because they were poor and their son was deathly ill; however, aside from his angel-like features, Pelayo and his wife still allowed the townspeople to harm him. A short time after the angel arrives, “the child woke up without a fever and with a desire to eat” (334). In a reading that chooses to view the creature as an angel, this should have given the townspeople a hint that the winged man really was an angel that was there to help them, but instead of thanking him, they thought of setting him out to sea with food and water for three days. This is hardly a thankful gesture. The next day, however, they saw that people were there “tossing him things to eat through the openings in the wire as if he weren’t a supernatural creature but a circus animal” (335). Not only did Pelayo and his wife not stop the townspeople from treating the angel like a “circus animal” after he may have cured their son from his sickness, but they didn’t even consider their plan of setting him free anymore. Instead they only thought of themselves and “charg[ed] five cents admission to see the angel” (335). Garcia Marquez shows how greedy mankind is, and criticizes the couple’s Christian faith because they desired money and materialistic things. Surprisingly, the angel is patient and kind to the townspeople even after they treat him so badly. After a few days of wondering whether he was an angel or not, the townspeople decide that this must be an angel and then “threw stones at him, trying to get him to rise so they could see him standing” and “burned his side with an iron for branding steers” (336). Even after these people were so cruel to him, he never hurt them or lost his patience with them. He never gave them the satisfaction until they burnt him with the iron; he only “flapped his wings a couple of times” and
“had tears in his eyes” (336). The townspeople all insisted on hurting him to get a rise out of him, instead of treating him like something god-like and holy even when the narrator suggests that they believe he is a real angel. This harsh treatment is a lot like the story of Jesus: Even though Jesus knew from the day he was born that he would be born into the world, humiliated, then crucified by the people of Jerusalem, he still went through with his mission in order to save them from their sins. In this light, “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” shows that humankind is far too ignorant and selfish to see what is really in front of them, just as the bible shows in the events in Christ’s life. Through this reading, Garcia Marquez seems to reinforce the moral lessons proposed in the Bible in his own story plot.

In a reading which takes for granted the winged man’s status as an angel, Garcia Marquez also shows the ignorance of humans when the townspeople dismiss the possibility of him of being an angel solely because he doesn’t give them the miracles that they want. For example, in the following quote, Garcia Marquez shows the little miracles the angel does give the unfortunate, even when they don’t appreciate them: “the few miracles attributed to the angel showed a certain mental disorder, like the blind man who didn’t recover his sight but grew three new teeth, or the paralytic who didn’t get to walk but almost won the lottery and the leper whose sores sprouted sunflowers. Those consolation miracles, which were more like mocking fun, had already ruined the angel’s reputation...” (337). The angel’s reputation was “ruined” because he didn’t give the blind man, paralytic or leper what they wanted. Even though the angel doesn’t give them the obvious things they wanted, he does give them some sort of miracle, these people are just too ignorant and selfish to accept them gratefully. This example shows how Gabriel Garcia Marquez is implying that people can be very ignorant to what’s in front of them, even when they present themselves to be “true” Christians.

While the interpretation that the man is an angel is very possible, so is another interpretation of the story, “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings,” that the man is not an angel, but a man that has gone through human evolution. Through this interpretation, Garcia Marquez critiques humans unwillingness to accept and confront evolution. From the moment the people set eyes on the man, they can’t accept him because he has wings. They don’t like that he is different from the rest of them. Because of this, they treat him in the cruelest way, by “lock[ing] him up with the hens in the wire chicken coop” (334) and “throw[ing] stones at him” (336). If this man had not had wings, they surely would not have treated him in this way. Instead, they most likely would have given him the hospitality he needed, especially since he was in “pitiful condition” (334). While most people were
watching him as if he were a “circus animal,” “Some visionaries hoped that he could be put to stud in order to implant on the earth a race of winged wise men who could take charge of the universe” (335) Some people wanted the evolved man to mate with women on earth so that there could be more winged people. Not all people were completely ignorant, some of them actually saw the beauty in his differences and wanted to improve mankind by breeding more of him. After a few years have gone by, the man sees the doctor after coming down with the chicken pox. When the doctor is examining him, he is surprised at the “logic of his wings. They seemed so natural on that completely human organism that he couldn’t understand why other men didn’t have them too” (337). The doctor sees that he is not some sort of weird animal that should be held captive, but something that every man should be. The visionaries and the doctor are the only people that give the man the benefit of the doubt. They are what Garcia Marquez wants humankind to look up to; they are the role models for society. He gives some hope that not all people are unwilling to accept change and evolution like the townspeople who are so quick to think the worst and harm him.

The man in “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” shows a few characteristics that contribute to the controversy of whether the character should be considered a man or an angel. For example, the townspeople “tried to make him eat some mothballs, which, according to the wisdom of the wise neighbor woman, were the food prescribed for angels. But he turned them down” (336). He didn’t show any interest in the food that the “wise neighbor woman” said was “prescribed for angels.” Some could view this as evidence that the man has gone through evolution because he doesn’t like that type of food. However, it is also a possibility that the woman doesn’t know “everything about life and death” like they think she does. That may not be “angel food” at all. And even if it was, it’s also possible that he just wasn’t hungry. Garcia Marquez is showing the ignorance of man again because they dismiss the idea of him of being an angel simply because he doesn’t want to eat what the “wise” woman said was angel food. Another controversial moment is when the man with wings had “tears in his eyes” (336) when the townspeople branded him with the iron. This could show that the man is an angel and is crying because he is hurt at the fact that the townspeople would be so awful to him when all he wanted to do was help them. Garcia Marquez is showing through the angel’s tears how ignorant the townspeople are towards “true” Christianity. The man could also be crying due to physical pain which could imply that he is an evolved man and not an angel because angels are not mortal; they don’t feel pain. Through this interpretation, Garcia Marquez is showing how cruel the townspeople are to someone who is different from them. The tears could be evidence for either side of the argument and Garcia Marquez wants readers to see that
multiple interpretations can be viewed at once in order to understand the story and see what he’s critiquing in humankind.

In conclusion, Gabriel Garcia Marquez wants his readers to see that there are multiple ways to read his story, “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings.” While most people only take one side of the argument, of evolution vs religion, Garcia Marquez encourages his readers to interpret his story in both ways. This is important because he wants his readers to see the faults in humankind no matter what people’s beliefs are. If they believe in religion, he wants his readers to see that he is addressing mankind’s ignorance of seeing “true” Christianity. And if they believe in evolution, he wants his readers to see that he is critiquing their unwillingness to accept evolution when it is right in front of them. Religion vs. evolution has been a very controversial argument since the start of mankind. He addresses this issue in order to give his readers a call to action. He wants his readers to keep in mind his critiques so that they may make a social change to improve mankind’s way of thinking so that they may not be ignorant and unwelcoming, but knowledgeable and accepting towards others in the future.

Works Cited

In the End You Never Know and Boy or Girl: Does it Matter?

In The End You Never Know

Well my story first starts off with my mother. She and I were just best friends. We loved baseball, shopping and traveling to new place to look for new thing to do. She likes to stay home all day and I would cuddle up next to her and watch a movie; our favorite was “Finding Nemo”, I like to go hiking and adventuring out in the woods, and I even showed my mom my favorite spot, where I just sit on the rocks and watch nature as it happens. When it came to dating boys, don’t get me started, it was the only thing she didn’t want to hear anything about. So if I’m in a relationship I’m better off not letting my mother know I’m even thinking about a boy. I would love to say I live with a regular family, and I have a regular, normal life; but in reality we all know that is not true for anyone.

My mother is in her late thirties, with brown hair with some gray hairs. She was devoted to her religion and this is why I don’t tell her about my relationships. She always said, “I better not catch you with a boy”. What she doesn't know is that I have been dating my boyfriend, Will, for about two years and a month now. Will is the best thing to happen to me since birth. He was about 5 feet 9 inches, black skater hair, with abs, 16 years old, and he is from Britain. From the moment I met him I knew he was the one. We fell head over heels for each since day one. We talked about raising a family after college and just always being together. He wanted to be a graphics designer, I want to be a nurse and we had our whole life planned out. We were attached harder than Siamese twins; I never felt so strongly for someone before him.
I'm a rebel in the sense that I would be with my boyfriend right under my mother's nose. She always had a problem with me dating boys but if I wanted to hang out, or invite one to my house then she had no problem. She never expected me to be making out with him right in my room as she walked by. In this relationship we had to be very cautious so she wouldn't catch us. If she did this women would release all of Hell on me. At first it was hard to do anything with Will in my house, because I was always worried of being caught, and that hell being unleashed. As time went on hiding the relationship got easier and easier, and it started to become like second nature to us. We would hear her footsteps, or she would call and knock before coming in so she made it pretty easy to hide the relationship. Even though this sounds like a great story, we all know that great stories end eventually.

Today is August 12th 2009. Just any other summer day I am home sitting on the couch, watching TV like any other day. My mother is at work and my brother is locked in his room playing video games like usual. Will and me video chat for most of the morning and by the time my mom came home. The other day we went strolling through Upper Murray Park, and we found a trail that led down to Lower Murray Park. Beside the ticks and spiders we saw and the seven mosquito bites I got, the day was perfect. Will took me on a picnic where he brought pepperoni pizza which made me so happy. Will kept reminding of the bugs and how he is itching everywhere on his body. Will called me and I look at the clock it was 11:53 p.m. and I swear if it was anyone else I would have hit them. On the phone he just keeps talking about how much his father kept using him to do yard work like cutting the lawn and working him like a dog. It was getting late and I said “I love you Will” right when my mom walked by my room. She almost knocked the door down to the ground and screamed “who are you talking to!?”. My heart was beating fast enough to win an Olympic race as I replied “no one”. She grabbed me and threw me out of bed and started searching for my phone screaming “where is it!?”. Luckily I was able to hold on to my phone when flew out of bed. She grounded me and took my laptop and TV away. I went to bed not knowing what’s going to happen the next day.

In the morning my mother punched my door open. She spent her morning on the internet checking the number and who I was talking. She read every single text I sent Will. She saw all the bad messages, all the sexting, and all the dirty talk we did. At that moment when she barged into my room with tears in her eyes I knew my life was over. She said she never wanted that life for me, and that she never thought I would be into guys like that. She tells me that this is not the way to live my life and what I'm doing is completely against “our” believes. She scolded me, grounded me from
TV, phone and internet for 6 months and put me under house arrest. She wanted me to change who I am and she started by having me call him and break up in front of her. I did what I was told and I was done with her. She wasn’t my mother anymore and I told her that. For the next six months all I did was back sass her, through fits, and just rebel everything. My relationship with my mother was broken and it wasn’t going to be fixed ever again. Three months passed and I haven’t talked to Will since that night. When I finally got my phone back I knew I couldn’t text him because my mom would find out I am talking to him. I finally got contact with him through video chat and what I saw was not Will. He changed so much from how he used to be. I knew that we were not going to get back to get or anything just by the disgust he showed. I knew it was over for good. I could take the pain of seeing his face anymore so I hung up and went to bed crying. All my dreams with him and life were crushed. I felt I couldn’t be with anyone ever else cause my mom would mess it up.

A year has passed and I was heading out to play basketball with some friends. When I got there I realized this new kid playing. I knew he wasn’t from this part of town because I never seen him before. He had blond hair, about 5 feet 7 inches and snake bite piercings. We played one-on-one and we even an even match. I ended up beating him 9-7 but it was a great game. We decided to exchange numbers and text whenever we wanted to play; he saved his number as “Jake(;”. By the time I got home I asked my friend Kayla about this about this kid because she seemed to know him well when we were in the park. She told me and he asked about me to and that he was “interested.” The first thing that came to my mind was to talk to him that there might be a connection. So the next minute I found myself texting him nonstop. We kept talking and talking almost the whole night and I actually fond an interest in this boy. So after a few weeks of talking we decided to go official. This relationship was different. This boy reminded me so much of Will. His jokes, laugh sarcasm. I swear I loved him. This kept going and my feelings grew stronger and stronger. I was talking to him about my past with my mother and Jake was so supportive and I felt like this guy was a true boyfriend.

When I realized this it hit me. I felt that history was going to repeat itself and I couldn’t bare to handle the same pain again. I told him straight out that I couldn’t think about a future with him. After what I been though in the past with my mother I told him I could never reach that stage of emotional devotion because that means being attached. After Will, I figured out that planning a future just makes u grow closer and you really don’t know what happens in the future. I told him all I want is to love him and I don’t want to be close because what if something like with Will happens now. He told me he understood where I was coming from and for the first time he opened up about
his past with me. Jake never once talked about his past till now and from what he told me I feel that he also knew what it was like to have a black hole where your heart is suppose to be. He wanted something lasting and I said I don’t know if I could again. He texts me a two page text tell me that he love me and he loves us, how wants to at least try. In my head I thought this kid would leave me after telling him all this but I told “babe your faith in us is so strong that I want to give us a chance too.”

Boy or Girl: Does It Matter?
In my narrative story, “In the End You Never Know” most people worry more about the gender of my character than the actual story. This is why I chose to mask the gender. The purpose of this was for the reader to have different viewpoints of the protagonist depending on if it was a male or female. The aspect of gender difference is to be able to alter the entire point of a “coming of age” story. In today’s day and age, society and culture inserts certain values in humans, like telling them what is acceptable for males and females. Society has its culture set up by having the gender roles, explicitly enforced through people since birth. For example, males are generally expected to be the provider for the families, and are the ones who do jobs that require physical labor, while women are suppose to be the stay-at-home parent, taking care of the house and kids. When the roles switch, society views it as some strange and different, and it completely changes the values and culture we are used to. Thinking about “Drown” and “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been” the values of the characters would be different if the gender of the main characters were opposite. When it comes to these “coming of age” stories, the moment where the protagonist matures differs depending on his or her gender. With this, we stereotype characters based on their sex. In result, what readers take from stories is supported on what they expect from a character based on their gender. Diaz’s and Oates’s stories are gender specific due to the fact changing the genders would give completely different meanings in thoughts, growth, and outtake in the characters. In my narrative story, it brings up the point that a reader can have different perspective based on the gender of the protagonist, and the stereotypical thoughts that most people have and don’t want to admit.

In my story, the purpose was to have a character in a situation where gender does matter in the sense of what you take out of the story in the end. This begins with the mother in the story; her purpose was to serve as the religious parent. Not specifying the type of religion she belonged to
opened up a wide range of thoughts about she meant when the protagonist dating was against their own “believes”. For the most part, people would usually claim the protagonist to be a boy because they believe by going against “our believes” meant it was an attack on homosexuality. Looking at the bigger picture, in different society like Albanians and Muslim girls are not allowed to date out of their own culture, because Will was “British”.

In an overview, looking at the main character as male protagonist brings up the view that this boy’s story was trying to “come out” and be true to him in the quest to find happiness. On the other hand, looking at the main character as a female protagonist, you can get the impression the girl is just another teen rebel going against everything her mother says. This being said, you are able to see that if the character was not boy this would not be a coming out story; because even though society is starting to accept homosexuality, we are still seen as a society that believes in heteronormativity. The “coming out” situation would not be the same with a girl than it with a boy. Now, if the main character was a female then the whole interpretation you had with about the boy would not fit with the character being a girl. She would not have been viewed as “gay” or anything to do with a same sex relationship, which means her story is just her rebelling against her mother. The point is the story can be interpreted as both characters trying to reach happiness, but the fact is the reader would have different thoughts about the character themselves.

Junot Diaz did an amazing job with character placement and setting the story in a Latin community. Being set in a Latino culture, sets different views on the way that society views homosexuality. His audience was more of Spanish speaking people since he decided to cover up the word gay as “pato”; he does so in the first two sentences of that short story. Upon doing so he separates the audience into groups that understand the situation and they start to formulation what’s going to happen later in the story. Diaz’s reason for writing his story for more Spanish speaking people is to be able to give them a reality check. Diaz’s “reality check” is to point out to the Latino community and say “Hey, in reality this is how you guys are handling sexual orientations.” That is why he separates the audience between these two groups. For the people who don’t understand this word, there is a possibly that they would be shocked towards the scene when Beto starts to mess around with Junior. Having Junior accept Beto’s hand placement, but still being uncomfortable with it, would be unexpected to a non-Spanish speaking people because, first of all, they would not have know Beto was gay and secondly, the scene isn’t predictable because Diaz never lets the reader know about Beto’s ambitions towards Junior. This would not even cross an English-speaking person’s mind if they didn’t know what “pato” meant beforehand. His purpose on delaying the meaning of
the word is like what most writers do. They delay to keep the reader interested and read on for the rest of the story. To the readers their reaction is being constructed by their thoughts of two males, but now changing the genders to two females would give the reader a completely different view of the story.

In today’s society, as we start to accept homosexuality, two females are generally more accepted than two males. When it comes to females they always a more comfortable bond with each other than two males would. Girls goes to the bathroom together, they hold hands, and when referring to their friends they usually call them girl friend while on the other hand you won’t see a friendship of two guys referring to each other as boyfriends. By saying this, the reader would have probably looked at the story as the two girls just experimenting instead of labeling them as gay. With this the story can take a different path of coming of age. Junior might have been more accepting to the whole cuddling and feeling Beto did to him and their friendship would have continued. What would have most likely separated them is the fact Beto is going to college but even so he would have been more excited to see his friend than he originally was. But now take the view point if we just switch one of the genders, then this story becomes a heterosexual relationship and the two might have actually had stronger feelings for each other in the story, or this story could have been seen as just other rape story. This being said Junior could have had stronger feelings for Beto in the romantic way, but accepting it was hard with Junior because being gay is still viewed negatively. Today’s society is very more comfortable with homosexuality, but to an extent, where it is ok to be openly gay or lesbian, but there are a lot of people who would frown down upon you. The situation of Beto and Junior, from “Drown,” would be confronted differently by the reader if they where two women, or even if Junior was the woman and Beto was still a man this would be just another typical rape story.

When it comes to “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been” the genders of the characters are typical for a rape story. You have this younger girl who gets abducted by an older guy who finds some sort of interest in her. Stories like this are found at least once a day on the news somewhere in America. What we are not used to seeing is a female raping a male or same sex raping. The reason is because women are not seen as dominant like men, they are more as “beneath” men, and men are not seen as sensitive or submission like women are claimed to be. Not to say that it isn’t out there but there these stories are not broadcasted on the news or papers because to our society it is abnormal. Ask a person what they think about male on female harassment and their response would be more negative than if it was a woman on a man. Now what if in “Where Are
You Going” Connie was a male and Arnold Friend was female? Would Oates be able to have the same message in his story if the roles were switch? The “coming of age” message can be the same, but it won’t be practical for us to read a story about woman abducting a little boy. The fact that it is not common for us to hear about stories about women raping men opens up a different perspective on how we would view his story. First of all, we would look upon this as something strange cause who ever hear about these types of situations? Since men are suppose to be the stronger, more aggressive one, then it would be a matter of the facts if the story would end the same way due to the power difference.

We know that there is a power difference between men and women. Connie was over powered by a guy who was stronger than her, leaving her as “weak and defenseless”, but if the genders were switch then Connie as a younger boy would be assumed to have the strength over the women who would be trying to rape him. A reader would look at this story and say that there’s nothing to worry about he can defend himself if he wants to. A situation, like Connie’s, would not be taken as seriously if the genders were switch and a woman is threatening to “break though a screen door and glass and wood and iron or anything else if [s]he need to” (Oates p. 938). She would be laughed at because in our society it is very rare for women to take such aggressive force and try to claim domination like this. Even if it was a boy about to be snatched by another male, most people would believe that the boy have a fighting chance to escape. Looking at his original story just shows the stereotypes that women are defenseless and always needs someone to protect them.

Diaz writes his story with the intentions of two males, to get his view of the Latino community’s emotions towards homosexuality out there and the use of two males is significant. The Latino community is also shaped with the idea of male dominance because of the larger society that surrounds them. Since women are put a step below the men seeing, two females having a romantic connection can be brushed off easily because, to men, it is not their gender they are worrying about, but when homosexuality is dealing with two men, most of them feels like it is a slap to the face because they are suppose to be “in control” and “better” gender, and that’s why male homosexuals are not as accepted. Diaz’s use of two male is a greater emphasize than using two females because of this pride feeling males have.

Oates’s story was porously to show male dominance of a younger girl, are stuck on the idea of male power that these rape stories would not make much sense if the role was switch. It is possible that one of Oates intentions is address this idea that men can have what they want and when they want it and they can manipulate a simple female because they are not seen as aggressive
and assertive and men. Upon saying this, her story could be set to a male abductor and a female victim for the solemn purpose of this idea of what is means to be a man. This idea would not make sense if the abductor was a woman.

In Diaz’s and Oates’s stories, it’s best not to tamper with the gender role since they are specific to what the story is suppose to presume, where in mine, wither you choose to read it as a male or female protagonist is entirely up to you. To reiterate, Diaz’s story is more effective because he used two male characters instead of other genders since to most people male homosexuality is accepted, but less than two females, therefore it causes a more shock to the reader. While on the other hand, Oates’s story would defy society’s norms, if Connie was a male being abducted by a woman. This all relates back to society’s gender inequality because we are very fixed on definition of what it means to be a male is and what it means to be a female. That is why switching the gender in my story gives the reader different character analyzes. Counter arguments could be that Diaz and Oates probably had other points to their gender choice, and that there is more to Diaz’s audience choice. All this would require further research and interpretations of the passages. Gender inequality is an issue every faces. You hear pep talks about being who you want to be, but the bottom line is they are saying be who you want to be within your certain gender.

**Work Cited**


I remember eating my first “authentic” Italian dish which was lasagna bolognese. I was a child when my mother decided to cook my father an Italian delicacy since that was what he truly desired for his birthday dinner. Food was never the same for me since. Italian cuisine is indeed culinary heaven. However there’s something to be understood from this general cuisine. It is through Italian cuisine and its many improvisations as well as its origins that we can see that the arguments and conflicting ideas or concepts brought within diversity itself can jeopardize identity. When we are too accustomed to the many mixtures of different ideas and cultures available, we begin to subconsciously substitute those for the original ideas and traditions. The course of Italian cuisine from its history to today reflects this.

It was a couple summers ago when a couple good friends of mine returned from a school trip to Italy for two weeks. I soon realized that they both returned different, memorized by the life and culture at this special European peninsula. Then the topic of food was brought up, which resulted in surprising statements. When I asked them how was the pizza over there in a jokingly manner both of them replied with serious tones that they never wanted to eat American pizza ever again after they first ate in a Roman pizzeria. “It’s just simply disgusting over here”, I remembered one of them say. I was surprised by their comments that suggested that there was no possible comparison at all; as if the Italian food I ate here at home wasn’t Italian at all. Our different perceptions on this cuisine’s identity conflicted.

In our society, we have learned to embrace diversity as a way to unite each other with our different cultures, spiritual beliefs, thoughts on current issues and trends, general ideas and cuisines. However in many cases this exposure can lead to conflicts when our ideas contradict one another. Therefore diversity isn’t always peaceful and has resulted in arguments, debates and even wars from our differences. Also as a result of all of this variety, diversity has changed our past thinking and ways of life into new ways that we express ourselves but our old, original ways soon become forgotten. America is perhaps the most diverse country in the globe but still not all Americans know the history and founding principles that make up this country. Is it productive to forget the roots of
the reason that our world is the way it is today? The “out with the old, in with the new” concept can’t always promise a better society.

As Italian food became popular throughout the globe, especially the United States, many attempts were made to bring different foods through similar Italian culinary concepts to increase economic diversity. Italian food is starting to spread more like a chain establishment. Authors such as In Praise of Chain Stores’ Virginia Postrel believed that this concept put in action will spread “economic discovery…that will increase local variety” and make more, in this case international, choices available (Postrel 808). In reality, we have decreased the awareness of truly authentic Italian cuisine as well as general identity.

Diversity has changed the ways we viewed authentic factors of history, food, ideas and culture. The improvising of past factors has been shown through Italian dishes such as lasagna. Italians treat it with such precision and delicate care, since to them any dish is more than just piling a whole bunch of ingredients in a baking rack to throw in the oven. You start off with the sauce, of course, pan frying the ground beef, sausage, or any other preferred Italian meats (Ratfink, “Basic Lasagna”) while mixing them up with your choice of tomato paste, sauce and vegetables; including but not limited to diced onions, minced garlic, peppers etc. and then carefully layering under and on top of the ingredients soon to be buried in shredded cheese and later baked at 400 degrees of perfection. However there is no general type of lasagna anymore. There are many alternations of lasagna dishes from vegetarian lasagna, Mexican lasagna to even an unusual yet interesting apple-crumble lasagna (“Apple Squash Lasagna”). All of these different ideas of what a traditional Italian dish could be like overshadows how it originally was like.

Within diversity is a natural tendency to disagree with the variety of factors present. Since we all come from different backgrounds, we will have different points of view on religion, morality, culture, current issues and of course food. All of our diverse ideas on Italian cuisine always has and always will conflict one another. Among us are different opinions about whose favorite restaurant or grandmother makes the best pasta carbonara. From our grandmother’s recipe to the recipe of a Tuscan baker, all of our versions of the perfect Italian dish are different. The pasta dish one enjoys dearly in Olive Garden might be viewed as downgrading to a chef in Tuscany. The delicacy that we have grown to adore will never be put down for someone else's interpretation of superb cuisine.

Within this tendency to come along stressed differences along with arguments due to diversity is the possibility that the origin of what was being argued about becomes unknown. Debates about the origin of Italian food has made its true history, as of today, remain a mystery.
According to Thelma Barer-Stein’s You Are What You Eat, the origin of pasta in general has no exact answer, ranging from theories of the earliest pasta coming from “noodles from Chinese sources” as well as from the “ship of Marco Polo” (Barer-Stein 314) while some Canadian journalists propose that that the claims of lasagna being Italian imposes scandal since according to them, the medieval English created this dish (“Great lasagna debate”). Even with pizza, our most beloved Italian-American obsession, there has been debates with scholars arguing that “although the early ingredients of pizza are Italian, its concept came from the Mediterranean societies that Marco Polo encountered” (“Origin of Pizza”). All of these arguments’ rather than solve the issue, made the quest for finding the identity more complicated.

Diversity presents itself in many different aspects that we can get accustomed to but it unfortunately can cause us to forget the origin of these aspects, challenging our knowledge on its identity. America has fallen in love with Italian cuisine ever since the first Italian immigrants immigrated to Ellis Island in the late 19th century. These immigrants brought with them the many factors of authentic Italian cuisine, such as arguably using less ingredients and preservatives but with more quality, but had to substitute these concepts of high quality ingredients for cheaper, available ones. It is with this course in history that identity began to be compromised due to the variation of different ingredients that substituted the traditional components.

This challenge of diversity on identity has developed greatly during the past several decades. The many different factors can change something or someone into something different entirely. For example, America’s desire to embrace, yet make Italian cuisine their own has changed its foundation almost entirely. Today, the many Italian-American food chains that we pass by such as Pizza Hut, Dominos’, Papa John’s and Olive Garden use diverse techniques to create an “Americanized version” of this cuisine that everyone can recognize more easily. Dominos’ use of buffalo chicken pizza, stuffed cheesy breadsticks with marinara sauce and authentic pasta stuffed in bowls made of bread puts us in a delusion of which food is truly Italian. Other simulations of Italian food with a different twist such as Burger King with its Whopper Pizza in Manhattan (McCormack, “Pizza Burger”) and Pizza Hut’s cheesy bites pizza change the perception of what Italian cuisine is. Therefore identity is changed due to the diverse ways we decide to display this cuisine.

Even in some few cases, diversity has been the exact thing that has been objected by others. Economic markets today have been focusing on expanding different types of companies and products in diverse parts of the world. However some places have objected to this type of globalization, fearing that it could affect the identity of their ways of life and customs. Ever since
McDonald’s was first introduced to Italy in 1985, “there has been great controversy surrounded by its new location” according to author Carol Helstosky (Helstosky 158). Many citizens thought that their own culture was in danger, resulting in violent protests between 1997 and 1999, including the damages of several franchisees (Helstosky 159). Helstosky also concludes that “Despite McDonald’s popularity among children and teenagers…the very existence of McDonald’s restaurants continues to elicit disapproval and indignation” (Helstosky159).

Although diversity can become good in many cases, it usually does not come without some sort of conflict which in some cases can challenge identity. When we are embraced by many different ideas and appearances, we may sometimes get too occupied with conflicts based on these ideas and appearances. The true, complete history of Italian cuisine might forever remain a mystery. A bigger issue that comes along with diversity is that it might cause us to forget individual identities of literature, cultures or even ourselves. The true original concepts and cultures might be substituted with the many alternations, reducing originality. Identity could be jeopardized.

Italian cuisine is, unfortunately, in minor danger. Our various interpretations of “Americanized” pizza, pasta and special dishes handicap our perception on Italian delicacies that are sacred. It is a possibility that there are Americans today that really never have eaten true Italian food due to the fact that we mimic too much. Diversity itself can be an excellent way of life just as long as we don’t always attempt to imitate the many factors in different and irresponsible ways. We can all enjoy diversity just as long as we value and respect all of those unique parts that make it up.

Works Cited


“Great lasagna debate; Scandal cooking over lasagna”. Windsor Star (Ontario). July 16, 2003

http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy.lib.uconn.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/?verb=sr&csl=8399&sr=HLEAD(Great+lasagna+debate%3B+Scandal+cooking+over+lasagna)and+date+is+July,%202003. 02 July 2012.


Trishana Bunsie

“No One’s Good Enough for Our Daughters”:
Codependency on a Father

Writer McBride insinuates to his readers that modern day hip-hop is commercialized and lacks the political and social conscious context, but rapper Nas proves through his song “daughters” that not all of the current songs are about materialistic things. He is able to create a song that doesn’t “spout violent lyrics that debase women and gays” (McBride 469). He addresses the male audience talking about his struggles with raising his own daughter as a father. He found himself supporting her more financially than mentally. In society today you find that majority of the teen girls that act out and proceed down the wrong path in life are the ones without a father figure in their life. McBride would praise Nas for this song because he is using it as an eye opener for fathers that aren’t around for their daughters, which has become a social issue. The lyrics and music video for the song “Daughters” explains the phases Nas went through with his own daughter, caused by him not being the cleanest father figure or being around as much. He is showing that young girls need a father figure to look up to and guide them, or it will make them prone to peer influence.

Nas is able to shed light on the audience he is aiming this song straying away from the typical modern day songs. It starts off by saying “I call it “shit for brothers with daughters; I call this “shit for brothers with daughters...” The use of repetition is useful to stress the importance of what he has to say. It’s able to grasp the listener’s attention through using the word “shit” as an approach to express the seriousness of what he has to say. In the first couple of lines of the first verse he explains how his daughter sent a letter to some boy her age that is locked up, which made him really upset. He then states “first I regretted it then caught my rage, like how could I not protect her from this awful phase?”(Nas) This expresses the argument of the song. Nas wasn’t around enough to realize that his daughter was sending letters to a boy in jail; when he did he became furious, with the fact that he didn’t “protect” her from this “awful phase.” An important job of a father is to help prevent their daughters from such awful phases while teaching them the type of boys that are commendable. Gangster rappers today express “rage” negatively through violent and aggressive lyrics but through Nas’s song he’s able to release his “rage” and feelings about the situation which is something McBride credits Hip hop music of doing.

Nas uses the song to speak on the identity that he presented for his own daughter to see. He states “Plus she’s seen me switching women, pops was on some pimp shit, she heard stories of her
daddy thugging, so if her husband is a gangster can’t be mad” (Nas) This coincides with the video for the song, showing a little girl with her dad holding ice cream while he converses with a woman. The little girl is observing him “switching women” which did not set a good example for her growing up and also show how he used to “debase women”. He exposed her negative way women are portrayed. The stories that she heard of him “thugging” also doesn’t show her what a good man should be and he realizes that if she ends up with a “gangster” he can’t be mad. Many daughters find them self looking for a man like their own father; when the fathers engrave a bad image of men in their head the daughter interpret it as being acceptable, as Nas states “she looked at me like I’m not the cleanest father figure but she rocking with it” (Nas). In the video it shows how he is leaving to go away and she’s at the window watching him go, which conveys that he wasn’t around a lot due to his job in the industry. You find a lot of dad going away departing from their families, whether they’re getting drafted in the army or being incarcerated. This strays away from the “I am” hip hop that Mcbride speaks about because he is not flaunting, accessorizing or spreading the “I am the best” (Mcbride 466) idea instead Nas is being relatable and honest.

He uses his own faults in order to tell this intriguing story to his viewers, giving them something to learn off of. He expresses what occurred when he found out his daughter was doing inappropriate things, stating “this social network said “Nas go and get ya kid” she’s on twitter, I know she aint going to post no pic, of herself undressed” (Nas) here is the point where he finally comes to the realization that he wasn’t playing the role of a father to her. He didn’t put up boundaries, which is why many teen girls are doing inappropriate things. In the next couple of lines in the second verse states “don’t know what got inside this childs mind,she planted a box of condoms on her dresser then she instagrammed it” (Nas). This is where she beings to act out of control cycle; which can be interpreted as his own fault for not being a dominate father. The word “planted” shows how what she did was intentionally insidious because she knew it was cause uproar. A scene in the video shows his daughter smoking marijuana and getting in the backseat of a car driving around with boys drinking soon after getting stopped by the authorities. Coincidentally the boys in the car had the thug like persona, “with a mouthful of gold teeth... muscles popping out of his arms and a thug attitude” (Mcbride 464). This clip of the video is significant because it shows the audience how lack of parental advisory from a father can induce these kinds of behaviors. Realizing that he wasn’t being a stern father he states “at this point I realized I aint the strictest parent, im too lose, im too cool with her” (Nas). This shows the effect of a father that doesn’t play the role. He was a bystander in her life but didn’t realize that it could lead her down the wrong path. HipHop critic
Mcbride states “the prototypical consumer at which the hip-hop industry is squarely aimed, which has parents sitting up in their seats” (Mcbride 468) which coincides with the scene in the video where she holds up a magazine that has rapper “soulja boy” on it, who is a “I am” rapper and fail to be socially conscious can relate back to Mcbride and how he’s trying to show how rap music is sending the wrong image to teen.

As the song progresses he continues to spread the awareness of this issue. Nas explains how he basically spoiled his daughter thinking he “dropped enough jewels on her” with the idea that it would keep her away from all the peer influence and getting out of control. This line of the song can relate to the fathers that only support financially, whether it’s by child support or freely giving money. Nas makes it clear that raising a daughter is not all about giving them all the “jewels” it is more about dropping enough knowledge on them. The song states “One day she’s ya little princess, next day she talking boy business” which shows how fast girls grow up and the drastic changes that occur. They soon enough reach the age where they begin to talk “boy business” and without a male’s perspective from a father, many girls find themselves having difficulties with relationships.

The image and actions of a father is one that is important when raising a daughter. The song states “they say the coolest playas and the foulest heart breakers in the world, god gets us back, he makes us have precious little girls” this line of the song is very important because its like foreshadowing; he realizes that what he used to do to females in his days is what boys are trying to do to his own daughter. God is hypothetically getting him back by having him deal with all his daughters mix up with boys, peer influence, and the social website.

Nas was able to send a strong message to his viewers through this song and video. It helps to express the importance of a father figure in a girl’s life. Nas begins to express in the last verse of the song how he realizes that raising a girl is not an easy job, and more difficult that raising a boy. He states “I just wanna see you dream up” which shows how as a father all he wants to see her to do is dream big which goes with the scene in the video where she is in the car like she is going away for college. He then states “it aint easy to a raise a girl” (Nas). Here he has finally come to the terms that a daughter needs more care, which is something he expressing to his male audience who has daughter and aren’t around. The last line of the song is important because it shows the expectations of a father figure when she reaches her teen years, stating “when she date, we wait behind the door with sawed off, cuz we think no one is good enough for our daughters” (Nas) This here is something expected from a father but when there isn’t anyone around to fulfill this position, it leaves the girl vulnerable to broken hearts.
Hip-hop music has become the ground for negative advertisement to the public and mainly the youth, which is something McBride expresses through his article. This song is one out of few in modern day hip-hop that touches on a real subject and real issue in today’s world. He’s able to stand out from McBride’s idea of the “I am” rapper and also avoid advertising “Luxury cars, designer clothes, and liquor” (McBride 468). Through this song you can also see how music today influence kids, which is portrayed in the video through his daughters perspective on the kind of guy she chose with the “gangster” persona and her actions on the social networks. The topic that Nas choice to speak on is not a typical modern day industry song which makes him, as an artist and the song standout as a whole. He’s able to avoid the typical mindless and shallow lyrics and still be appealing to a vast number of people which is why I chose to elaborate on this song.

Being a father is a task that is difficult but worthwhile to take on, which is what Nas expresses in his song “Daughters”. Today you see more and more families only consisting of a single mother. Raising a daughter it is very important to have a father figure around; someone there that can teach them the male perspective on things. Also, Nas expresses how important it is to be an admirable father figure, someone that your daughter can look up to in a positive way. Fathers not being around has become a social issue that Nas chose to express through this song, sending out a message to all his “brothers with daughters” hoping that they can take and grow for what he did work with raising his own. Altogether, Nas has created a song that is “social commentary”(Mcbride 468) and also imply that every daughter needs a father around to keep them grounded, and one that not only support financially but more so emotionally and mentally.
Melisa Cardona

What Actually Is Good Academic Writing?

Throughout my high school career, I have been taught that nothing is perfect. There will never be a time where something that was completed was done to a point where it cannot be altered. Junior year I had to rewrite an essay and I did as I was instructed. I handed the essay in thinking it was in a better condition then it actually was in. After meeting with the teacher, I had many changes that needed to be made. Then, just to make sure I was not handing in another essay that was not complete, I went to go get it revised by another teacher. She had numerous more corrections she believed needed to be addressed. After getting it all corrected by two different sources, I resubmitted the essay. Ultimately getting the essay returned to me, it was evident that there was still a multitude of changes that should have been made.

Michael Berube claims that while writing an essay a summary is not what is being looked for. He explains how putting the writer’s own twist and giving a clear statement on a position is how a well-written essay is started. As Berube had mentioned, if a clear position is identified and an argument can come about from it, then the essay had brought in the attention of the reader. Another author that incorporated his thought on a good academic paper is George Orwell. He states the politically correct English is not always the appropriate route to take. There are simpler ways to express certain thoughts. When revising an academic paper, it is better to get the point across rather then frolic around the bush just to integrate rigid words. A suitable essay begins with a proper standing point and conveys its own side and vision of what if being discussed. Good academic writing consists of a firm standing point along with proper revisions without summarizing the topic that is being analyzed.

A well-written academic essay is never complete until it has been revised multiple times. Revision is a key factor of trying to perfect an essay. Revision does not mean incorporating massive words that a majority of people would not know the meaning of. Revision is going over the paragraphs that had been started and remove unneeded words, simplify the statement, and make sure the point of view is clearly stated. The statement needs to be précis in order to give the reader a
clear standing point. As Orwell stated in his essay, precision is very important to give the reader a defined view of what is trying to be explained (512). Having good metaphors and making sure that everything has proper abbreviations is also part of perfecting an essay as claimed by Orwell. When the revisions process has started, it is better to remove useless words. Therefore, the definite statement will be brought forward. Writing in politically correct English is not needed. By integrating politically correct English, the sentence or statements starts to modify to a different direction as Orwell says “It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish” (510). We as writers make our writing even more difficult to understand when we use politically correct English. The reader would prefer to understand the argument rather than having to read the dictionary as well as the essay that had been constructed. Politically correct English is a waste of time and a majority of readers will not consider the essay any more intelligent because of the usage of immense words. The writer needs to review their piece various times in order to remove large words and avoid confusion.

Revisions should be done after the writer believes they have constructed a good piece of academic writing. Once they believe they have the piece they are suitable with, they need to go over and make sure there are not any useless things throughout it. A good academic essay needs to be revised multiple times. Once is not enough to find all the errors and make sure the argument is specific. For example, a sentence may sound correct to the writer since he or she know exactly what they are saying but the reader could be completely lost. By revising the essay, the writer has to go over and simply make sure the essay is easily understandable by a vast majority of people. Even though as earlier explained, no matter how many times it is revised, it is better to make sure the argument is being clearly understood. For instance, there was a paper that I needed to write about how racism related to The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and I had a grammar correct essay but the thesis was not clearly stated. If my argument was brought forward clearer then I would have received a much higher grade. Revision may be an important part of a properly writer paper but a rich statement stating the writers position is also crucial.

A clean-cut statement taking a clear position is a crucial part of a composed academic paper. After revision, if the reader cannot identify what the argument is, there is no point of backing up an unclear statement. If the writer is not sure about their position, then the reader is going to be just as confused. For example, Berube's students did not have a clear understanding of his grading policy and it made it difficult for him to explain the scattered policy to them. For the writer to avoid being questioned on the position they thought was taken, they should be straightforward with their statement. Berube states how having the reader disagree with the statement the writer has taken is
what to strive for, “When I tell them that an observation is not a thesis, and that their thesis isn’t sufficiently specific or useful if they can’t imagine anyone plausibly disagreeing with it” (303). Once the reader feels as if they can challenge the writer then the essay would be a more enjoyable source of text. The reader would like to be able to reread the text and not have to struggle through it as Berube claims, “go back and reread the passage in question (good!)” (304). Anything that is worthy enough to be reread has to be a good piece of writing. An example would be someone rereading a book because they enjoyed it so much the first time. That person would not have reread the book if they did not believe it was decent.

A properly written essay should always consist of a precise thesis that states the position of the paper and forms an argument that can later be discussed. If the writer is hoping the statement will be discussed, there needs to be a stable and direct phrase. If the statement is unclear then the academic paper would very broad and could be misunderstood. To make the statement be even clearer, keeping the language simple and easy would help out the reader. As mentioned by Orwell big words are not necessary to make the essay sound as if the writer had higher knowledge if there is still a broad statement. Cutting out words that are not required to get the statement across would also make the statement more upfront. Orwell claims that replacing small words with more complex words is not going to always work in the writer’s benefit, “Never use a long word where a short one will do” (519). Keeping the writing precise and on point is what the reader is hunting for. For any typical student, short articles will much rather be preferred rather than a longer one explaining the same concept. In order to complete a good academic paper, the writer should make sure to have a clear statement securing their argument without repeating the original author.

While constructing a qualified academic paper, the writer should always be careful of giving the reader a summary. Summarizing in an academic paper is not an ideal thing to do. This will confuse the reader since a clear argument was stated and the writer is going off on a tangent about what occurred in the literature. Michael Berube managed to write an essay explaining the flaws of summarization in an academic paper. He explains that the writer should not give the reader a summary of the text but to explain their point of view of what they had read. As Berube says “we haven’t read it in quite the way you’re reading it” (303). Everything in an academic paper should be from the writer’s point of view and what they find intriguing and important. Berube is explaining how everyone could read the original text but not everyone is going to view it the same way. For instance, a television show may intrigue a certain audience but to another audience it could be absolutely horrid.
The writer should always analyze the text and put forward their thoughts of the situation but they should never contradict the literature. Berube states, “Makes claims that are directly contradicted by the literary text itself (bad! The mute button for you!)” (304). He is trying to prevent the reader from picking up on the bad habit of going against the original text. The essay is being read in order to understand the writer’s contemplations about the text and what they got out of it. The readers do not want a summary of the literature because they might as well read it themselves. What they want is a different view of the context. George Orwell talks about integrating metaphors and imagery in a well academic paper, “A newly invented metaphor assists thought by evoking a visual image” (512). The reason he mentions the figurative language is in order to make the writer’s visions more vivid as they explain the literature. Instead of giving a tedious summary about the text, the writer’s job is to give it life and put his or her own spin on what the original author was putting forward. Avoiding summarization is a key factor of a well-written academic essay. By in taking these unstructured rules, a good essay will easily unfold.

A well academic paper requires many traits in order for it to reach high standards. Revisions will always be an important factor of writing anything in general. Berube makes sure to push the thought of making the text clear by going over it and getting rid of anything that is not required. Orwell also put a foot forward in order to express the fact that big words will not improve the essay but confuse the reader. Along with not playing tricks with the reader’s mind, a clear statement with a clear position in the argument the writer is expressing is ideal. Both Berube and Orwell touch on the subject of avoiding enormous words in an academic paper. Politically correct English is also not what the reader is looking for as mentioned by Orwell, “Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging, and sheer cloudy vagueness” (517). They want an understandable argument with proper analysis and the writer’s point of view. Therefore, summarizing the original text is another factor that should not be done. The reader does not want to get an explanation of what the author was saying; they want an explanation of the writer’s point of view about the authors writing. Would the reader appreciate the essay more if they can interpret it in their own way? If there were broader statements in essays, would the writer have more liberty to make the reading what they truly want it to be?

Work Cited


Kurt Vonnegut creates a story that forces people to stop and seriously think about changing what they believe to be true, and what they believe is false. After reading Vonnegut’s short story “The Nice Little People,” the reader is required to rethink what they believe in. The story “The Nice Little People” presents the reader with a variety of choices on what actually happen in the story. One of the choices the reader has to choose between is that Lowell Swift the main character in the story has a mental illness, and he killed his wife. The second choice is that Lowell really did meet little people, aliens really exist and they killed his wife. Readers have to make a chose between the story being about mental illnesses or science fiction. Vonnegut gives the reader more choices to decide from in the story, but those two are the ones that really stand out. Between those two selections: believing Lowell has a mental illness or believing aliens really exist, whichever one the reader decides on, they both have different implications. If you say Lowell is crazy, it means you believe Lowell was capable of murder. If you say the aliens in the story are real, it means you believe Lowell was innocent and wasn’t capable of murder.

One side of Kurt Vonnegut’s story, “The Nice Little People” makes you choose that aliens really exist and they were the ones who killed Lowell’s wife. Initially if people were presented with this choice before they read the story almost everyone would say no to this choice, but after reading the story it makes you wonder whether Lowell really met little people. Lowell for the most part seems like a sane man, who is content with his life and, who loves his wife. The story gives the readers the impression that Lowell wasn’t the type of man who could hurt is wife. In the story it says “Lowell had never loved anyone else” (431) and “he would have been lost without her” proving that Lowell wasn’t capable of hurting Madelaine (432).

When introducing the aliens into the story it goes into great detail on how Lowell thought they were insects but then saw them for what they truly were “it was then he saw that the insects were three men and three women, perfectly proportioned, and clad in glistening black tights”(433). The way Lowell sees the little people it didn’t seem like a result of any type of mental illness, it seem like the little people he was seeing were real. During this scene in the story the author sets a tone
that keeps the reader calm and allows them to sense that what’s happening in the story is actuality and the result of any mental illness. This helps convince the readers that the little people were real.

For all the people who read Vonnegut’s “The Nice Little People” and truly believe that Lowell encountered aliens it says a lot about who they are. It means they believe aliens exist in literature, and they probably view life in a different way than others. Usually people who are known to believe in aliens in literature understand that there are things in the real world that humans may not understand. They are open to the idea of the world containing things that are still unknown and misunderstood. The people who think Lowell did murder Madelaine are usually the people who choose not to or can’t accept that there may be things in the world they don’t comprehend. There are people who think aliens are real in the real world are crazy or have issues, but some of them are just able to realize there is more to the world than meets the eye, and maybe just maybe aliens do exist.

The second choice Vonnegut’s story, “The Nice Little People” makes the reader consider is that Lowell had some kind of mental illness and he killed his wife Madelaine. This option is easier to accept because in general most people don’t believe in aliens and there is a lot of evidence in the story that points to Lowell killing his wife. Even though Lowell loved his wife, he still had reasons to kill her. Society doesn’t make it easy on men who aren’t the man in their relationships or marriages, they are usually ridiculed or looked down on by others, and the audience can easily see that Lowell isn’t the male figure in his marriage. Lowell’s wife Madelaine made more money in the relationship and even though it didn’t seem to bother him; the reader can sense that it did. In the story it says that Madelaine even makes fun of Lowell because of this: “Madelaine was a real estate saleswoman and made far more money than Lowell did. Sometimes she joked with him about it” (431). It’s possible Lowell resented her for that. In the story Lowell talks about how he felt Madelaine might leave him because she didn’t need him like he needed her: “Some days, as he rode home on the bus, he felt dull and ineffectual, tired, and afraid Madelaine would leave him—and he couldn’t blame her for wanting to” (432). Then when Madelaine forgets her and Lowell’s anniversary it gave the audience the impression that she was not taking the marriage seriously. When Madelaine came home she told Lowell she was “sorry about the anniversary” (437) and Lowell responded “perfectly all right” (437). Lowell didn’t appear hurt by Madelaine’s forgetfulness. But forgetting a 7 year marriage anniversary is a big deal, and also could have angered Lowell, giving him a reason for killing Madelaine. The story also gives the reader the feeling that Lowell knew Madelaine was having an affair with her boss. When Lowell is looking for the little people on the couch he finds something.
In the story Lowell finds something that belongs to Madelaine’s boss “In the corner of the couch where the cushion had been lay a quarter and a dime, a paper match, and a cigar band--a band from the sort of cigars Madelaine’s boss smoked” (436). Lowell knew Madelaine’s boss was in their home, so this had to grow some suspicions in his mind of her cheating. All of these reasons could have led to Lowell being angry with Madelaine.

Lowell had many motives for wanting to kill Madelaine. Right before Madelaine is killed she and Lowell have a heated encounter. She tells Lowell that she has been having an affair with her boss and Lowell takes the news in an overly calm way that makes him seem like he has mental issues. Madelaine asks whether Lowell “you saw me kissing Bud outside just now” (438), and Lowell responds in a way that makes him see unconcerned: “yes. But I don’t imagined your ruined” (438). Lowell should have been more emotional towards hearing this devastating news; it gives the reader the impression that he can’t comprehend what his wife is saying because he has a mental illness.

Then when Madelaine tells Lowell she wants to marry Bud, Lowell shows signs that he wants to physically hurt Madelaine with the knife. Madelaine tells Lowell she loves Bud: “I love him, Lowell. I want to marry him. Do you have to drum on your palm with that knife?” (438). This shows signs that Lowell was thinking about using the knife to hurt Madelaine for her wanting to marry someone else. Madelaine tries to apologize to Lowell for hurting him “Lowell, I’m dreadfully sorry” (438). Once she says this, Lowell’s demeanor changes and he becomes more aggressive towards Madelaine. Lowell says to Madelaine, “Sorry for me? Nonsense! Whole new worlds have opened up for me” (438). Lowell begins to hug Madelaine and she starts to feel uncomfortable “She turned her head aside and tried to push him away gently. He hugged harder” (438). Very quickly after this Lowell and Madelaine’s relationship turned into physical abuse, at least for Madelaine. When Lowell is still trying to hug Madelaine she says to him “Lowell-no. Let’s stop it, Lowell. Lowell, your hurting me. Please!” (438). While still trying to get away from Lowell Madelaine says something that gives the impression that Lowell may have physically abused her in the past. She tells Lowell “I can’t stand it!” (438) this could potentially mean that Lowell may have hurt Madelaine in the past. If Lowell did hurt Madelaine in the past it adds to the suspicion that he has a mental illness.

The way Madelaine is killed it contributes to the feeling Lowell has a mental illness. When Madelaine is killed, the scene where the spaceship kills her could have easily been Lowell having a hallucination or seeing things in his mind. The way the spaceship killed Madelaine could have been Lowell’s physical actions. The first thing the spaceship did before it killed Madelaine was “The spaceship in Lowell’s hand hummed and grew hot” (438). This could have represented Lowell’s
emotions; they could have been growing hot at that point and time. Then the next thing the spaceship did was “It trembled and shot from his hand, under it’s own power, straight at Madelaine’s heart” (438). That last sentence could have been Lowell’s hand driving the knife into Madelaine’s heart. If Lowell did kill Madelaine and the little people were fake it says to the audience you can never really trust people. Lowell seemed like a nice, innocent man but if he truly killed Madelaine it means he was hiding a dark secret and shows you can never truly understand everything there is to know about a person.

Whether the reader chooses to pick the first or second choice in Kurt Vonnegut’s short story “The Nice Little People”, the story still does its job. The story makes the reader stop and think about their beliefs and what they mean to them. In some cases stories like this may even change a reader’s opinion on life or in literature. Stories like this open up a reader eyes to all the possibilities in the world. It forces you to come out of your box or mold and live. Try new things, learn new things and grow as a person.

Works Cited
I sat down to write an English paper one night and when I finished I had a hard time staying focused while rereading it. It was a paper filled with dull and boring words, nothing more. I kept trying to make it sound more like myself but I could feel that if I was wasn’t able to read it once without being bored, I couldn’t expect my teacher to read it without falling asleep. It was my own essay and I felt like I couldn’t relate to it. I decided to switch some sentences around and hand it in. Once I handed it in I realized that I wasn’t going to get a good grade because I can’t expect someone to read a paper that the writer isn’t even interested in.

Looking back on that paper, there are a lot of steps that I could have done to make the reader more interested. Michael Bérubé talks about how analyzing an argument has a more powerful effect than summarizing. Summarizing becomes repetitive and does not allow the reader to fully understand the writer’s argument. The writer isn’t going to read the paper if the writers themselves are not sure of what they’re writing about. Also, the reader will not continue to read the essay if there is no hook in the introduction or if the thesis does not have an impact on him. For example, when I’m reading a pamphlet and the information doesn’t grab my attention, I move on. The introduction and the thesis have to grab the reader’s attention the same way as a pamphlet, in order for the reader to make it through the entire essay. The introduction and the thesis work together because they are both the first impression of the essay to the reader. One writer who did an exceptional job in the format of his introduction is John Taylor Gatto, who brings in the reader by incorporating an anecdote. What makes Gatto’s anecdote successful is that it’s relatable to the reader who gets an understanding of Gatto’s style. The writer’s style in an essay is essential because it’s the connection between the reader and the writer. Every writer has his or her own way of dragging the reader in and keeping them interested throughout the whole essay. For example, Gatto and Bérubé could write about the same topic and even have the same idea but they’ll both express it in different
ways. Each writer has his own opinions and style, which reflects the way the reader forms his own opinions about the writer’s argument. A writer with no style will bore the reader and the reader will be forced to stop reading. Reading a boring and confusing essay is just as bad as eating ice cream quickly, it makes your head hurt. To avoid that, the writer has full responsibility of revealing his personal writing style and his argument in the introduction in order for the reader to stay focused. Good academic writing is about keeping the reader interested and having them being able to agree or disagree with the writer’s argument. The writer needs to start introducing their personal style in the introduction and thesis, in order for the reader to feel engaged about the argument presented in the thesis and the opinions formed through the analysis.

The introduction and the thesis are the most important part of the paper; they are the section where the reader learns the writer’s ideas and also the writer’s argument. In the first sentence the reader can tell whether the essay is going to be interesting or not. Gatto’s first sentence is written as, “I taught for thirty years in some of the worst schools in Manhattan, and in some of the best, and during that time I became an expert in boredom”(683). This first sentence is relatable to the reader and is also intriguing when he tells us how he became ‘an expert in boredom’. Now, as readers, we may ask ourselves “Where is he going with this?” and every now and then it’s good for readers to question the writer. From this quote we have a direction of the argument and also since the first sentence was interesting, we are eager to continue reading. Once the reader gets through the introduction, the thesis ensures us what we will be reading about. Only if the thesis is written correctly then the reader won’t be confused. For example if a gym teacher forgets to tell the kids that they are going to run a mile at the end of class, they will be awfully confused as to why they are running a mile. Just as if the writer’s thesis doesn’t incorporate one of the main points in the essay, then when the reader gets to that paragraph, they will be confused as to why the writer is adding that paragraph. The thesis has to mention everything that the writer will be talking about in the essay, but it also has to be specific and debatable. The reader has to feel as if he has a chance to argue against the writer’s opinions. Bérubé claims, “When I tell them that an observation is not a thesis, and that their thesis isn’t sufficiently specific or useful if they can’t imagine anyone plausibly disagreeing with it, they ask me why they can’t simply explain what happens in the novel” (303). Bérubé states a clear point that a thesis is not just a summary of the entire essay, instead it gives the opinions of the writer in a structured format. The thesis needs to be debatable and specific in order to guide the reader through the essay. The thesis is like having a tour guide on a bus, without him one would see everything as it comes, but one wouldn’t receive the factual and interesting information. Without a
thesis the reader will read each point as they go but he won’t be able to prepare his opinions because
the thesis isn’t there. The introduction and thesis are a first impression on the reader, which can
either excite or bore them throughout the rest of the essay.

Since the writer’s goal isn’t to bore the reader, it’s important to not bombard the reader with
information he already knows; instead the writer should share his opinions to the readers. For
example it’s boring enough to listen to the news once and if someone summarizes the whole episode
then it’s boring because there is no new information, but if he tells one his opinion about the
situation, then it opens up an opportunity for one to agree or disagree. That’s how analyzing will
help the reader, by allowing him to form counterarguments to the writer’s opinions. Summarizing
won’t help the reader’s argument because even if he doesn’t know how to start an essay he should
get straight to the point. Bérubé claims “It’s far better to start by giving us some idea of what you’ll
be arguing and why” (304). Bérubé is saying that it’s better to state an argument in the beginning
rather than summarize information that the reader already knows. Readers can’t grasp the writer’s
thoughts when each paragraph consists only of a few sentences of the writer giving their opinions,
while the rest of the paragraph is a summary. Summaries don’t help add on to an idea, instead as
Bérbué mentions, they serve as a distraction from the whole point, in the sense that the writer tells
the reader everything he already knows (304). The reader wants to know the writer’s point of view
which only happens when the writer analyzes the topic, then the reader will see the perspective of
the writer. For example I remember laughing about a quote that a writer once wrote in a story, but
I’m sure not every single person who read that quote laughed and that’s what its like to analyze. No
one else may laugh because they may have a different sense of humor than me, just they may have
different opinions than me. When writers analyze they express their opinions about the topic and
therefore allow the reader to enter their world where their thoughts roam around freely. This arises
debatable questions and arguments that the reader may form, which means that the writer did his
job in getting the reader actively engaged. Everyone knows what they read but not everyone has the
same views on the reading and for that reason, in the essays it is the writer’s job to make sure he
conveys his opinion throughout the essay.

Just as analyzing keeps the reader’s attention, being original and adding style to the essay can
also help the reader stay more focused. Gatto covers the topic of “boredom” in his essay, “They said
teachers didn’t seem to know much about their subjects and clearly weren’t interested in learning
more. And the kids were right: their teachers were every bit as bored as they were” (683). Gatto
refers to the classroom as being boring because the teachers do not know the lesson they’re teaching
or the teachers are just bored with what they’re teaching. Just as the teacher may not be interested in what they are teaching, writers may also come off as being bored with what they’re writing about. We’ve all come across those writings that have made us fall asleep and the result is that we weren’t connected with the writer, they didn’t do their part in reaching out to us. They also may not have a direct argument, which confuses the readers, just as the teachers may not know what they are teaching. If the writer is ranting on about the same point then it’s like a child running around in circles screaming the same word. Gatto’s sense of ‘boredom’ is connected to the same boredom that can occur in an essay when the writer isn’t interested in what they are writing about. Writers have the ability to incorporate their own style in their essays to grab the reader’s attention that separates them from the millions of other writers in the world. For example I remember this author who made me laugh about the way penguins walk, but I don’t remember every author that wrote something funny; this particular author is memorable out of all the authors that I’ve read. It’s the writers’ style that makes them memorable and makes me want to find more stories that they’ve written. Bérubé clearly states that it is important to be original in one’s essay, “Extra points for wit and style, points off for mind-numbing clichés, and permanent suspension for borrowing someone else’s argument without proper attribution”(304). Bérubé has a grading system in which he awards and deducts points for positive or negative aspects of the essay, and in this particular case he finds it significant for the essay to have the writer’s style present. Just as we all have different personalities that make us unique individuals, when a writer has “style” and “wit” it makes the reader more interested in what the writer has to say and remember their writing (304).

All these core aspects make up a well-written paper that serves one purpose: to make and keep the reader actively engaged. The writer is fully responsible for keeping the reader’s attention throughout the essay. The writer gets started by having an intriguing introduction and thesis, which is a way of getting the reader’s attention and showing them the style of the writer. The writer also stands forth with strong opinions and a strong argument; the writer must do this while being interesting and keeping the reader’s attention on the main topic. Many writers tend to ignore the reader and write boring essays, writers like those in high school. The essay I wrote in English class was boring and not engaging because I wasn’t thinking about how the reader would react to it, I just wrote an essay because I had to. They are not interested in the subject they have to write about but even so, they can make any essay interesting. After all, if the teacher is the reader and the students want a good grade, then why wouldn’t they try to keep the teacher engaged? It’s an odd way to
approach essays but they will soon see that no matter what kind of essay someone writes, the responsibility lies on the shoulder of the writer to keep it interesting for the reader.

Works Cited


Deborah Delianne

The Dangers of Conforming to Society

“Is it true that you sing benna in Sunday School?; always eat your food in such a way that it won’t turn someone else’s stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming; don’t sing benna in Sunday School; you mustn’t speak to wharf-rat boys, not even to give directions; don’t eat fruits on the street-flies will follow you; but I don’t sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school; this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a buttonhole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming” (Kincaid 926).

In the short story “Girl”, Jamaica Kincaid employed unique techniques that captivated the reader’s attention. She used simple punctuations including Italics and semicolons. The use of these punctuation and the repetition phrases emphasizes the overall tone of the controlling relationship between the mother and daughter, the contrast between the mother and daughter approach to their situation, and demonstrates the overall theme to which is how society can have an impact on an individual’s actions and can eventually have a negative effect on people in their surroundings.

Throughout the passage, the mother is very protective and controlling. In the beginning, she was rambling about the things a girl should do and wear in order to be considered proper and pure. However, through the use of semicolon, it is clear that the mother is actually over protective and impulsive. For example, as mentioned in the quotation above, “you mustn’t speak to wharf rat boys, or even to give directions; don’t eat fruits on the street- flies will follow you; but I don’t sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday School; this is how to sew on a button.” (Kincaid 926). As it can be seen the mother is overprotective and unsympathetic. The mother continues to ramble without considering her daughter’s response. It was as if
her daughter’s response was not valuable. Instead, she continues to ramble about her indications of having the appropriate image. The semicolon highlights the mother’s thought process which is evidently endless. She never takes a break or considers stopping to understand her daughter’s point of view. In addition to the semi colons, the author use of repetition emphasizes a few qualities of the mother’s character. As shown above, after every semicolon, the mother begins with “this is how”. The continuity of this phrase indicates that the mother is very commanding and manipulative. Therefore, the author’s use of the semicolon made it clear and obvious that the mother is both overprotective and inconsiderate, which is a tone the mother carries throughout the passage.

This tone not only indicated her poor qualities as an individual but also demonstrated the heavy contrast between the mother and the daughter’s approaches in their relationship. This contrast is highlighted through the use of italicized phrasing. In addition to the mother being manipulative and inconsiderate, she is also judgmental. As it can be seen in the text above, the mother automatically assumes that the daughter is a slut. She stated “on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are bent on becoming” (Kincaid 926). The mother doesn’t have any solid evidence that indicated the daughter being a “slut”. This up brings the question, is there a possibility that the daughter could be innocent and maybe the mother is exaggerating? The author’s use of italicized phrases indicates that the daughter is innocent, and accentuates how the mother falsely passes judgment on her guiltless daughter. As the daughter stated, “but I don’t sing benna on Sundays at all and never Sunday School” (Kincaid 926). Notice how the daughter doesn’t indicate that she isn’t a slut, but instead that she never sings benna. Nevertheless, the daughter may not even know what the definition of being a slut is. Overall, the use of the italicized phrasing helped the reader to indicate how the mother is dominant towards the daughter, who is innocent and defenseless.

The author’s use of semicolons, repetition, and italicized phrases helps the reader to indicate the overall tone and contrast between the mother and daughter. This technique also emphasizes the overall theme, which is to what extent society plays in one’s life? Through the use of these techniques the authors indicated that social standards had lead people like the mother to degrade girls based on stereotypical ideas. Society has a way to engage people to conform to its’ standards, rules, and ideas. If one does not conform, the individual will suffer from isolation, embarrassment and shame. This explains the mother’s manipulative behavior. She fears of her daughter being an abomination to her society. Yet the mother’s actions forbid the daughter to defend herself and explore autonomy, which characteristics required to survive in the real world. This point was evident to the reader by the technique the author employed. Moreover, the author’s use of punctuations emphasized how society can heavily impact someone’s life, their actions, and their views on
When doesn’t a person ever question his or her own writing, let alone someone else’s? After reading two texts, Michiko Kakutani’s “Word Police” and Michael Bérubé’s “Analyze, Don’t Summarize,” I have been able to explore the ideas I subconsciously think while either writing a paper of my own or reading a piece of material by another person. Writing has to be personal, free of generalities, and able to captivate one’s interests. Kakutani’s “Word Police” is quite representative of what I would consider “good” writing, while my essay actually reflects the main focus of Bérubé’s. I value my writing and the ideas other people convey through their writing with the use of figurative language and detail. The most important quality of “good” writing is an author’s style, and Kakutani and Bérubé clearly have their own individual types. It’s important for a writer to have a unique style because it’s just as critical as having a voice and personality that stands apart from others. When a person doesn’t express him or herself as an individual, people don’t find themselves intrigued by that person’s words because they’re not original. Good writing should usually involve creative analogies expressed in the forms of humor, engaging techniques, such as the use of thought-provoking questions, imagery and anecdotes, and straightforwardness.

When I began reading Kakutani’s “Word Police” I immediately thought back to my sophomore year in high school. We had been studying Maya Angelou’s life and writing, and I had decided to analyze her poem, “On the Pulse of Morning.” Reading the quoted bit of it in Kakutani’s introduction reminded me of the admiration I have for the poem and pulled me into Kakutani’s
essay. I was not sure what to expect of her essay, but once I had finished reading it, I felt I understood the reasoning behind Kakutani’s choice of writing style.

There’s a part in Kakutani’s essay that made me realize the tone in her writing is humorous. She explains how Rosalie Maggio, author of books on politically correctness, has written a dictionary that provides biased-free writing guidelines: “Whom are these guidelines for? Somehow one has a tough time picturing them replacing Fowler’s Modern English Usage in the classroom, or being adopted by the average man (sorry, individual) in the street” (711). This quotation can, of course, be interpreted in other ways than my own, but I get the impression that Kakutani is being sarcastic when she adds her little remark in parentheses. And although I find the way she goes about adding her remark humorous, I understand that she may feel the same way towards Ms. Maggio’s ideas as me. I feel like Maggio is the eavesdropper on a conversation on politically correctness, and in willingness to state her understanding of what politically correctness is, she gets a little carried away and starts to make no sense. Kakutani allows me to connect with her personality by integrating her sarcastic reactions into her writing. However, I will acknowledge that poking fun at Maggio throughout her whole essay may not be what keeps Kakutani’s argument as strong as she intends. Perhaps Kakutani believes that using her humor is what draws her readers into her argument in full; still, ending her humorous remarks on a single page would have done well enough to keep her readers interested. A writer has to keep in mind that humor should not be used extensively; readers do need to be able to understand the seriousness of the argument as well. Kakutani creates a balance between humor and seriousness by incorporating thought-provoking questions into her essay.

Questions are a great aspect of “good” academic writing. They make readers more involved in the reading and help the writer to express his or her ideas in a more considerate manner. Kakutani seems to invite her readers into her writing by interacting with them through questions that relate well to her viewpoint of the topic. She asks, “Will making such changes remove the prejudice in people’s minds,” and, “Can the avoidance of ‘violent expressions and metaphors’ like ‘kill two birds with one stone,’ ‘sock it to ’em’ or ‘kick an idea around’ actually promote a more harmonious world” (712). These questions are possibly meant to sound rhetorical, but depending upon individual thoughts, readers may arrive at many different conclusions. Some, like I myself, may respond, no. As the popular expression goes, “You can take the kid from the fight, but you can’t take the fight from the kid;” I believe, “You can take the bias from the words, but you can’t take the words from the bias.” People are always going to hold their own opinions and will always be of distinct personalities that have different perspectives on life. No change made to a word will make a person more
politically correct; the person will simply make the word seem more politically correct and continue on his or her way to be bias in other fields of expression. Now, others may think otherwise. Like Ms. Maggio, there may be people who are determined to change the ways of the world around them, starting with the common words and phrases used in the English language that may spark bias. And as this essay continues, I can’t stop myself from thinking about how I may be everything but what I believe Kakutani and Bérubé’s essays are: straightforward.

Making a point is, well, the whole point of an academic essay. And what is a point made if no one understands it once it’s been put across? I’ve got an answer for that question: it’s not a point at all. This is why being straightforward is a critical factor to “good” academic writing. Kakutani discloses: “Calling the homeless ‘the understood’ doesn’t give them a place to live; calling the poor ‘the economically marginalized’ doesn’t help them pay the bills. Rather, by playing down their plight, such language might even make it easier to shrug off the seriousness of their situation” (713). She makes it evident what she believes and conceives her point to be. There’s a section where Kakutani calls attention to the University of Missouri’s Multicultural Management Program pamphlet of “cautionary words and phrases” (713). When I read that the pamphlet suggested that words, such as “gorgeous” and “petite,” were not to be used to describe women, I found it ridiculous. I would personally find it more offensive for another person to avoid using a specific word to describe me, in hopes of not offending me, instead of using direct language. My opinion itself is a fine example for why it is important to be straightforward; misunderstandings are left to a minimum, and it can leave readers feeling much more positive about the argument at hand.

Because I was easily able to understand the analogies embodied into Bérubé’s essay, I felt much more interested in his argument and was hopeful about where it could lead. I do recognize that many readers, using my English class as an example, may not watch sports or sports talk shows, let alone understand their purposes, but I do, and that’s possibly why I had such an enjoyable time reading “Analyze, Don’t Summarize.”

A step away from the sports talk, however, is the introduction paragraph. The introduction serves as a preface to what Bérubé will make of his essay, without going too far into detail on his main point of discussion. I’m not going to say it includes a topic we can all relate to, but I do, and that’s possibly why I had such an enjoyable time reading “Analyze, Don’t Summarize.”

The first time a student asked me about my “grading system,” I was nonplused—and a bit intimidated. It was an innocent question, but I heard it as a challenge: I was a 25-year-old graduate student teaching my first section in an English-
literature class at the University of Virginia, and I really didn’t know what my grading system was. Nor did I feel comfortable saying, “Well, it’s like Justice Stewart’s definition of pornography, really—I simply know an A paper when I see one.” (302)

I can understand how it can be really difficult to determine what an acceptable grading system is as a teacher. It just seems like one of those things that when it comes down to it, teachers just know what grade the assignment deserves. For many individuals, though, grading is a crucial element to their academic well-being. The way Bérubé expresses this idea through a humorous personal anecdote really adds relevance to his writing and more interest to the reader.

Perhaps Bérubé’s style of humor is, in some way, like Kakutani’s and doesn’t quite fall through well with every reader. As Bérubé undoubtedly mentions, a “good” academic essay acquires, “Extra points for wit and style, points off for mind-numbing clichés, and permanent suspension for borrowing someone else’s argument without proper attribution” (304). I guess it can be said that his grading system still relates well to his own comment on the definition of pornography. So he may not base his grades off of Justice Stewart’s definition, but with more complex standards, Bérubé may agree that people yearn for something new and interesting, far from what they’ve seen (or heard) before, and something that is unique to the creator of the piece, not a remake of someone else’s work. I’m aware of this argument because of Bérubé’s simple and unvarnished writing style.

I can only hope I have kept my own argument uncomplicated. Compared to Kakutani and Bérubé’s ability to keep their readers’ interests through their creative usages of analogies and various other literary techniques a bit of pressure has surely been added to my own writing. This style of writing—to be detailed, thought provoking, to the point, and original—means so much to me. Perhaps if more writers used techniques such as these, there would be more students interested in reading academic essays. Too many times I have heard classmates complaining about how boring and uninterested they are in the assigned reading for class, and it’s a little discouraging because it isn’t the reader’s fault if the writer has not fully engaged his or her attention. I want to reveal what is necessary for a writer to employ within his or her essay, in order to increase the amount of motivation and readiness students feel when relating to and discussing their readings with others.

Works Cited
Bérubé, Michael. “Analyze, Don’t Summarize.” The Writer’s Presence. Eds. Donald McQuade and
Women are always looked upon as the weaker sex. Maybe because we openly express our emotions and if a man was to do it he would be looked at as weak and society has wrote that off as wrong. Men are supposed to provide, never be needy or show signs of weakness. But we are all humans. Despite the forms we show it in we all want love, attention and to be accepted as an individual. In these coming of age narratives “Where are you going, where have you been,” by Joyce Carol Oats, “A & P,” by John Updike and “Love is more than a word,” written by myself, each character portrays a need of attention. What is interesting is that the two female protagonists, Harmony and Connie show a completely different cry for attention than the male character Sammy. Both females yearn for the attention of their parents and there is more of an emotional burden that they are left with. But Sammy only sought out attention from three girls. This isn’t something that will have an affect on his future but the females are placed in life or death situations that surely give them both wake up calls. Each narrative makes me think about the question of “What form of attention was it that each character was searching for?” You can clearly see that when males are the protagonist of coming of age narratives the lessons are always less emotional than when females are the protagonists. Society has placed females into this weaker standpoint. This is greatly reflected into coming of age stories that authors tell when there are women protagonists versus male protagonists.

In my short story “Love is More Than a Word,” I created a coming of age story from the perspective of a growing teen girl named Harmony. For all of her 18 years she was forbidden to see any boys, go any places that weren’t safe, or do anything that didn’t involve school for that matter. Her father sheltered her and protected her from the world the most he could. This is common for females. Often parents feel as if they have to shelter their female children more than their male
children. Society doesn’t feel that females are fit enough to fend for themselves. This is represented all the way back in the early years when woman were considered “House wives.” They weren’t allowed to work or even dress the way they wanted to. Men where looked upon as inferior while woman were told they weren’t capable of working or doing anything besides raising kids and cleaning a home. This is even represented in children books and movies. Princesses are usually waiting for their Prince to come and protect them. Even in much more serious issues such as rape. It’s not exploited more if a man rapes another man, or a woman actually rapes a man because these things seem less likely and uncommon. I can even say I, myself am guilty of this. In the coming of age story I wrote my protagonist was a female and I made her be dominated by a man, her father and attackers. Falling victimized to societies beliefs I made him shelter and protect her.

Not seeing her father’s strict rules as protecting her, Harmony eventually got the courage to disobey him. She attended her first house party with her best friend who lived in the poorer part of New Jersey but attended her private school on a scholarship. At the party Harmony was drugged and ganged up on by a group of males. At least 4 men stood over her confused body, towering her, laughing and taunting at her weakness. This proves that men look down upon women. These men are taunting her as if she was an animal. The big picture that I didn’t realize is I never had the intention of portraying Harmony as this helpless girl. But Harmony being dominated by these men fully develops the core of her coming of age. She realizes her father wasn’t trying to shelter her. He is a man himself and all he wanted was to truly protect her, because he knows that there is men out there that will not protect women. As Harmony started to feel helpless she begin to wonder where her best friend was. At this very moment she calls out for her parents and silently prays that if God get’s her home safely she will never disobey her parents and do exactly what they say. This shows that the protagonist has learned her lesson and finally realized what her parents were trying to teach and protect her from. Her cry for help shows that she realized she cannot face the world alone and there is so much she even at 18 does not know. Laying there in a room full of strangers her realization that her parents were right reinforces the act that females cannot protect themselves on their own. This wasn’t the message I was trying to send to my readers at all actually. I never thought about the deeper meaning to it. It's a bad thing that often times many movies, short stories and books portray this message of woman not being strong enough to defend themselves from men. If I could change the message of my story I honestly would. We need more short stories that break the normal of society. Woman can in fact stand up for themselves and are not dominated or beneath men! In the end she tells her parents everything that happened, making her father stricter and for
sure sending her off to another private school instead of her dream school in New York. Harmony’s rebellion was derived from her want of attention from her parents. For all of her 18 years she did what they said, got all A’s in school and never disobeyed their rules. And where did this get her? They still worked more than they spent time with her. Harmony felt like maybe if she disobeyed them maybe they’d notice her then, maybe they’d take a break from work and see that their child needed them!

I based my short story off of the short story “Where are you going, where have you been,” by Joyce Carol Oats. The protagonist Connie is often criticized for not being like her older sister but she is portrayed as “loving the skin she’s in”. “Her name was Connie. She was fifteen an she had a quick nervous giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors” (930). Unlike Harmony Connie’s parents didn’t shelter her at all. Her mother often criticized her for not being like her sister. “Stop gawking yourself, who are you? You think you’re so pretty” (930). “Sometimes they went across the highway, ducking fast across the busy road, to a drive-in restaurant where older kids hung out” (931). Towards the end of the story a guy she saw at the shopping center she usually goes to shows up at her house telling her to come with him. You can tell that he is much older than her and probably intoxicated. “He stood there so stiffly relaxed, pretending to be relaxed, with one hand idly on the door handle as if he were keeping himself up that way and had no intentions of ever moving again” (936). Pulling up into her driveway he first tries to manipulate her with sweet words. “I took a special interest in you, such a pretty girl, and found out all about you like I know your parents and sister are gone, I know where and how long they’re going to be gone, and I know who you were with last night, and your best friend’s name is Betty. Right?” His soft approach implies that he feels as if he can out smart her. This further reinforces the fact that female are looked at as weak because he’s already wrote it off in his mind that he can say these things to her and she won’t be able to see that he’s lying. He doesn’t feel like she can use her brain to see from his appearance something is wrong. Getting impatient he begins to get angry with her and starts to threaten her family. He let her know the power he has telling her exactly where her parents are and that he has been watching her. Unlike Harmony’s scenario Connie wasn’t physically dominated at all. Mentally he is controlling her. “This is how it is, honey: you come out and we’ll drive away, have a nice ride. But if you don’t come out we’re gonna wait till your people come home and then they’re all going to get it” (940). Arnold Friend knew this was something that would get Connie’s attention. She didn’t want her family in harms way for something that she had caused. Connie’s coming of age evolved when she went with this stranger. This shows that she was taking responsibility for her actions and keeping her family
out of harms way. I’m sure she never wanted this to happen, but her lack of obedience towards her family came from her wanted to be accepted for Connie. Her being constantly reminded she was nothing like her big sister made Connie feel like a shadow. All she wanted was the attention she deserved from her parents that her sister received. Each female protagonist coming of age climax has an emotional toll on them I’m sure they will never forget.

Sammy in Updike “A & P” was different though. He didn’t care what anyone thought except for these 3 beautiful females that walked into his job. After they are disrespected by his boss Sammy quits his job in their defense. This was his way of looking like a hero to the females and getting there attention. Sammy didn’t think about any long terms affects of, what would my parents say? Will they be disappointed in me? How would this look to my future employers? Even though Sammy made a statement for himself and it shows him being able to take responsibility, nothing is tied to him emotionally. “… my stomach kind of fell as I felt how hard the world was going to be to me hereafter.” (972). So yes Sammy learned the lesson this is something he will surely get over. However him now being in the predicament of not having a job will not be a permanent thing for him.

The females experiences in their coming of age narratives is much more traumatic than Sammy’s; both females were taken advantage of by males in each short story but they didn’t allow them to completely take power of their life. Harmony stepping up and telling her parents what happened to her was her taking her power back; this wasn’t something she was going to keep inside and allow to destroy her.

Even though the strength of the female protagonist is hidden and they are portrayed as weak, if you look into the under layer of each narrative it took true strength and courage for both of them to do what they did in the end. Connie could have lost her life dealing with this complete stranger that surely could have killed her she decided to fight back. In the end I don’t think her defeat comes from her being weak it actually shows her growth. Her family treated her horribly but in the end it was there safety she was most concerned with. This was her standing up for them and taking up her responsibility. Harmony will always remember that night. The first night she ever went out being tormented and embarrassed. But she won’t remember it and be scarred it actually is what will shape her into becoming a women. This isn’t the message the text is actually trying to convey be as I reader and this was the message I took away from it for empowerment.

Society has surely constructed the way many stories and characters are portrayed. From these coming of age stories you can tell that men are not given much emotion with the role that they play.
This doesn’t affect the overall story because their growth is still gained. Both of the female protagonists are embraced with these life or death emotional events that they too also learned and matured from but it’s something they will always remember in their hearts. Even after writing my paper, I didn’t realize I was writing in the way of society. Now that I think about it my paper more than likely would have been shaped with less emotion if I had chosen to write about a male. Hopefully soon the society few of literature, television and life is reversed. So that females are portrayed so emotional and males are portrayed so emotionless. All humans have feelings regardless of their gender.
What is good academic writing? This question does not have a simple answer. Is good writing a skill that comes with every individual or is it something that requires instruction? When one reads an essay or a book one likes it or hates it; if it grabs one’s attention, is written in an understandable way or is interesting, one will stick with it. We have read many essays in class to show us different writing styles, three authors that have caught my attention the most have been Michael Bérubé, John Gatto and Michiko Kakutani. These three essays have grabbed my attention because I have been able to relate to them right away. Good writing is when the author can grab and keep the reader’s attention using relatable stories and showing emotion.

When I am able to relate to something I show interest in reading it right then and there and I won’t stop reading until I finish it, Gatto does a good job when it comes to connecting with the reader. Gatto starts off in his classroom having a discussion with his students about boredom, and then describes the teachers in the teachers’ lounge complaining about their students. What I like about Gatto’s writing is that he gets to his point right away; in the first paragraph we find out what his purpose is, and how he feels about his statements. Gatto finishes his paragraph by saying, “They said teachers didn’t seem to know much about their subjects and clearly weren’t interested in learning more. And these kids were right: their teachers were every bit as bored as they were” (683). This is a disappointing statement because teachers should want to teach; as a student I can always tell what teacher cares and which one does not. If the teacher has passion for what he or she teaches it makes me want to learn and care about the class in order for me to succeed in it. Even throughout the essay, I as the reader wanted to keep reading, the way he spoke about public schools made me rethink everything I knew. Gatto always found a negative to the situation, for example on page 687 he states that the purpose of public school education is for the kids to fail. Gatto supports his statement by showing us the six purposes on why Inglis agrees that the system is for students to fail. The six purposes are very important in this essay; they give even more support to Gatto’s writing. What the steps say, is that most students are meant to fail. I disagree with these steps because many students have challenges in their lives but they are able to succeed. I think the challenge we go through is the motivation in our lives to prove that a school system is not enough to destroy our future.
The first words in Bérubé’s introduction to grab my attention are “grading system”, it is something I am familiar with, I always wonder as student how my teachers will grade me and if the class is going to be a challenge depending on how lenient or strict the teacher is. I was able to relate Bérubé’s essay but my attention was not captured throughout his writing. In Bérubé’s introduction he tells us his personal experience about when he first became a teacher and why he started thinking about what his certain system should be. I lost interest towards his essay, “Analyze, Don’t Summarize” when he started to use examples about sports; the examples are very clear throughout his work but I am not a sports fan so I had no idea what the show Around the Horn was. After, Bérubé explained how the show works I can see where his point was coming from. For example he wants his students to analyze their papers, and to not waste their time summarizing. His grading system will be based off the show; when ever they say something wrong he will take off points. I feel that although he explains what he wants to talk about it is not the same if I were a person who would actually watch the show. I do not watch this show therefore what he is speaking about does not grab my attention. I am unable to make any connections or take any interest in what he is trying to prove.

If we compare the two writers, I think Gatto and Bérubé both say what they have to say without adding words they do not need. These authors have different writing styles; Bérubé is not as angry when it comes to Gatto, maybe it has to do on their topics. Gatto is proving a point and does not care whether or not he insults anyone in the process. When Gatto writes he makes sure to tell the reader whom he is directing his opinions toward. I feel like this is an important factor of keeping the reader interested because it allows the reader to feel the emotion the writer is trying to express, in Gatto’s case it is anger. For example on page 685 Gatto compares schools as a prison and wonders “what exactly is the purpose of our public schools”, he shows all these emotions because he is looking for someone to blame. He himself was screwed over by the public school system when he returned to teach after his medical leave, Gatto felt betrayed because the school had destroyed all evidence that he was on a medical leave, which led him to getting fired. This is another example he uses to show us how the school systems are meant for people to fail not just the students but the teachers as well. All this information Gatto shares with us is important because he wants the reader to be in his shoes and see exactly what he is trying to say. As the reader I want to know these small details in order to have situations in my own life that I can share with the author. It is important to find interest in good academic writing because if we truly like what we are reading we feel emotion. With emotion we can do a lot more than if we did
not care; If we care about what we are reading, sometimes it is something we want to change therefore we can take a stand and make a difference. In the reading Gatto wants the public school systems to change, Gatto needs someone to blame but he does not aim his anger towards his students or the teachers; this is why throughout his entire essay he shows us the different emotions he is feeling and directs them to the public education.

Bérubé is a passive writer, he does not have any negative experiences towards his topic, he is just trying to figure out the kind of teacher he should be and how he will be grading his students. I believe the anger that Gatto shows in his writing proves that he has a lot more passion for what he writes. The anger grabs my attention more than the passive writing style; I feel like Bérubé has his own opinions but does not show as much emotion.

As I read the essay “Against School” many different emotions (Ager, disappointment) went through my head, why? Because I was a student of public education and all this information Gatto is giving me grabs my attention immediately. Gatto shows these emotions he wants the reader to also feel them because he wants the reader to step into his shoes and see his perspective of the situation. In order to succeed, teachers need to learn the right teaching skills to promote the proper education to students, “we could encourage the best qualities of youthfulness - curiosity, adventure, resilience, the capacity for surprising insight”(Gatto684). This sentence is proving to us that students are capable to be students the ones that desire to learn and go to school; the only problem is that the school system is formed so that some students fail and others pass. Until public schools change their system students are going to have to beat all the odds that are against them, making a future career with the education they receive.

Discrimination is something seen a lot around the world in some countries more than others, I think that Kakutani holds a strong message within her essay. I think the author does a great job with her introduction paragraph.

“This month’s inaugural festivities, with their celebration, in Maya Angelous’s words, of “humankind” – “the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew/ The African, the Native American, the Sioux, / The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek/ The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheik, / The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher, / The privileged, the homeless, the Teacher”- constituted a kind of official embrace of multiculturalism and a new politics of inclusion. (Kakutani 710)

The reason why I think she does such a great job with her introduction paragraph is because she uses a quote to address all types of people with different religions, ethnicities and social statuses.
She wants to be able to grab everyone’s attention; she does not want to discriminate like most authors do. As the reader this quote caught my attention right away and it made me want to keep reading. Because this quote address so many people it shows the author does care who she is addressing her essay to and how se presents her ideas. If we keep reading her essay that first sentence ties in perfectly with the message because according to the author there are many words we use that lower the persons power. For example, the words “king” “lord” “master” are words meant to give men power, they are words that are used in our society to show high class, or to be considered “our leaders” (Kakutani 711). We need to become a country that brings equality to everyone but this is something that is going to need time to change. We supposedly live in a place that brings equality to all but in reality this is not true in the work place we see it all the time, sometimes if it’s a “mans” job they will hire men over women or they will discriminate on their race or religion. You must be wondering on how all this ties in with my main message? It is quite simple I think that because her examples come with so much questioning and thinking as the reader, it captures my attention at the beginning of the essay and keeps until the end of the essay.

Without good academic writing, our English language would not be where it is today. As readers we must learn how to relate to the authors in order to take interest in what they are writing about. If we find something to connect to from the reading we are able to get through the reading faster, with a better understanding. Good academic writing can mean different things to other people, but if we are not interested in what we read why do we care about what the author has to say?

Works cited
In both Jamaica Kincaid’s “Girl,” and Rick Moody’s “Boys,” we see how members of both genders are initiated into the adult world. The transfiguration from innocent children to experienced and time-tested adults is a difficult change. Yet, as taxing a process as it may be, it can flash by in the blink of an eye. Instead of simply telling the reader that the switch from childhood to adulthood is a rapid change, Kincaid and Moody both show us how quick a transition it can be by writing their respective pieces in a stream of consciousness format. Instead of abiding by conventional writing techniques, Kincaid and Moody minimalize their usage of paragraphs, dialogue, and proper sentence structure. The results of this writing style are narratives that step away from the classic omniscient narrator. These stories command interest by leaving out miniscule and major details which leaves the reader to fill in the blanks him/herself. Stream of consciousness is meant to transmit the workings of the human mind onto text by drawing the reader in emotionally. The stream of consciousness narrative utilized by both authors highlights the change and confusion that the young characters are forced to deal with as they trudge through the trials of life.

In “Girl,” the reader experiences first-hand a series of orders that a protective mother barks at her innocent daughter. The mother orders her daughter how to act so she can appease the desires of others, and she repeatedly warns her daughter against being a so called “slut.” With accusatory statements such as “is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school” and “prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming,” Kincaid victimizes the girl and turns the mother into a villain. (Kincaid 507) By having the mother’s demands make up a vast majority of the story, Kincaid makes the reader feel bombarded by the orders. This leads to the reader feeling victimized and attacked alongside the little girl. Kincaid also plays with the idea of standard punctuation, namely by taking periods out of the story. The void left by the absence of periods is gapped with a multitude of semicolons. The semicolons link the lengthy list of demands together, making them appear to be one very long order instead of separate lessons. Fragments such as “this is how you sweep a whole house, this is how you sweep a yard, this is how you smile to someone you don’t like too much; this is how you smile to someone you like completely; this is how you set a table for tea,” Kincaid overloads the reader with multiple ideas all at once. With no full stops, the
reader goes through the story faster, which emphasizes the idea of how quickly the little girl's innocence is being ripped from her. Going from learning how to “cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil” (Kincaid 507) to learning how to “make a good medicine to throw away a child even before it becomes a child” (Kincaid 508) represents a drastic leap in responsibility for the girl. The fact that these two lessons appear in the same paragraph, uninterrupted by any interjection by the girl, takes us by surprise, the same way the girl is surprised by her new responsibilities as an adult. While the mother may just be trying to protect her daughter, from the little girl’s perspective, her mother is berating and scolding her for actions that she is not guilty of committing. “But I don’t sign benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday School” and “but what if the baker won’t let me feel the bread” are two phrases that underscore the girl's desire to hang onto her innocence. (Kincaid 507) They incite sympathy and sorrow for the girl and her plight. These two lines are the only utterances by the girl in the whole story. She says both of them as rebuttals to her mother’s unfounded accusations, but her mother ignores her and continues her tirades both times. The stream of consciousness writing drives this emotional investment that the reader makes as they read the story. Kincaid makes the reader sympathize with the girl through her failure to convince her irrational mother that she is guilty of no wrongdoing. It’s fair to say the the mother is not inherently evil; She is looking out for her daughter, but is going about it the right way. The themes of arguing with parents, feeling overwhelmed by life and public perception are concepts that everyone can relate with, and the stream of consciousness effectively relates these themes to the reader.

Similarly to Kincaid, Rick Moody uses ambiguous descriptions to draw in and involve the reader. In “Boys”, we see the evolution of two twins from the day they are born to the day their father dies. Moody paints the picture for us as to how the boys grow up being carbon copies of one another, but with unexpected tragedies falling upon their family, they being to detach from each other emotionally. When the boys reach the stage of adulthood, they become dangerously close to getting into physical altercations and cannot stand to be in the same room as one another. When “[their mother] explains the seriousness of their sister’s difficulty, her diagnosis.” (Moody 242) we can see how the emotionally shattered boys turn to drugs and sex as distractions from the pain they feel after their sister dies. The reader sees the boys evolve from going to Sunday school together to violently arguing over politics and finances. By the time “one boy threatens to beat the living shit out of the other,” it is obvious that their relationship is not what it once used to be. (Moody 243) The stream of consciousness style displays how quickly the relationship between the two boys deteriorates. Moody deliberately leaves out key details, introduces major plot points abruptly and
nonchalantly. By writing, “Boys enter the house, embarrassed, silent, anguished, keening, afflicted, angry, woeful, griefstricken,” Moody shows us that the boys are going through tough times, but purposefully refuses to tell us what exactly is causing this roller coaster of emotions. (Moody 243) Telling the story in this third person limited style allows the reader to learn about the characters while leaving the right amount of ambiguity. With this tactic, Moody takes the whirlwind of emotions surrounding the boys’ lives and transfers them to the reader. Moody depicts the rapid unraveling of the boys’ lives without breaking the action. The cancer, drugs, girls, arguments, and the collapse of their father “happens so fast” according to the narrator, and the stream of consciousness style portrays the randomness and confusion that the boys dealt with as they matured. (Moody 245) After depicting the downward spiral of the relationship between the twins, Moody hints at some sort of reconciliation without disclosing the details. “Each of them… [misses] the other, each is devoted and each callous, and each plays his part on the telephone, over the course of months. Boys enter the house with fishing gear, according to prearranged date and time,” it is implied that the boys are beginning to resurrect their friendship. (Moody 245) Yet as soon as the reader is given a chance to realize this recent development, Moody shocks them with the episode of the “boys rush[ing] into the house leading EMTs to the couch in the living room where the body lies.” (Moody 245) The unforeseen collapse of the father surprises the reader as much as the twins. Just as things seem to be getting better in the story and the lives’ of the boys, Moody drops a bomb on the reader. Such use of heavy, poignant feelings, coupled with vague and unexpected storytelling makes “Boys” feel less like a narrative, and more like a personal experience.

It would have been simpler, easier, and more practical for Kincaid and Moody to drop obvious symbols alluding to the difficulties of growing up, or for them to pen more stable, organized stories. But the style of the two stories makes it that much more real and relatable. The obscure writing forces the reader to fill in the blanks, thus inevitably incorporating one’s own emotions into the text. The repetitive demands of life in “Girl” and the pressure to adhere to society’s demands are themes that everyone can identify with. The staggering sets of developments in “Boys,” as well as the deteriorating relationships over time are concepts that personally register with every reader. Both authors use the stream of consciousness to add layers of relatability, disorientation, and realism to the text. We join the characters on their tumultuous journey from children to adults, feeling every emotion they feel along the way.

Works Cited
When we hear names such as William Shakespeare, Jane Austen and Zora Neale Hurston immediately we think of the great works of literature created by these authors. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is particularly special because it is a story that is relatable. His writing might have been addressed to life in the sixteen hundreds but it is a timeless story of young love, betrayal and heartbreak. When I think of Shakespeare I immediately think of good writing which is defined in different ways. It can be interpreted as something easy to understand, something with proper word choice and structure, something that holds a deeper meaning or something well supported. Political writer George Orwell argues what makes good academic writing in his essay “Politics and the English Language.” He explains how modern writers are butchering our language and modeling terrible examples of what ought to be good writing. Exemplary writing should grab the reader's attention within the first few sentences and maintain his focus throughout the entire piece. Much of today's writing is influenced by the means of media distribution such as the World Wide Web. We are able to receive information at a faster pace and due to that, the way we absorb and reproduce news has also sped up. The Internet and text messaging has allowed today's writers to become lazy. Watered down language and inaccurate websites have made room for this laziness to spread. Neither the internet nor texting demands a correct and formal way of writing, which allows authors to become relaxed in their forms of writing.

Academic writing can be lengthy and tedious, causing student writers to lose interest in their assignments. Twenty years ago a college student would spend hours pouring over piles of books searching for support for homework. Today many students can do a search within minutes and barely break a sweat. The problem with the easiness of the world wide web is that it allows students to become lazy. If research now is considered spending twenty minutes in front of a laptop and maybe a half hour to type out what was just read into a written paper then that is not actual work; it is just repetition. Our minds are getting used to working faster. As Nicholas Carr noted in his article, “Is Google Making Us Stupid”, he easily loses his concentration: “I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do. I feel as if I'm dragging my wayward brain back to the text.
The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle” (Carr 1). The reason why gathering information off the web is so quick is because many websites such as Wikipedia simply do a basic summary of the topic. Allowing readers to take in information much faster because it is only a broad overview, not detailed enough to be considered too long. If Orwell was around during this time he would criticize websites like Wikipedia. Information found on such websites is commonly not reliable. Writers that replicate and distribute incorrect information are lying to the rest of the world. A serious problem because of the power the media of writing has as sharing information.

Our language and writing have not changed but the technologies available have changed writers. Not every writer has been affected but the accessibility to sources has made writing easier. Nicholas Carr explained in his article, “The web has been a Godsend to me as a writer. Research that once required days in the stacks or periodical rooms of libraries can now be done in minutes. A few Google searches, some quick clicks on hyperlinks, and I’ve got the telltale fact or pithy quote I was after” (Carr 2). If a professional writer can freely gloat about the blessings of the internet then we can conclude that it is not the media that does the damages in the writing today, rather the people who are doing the writing. If one comes across a horrible work of literature, can one really blame the generation as a whole or the internet? No, because the one at fault is the idle writer who did not care to give his words enough thought before publishing them. Automatically the expectations and the high standards for good writing are minimized. It is impossible to judge what is good when there are no examples available for comparison. The author’s laziness in his work ethic is what gives writing today a bad name.

A major setback that can be found in writing is grammatical errors, common in text-messaging. Texting has made it easier to constantly be in contact with others. Because there is not much space to write a full conversation people have found ways to use shorthand contractions that take up less space and are more convenient when writing a full conversation in a text. Text message has become its own language, “along with letter-number homophones (“gr8” and “2moro,” for example), emoticons (like the tiresome colon-and-parenthesis smiley face) and acronyms (like the ubiquitous “lol,” for “laughing out loud”)” (McGrath 473), anything is allowed in texting. These written mistakes are not the simple “than” used in place of “then”, instead these are such profound grammatical errors that irritate professionals. English professor at Columbia University, Eleanor Johnson, comments that, “text messaging has made students believe that it’s far more acceptable than it actually is to just make screamingly atrocious spelling and grammatical errors” (Abram 1). How is it possible that the elite in college students are the ones writing the worst? Perhaps the
achievement bar has been set lower. As Johnson explains, there are rules that must be followed when it comes to formal writing. Professors must push their students and insist on the importance of good academic writing. Orwell made a clear point when he said, “.the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take necessary trouble” (Orwell 510). Texting is a tool created for the population to enjoy, if it is impacting the culture's writing it is not because of the texting itself but the people who use this media. If the author is lazy, his negligence will without a doubt be reflected in his work.

Rules exist to set guidelines of what if acceptable. Just like most things in life, academic writers have a list of rules to follow. Not to restrain their writing abilities or talents but to improve their work. In his essay Orwell pointed out six main rules that he believes must be observed in formal writing. They are as follows; “Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print, never use a long word where a short one will do, always cut a word out if possible, never use a passive when you can be active, never use a foreign phrase, scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent and break any of the rules sooner rather than say anything outright barbarous” (Orwell 519-520). I agree with Orwell, our language is not collapsing. The language is, however, being dumbed down. It is as if college students need to be handed a “How to for Dummys” book every time they are assigned an essay. They are incapable of researching and writing essays completely by themselves. Professors feel the need to hand ready made research along with the prompt question just to get the students motivated. Clearly the ones who need fixing are the lazy writers who even with so much help keep showing signs of carelessness in their writing.

Orwell's first rule stands out the most to me as a writer. How many countless times have students such as myself used a redundant metaphor on an English paper? Sometimes even in everyday speech we use metaphors and phrases that we don't even know the true meaning of. An example from Orwell was the hammer and the anvil, “...now always used with the implication that the anvil gets the worst of it. In real life it is always the anvil that breaks the hammer, never the other way about: A writer who stopped to think about what he was saying would be aware of this, and would avoid perverting the original phrase” (Orwell 512). Orwell is trying to advise writers to stay away from metaphors and old sayings unless you really know the meaning tagged to them. Authors ought to give their sentences and paragraphs more thought. That way they would realize that taking shortcuts and using ready-made language is not always the brightest idea. Is our generation really so
lazy that thinking up new sayings and incorporating imagery is too much work? Do not insist on using worn out language from someone else's work. Writers paint the picture for the reader using fresh, new words.

English is a very rich language with many of its root words derived from a number of different languages. Orwell makes a point when he explains that it is not necessary to use foreign phrases when you can speak plain English, “...there is no real need for any of foreign phrases now current in English. Bad writers, and specifically scientific, political and sociological writers, are nearly always ones, haunted by notion that Latin or Greek words are grander than Saxon ones” (Orwell 513). A balance would be ideal. Writers don't need overly-complicated sentence that leaves the reader guessing the overall meaning to the string of words, but then again formal writing would be boring and repetitive if there were only elementary words in an essay. It is important that writers look for the meaning of each specific word they use. Writers cannot be lazy and throw in a word that sounds fancier but does not equal what they intended to say.

Good writing depends greatly on how clear and to the point the argument is. The goal is to be concise. Show the reader what he needs to know is straight forward sentences. Orwell writes that, “A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four question, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?.” (Orwell 516). If an author is truly interested in his topic and cares enough to spend extra time looking over his words, trying to make it sound better, then he is an excellent writer. Like Orwell said, “if it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out” (Orwell 519). A dis-interested writer would ignore this piece of advice, believing that the more words the better. After all he is just trying to fulfill the demand of the assignment; an essay of five to six pages.

There are millions of sources literally at the tips of our fingers. Computers, Ipads, cell phones and other various touch screen gadgets allow us to have any question easily answered in a matter of seconds. We are at a time where everything is about speed. Faster cars, phones and internet services get people used to quick and easy. Some would say that it is the Internet's fault. Can a media as useful as the internet really be the cause of the down fall in today's writing? As Erin Jansen, founder of Netlingo says, “.. the new technology has not fundamentally changed existing language but added immensely to the vocabulary” (Abram 1). A smart writer uses the internet to improve his writing. Google, Bing and Yahoo are just three of many search engines that can bring
information from anywhere around the world. Writers do not have to travel to China to learn about the Great Wall of China; Google offers the smallest details about the world wonder on a silver platter with pictures included. Unfortunately, writers who are getting used to the easiness that the Internet provides are losing the thoughtfulness and patience it used to take to acquire such information through timely research. Writers want what is easiest and fastest now. Writing today has been dumbed down and authors are not putting much effort into their literary works. Children’s books are ridiculously easy to read, hardly challenging the mind. Also, often time’s children are given punishments that require writing. This could be the reason why a college student would see a ten page paper as torture. The point is that writers today are lazy. Not because of the internet or text-messaging but, because people are not being challenged.

Work Cited
Angel Marrero

A Link to the Past

Ever since I was born, I was raised in apartment buildings. My mother never could have afforded a fancy house or anything close to that so the apartment had to do. My mother is a hard working woman till this day; but never really had a chance to either relax or save money for a house. The community on the other hand was a very interesting experience to obtain. The apartments I lived in were split into four apartments for one yellow house. There would be around twenty to thirty of these houses around the whole place. So with this big area there would be lots of people and activities. We would do everything and anything we wanted. For example, we played kickball to dodge ball tournaments, played lots and lots of video games, throw fire crackers at each other for the fourth of July, and even make igloos in the winter. The community was great and there was always something to do. I remember one time we had a big party in the center of our apartments and that didn’t stop until 3:00 am. What wasn’t there to do? We had from moon bounces to rock climbing, and the food? Don’t get me started. There were just an unlimited supply of food and the food was just fantastic. Not only had the huge parties made it interesting. The people made it even better. I remember when I met my first best friend. At first we didn’t seem to like each other hence the first fight I have ever been but after that we became really close and till this day I talk to him about anything. His name is Omar Ruiz. The day after we fought, we talked and then we were fascinated with playing WWE action figures. I remember one day he slept over my house and we played with the action figures from 5:00 pm to 11:00 pm. We also played video games for hours as well. We were just there for each other even though he is 3 years older. We had our ups and downs and till this day we talk about our exciting adventures from; playing video games, to have imaginary adventures in the woods. While a community has its ups, it also has its downs. I remember the day
Omar’s parents planned on moving away. We said our goodbyes but it wasn’t a goodbye at all. It was more of a see you later. We saw each other every weekend after that. We also were prepared for the future and what was going to be ahead for us. We both learned from each other’s mistakes and learned how to move on even when not being around, and to tell our wonderful story. In the community I lived in was a great experience to live on to the future and to know what I am expecting for the later years. Now Omar and I talk every day, just to see how everything is going. Last month we went out to eat at Chilies just for the heck of it. I ordered the chipotle chicken crispers and he ordered the full rack of baby back rips. As we were eating, I mentioned to him that my girlfriend is pregnant and he didn’t suspect it, but in the end he realized that he will be here to support me on any occasion. The trust that we brought to each other first came from the community that was built from where we were raised. There were also times that Omar needed my help. I remember the day that Omar need a big favor from me. That favor was to help him with a crush that he liked, I helped him and they actually started dating, he was very thankful and till this day they are still couple. I believe that if I wasn’t raise in an excellent community, then I would not have met a great friend like him. When I had good friends like Omar, there are some people I wished I never met and am glad I will probably never see ever again. There was a kid by the name of Brian, and let me tell you he was a disgusting person. Going into exact detail will probably make you consider this kid in need of some therapy, but I was glad when he moved to a different state. In a sense there were people who could have been inseparable but that were not the case. Out of all the friends I have obtained throughout my childhood, I was inseparable to five of them. The community was a great one and I will truly miss it. I would not have asked for another community although it had its ups and downs.

When you read a story or narrative, there would always be a place behind it. It wouldn’t make any sense if the story had no place. The point of a story is for the reader to understand what is happening and where it is happening. However, a place doesn’t always need a story behind it. For example, if someone asks me about a certain place, if I know what the place is about then I would end up describing the place not tell a story about that place. In the stories “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and “What it Means to Say Phoenix Arizona” show great examples of place in a story. Also in the Movie “Big Fish” It shows really brings the difference between place and story to a whole new level. In Sherman Alexies story, he mentions the change of people’s culture and how some cultures are not meant to be. However, in Flanner O’Connor’s article she explains how anything can happen at any given time and how things can be unexpected at times. The movie Big Fish shows how what
people say about stories can be either true or true with a little twist on the actual place and the
people in these certain places. The purpose of a place is to visually know what it is and how it looks
like. Meanwhile, the purpose of a story is to see what happened in this place. Generally a place is
needed when narrating a story and a story is not always needed in a certain place. Place and story
rely on each other and give people opinions and different meanings on certain beliefs on stereotypes
and cultures.

In my narrative, I explain where I grew up from and some stories I generate from the place I
was born in, which was in the apartments. The stories generated from the place I lived in. For
example, the community that was built where I grew up brought stories. For example, the story of
my best friend Omar and how if it wasn’t the community, I would not have met a very nice friend
like him. Communities can really tie stories in great depending on how the community is and where
it was located. Also it can change on how people think about communities. For example, when
people think about apartments, they tend to think about the ghetto and how poor people live there.
Also people believe that in apartments or the ghetto, there is the start of violence. However, when
reading my narrative, people can now believe that living in apartments is not all a bad thing either.
The narrative supports that. In my narrative I mention best friends. Omar is my best friend and I
know for sure that he will always be there for me even when it gets really tough. That’s what best
friends are there for. When society thinks of a best friend, they believe a best friend is someone who
will be there whenever you need them, and I believe that in my narrative when I mention Omar.
Not only when reading a narrative makes the reader believe in difference, but also thinking that
there beliefs are the same as well.

In Sherman Alexie’s short story “What it Means to Say Phoenix Arizona”, she describes the
differences of culture in society. In the story Victor is a Native American who doesn’t live the
Native American lifestyle. When society hears the word Native American they usually think of
people who live in a secluded society or a reservation, and usually do things natural, like make up
stories rituals and customs and the occasional Pow-Wows. After reading this story I have a change
of mind. Natives are not within their culture anymore there more like Americans. The only one who
is just like a Native American in the story is Thomas Builds a Fire. He is a story teller and most of
the times it’s for a future reference. The narrator states, “Thomas Builds-the-Fire walked through
the corridors of the tribal school by himself. Nobody wanted to be anywhere near him because of all
those stories. Story after story” (Alexie 917). The narrator in the story explains how from all the
stories that Thomas tells; the more and more the Native Americans dislike him. This proves that
how Natives dislike Thomas because of the stories that he says and how more Native he is. Since they dislike Thomas, they dislike being Native and like to become less of their culture. My beliefs of Native Americans changed after reading this story by showing how Native Americans are not a part of their own culture.

Sherman Alexie also talks about the change in people throughout a story. She mentions how Victor had a change of heart after taking Thomas to see his dead father and cremate him. At first Victor was a selfish person towards Thomas. Sherman Alexie mentions how Victor used to be good friends with Thomas but later on, Victor ignores him and beats him up very badly. However, going close to the end, Victor changes heart and gives Thomas half of his father’s ashes. For example, the trip with Thomas meant very much to Victor and I believe that around the end he gives half of his ashes to Thomas to show respect and thanks for going with him and giving him the money to go on the trip to Phoenix. Alexie states, “Victor was ashamed of himself. Whatever happened to the tribal ties, the sense of community? The only real thing he shared with anybody was a bottle of broken dreams. He owed Thomas something anything.” (918). This shows that Victor has a change of heart. He thought of him community and how he didn’t really give anything to it. Victor believes that he should do something about it. When I read this it made me think about even the most selfish people can change throughout anything.

Instead of talking about reservations, Flannery O’Connor gives us a new look of on a different culture. In this case it would be about the southern culture. In “A Good Man is Hard to Find” the culture changes from the perspective of the grandmother. When people think of the south even back around segregation they would think whites to be dominate and how whites were racist among other race.

““In my time,” said the grandmother, folding her thin veined fingers, “children were more respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else. People did right then. Oh look at the cute little pick-aninny!” she said pointing to a Negro child standing at the door of a shack. “Wouldn’t that make a picture, now?” she asked and they all turned and looked at the little Negro out of the back window.” (O’Connor 945)

This quote proves how the grandmother can become a tad bit of a racist She calls the kid a pickaninny which is an offensive word to describe a black child. She also tells her family more racist things about that black kid. When I thought that racism was far gone by now, this just changed my beliefs in that there are still lots of people in the south are racists.
Besides the grandmother being a racist, she also changes throughout the story. She encounters a death like situation. She wanted to think of Jesus because of what is going to happen with her and her family. "Pray, pray" the grandmother began, "Pray, Pray..." (O'Connor 957). O'Connor tries to prove how the grandmother is relying on Jesus to save the day. When read this I chuckled because when I see movies about religion, it usually revolves more toward African Americans. This also made me think about if whites do really go to church. I also never had a white friend of mine say that he prays at night and goes to church on Sundays. This changed my aspect of people and what they believe in. Another thing Flannery O'Connor does is changes people’s beliefs on trip or adventures. Family trips are supposed to be fun and exciting, but this one was not. The grandmother wanted everyone to see a house with a panel that had valuables in it; however they were at the wrong state. The grandmother was confused in which state she was which resolves into the car doing two flips and almost injuring everyone. After that happens everything falls down from there, especially when the Misfit and his buddies come and kill everyone. When I read that I was thinking to myself how now this can happen to anybody and basically to watch my family and I from and stupid mistakes and from anything in general. This can happen to anybody and its crucial but in the end it changed my belief on road trips.

Not only in the short story changed my mind also this scholarly article by Lucy Ferriss, found a change in my beliefs on the short story “A Good Man is Hard to Find”. Ferriss explains how this story is based on the grandmother’s point of view. Wait, isn’t this a third person story? It is a third person story because of the words they use in the story. However, this story proclaims the journey of the grandmother and about her past and present. This story proclaims mostly towards the grandmother and how she used to talk about the old days; and how she was confused about where she is; also how she met the Misfit and how she encountered a discussion with him; and of course being killed at the end. As I was reading this this also changed a way of reading stories. Not only because a story is in third person, that it can be based on a first person’s point of view about their life.

The movie “Big Fish” really brings a whole new level in how people beliefs in stereotypes. The point of adding a twist in a story makes you believe if people are telling the truth or a lie. For example Ed bloom always told stories about his son Will and how he was born. Ed tells everyone the story how he catches a big fish and gets the ring that’s inside of the fish in order to marry his wife and how it was magically the day when his son was born. Going further in the movie Will realizes that is was a myth and then always believed that his father’s stories were unreal. When Ed
dies towards the end of the movie, Will finally realizes that most of his stories were true, but with a little twist added. After seeing the movie it made me realize how if what people say is true and reliable. Not only reading stories make peoples beliefs change but also in movies.

Not only in *Big Fish* shows the difference between how people react towards others stories, has it also showed different ways of places throughout the stories that were told in the movie. Ed Bloom talks to Wills Wife about his past. He explains how he met his love of his life. The journey was quite strange in a way that Ed encounters a mystery perfect town in the woods called Spectre. In Spectre, there were people who seemed perfect. Spectre is a town that was very bright, had white houses, and it had happy people. As I was watching this, I thought to myself if this can be possible. I wonder if there is a place like Spectre in the world. Like my brother always told me “anything is possible”, and my beliefs changed after watching this movie.

When reading the stories and watching the movie, I realized that my beliefs changed. The stories made me think about if this can be true. I mentioned that in “A Good Man is Hard to Find” My beliefs in people’s way of thinking can change. The fact that the grandmother was a racist and then rely on Jesus to save her and how anything can happen on road trips made me think differently. I always went on trips or vacations and nothing like that has ever happened to me and from now on I will be more aware when I am on a vacation. In “What it Means to Say Phoenix Arizona” it made me think about how Native Americans change from being in a Native culture, to being more like us Americans and how their culture is meaningless. In Big Fish, the way of thinking if people say lies and truth changed my opinion on it. Now I believe that people probably are telling more of a truth than a lie. Even from the slightest detail in any story or movie can change anyone’s beliefs on a place or a stereotype.

Since these two stories and the movie changed my beliefs about some sort of stereotypes, there are people who wouldn’t think that is true. Some people would believe that since a story is just a story, the ways of place will stay the same. A friend of mine believed that after reading Alexie’s story, that Native Americans will always live the Native style. This is not true. Even know that one of our astronauts is Native American can change the thinking of how Native Americans live. My friend did not know the fact that John Bennett Herrington is Native American and an astronaut; change his belief that Sherman Alexie’s story is true. This relates to the movie *Big Fish*. The point of how some stories can be true ties in well with this.

In conclusion, when reading a narratives or short stories think about what can happen in result of change. The ways that these stories changed my beliefs or stereotypes or culture, can
become helpful in the later years. I explained also that the movie *Big Fish* changes the way people think about if anyone is actually telling the truth or not. I encourage anyone, next time when reading a story or when watching a movie, to think about how this can change your beliefs in stereotypes or even the culture that it is taking place.

Work Cited


*Big Fish*. Dir. Tim Burton. Perf. Ewan McGregor and Billy Crudup. 2003. DVD.


Can you imagine growing up without your parents? I can. I lived a parentless childhood. I was born in Peru where my grandparents were my caregivers. My biological parents came to the United States when I was about six months old for a better job opportunity and in hopes of someday offering me a better lifestyle. On April 26, 2002 I arrived to the United States and met my parents at the age of eight. Unfortunately as time went on, conflicts arose as I lived my childhood years with my parents and they ended up separating. I was about 11 years old, aware of my parents’ situation, and could remember every fight, every loud discussion, and every night my parents would cry in despair. After they separated, at age 11 I went to live with my uncle from my father’s side of the family. I felt I lived my childhood years alone because of the many conflicts between my parents. It was a pain no child should ever endure. Although I’ve been through unfortunate circumstances, I was able to become the mature and strong person I am today. Being an independent child for most of my life made me mature because I did not rely on my parents; correspondingly, I became independent and learned how to deal with any trouble with which I was presented. I have lived with my relatives that surrounded me with love and care but not the appropriate guidance parents would provide. The role of parents is irreplaceable because their teachings act as a foundation towards child development. Accordingly, John Updike’s “A & P” greatly demonstrates the maturity a teenager develops without
parents being present. In accordance, Sherman Alexie’s “What It Means To Say Phoenix, Arizona” shows how the absence of parent doesn’t prevent primary character from maturing. Contributing to both texts, the movie Glitter is another example of how a parentless young girl develops maturity. I stand upon the belief that an individual does not need parents to develop maturity. Maturing without parents helps an individual become aware of whom they are as a person and develop an experienced conscious in order to confront future situations. Certainly, in most cases parents are present in an individual’s life but this is not always the case. Often, the absence of parents makes the individual think more on their own. I am my own example that maturity is possible without the presence of parents.

The absence of parents is sometimes inevitable. An example of this is when Victor lost his father in a tragic car accident. In the beginning, Victor felt like he was alone because after hearing about his fathers’ passing, he did not have the means to travel back to Phoenix, Arizona. At the end of Alexie’s “What It Means To Say Phoenix, Arizona” Victor proves that he matured after his father’s death. As he stated, “‘Wait,’ Thomas yelled suddenly from his porch. ‘I just got to ask one favor.’ Victor stopped the pickup, leaned out the window, and shouted back. ‘What do you want?’ ‘Just one time when I’m telling a story somewhere, why don’t you stop and listen?’ Thomas asked. ‘Just once?’ ‘Just once’” (918). In this quote, the author demonstrates how Victor matures through his childhood friend, Thomas, and learns to appreciate his friendship and generosity. After many years, Thomas, appears and is willing to help Victor get to Phoenix, Arizona to scatter his father’s ashes. This appreciation led Victor to develop an awareness of valuing people for who they are. Moreover, the author shows how Victor matures through the experience of realizing his generosity from someone he didn’t consider a friend. The fact that Victor agrees to listen to Thomas once shows that he is willing to make the first step to change. Although, maturity doesn’t always develop at the end like in Victor’s case it may occur at any given time.

Alexie’s example of peer impact on Victor shows that other people can contribute to one’s maturity as opposed to parents. In the scholarly article, “Interpersonal Conflict During Adolescence” the authors, Brett Laursen and W. Andrew Collins, expand this further through their psychological perspective “Social relational and cognitive-developmental perspectives predict that age-mates, especially close peers, will compromise more than parents” (Laursen & Collins 4). The authors’ point of view in this phrase states the great influence close peers can cause in individuals rather than parents. In Alexie’s “What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona” the main character Victor learned to appreciate Thomas’ friendship because in despite of the pain Victor caused Thomas,
Thomas remained faithful. Therefore, Thomas is considered the close peer that influenced Victor to mature as an individual.

During my childhood years I remember always needing the love and advice from my parents. When I most needed them, they weren't there. These were the challenging moments in which I developed an inner self-consciousness of becoming independent. Likewise, in Alexie's "What It Means To Say Phoenix, Arizona" Victor is faced with a difficulty

[V]ictor’s mother was just as poor as he was, and the rest of this family didn’t have any use at all for him. So Victor called the Tribal Council. ‘Listen,’ Victor said. ‘My father just died. I need some money to get to Phoenix to make arrangements. ‘Now, Victor, we do have some money available for the proper return of tribal members’ bodies. But I don’t think we have enough to bring your father all the way back from Phoenix... It was a fair trade, and that was all Victor had ever wanted from this whole life. (909-918)

In the first quote, the author describes how Victor doesn’t receive the help that he needs and as a result he learns to appreciate his friend, Thomas, for caring to help him. Thus, after experiencing rejection Victor realizes his need to rely on independence. The fair trade mentioned referred to Victor’s desire to be helped after being rejected from the opportunity to bring his father back from Phoenix. Additionally, during parents’ absence one relies on oneself and one’s friends for guidance, support and personal growth. This reliance guides to becoming an independent person like Billie, the main character in the movie Glitter.

Parents always want the best for their child but what happens when parents have the need to abandon their child for help themselves? There are many existing cases in which parents have difficulty in offering their child a stable standard way of living. In accordance to this, Glitter is a movie that portraits a parentless young girl named Billie. Billie’s mother leaves her at an orphanage when she was 9 years old because her mother was an alcoholic. Billie was aware of her mother's alcoholic problem, but could not understand why her mother was abandoning her because above all she just wanted to be with her mother, like any child would. She eventually grows up and learns to be independent. Billie’s independence led to self-reflection enabling her to identify right from wrong. As a result, she was able to make decisions throughout her life. Billie’s experience with challenges and difficult situations throughout her adolescence life helped shape her maturity as an adult. As opposed to having her parents’ present, Billie’s maturity would have developed much quicker. Resultantly, the development of maturity without parents is certainly much harder but it is
not impossible. Surely, many could argue it is not the way it should be, but it is reality. For example, since birth, I was handed over to my grandparents in Peru, where I had a sense of structure and stability in life. When I came to the United States to live with my parents, it was a dramatic shift from having structure and stability to having none. This dramatic shift made it very difficult for me to make my own decisions, which would affect me later on in life. Like Billie, maturity is something that was achieved over time. Nevertheless, maturity doesn’t always have to grow through the confrontation of challenging situations but also through coping mechanisms.

Coping mechanisms are ways to deal with one’s struggles. From personal experience, I have had many coping mechanisms. For example, my coping mechanism to deal with my parentless adolescence was through journal writing. Journal writing is a significant coping mechanism for me because this helps me freely express myself without anything or anyone interfering. Coping mechanisms can be of great impact towards maturity because they can aid in obtaining a different perspective in life. At times, coping mechanisms may enhance experiences by surrounding influences such as family, friend or even strangers. In my case, journal writing is not exposed to outside influences because it’s more personal as opposed to in Thomas’ storytelling, which is more publicly exposed:

Thomas closed his eyes and this story came to him: We are all given one thing by which our lives are measured, one determination. Mine are the stories which can change or not change the world. It doesn’t matter which as long as I continue to tell the stories. My father, he died on Okinawa in World War II…My mother, she died giving birth to me, died while I was still inside her. I have no brothers or sisters. I have only my stories which came to me before I even had the words to speak. I learned a thousand stories before I took my first thousand steps. They are all I have.

It’s all I can do. (Alexie 917)

Thomas has great exposure to the external world through his story telling gaining all kinds of knowledge guiding to full growth. In the last three lines, Thomas explains how he has no family as well as his need to keep telling stories because it is all he can do. Accordingly, a reader can interpret how Thomas, being parentless, uses the coping mechanism of telling stories to not only motivate the people around him but mature as new experiences shape him throughout his life. New experiences are always advantageous, but in Thomas’ case they have a significant meaning because this allowed Thomas to grow mentally and emotionally.
Throughout parentless times, self-reflection becomes a very important component of beginning to develop maturity because this helps an individual to gain a deeper understanding of themselves within difficult situations. Self-reflection is significant in conflict settings because this understanding of identity begins to engulf an individual’s conscious to the point of making them critically think and learn new experiences. Similarly, in Updike’s “A & P” the main character, Sammy, reflects in a supermarket, “I could feel in the silence everybody getting nervous, most of all Lengel, who as me, ‘Sammy, have you rung up their purchase?’ I thought and said ‘No’ but it wasn’t about that I was thinking” (971). Sammy does not agree with the way his manager points out girls’ appearances and realizes how hurtful and unnecessary judgments can be. When the author writes “‘No’ but it wasn’t about that I was thinking”’, Sammy realizes how mean Lengel’s comments are and decides to quit, which is revealed later in the text. Ultimately, Sammy’s awareness blinds his immaturity and shapes his new perspectives. Furthermore, one of the advantages of maturing is the preparation it gives you to face challenges.

Overcoming challenges enables an individual to become prepared to resist future challenges. Likewise, the scholarly article, “Interpersonal Conflict During Adolescence” expresses, “[M]aturity brings greater skills in managing conflict so as to avoid negative outcomes” (Laursen & Collins 8). Once again, the scholarly article does not include whether or not the presence of parents are necessary but this correlates back with Updike’s “A & P” because Sammy goes through the trouble of overcoming the challenge of defying his manager at work making the decision to quit. In his parents’ absence, Sammy is able to overcome this challenge and become aware of the unfair situation he lived by critically thinking for himself. Overcoming barriers provides Sammy with strength to defeat any future challenges. In accordance with this, prior to maturing an individual may face many obstacles. These barriers cause individuals to critically think and reason out ways to resolve conflicts.

As mentioned before, maturity involves critical decision making. During my pre adolescence years, I had a great deal of decisions to make throughout my life, whether I was at school or home. During the initial phase of making a decision, I did not know how decisions could change my life. Updike’s “A & P” presents a crucial moment for Sammy and the huge turn it took on his life, “‘Did you say something Sammy?’ ‘I said I quit.’ ‘I thought you did.’ ‘You didn’t have to embarrass them’” (971). Sammy made a huge decision by quitting his job and the most important part is that he became aware of the judgmental world and stood up for the girls that were treated unfairly. Sammy voluntarily made this decision aware of the consequences; hence this shows the level of maturity he
came to obtain in order to make this vital decision. For example in my case, decision making at school, home or outside was difficult because of being parentless. However, making decisions allowed maturity to start because this was a form of understanding future consequences in advance. The development of maturity without parents is also tied to obtaining a broad outlook on life.

Vitally, maturity takes on a whole new level of perspectives. Throughout my parentless life, I have come to learn that as new perspectives develop, personal change advances with determination. This is because when a different perspective is developed, a new level of understanding is reached, which is crucial in one’s life. It is crucial because this helps one to be open-minded to other ideas. Updike’s “A & P” expresses the whole new level of perspective Sammy takes on and how this may impact his life from now on,

and the door heaves itself open, and outside the sunshine is skating around on the asphalt.

Looking back in the big windows, over the bags of peat moss and aluminum lawn furniture stacked on the pavement, I could see Lengel in my place in the slot, checking the sheep through. His face was dark gray and his back stiff, as if he’d just had an injection of iron, and my stomach kind of fell as I felt how hard the world was going to be to me hereafter. (972)

The first part of the quote is described as a new beginning in Sammy’s life because now that he quit his job, something new would be awaiting for him. In the last sentence Updike purposely used the words “fell” and “hard” to inform readers how Sammy was feeling at that very moment.

Sammy wondered how he will be treated in the future and how harsh the world would treat him from now on after witnessing the girls’ unfair treatment. Sammy has parents, but throughout the growth of maturity his parents were not present enabling him to take action and realize on his own.

Sammy’s perspective about the present world completely changed after becoming aware of existing biased treatments. Updike cleverly challenges readers to critically think about Sammy’s life anticipations. For example, readers can think about what causes a person to make a decision?

The situation where the conflict happens is of great impact towards achieving maturity development because it enables individuals to critically think about a certain situation and be faced to make decisions. Accordingly, Laursen and Collins interprets this as, “We examine the pervasiveness of conflict in social relationships and its implications for individuals within various models of adolescent development” (Laursen & Collins 1). I agree with this article about the social conflicts between people enables individuals to develop in various ways but I believe these conflicts regarding social relationships without parents prepares an individual to make decisions distinguishing right from wrong. Though the scholarly article does not mention the involvement of
parents, in John Updike’s “A & P”, the protagonist Sammy, goes through a conflict setting in which he notices that three girls are treated unfairly. As a result, he faces the challenge of making a decision which enables him to progress into a mature person replacing his immaturity with new ways of viewing life. During adolescent years, the awareness of valuing people such as family and friends may emphasize the need to mature in order to learn the importance of value.

A parentless child like me experiences challenges, pressures and moments in which it may seem one cannot go on but above all these barriers there is an advantage. It is precisely these barriers that encourage individuals to expand thinking and become aware of meaningful lessons that one faces every day. Throughout my life, I have come to value the smallest of details and realized how maturity can change one on different levels. These different levels involve different perspectives formed according to experiences such as Sammy’s or Victor’s. Both experiences changed their lives for the better thus, experiences shaped their new perspectives. Becoming independent and reflecting upon ourselves takes rigor (because of lack in guidance and support from parents) but these are important components in change. On the other hand, decision making also contributes greatly towards personal growth because certain decisions can change an individuals’ life for the better or for worse; as in Sammy’s situation, where he feels an upsetting hunch about the future. When parents are not present, coping mechanisms can also help to approach maturity. For example, journal writing helps me to mature to a certain extent but I am not at a great advantage as Thomas is because as he tells his stories he gains learning experiences contributing to adulthood. Above all, I represent myself as an example for being able to grow through my experiences and barriers. Throughout this growth, I was able to motivate myself to move forward and continually mature without my parents by my side.

Works Cited
This past Spring I was selected to participate in the prestigious Bank of America Student Leadership Summit, a program that acknowledges leaders who are commendable young people interested in improving their communities. It consisted of a seven week summer internship at the Carver Center of Norwalk, as well as a week-long leadership summit in Washington, D.C. with 230 other student leaders from throughout the country. It so happened that I had prior familiarity with the non-profit organization; it is nearly 15 feet from my home. So close that when I looked out the window I could see everyone playing basketball, football, soccer, and more. I grew up within this large community athletic center. I had played AAU basketball and participated in many youth activities as a child there. The Carver Center’s dome top roof and outside basketball courts sparked competition on a daily basis. This organization had recently experienced renovation, so everything was new. The outside basketball courts had glass backboards and freshly painted lines. I would see youth the age of 5 to 18 engaging in highly competitive sports from sun up to sun down but rarely would see them working on their school summer assignments. The sun continuously beamed on the Carver throughout the day and approximately 7:30 at night the street lights were set to turn on. The surrounding grass was green and full, perfect for games of football, soccer, and ultimate Frisbee. One could smell the grass from a mile away. The swings would fluctuate back and forth by push and by wind while toddlers nearby inside of the jungle gyms were constantly getting hurt. The atmosphere was great and still is; everyone is happy and enjoying themselves. Most importantly the weather matches its personality, sunny and blissful. When I walked into the gym, the lights were bright and if one was not engaging in a game of indoor basketball then it was best to wear a sweater because the air conditioner was always at its highest. This location played a primary part in influencing my leadership role at the Carver. I was able to use the joyous atmosphere and the location’s resources to impact my experience as well as the students’.

During my internship at the Carver Center I learned the true meaning of volunteerism. My time was busy with five and six year old children. I had to plan field trips, daily activities, and most of all time for academics. Through my dedication and commitment to improve my community I took the initiative (with permission) to change the usual schedule from solely playing sports, music, and field trips to having more than three hours of academic work each morning. We started the day
off with reading for an hour, then mathematics and history for an hour each as well. I taught kids how to write and spell their names while helping others improve their reading skills. I felt that the only way to help the kids improve and change their perceptions of their future was to educate them with the opportunities that they have around them. The Carver was not only equipped with a rather large athletic facility but a second level full of classes, that we used for these academics. At first there were some kids who were rebellious and did not want to be there for “school”. They would constantly fall asleep. Soon I pondered on the possibilities of why some would do this every day. Was it because I was boring? Partially yes, but then one day I had an epiphany. It was because the classroom environment was too cold; they felt as if they were home. Eventually I would have the air conditioner cut lower and the percentage of kids participating in educational activities began to increase, and soon all the kids were motivated to learn. They looked forward to going to camp not only for the sports but for the ability to expand their knowledge. Toward the end of camp I asked the children the same question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Many of the students who had said they wanted to be an athlete or musician were now saying they wanted to be a teacher, lawyer, or doctor. One child had said “I want to be the president and a teacher like you Isaiah.” For some reason he had thought I was president which made me proud.

It made me feel as if I did my job as a mentor and most of all as a leader in my community. I helped give the kids the tools for self-confidence. When they had more self-confidence they set higher standards for themselves and they looked beyond their own little “worlds.” The children weren’t the only ones who learned something about themselves; I learned something about myself as well. I learned that I am good at working with younger children and that I love to help develop the future leaders of tomorrow. As author Wes Moore said, “We are not products of the environment, but products of our expectations” (“Lecture”).

The Home Court Advantage

In this essay I will analyze why being familiar with a location, properly utilizing its resources, and building on constructive criticism are important to “home court advantage.” When the phrase home court advantage is mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is sports. While participating in athletics, teams are known to build momentum and go on scoring streaks that make their opponents nervous. To make things worse for the opponent, if the team that has the momentum going for them is on their home court then they will have a greater support system. This support system is typically known as a fan base. When a home team goes on a run the fans become extremely loud and create very obnoxious noises. In result the road team becomes rather anxious
which leads to a great amount of mistakes. At the same time, the home team feeds off of the crowd’s enthusiasm and the opponent’s anxiety. Home court advantage offers more than what meets the eye; the team is familiar with the surrounding area and the ends and out of their court. Those who absorb and properly use the resources of a familiar location develop a psychological inspiration and motivation. I will utilize the movie *Big Fish*, the stories “A&P” by John Updike and “A Good Man is Hard” to Find by Flannery O’Connor, the scholarly source “Resistance on Isle Three” by J. Stearns, and my personal narrative to further explain the importance of “home court advantage”.

The notion of “home court advantage” is important to maximizing one’s opportunity within a familiar location. Metaphorically, my experience at the Carver Center is identical to this idea. I had already experienced the wonderful sight years before actually becoming an employee there and was accustomed to the facility, the staff, and the youth. Hence, this justifies the reason why my work ethics were so highly influenced; I did not want to let anyone down, I took this as an opportunity to prove my maturity level and to become an adult. Once I was hired, I was able to reacquaint myself with the program simply because I had been a summer camper when I was child. Now that I was working for them under Bank of America it felt completely different; I had to take on an adult and administrator perspective and responsibility. Waking up every morning to look out the window to see the Carver Center’s surroundings was great. It had seemed strange that I had become a part of administration and was a summer counselor at the Carver Center. At first I almost felt like a kid all over again because I remembered being in the shoes of the kids a few years prior. This association of home allowed me to feel comfortable but not too at ease because I knew I had a job to accomplish. That job was to inspire the kids which in return inspired me. I had used the advice that Wes Moore had given me which was, “We are not products of the environment, but products of our expectations” (Lecture). My familiarity with the organization allowed me to display my talents, which in return inspired the director to give me a part time job once the summer camp ended. In this example we see that “home court advantage” involves being prepared, with all of the head starts I had I was able to maximize my positive experience at the Carver Center. As we all know, in order to be prepared one will need resources.

Resources are a significant part of succeeding within a location. In the movie *Big Fish* the main protagonist Edward Bloom used his money and contacts to help rebuild the town of Spectre. He was able to renovate each and every building. If he had not had the money or contacts to help rebuild the town then it was likely that all the people would have left. In return of his favor people
respected him and he was labeled as a superman. Another example is when he goes out of his way to prove his love for Sandra. He says, “You don't know me, but my name is Edward Bloom and I love you. I've spent the last three years working to find out who you are. I've been shot and stabbed and trampled a few times— I broke my ribs twice— but it's all been worth it to see you here, now, and to finally get to talk to you because I'm destined to marry you. I knew it the first moment I saw you at the circus and I know it now more than ever” (Big Fish). He is able to prove his love at first with a bouquet of daffodils. Yet, she is not completely persuaded so he goes above and beyond. He has her name written in the sky, a garden of flowers planted in front of her door, and interrupts her class. In this example we see that location is positively influenced by the use of resources. If he had not used these resources, then it would be likely that she would not have fallen in love with him like she did. He gave her a taste of all the finer things that her previous boyfriend did not offer. The use of the movie’s resources allowed for a great and uplifting narrative that Edward Bloom’s father continuously yearned for. On a “home court advantage” perspective Edward Bloom was more prepared than Don Price; he had done all of the things listed above and most of all did what Sandra told him to do, which was not to fight her ex-fiancé back. In other words he was prepared not to fight back. Metaphorically, he had “won” the game when Don suffered a heart attack on the toilet. The end result was that Edward was characterized as a heroic person. In order to be a heroic person you must research about others and yourself.

It is important to research so that you have prior knowledge and can answer the questions you ponder upon within/ of a familiar locality. On a “home court advantage” perspective it is crucial to research and study your opponent. This not only gives you an advantage but shows that you are prepared. Athletes tend to watch games of other players so that they can observe their enemies style of play, strengths, and weaknesses. In thinking about the students’ distraction within my narrative, I wrote “They would constantly fall asleep. Soon I pondered on the possibilities of why some would do this every day. Was it because I was boring?” (Mohammed 1). If I were to compare myself to Edward bloom, I can say that I did research as well. He researched everything about Sandra, he knew her likes and dislikes, most of all he was able to use this research as an advantage over her fiancé. In my very own experience, I had to think in order to have an epiphany. I was so familiar with the school environment that I was able to discover the “distraction” amongst the young student athletes. I took an approach that most would not; I put my feet within the students’ shoes and acknowledged the endless possibilities of boredom and sleepiness. I had attended a high school that was freezing and along with others experienced drowsiness during class. It was as simple as that,
I concluded that the glacial air-conditioned rooms nearly altered the “working environment”. On the “home court advantage” idea, athletes are inclined to work on their weaknesses. In my scenario I was motivated; I placed my efforts into improving the students and I “weakness”, which was easily dealt with by turning the air-conditioner down. The short story “A Good Man is Hard to Find” is an example of not using the ability to research as an advantage. The author states, “the horrible thought she had had before the accident was the house she had remembered so vividly was not in Georgia but in Tennessee” (O’Connor 953). The grandmother at first describes a plantation that she had visited when she was a child; She becomes rather specific in which influences Bailey whom is driving to visit this place. On the way there she causes him to get into an accident within the woods. In result led to the mishap with the misfit. Although she had left the familiarity of her home and entered a new environment she should have known where she was. Her getting lost does not exempt her from being responsible for her own actions. If from the very beginning she had forgotten the exact location of the plantation then she should have researched where it was or chose not to look for it. In situations such as this utilizing the advice of others would have been useful. The driver offered constructive criticism and advised her not to pursue the search for the house but she chose otherwise.

The means of using constructive criticism is essential to capitalizing success within an accustomed location. Athletes are known to have bad stints even on their home court; in order to get over this hump they use the constructive criticism of their coaches and teammates to help encourage themselves. At times the words that are shared to an athlete are harsh, but if he or she uses these words to improve their strategy and game then it is likely that the player will recover mentally. Using this correctly shows one’s decision making skills. The shorty story “A&P” displays the idea of not utilizing constructive criticism properly within “home court advantage”. The author states, “Lengel sighs and begins to look very patient and old and gray. He’s been a friend of my parents for years. ‘Sammy, you don’t want to do this to your Mom and Dad,’ he tells me. It’s true, I don’t. But it seems to me that once you begin a gesture it’s fatal not to go through with it” (John Updike 971). While being in a business environment, the two characters become rather personal. In this passage we see that Lengel is telling Sammy that if he quits both of his parents will be disappointed in him. Lengel gives Sammy constructive criticism in which will better him in the long run. He doesn’t say anything offensive or brutal but Sammy on the other hand chooses to take this in a negative way and quits his job. Now that we know that he is jobless, moneyless, and has a handful of pride, we can conclude Sammy’s decision making skills as well. He decides to take the
three girls side as if he has known them longer than his family and co-workers, which is truly a poor
decision. Accusing Lengel for embarrassing the three girls was his way of defending his bad choice.
We see that in everyday retail people are being embarrassed whether it is the cashier or customer, so
what makes this situation different? Unfortunately, he is an example of poor decision making and
the lengths in which men will go for women and pride. If he decided to take the constructive
criticism from Lengel then he would still have a steady income, his parents would not be upset with
him, and the opportunity to look at the future beautiful customers that walk through the store. It is a
shame that all he left with was his ego, and the idea of doing something heroic. Taking a look at the
scholarly source we see that it as well depicts resistance within a location and the physiological
affects it has on the mind. The authors states, “He depicts this act as not only his standing up to a
petty and puritanical authority figure, but as a romantic and heroic act in the girls’ defense. He
storms out of the store, hoping they’ll stop and watch . . . their unsuspected hero” (Sandlin, Burdick
395). There are many reasons in which Sammy quit. It could have been because he was inspired by
the “sexual arousal” that the girls caused him mentally or the rebellious behavior that was influenced
when he had seen the girls’ apparel within the grocery store, and even possibly his desire to be
accepted by his surrounding peers. We will never know the exact reason but an idea of it. These
authors stress that it is important to exhaust all possibilities of a fictions plot. It will allow one to
access analytical ideas and go beyond the border.

It is essential to exhaust the possibilities of “home court advantage”. We have seen that there
are numerous ways in which we do this. Metaphorically, “home court advantage” is the idea of
utilizing resources, research, and constructive criticism to improve our success within a familiar
locality. The help of the movie Big Fish, the stories “A&P” by John Updike and “A Good Man is
Hard” to Find by Flannery O’Connor, the scholarly source “Resistance on Isle Three” by J. Stearns,
and my personal narrative have explain the importance of “home court advantage”. Most
importantly the process of reaching inspiration and motivation. The meaning behind “home court
advantage” is to set for a great narrative, whether it is good or bad. These literatures have depicted a
location and scenery.
Work Cited


Food, the Irony, and Distraction

I

Food, food, food, an essential subconscious topic that affects everyone, regardless of whom you are and where you are from, it lingers within the most primal parts of the brain since development. Why you may be asking? It ties into four of the eight important life functions in physiology of human life and any living organism. Those include nutrition, growth, transportation (internal transportation), and synthesis, the break down, buildup, and energy from the nutrients in food that turns into ATP (adenosine triphosphate). It’s one of the prime life functions that dictate what is considered “alive.” In simple terms, it’s the gas for our body to keep us running. Many people believe that food is a simple subject, I’m sure we all should know what food is; we have eaten it and known it from birth to death. It is genetically programed into our genes and brains when we were first born; we immediately cross reference the source of nutrients and energy to be our mother’s breast milk. What makes food complicated is the other affects it has that we either do not notice, or do not know that it is affect us in such a way. What you don’t know is that food could be harmful to our focus and concentration, while at the same time it can benefit our focus and concentration. This is where the contradiction comes in that makes food so sophisticated yet so simple. Even though it is a known fact that food does good for our body and brains, it’s even known certain vitamins in foods like fruits boasts the ability to improve our focus and concentration by helping the brain itself. The subject of matter is not a certain food itself, but rather food as a whole is a distraction. It is double edged; it is so integrated into our functions that without knowing, we prioritize it over other things subconsciously while we, ourselves, are unaware that our actions may have been altered. It affects us mentally and our physical actions. It might as well be considered one of the greatest natural distractions for humans.
The desire for food is an essential focus for our brains subconsciously. Our brains will alter our actions psychologically and physically to obtain food. Physical signs could happen when we are able to sight food and or smell the fumes. Our body would already begin our involuntary mastication actions, the process of chewing and consumption. Starting with the salivary glands, they would begin to secrete amylase, an enzyme commonly found in saliva, to prepare the internal parts of our mouth with lubrications and the chemical break down of food, which would help soften the bolus before it reaches the stomach. The stomach is the holding chamber of our digestion track. It is a muscle too, which churns and contains hydrochloric acid that further breaks down the food. The churning action moves the food around, almost like turning food on a grill. When the stomach churns while it is empty, it creates noises which are commonly known as growling (Toothman). It’s a verbal sign from the stomach that is empty. During the moments we are hungry, we may notice that we are unconsciously looking at or for food; we might even be locked onto the sight of food on a magazine or ad on the television. When we’re hungry our food gives us physical signs.

The psychological effect that our brain gives off could change the course of what we’re thinking and doing. The desire for food is integrated into our brain; it is very hard to ignore our primal instincts that have been with us since the time of our distant relatives, the Neanderthals (commonly known as cavemen), where the only worry was probably food. Our brains will give us the signals that we will want food, we will need food, and that we will search for food. It has been natural instincts for all living creatures. When we are able to obtain food, we are awarded. When we consume food, we feel pleasure. Scientists have linked the orbitofrontal cortex, the section of the brain responsible for pleasure and drive, to eating (Marano). Pleasure is a desired feeling for our body and our brain associate pleasure with things we consider “enjoyable.” The psychological connection of food and pleasure is strong enough to be a drug for some. Binge eating is an example where the desire to eat is strong enough to change a person’s action. It is a disorder where the person loses their control on food consumption and eats large sums of food in one sitting. The stimulus for food is powerful, and in modern day it can be found everywhere, and in many forms. It is now almost impossible to travel without seeing food, whether it is on a billboard, television commercial, on the radio, or on a magazine advertisement (Marano). In America there is a huge diversity of food, and it is almost impossible to say that there isn’t a food out there for you. Foods from almost every culture can be found in America with almost any kind of alteration or alternate form. All of our senses are used for food, scientists believe that, contrary to popular belief, the factor that sets different foods in different importance is not completely about the taste of the food,
but rather the factor of availability also determines how our brain seeks food (Pleasure and Culture). The harder it is to obtain a certain food, the less available it is to us, the more our brain will desire for such food. For an example we can talk about truffles, they’re extremely expensive for a ball and due to the price tag, obtaining truffles is limited to few. This makes it very desirable according to connection, even though when we’re told it is fungus, which we associate as something nasty. This is also connected to desserts. They are unhealthy for us, but most of us only want desserts. They are generally hard to obtain, and consumed last, at the end of the meal. The taste and visual sight of the dessert tends to be appealing to us psychologically. If it is a delicious birthday cake, it is only available once a year for us and maybe more if we have friends, but on a daily basis it is not available to us. This effect makes some people crave for cake. Desserts also tend to have good taste, which also adds to desire and pleasure. Food affects us heavily psychologically just as much it affects us physically. It is always a subconscious thought lingering behind our thoughts. When the desire for it grows large enough, it becomes unbearable and we cannot fight this overwhelming desire at times. It is almost impossible to say that food is not on our minds, it will always be a thought, and it varies in intensity at different times and situations. When we become victims to our own desires for food, we can only remain captives until we fulfill the request laid before us, even if it means it will force our actions to bend towards its will.

Physically and psychologically food is intertwined with many of our actions. Our body is constantly functioning on food, either absorbing it into our intestines or breaking it down into simple sugars to be used for synthesis for adenosine triphosphate, ATP for short. The cycle of digestion goes on all day and never stops. Our body easily affects our actions and thoughts to capture our attention onto its lack of nutrients and energy. It will even turn on itself if food is not available, through the process of burning body fat than even body muscle. It is too natural that even we will not always catch that our actions are being diverted towards food. It’s a hidden lure that reels us in unsuspectingly, or could it be that we do not care that we are being reeled in by the distractions of food. Maybe it is something that just happens.

II

Hmm, as I read through this article, it explains that food is such a great natural distraction that it even affects us unconsciously, “food will always be subconsciously lingering in the brain.” I find it very hard to believe this. I never felt that food took control of my actions. I always felt pretty conscious when I eat, and even when I’m hungry at church I keep it in. it didn’t force me to leave and find food. This probably only affects gluttons and people with eating disorders. No, no. Not
even, unless you brought up their favorite meal or something. They must be like Fat Bastard from Austin Powers. I hardly see how food affects us besides “When the stomach churns when it’s empty, it creates a noise, also known as growling (Toothman).” These scientist must rethink of how they did their research. Even that “research” they did on how eating leads to pleasure seems to be taken out of nowhere. “Scientists have linked the orbitofrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for pleasure and drive, to eating (Marano).” So… they are saying that if I eat food, I’d feel pleasure and drive? Oh that must be why some people become virgins till their forty because the food they ate was enough pleasure for them… No way! That’s total bull shit. Those scientists must be high out of their minds. There is no way food is anywhere remotely related to pleasure. That fruit cake I ate last year at the Christmas party was far from anything pleasurable. It’s a food I only eat once a year, if not less, and I am in no way seeking that food, nor did it give me any desire chewing on that nasty junk. It was hard like a brick and probably tastes worsts than dog food. That fruit was supposed to trigger my “pleasure” senses? AHAHA! No WAY. That idea must have come from the Devil where Aunt Mary got that fruit cake from. I mean, its own name is made of two editable and delicious foods, how can something be the combination of my two favorite things taste so bad? It should be changed to crap cake, cause that’s the only way to explain how there is “fruits” in that cake. Connecting the feeling of pleasure and that cake is like connecting light and dark. There’s just zero connection or a like feelings. It was such a great Christmas dinner till Aunt Mary had to bring out the harbinger of bad taste and stomach aches. I don’t even want to remember anything related to that Christmas anymore due to that cake, if it could be called a cake at all. The sight of it is engraved into my memory and almost makes me gag just seeing it in my head. Now I feel sick. I’m going to get something to make me forget this feeling. Maybe there’s some cookies in the cookie jar.

III

“The turkeys ready!” The tall blonde woman holding the freshly baked turkey is Mrs. Alison Johnson. She married Nick Johnson about two years ago but they’ve been going out since high school. She’s around 24 and an amazing cook, good enough to go to college for a degree in culinary. She volunteered to cook for the Christmas gathering. “Amanda go get your granddaddy and help him to the chair over there next to grandma. Okay” Amanda is John and Sarah’s kid. Alison wasn’t able to have any kids yet but she adores them.

“Okay Aunty Ally.”

“Dear over here, I set down some towels, common give it here I put the thing down for you.” That’s Nick, Alison’s husband. He’s the typical genius superhuman, four point oh in high school and
college, quarterback for high school and his college team, dumped the team to go to med school. Every inch of him can make any parent proud, even got a wonderful wife.

“Aww you smell that? Heyyy Sarah bring dem kids ere’ and tell em’ their auntie made some fine turkey. Make to tell them to stop playing the dog too. He’s ole’ and can’t take that fussin’ the kids make.” This is Sarah’s husband, Sean Rogers; she married to him after she moved down south. I don’t know too much about him, but he has a thick southern accent. He’s a business man but he looks like he could fit right in as a redneck or hilly billy.

“Ey’ Timothy, Ty, it’s probably your old man and mother, get’ der door will ya?”

Timothy is my younger brother. He isn’t the brightest person, and he tend to be shy, but he does what he is told.

“My apologies everyone, my meeting with a defendant was prolonged beyond my original intent.” That’s my father Tom; he’s the typical strict father. He owns a law office which handles a lot of cases from the state. He used to be a state prosecutor, but stopped to open his own practice.

“Oh honey don’t worry about it, it’s Christmas, and helping someone on Christmas is very understandable.” That’s my mother Judy, she’s the typical soccer mom, she also sometimes works with father at the law office, she too has a law degree but stopped when Timothy was born.

“That person must’ve paid you a lot of money for you to work over time like that! You better have charged a lot extra.” That’s Aunt Sarah, she tends to think a lot about money. She’s a good person but money gets to the bad side of her.

“It’s auntie Mary! Auntie Mary! Auntie Mary! Is that for us! Give me give me!” Billy tends to be the typical chubby elementary schooler. Hes….oh this is bad I don’t remember how old he was. He might be in fourth grade? The person he’s frantically jumping at is gramp’s neighbor and family friend Mary. I never learned of her last name but she been around for a while. We tend to just call her Aunt Mary, but she’s not our real aunt.

“Comon Billy settle down. Boy he’s hyper today. Comon Billy I have enough for everyone, it’s for dessert when you go home okay? Can you wait till after then?”

“Awwww. Fine! But you promised. Pinkie swear?”

“Yes Billy, pinkie swear. Hey Timothy would you like some too dear? Aww common Timothy, just stand there like a statue and nod, talk to Aunt Mary”

“Yes auntie”
“Comon speak up Timmy! I’m old and my hearing is brittle.”
“Yes auntie, I would like one.”
“That’s what I like to hear. Don’t get jealous Tyler, I got an extra special fruit cake for you too.”
“Fruit cake? What’s that?”
“Just wait dear, it’s a god sent food that you would love. I made them the other day. Comon you old ladies, tell old Auntie what she can do to help around.”
“Hey Aunt Mary, you’re here. The turkey I prepared just finished, just grab a seat, you don’t need to help today, Sarah, Judy and I all got this done. Let the proud women of this house do the cooking this Christmas.”

“Why don’t you look at that Mike, you’re a grandfather with three great daughters now. Did you teach them the secret to your gumbo yet? You can’t keep that god given talent for making gumbo to yourself, teach it to your daughters so they can make it and we can all enjoy it again.”

“Oh common Aunt Mary, you know Dad can’t just teach that secret, even if we did I don’t think Alison can even copy it.”

“Judy’s right, that’s not something we can just copy”

“Girls… the secret is what I’ve always told you and so has your mother…” Grandpa has been a smoker in his younger years from what I’ve heard, the young rebellious days have reached his old age and affect his lungs, and he has a very broken talk due to silent coughs. We all feel bad for him but he hates it when we show any pity. After grandma past we thought he would be lonely, but now he has all the grandkids to play with. The gumbo my aunts and mother talk about is legendary. Grandpa was a chef and he was a great one. He cooked everywhere, in almost every country in Europe, even where he met grandma in Italy; he was famous for his gumbo. He was always said to have some secret, which he always deny.

“We get it Dad, just sit down and enjoy the food we’ll serve, save your voice.”

“I’ll get’ all dem’ kids to the table. Y’all finish setting dem dishes. Com’on Tom let’s wrangle in the little uns,” If you’re wondering what Uncle Sean says, it also just skips through my mind to what he could be trying to say. It always sound like he doesn’t finish half of his words, yet hes an amazing businessman somehow.

“Let’s take a moment to thank the ole’ mighty lord for the food that he brings for us today. Amen”

“Nick, how is the medical schooling going for you? If you don’t like it there I could always… hey Tyler pass me more of that gravy, it’s amazing, Judy you should try some too here.”

“Alison this is great gravy, show me later how you make this.”
“Sure thing, it’s so simple but there’s many easy tricks to making the perfect gravy.”
“Well back to what I was saying Nick, if you feel like you get stuck in the medical schools, I always has my offices open for you to come down.”
“Sure Tommy but..”
“Nick, you’re an adult now, let’s not call each other by childish nick names now.”
“Honey, don’t be embarrassed. Don’t worry Nick, he’s just trying to be a stuck up lawyer in front of his little brother.”
“Ya here him Nick? If ya don’t like that health business, y’all always welcome down ‘ere with my business.”
“Thanks both of you but I’m doing fine in medical school and I enjoy it. Hey pops this your gumbo?”
“Gramps made gumbo?”
“No no, that’s my gumbo, I’m sorry if it’s not like grandfather’s”
“Auntie Mary can I have the cake yet?”
“Billy, she alreadys tolds you can’t have it yet!”
“Amanda, don’t yell at your younger brother like that. Billy just waits a bit longer than you can have it. Okay dear?”
“Uh huh” I swear that this kid’s brain only operates with one goal in mind and that’s food. He’ll do anything for a cake or snack.”
“So Tyler, how’s soccer so far? You know football is a great sport to play? Maybe I can teach you a thing or two about throwing one.”
“Its fine, our team won the states this year. And I’m fine with just kicking the ball”
“Comon sport, those arms of yours are looking good, why don’t you try football like I have.” I don’t think Uncle Nick ever stops bragging about his high school and college football experiences. I also hate it how he tries to recruit me into it. “Comon why don’t cha try out that arm of yours now and pass me some of the smoked ham”
“Yeh yeh whatever, here ya go.”
“Dang! This is some delicious ham honey, here try some yourself this is amazing. Comon Tom, Sean, Dad, try some of the ham Ally made. It’s great!”
“Y’all got a fine wife der’ only if Sara can.. owww what was dat’ for?”
“Shut it Sean, or I’ll stop making that pie you love so much. Comon Amanda, here eat some of the mash potatoes.”
“Fine fine! I get it, sheesh.”
“Comon kiddies, gather ‘round, Tyler get in here too, I got one for you too.”
“Me me me first Auntie Mary.”
“No cutting Billy!”
“Now now, kids be nice, you’re brother and sisters. Timothy, since you’re so quiet you get yours first. Here Tyler here, it’s a big one since you’re such a big boy now”
“Aunt Mary, I’m 17 now.”
“Oh 17 is but a wee little baby to me”
“Y’all remember to throw away the trash ya here? Eat it when y’all all home.”
“Listen to Uncle Sean and eat it when you’re home kids.”

On my way out I looked at the circular block that was handed to me by Aunt Mary. It was heavy like a brick! I slowly opened it and there was the fruit cake. A brownish something that I cannot describe with small colorful pieces of what is supposed to be fruits imbedded everywhere in the brown looking cement block that is holding it all together. I took a bite into it and spit it onto the ground immediately when no one looking. As we walked out to the car, I lifted the lid of the green trash bin and threw it out. “Good riddance!” I whispered.
“What was that dear? I heard something drop”
“Oh it’s nothing mom, I hit my foot onto some trash.”

Works Cited
Multiple Readings: *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*

Gabriel García Márquez vilifies some of the innate human characteristics in his short story “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”; characteristics such as the fear of the unknown, and our frequently lofty expectations. All of which stem from a rather deep-seated need which is dependent on the situation. Additionally Gabriel García Márquez is able to manipulate his story in such a way, he allows happenings which otherwise would be considered a reverie of some sort to occur in a relatively realistic setting. As a result readers of “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” are allowed to resolve a number of relatively plausible possibilities. Based on the contextual evidence provided by Gabriel García Márquez the reader can conclude that the man with enormous wings is either an angel or just another “spectacle” placed in this convoluted world which Marquez has crafted; regardless of the interpretation the reader can affirm that Gabriel García Márquez had provided an assailment of innate human characteristics, which are characterized by the locals in this short story.

“A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” takes place in a rather mystifying world; while killing crabs which are believed to be the reason behind their child’s ailments Pelayo and his wife Elisenda discover an old man which is initially described as a nightmare: “He was dressed like a ragpicker. There were only a few faded hairs left on his bald skull and very few teeth in his mouth, and his pitiful condition of a drenched great grandfather had taken away from any sense of grandeur he might have had”. (334) Marquez this vivid description to highlight the fact that the old man does not possess any social importance among the world his is in.

As Gabriel García Márquez’s short story progresses the reader is provided with substantial evidence to resolve multiple interpretations, one being that the winged man is an angel. For example, after the man is discovered by both Pelayo and Elisenda, they couple consult a “wise” elder who suggests “He is an angel; he must have been coming for the sick child”. (334) The reader can assume this to be true given the qualifications of the woman; shortly after the woman then suggests that the
winged man be clubbed to death as he may be a “fugitive survivor of a celestial conspiracy”. (334) further evidence which suggests the man to be angel of some sort can be seen when the winged man is spared from clubbing: “Pelayo watched over him all afternoon from the kitchen, armed with his bailiff’s club.”. (334) Ironically, once the winged man is spared the child is then free of his ailment and feels the desire to eat once again.

Further evidence which Gabriel Garcia Marquez provides which may suggest that the winged man is an angel can be seen shortly after the man is tortured: “He awoke with a start, ranting in his hermetic language and with tears in his eyes”. (336) The “hermetic” ranting suggests that the winged man may be of religious origin as hermeticism relates to a set of religious beliefs. Gabriel Garcia Marquez describes the man’s passivity to being tortured as: “..Not that of a hero taking ease but that of a cataclysm in response”. (336) Here Marquez utilizes the word “cataclysm” which (based on its meaning) can lead the reader to interpret the winged man as a “holy entity” (angel)

The reader may also view the winged man as a taboo, but normal being in the world that Gabriel Garcia Marquez has produced. Evidence provided which could lead to this interpretation can be seen by the existence of another “nightmare” which is among the locals: “It so happened that during those days, among so many other carnival attractions, there arrived in town the traveling show of the woman who had been changed into a spider for having disobeyed her parents”. (336-337) Marquez presents us with what he describes as a “normal” situation; another carnival attraction arriving, who just so happened to have been changed into a spider woman by her mother as a result of her disobedience. From this the reader can conclude that “abnormal” happenings are in fact the norm in this setting; it is rather possible for humans to exhibit animal features.

Further evidence which allows the reader to conclude that the man is normal in this world of the abnormal is the background on the spider woman provided by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The reader is made aware that it is possible for people to be transformed into creatures or people who possess animal features: “..There arrived in town the traveling show of the woman who had been changed into a spider for disobeying.” (336) by providing retrospect the reader can deduce the very wide variety of reasons as to why and how the winged man ended up with wings.

Marquez’s story presents a sense of critique which is prevalent throughout most of his writing, that being of the innate human fear of the unknown; which is characterized by the actions taken by the locals. Upon encountering the winged man Pelayo’s immediate response was to lock him up in a chicken coupe, rather then tend to the man or find the neighborhood doctor. Instead
Pelayo calls upon a wise women who (as a result of her innate fear of the unknown) suggests “clubbing to death” the man to death.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez characterizes the locals further during Father Gonzaga (a local priest) evaluates the mans credentials. If the reader views the man as an angel this evaluation can be seen as rather sacrilegious; father Gonzaga solely relies on expectations of what angels should look like in order for him to make his ruling. He finds that because the man does not “speak the language of god”. (335), “had an unbearable smell of the out doors..”. (335) and looked too human, he cannot be an angel. From the perspective of the man being an angel; the reader can also resolve that because Gonzaga has never encountered an angel prior to the winged man he is afraid that this is what angels actually looks and smells like.

As a result of the fears which the people possess, Marquez also demonstrates a deep-seated need which the locals express during their conjectures of what to do with the old man. While holding the winged man captive in the coupe the locals conjured what to make of the winged man’s future, for example: “Some visionaries hoped that he could be put to stud in order to implant on earth a race of winged men”. (335), “Others of sterner mind felt that he should be promoted to the rank of five-star general”. (335) What Marquez suggests through these conjectures is that the locals are in need of direction and leadership.

Marquez goes on by characterizing the locals which have now corralled to view this the man which they have now turned into a circus freak. After being kept captive for some time the locals begin: “Tossing him things to eat through the openings in the wire as if he weren’t a supernatural creature but a circus animal.” (335) In addition to further conveying his supernatural being, Marquez showcases the lack of respect which many humans have for that which they are unfamiliar with; Marquez goes on when the crowd makes conjectures concerning the captives future. “He should be named mayor of the world”. (335), “He should be promoted five-star general in order to win all wars”. (335), “[He should be] put to stud, in order to implant on earth a of winged wise men who could take charge of the universe”. (335). Marquez not only embodies the innate human ignorance through the locals, but he also goes on to suggest that the people are in need of direction, some sort of leader.

The notion to promote the winged man “mayor of the world”. (335) suggests that there may be a lack of a leadership role in the community and that the locals are seeking to appoint someone who may be able to point them in a different direction, to a position of power. The notion to promote the winged man five-star general, “to end all wars”. (335) Suggests that there may be
multiple ongoing wars going on in the area which the locals want to put an end to; however are lacking to proper military expertise. The reader is made aware that many traveled to see the winged man where Gabriel Garcia Marquez writes: “The most unfortunate individuals on earth came in search of health: a poor women [who had been counting her heartbeats]... and many others with less serious [ailments]” (335-336) fact that many individuals far and near came to be “in the presence” of the winged man in hope of being healed of their existing ailments suggests that there may be an ongoing famine or lack of medical professionals in the area.

Both perspectives of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s short story: “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” can support the claim that his work is primarily an assailment of the innate human fear of the unknown. From the interpretation of the winged man, being an additional “freak” among the locals; the reader can see locals act of locking up these people who exhibit animal characteristics as the response of their fear of not knowing how to assimilate the individuals back into society. Therefore they parade the individuals such as the old man with enormous wings and the spider woman around in cages in an attempt to not only make profit but also to entertain themselves; the parading can also be seen as a form of mockery.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez brilliantly manipulates his story in such a manner that both interpretations of the winged man are arguable based on the information provided. Marquez provides sufficient contextual evidence to support both sides; additionally his ability to convey his idea that people have an unconditioned fear of the unknown which is the result of a deep-seated need which he displays through the neighborhood conjectures of the winged mans fate is effectively delivered.

Work Cited
Chris Pineda

What Is Education’s Real Purpose?

John Taylor Gatto sees the education system in a different light than everyone else. He hates what it does to students and how it doesn’t live up to the goals he views they have; which are “to make good people, to make good citizens, and to make each person his or her personal best.” (Gatto 685). Our education system today is formulated to fuel each student’s drive to excel above his or her peers. It also creates an atmosphere in which we are constantly dependent on others for almost everything. This competition is created through the separation of grade levels and ranks to fuel a student’s need to do better; meanwhile continuing to encourage group work and less independent assignments to achieve a united society. Although these points might not seem to be what our schools strive for, both of these points are the main focus of our school system today. The American education system is primarily used to promote competition and social dependence in order to create an aggressive yet unified nation.

Schools in today’s society are known for segregating students into different classes based on grade level. Gatto saw this as a means of restricting the students from their full potential. He stated that there is a “differentiating function” (Gatto 687) that separates students “by role and trained only so far as their destination in the social machine merits- and not one step further” (Gatto 687). This is not entirely true. The segregation between grade levels is not to prevent the students in the lower classes from achieving just as much as the students above them. This is done to identify where the student lies and to display that they can be doing better, to strive for a higher placement or to strive to be the best in their respective levels. A feeling of determination will arise to prove to themselves and their peers around them that they can achieve standards just as high as the students in higher classes. Competition is also depicted in the film Waiting for Superman with a student named Daisy;
she was so committed to her future and getting a leg up on the competition that she submitted a letter to the admissions office to the college of her choice, only being in the fifth grade. Competition is valued in schools because it allows for elite schools and students to be recognized and therefore encourages students to not settle for below average. This demonstrates how competition is promoted at an early age so children like Daisy can grasp the concept with aggression.

This determination to do better and to establish one’s self as superior than others is a valuable trait that every school in the United States tries to implement in their curriculum as much as possible. In fact, competition is so integrated into a student’s daily life that it is in extracurriculars such as sports and the debate team. Allowing students to become competitive at an early age ensures that our country will not fall as a world power. This goal is implemented into the schools to make sure that the future of our country lies in the hands of competitive and formidable citizens. In the film Waiting for Superman it was shown that countries such as Singapore and Finland along with many others ranked above American students in math and a competitive edge can be what America needs to render this information outdated.

It may seem as though the public schools parents send their children to are preparing them to handle things on their own; to become independent and self-sufficient adults. But this is not the case when considering how our schools are structured. The sheer amount of collaborative assignments makes up the majority of school work nowadays. From my personal experience, I have noticed time and time again teachers forcing students to do group work and to have a partner in an assignment. It has gotten to the point that students have become so accustomed to this style of learning that at any time a project is given there is always one or more students in my class that asks if partners are allowed; and the teachers have always said yes. I have been given assignments that I could have easily completed on my own but despite my many protests I was forced to work in a group. This is a way to instill in us the need to work with others to succeed, to get that good grade. This feeling of social dependence is also introduced in the film Waiting for Superman when a student being interviewed as to what he experiences in class says he does not like math because he constantly hears his classmates complain about it. This shows that children have been conditioned to go along with everyone else rather than stand out as an individual. This may seem as a bad thing at first but when looking at it through the eyes of a country and not an individual one can see that this is America’s attempt at uniting its populous. It forces us to depend on others when we can succeed on our own. But by instilling in us the need to work as a team, to succeed as a unit, schools are promoting unification and a bond within all Americans.
If our country is successfully united in every matter then this benefits America in a great way. It can make it a stronger nation overall because with stronger unity comes the greater possibility of nationwide patriotism. If people become more patriotic towards their country they are more prone to devoting their time, labor, and lives for the betterment of the country. I believe Gatto would disagree with this point of unity due to his many arguments that school deliberately separates students to create a more manageable populous. Gatto stated “It is in the interest of complex management, economic or political, to dumb people down, to demoralize them, to divide them from one another, and to discard them if they don’t conform.” (Gatto 688). Proclaiming that the country divides the population and restricts their intelligence is far from the truth. Dividing the country would weaken it and keeping the people uneducated would prevent America from progressing and maintaining its superiority over the many countries that are inferior today. Uniting the country in any way is imperative for its success which is why our school system promotes the valuable attribute of working together.

Gatto has a good overview of the education system to a certain extent, but it is not perfectly accurate. Resources and personal experience have demonstrated a different view of the American education system. American schools are made to teach its students how to rise above others and compete to be the best. But so as to not lose the necessary unity that a country needs it instills the subtle need for social dependency.

Works Cited
American Teacher, Vanessa Roth and Brian McGinn, Erik Bennner, Neil Cavuto, Documentary; 2011
Waiting for Superman, Davis Guggenheim, Geoffrey Canada, The Esperaza family; Documentary; 2010
Christopher Reyes

“Jesus Walks” into the Mainstream

Kanye West started as an impressive producer behind the scenes working with the legendary Jay-Z prior to becoming an international and iconic artist. *The College Dropout*, West’s debut album has sold over 4 million albums worldwide, classifying him by most as a mainstream artist from the beginning. James McBride, author of the article *Hip-Hop Planet*, talks about how “most commercial rappers spout violent lyrics that debase women and gays” and “most rap songs unabashedly function as walking advertisements for luxury cars, designer clothes, and liquor.” If you asked most people if they thought Kanye West fit the description that McBride believes, chances are the majority would say yes. Kanye West is in fact very arrogant and boastful, however, when it comes to art such as his music, he is truly passionate. Kanye West successfully created a radio hit that strayed from the typical mainstream stereotypes. He uses the theme of religion to convey a powerful message that can apply to everybody and anybody.

What really separates Kanye West from the rap stereotypes can be seen in his 3rd single off *The College Dropout*, “Jesus Walks”. Darryl McDaniels of the hip-hop group, Run-DMC told Time magazine, “I stopped listening to hip-hop 10 years ago. This past decade it seems like hip-hop has mostly been about parties and guns and women. That’s fine if you’re in a club, but from 9 a.m. till I went to bed at night, the music had nothing to say to me. So I listened to classic rock. When I heard it [“Jesus Walks”], I stopped dead in my tracks. I thought, ‘this song is about everything! It feels
When a pioneer of the hip-hop genre is suddenly shocked by a song in a time period where the genre is flooded with commercialism, that says something.

“We at war, we at war with terrorism, racism, but most of all we at war with ourselves” (Kanye West, “Jesus Walks”). The song starts off with an introduction speaking about the human race and how there are numerous problems in society, however none as significant as the battle within ourselves. A lot of people struggle with issues within themselves that only they can change (i.e. low self-esteem). The first few lines of the first verse are Kanye West’s depiction of the Midwest, specifically Chicago, his hometown. “You know what the Midwest is? Young & Restless / Where restless (n***as) might snatch your necklace and next these (n***as) might jack your Lexus / somebody tell these (n***as) who Kanye West is…” Kanye also purposely samples the musician and civil rights activist Curtis Mayfield from the song “Don’t Worry If There’s A Hell Below, We’re All Going To Go” in order to depict a racist man insulting blacks. In the following line Kanye raps one of the first religious lines with a reinterpretation of Psalm 23 from the Old Testament, “I walk through the valley of the Chi where death is;” West uses wordplay, replacing “shadow of death” with “Chi of death”.

“Getting choked by the detectives yeah yeah now check the method / They be asking us questions, harass and arrest us / Saying "we eat pieces of sh*t like you for breakfast" / Huh? Yall eat pieces of sh*t? What's the basis? / We ain't going nowhere but got suits and cases.” This stanza paints a picture of how racism and discrimination are still alive. Kanye describes a scenario where some form of law enforcement uses cruel interrogation methods discriminatorily. What Kanye means by “we ain't going nowhere but got suits and cases,” is how a lot of lawsuits and court cases arise stemming from racism, but no matter the outcome, racism still remains alive. Kanye next speaks on behalf of the drug dealers in the world, “A trunk full of coke rental car from Avis / my momma used to say only Jesus can save us / well momma I know I act a fool / but I'll be gone ‘til November I got packs to move I hope.” The mother in this scenario believes God has the answers, however reality hits, and the fictitious protagonist in the story knows that in order to make ends meet, he must sell drugs (“I got packs to move”).

So far in the song, Kanye has spoke upon several issues using lyrical scenarios that correlate with religion. This can be visually interpreted in the video, where the main scenes are of Kanye preaching his lyrics in a church, accompanied by the corresponding situations (i.e. bricks of cocaine in the trunk of a car). Following the 1st verse comes the hook, where Kanye directly asks God for guidance because he feels the Devil is trying to lure him from his path of enlightenment. “To the hustlers,
killers, murderers, drug dealers, even the strippers (Jesus walks for them) / To the victims of welfare for we living in hell here, hell yeah…” At the beginning of the second verse, Kanye addresses all kinds of ‘sinners’, people who are forced into hustling everyday. He also addresses receivers of welfare, whom are seen by some as lazy and receivers of ‘free money’, when that is not the case. They’re everyday struggles are worth far more than the ‘free money’ they collect. “Now hear ‘Ye hear ‘Ye want to see thee more clearly / I know he hear me when my feet get weary / ’cause we're the almost nearly extinct.” Here Kanye explains how he seeks to find answers through his faith, and how he is sure God hears his prayers along with the rest of the faithful disciples of Jesus. Kanye then states “we rappers are role models we rap we don't think”, saying how the main role of a rapper is to rap, despite the fact that they are seen as role models, typically by young adults and kids, and does not take this into account when rapping. Returning to the topic of religion, West clarifies that the focal point of “Jesus Walks” is not to “…argue about his [Jesus’] facial features” or “to convert Atheists into believers”, but that the message of the song is that everybody needs something to believe in, themselves perhaps, in order to survive and prosper. In Kanye’s case, he finds that strength in Jesus. Hence, “I'm just trying to say the way school need teachers / the way Kathie Lee needed Regis that’s the way I need Jesus.” Now, one of the most important parts of the song, So here go my single dog radio needs this / They say you can rap about anything except for Jesus / That means guns, sex, lies, video tapes / But if I talk about God my record won't get played Huh? / Well let this take away from my spins / Which will probably take away from my ends / Then I hope this take away from my sins / And bring the day that I'm dreaming about.

West is a celebrity that has been on the map for over a decade; everybody knows who Kanye West is. The reason this song, “Jesus Walks”, was so successful even though is avoided the “easy way out” of simply speaking upon superficial matters, can be credited to a number of things; the grandiose, orchestral production, the message which seeks out to touch everyone, and the fact that Kanye West was the one delivering this message. Popular radio music is all mainstream and commercialism. Kanye could care less if this song got radio play or if he made money off of it. He hopes instead that making a song on what he truly wants to make a song about, that it is a form of confession, and will remove his sins, and furthermore bring him to enlightenment of some sort. Ironically, the message Kanye conveys through this song is to have faith. No matter what your situation, regardless if you are associated with a religion or not, have faith.
Jamaica is like no other place in the world. When I step off the plane I feel its presence, I feel everything, its heart and soul. It’s almost as if there is different rhythm in the air. A different temperature, a tropical heat, away from the concrete jungle I know so well. Jamaica is my haven away from all problems for a while. Jamaica was a place where I could run free as a child; I remember running in strides through the gully. Sitting on my grandfather’s grave and eating mangoes until the sun went down. While I sit here and look back, I realize Jamaica is where I got my sense of food, and music. I remember riding donkeys and throwing rocks at the mango and coconut trees. Dancing to reggae music until my legs hurt and could not dance anymore; eating fruit until I got sick. At times I look back and wonder if my mother felt the same when she was a child. As a child it was hard for me not to like Jamaica, if my mango fell I could just get another. The nights were peaceful hearing the crickets chirp, but the mosquitos were quite awful. I remember the first day I fell in love with Jamaica, I was about four (very tall) and my mom took me to her childhood house. After a while I started exploring on my own, and she lost sight of me. When they found me I was on my grandfather’s grave (positioned under the mango tree) stuffing my face with three mangoes. It is almost tradition now to sit on my grandfather’s grave, eat mangoes and just think back to a time where things were simple. When I had no worries, and when I could feel the presence of my grandfather. Jamaica is where I learned most of my values as a child. Everything was plain and simple back then, if you were instructed to do something; the task would be completed. Jamaica
gave me my pride and honor; my culture and my respect for other cultures. It taught me a sense of independence, when I had to fetch water from the well every morning; picking fruits and feeding the chickens. This gave me independence because I had no one to help me; I had to do it all on my own. Sometimes, I look back at the scars on my legs, from running around in Jamaica; I realize it’s a part of me, a part of my past, and part of Jamaica. My scars symbolized a connection from Jamaica while away. My experience there taught me that life is no joke. People actually have to work hard for everything. I remember when I was in Jamaica this year, and saw everything through the eyes of an adult. Jamaica was still beautiful to me, and still the place I wanted to be. Though, as I looked past all the essence of Jamaica, I saw what the child in me failed to see. The child forgot to see the struggle, how hard the people worked just to leave. Things were tough for the people who lived there. People always picture Jamaica as dreadlocked Rasta singing “one love”, but in reality Jamaicans are hardworking people who will walk the miles to make a dollar. As the years went on I started to notice that Jamaica was spiraling into a frenzy of violence, and high crime rates. To the point where my mother did not send me back, out of fear. I spent that summer on a cruise ship, exploring the Virgin Islands. Sometimes I wonder what happened to this place that I saw as a heaven on earth. As I watched the tropical storm knock down my childhood house, where my mother once played as a child; where my grandfather lay beneath the ground. It was as if my whole childhood memory left me, this place where I was grown as a child, completely destroyed. Reality kicked in, Jamaica taught me that that life wasn’t easy. It shaped me to be tough and fight for the things I wanted. Just like every other Jamaican walking early dawn to get to work, in order to escape the situation they are in. Now when I get off the plane I take in the essence of Jamaica. I take in the struggles of Jamaica, and I never let it go. I take it with me when I leave, because Jamaica prepares me for the cold world we live in. When I close my eyes at night, Jamaica is the place I imagine to be, the place where all my troubles here are small over there.

When reading a story an author always uses a setting to connect to the story. The place you are in has a major relationship to your story. Sherman Alexie and Jamaica Kincaid, demonstrate great examples of the relationship of place and story. Alexie’s, “What It Means To Say Phoenix, Arizona,” shows life on the reservation, as well as counteracts stereotypes that many people have about the reservation in his story. Kincaid’s “Girl”, starts off with a young girl, from the Caribbean who is being taught how to behave like a lady. The last article that will be discussed in this essay will be "Performance and the Gendered Body in Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl' And Oonya Kempadoo's Buxton Spice”, by Carol Bailey. This article will deeply analyze Kincaid’s “Girl.” One of my major
arguments in this essay will be the relationship between place and story. The place you are in has a major relationship to your story, because depending on what type of environment you’re in, your story will be based upon how that place affected your thoughts and ideologies. Just like in a story when the author puts a setting, in order for the reader to connect to the story. This is important because if the common man would go to different places he/she would realize that their story would be different. For example, in my earlier narrative I discussed how being in Jamaica changed my story, because of the environment I was in, I became more aware of the world, and could easily suppress all issues.

The place where a writer comes from can significantly affect their story. Kincaid, the author of “Girl,” was originally from Antigua. Antigua is in the Caribbean, but generally labeled as the Virgin Islands. In the Caribbean Islands there are many customs that are seen throughout the Caribbean if you were to pay close attention. For example, the food, and the music plays a huge part of connecting the islands. In “Jamaica Kincaid on Girl”, Kincaid states that “Girl” was basically a narrative on how it was in Antigua. Thus meaning, if it wasn’t for the environment that Kincaid was in; her story “Girl” would not be the same. It was the place that changed her story. This ties back to the concept on how there is a strong relationship between place and story. The place that Kincaid was in completely changed her ideologies on certain topic one being the connection between Europe and Antigua.

When reading in depth Kincaid’s “Girl”, and “Jamaica Kincaid on Girl”, I noticed that the history of Antigua has really affected her writings. Part of being in a place involves, becoming affected by the history. History and place completely corresponds to one another, part of being in a place is being affected by the history. Kincaid’s Antigua was conquered by Europe, until its time of independence. They did not get their independence from the British until 1981. Kincaid was born in 1949, meaning that she spent half of her life seeing the fight for independence. Having this experience in life can completely change how one writes their story. In the article, “Performance and the Gendered Body in Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl' And Oonya Kempadoo's Buxton Spice”, it discusses how the environment that Kincaid came from affected her writing decision. This statement that Bailey makes has some valid and invalid points. It blamed Kincaid of being a writer from the Caribbean trying to reject “Culturally Euro gendered paradigms of womanhood” (Bailey 106). To some extent I agree that in many occasion, many Caribbean people try to reject European culture that was thrust upon them. For example, in “Jamaica Kincaid on Girl”, she connects Mother England to oppression. So I do believe that in some sense it can be a rejection of European culture.
that was diffused in the islands. Then Kincaid states, “I’ve come to see that I’ve worked through the relationship between Europe and the place that I’m from, which is to say, a relationship between the powerful and the powerless” (Kincaid 929). Kincaid basically refers to Antigua as the powerless compared to Europe. I would agree with Bailey when he states the rejection of the Euro culture. Though, I believe it is more of a connection between the place where she grew up, and how it affected her story. As she stated before “girl”, is a relationship between the powerful and powerless.

It’s almost as if Kincaid felt powerless like the child, when she was in Antigua, and Europe was her representation of the mother, who was powerful. “You mustn’t speak to the wharf-rat boys, not even to give directions; don’t eat fruits on the street-flies will follow you; but I don’t sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday School” (Kincaid 926). In the story you see the sense of how powerless the girl was compared to her mother; the girl did not have a voice. The girl in that story had two lines in which she tried to defend herself and ask questions. This can tie back to how Kincaid felt growing up, completely powerless with no voice. If it was not for the place she was in “Girl” would be a completely different story, with different thoughts and ideologies.

When reading “Girl” I automatically saw similarities between the way my mother grew up in the Caribbean, and how I was raised. This shows how place has a major relationship to story, because the place my mother was in affected her story and mine as well. I noticed a lot of similarities between the girl’s mother and mine. When it comes to my mother ideologies, it relates very closely to “Girl.” Where the mother constantly talks, but rejects any new type of thought. Especially when her “mother” scowls her about sing calypso music on Sunday. My mom would constantly yell at me for singing reggae on a “holy day. “When returning to the story I noticed that a good percentage of her stories were my mother’s life. She had to learn how to hand wash clothes, and put them to dry. As well as how to grow vegetables, and pick fruits. She also learned how to iron her brother’s clothes and how to walk like a lady. The biggest task that she had to learn was how to cook, cornmeal porridge (called doukona in “Girl”). Though, what I noticed was that my mom continued the tradition of these lectures. Just like how the girl’s mother was possibly taught when she was young. My mom would constantly tell me as a child not to eat food on the street, just like the girl’s mother. She taught me how to walk when entering church and how not to sit. In “Girl” the mother states, “you mustn’t speak to Wharf-rat boys” (Kincaid 926). This reminds me of my mother because she tells me constantly that I should not talk to ragamuffins. All of my mom’s ideologies were pushed unto me as a child, but they were not as severe because I was in a different place, which makes a new story. Though the place I was in did not just affect my story, it affected her as well.
After she left Jamaica and came to America it was a new mindset, because she did not have to work as hard to provide food, and wash. This goes back to my point that the place you are in has a major relationship to your story. My mother has changed a lot solely on her place alone. Even Kincaid’s ideologies could have changed by now, because she is no longer in the environment she was once in or once left. The place you are in has a major relationship to your story, because depending on what type of environment you’re in, your story will be based upon how that place affected your thoughts and ideologies.

For Alexie’s “This is what it means to say Phoenix Arizona”, we are going to take a look back on how history has a connection between place and story. While reading this story the reader would most definitely expect to hear a stereotypical view of the reservation. But Alexie destroys this concept before it starts. Traditionally one may think of a reservation as a place where Native American tell stories and chant around a fire living in tipis. In “This is What it Means to say Phoenix, Arizona”, Alexie shows a sense of evolving in place in the story. With this sense of this reservation evolving the people evolve as well. With the idea of evolving comes the idea of having other cultures diffuse. Alexie shows an example of this when he writes, “You know,’ Thomas said. ‘It’s strange how us Indians celebrate the Fourth of July. It ain’t like it was our independence everyone was fighting for” (Alexie 911). This goes back to my point on how place has a relationship with story; the reservation has changed so much since the day the Native Americans originally arrived there. This means that there in the same time as us, they do the same thing. This can go back to my earlier point, how people perceive Jamaicans and how they assume we all smoke weed, and are Rastafarian. Over a period of my lifetime, I watched Jamaica change. As Jamaica changed I changed with it, it evolved and I became the evolver. The place and the environment I was in completely changed me, and made my story different. In the story we watched how Victor and Thomas evolved into two different people. Victor did not want to hear old Native American stories; while Thomas learned to thrive of old stories and could not wait to tell them. “Just one time when I’m telling a story somewhere, why don’t you stop and listen?’ Thomas asked” (Alexie 918). Victor agreed to listen to one of his stories just once, but he was not too happy about it. Victor chooses to evolve with the place to some extent, and Thomas chooses to fight the change. The place you are in has a major relationship to your story, because depending on what type of environment you’re in, your story will be based upon how that place affected your thoughts and ideologies.

When one grows up in an environment, and dies away from a place, it can completely change their story. I noticed that it was very important for Victor to drive to his father death place.
Whether he could see it or not, it was something that had to be done regardless of his financial situation. Even if it meant borrowing money from a longtime friend that he does not get along with so well. What was also most interesting is that he drove his father’s truck, and took his ashes back to his place. According to Victor, “But I didn’t imagine my father looking anything like a salmon. I thought it’d be like cleaning the attic or something. Like letting something go after they’ve stopped having any use” (Alexie 918). I found Victor’s choice of words very interesting, because he is basically saying that his father has no use to him anymore, so he’s letting him go. Victor fails to realize that he is not letting go, he’s keeping the ashes, and the truck because it’s a reminder of someone. His father’s truck is basically a representation of a tombstone. After seeing this I realized how much my grandfather grave meant to me. In the earlier chapter I described Victor’s character as the evolver, thorough out this story. Then towards the end I saw how Victor’s character took a couple steps back when he brought his dad truck and ashes back to the reservation. Instead of leaving the truck and moving on he brought it with him, because perhaps he felt that bringing it back to the place had more significance. More of a story on his father’s life, the place that his father died had no story to it. Just like how I find it necessary to sit on my grandfather’s grave every time I go back to Jamaica. Honestly if my grandfather’s grave was moved, it would not mean the same. If it was moved to a different island I would most definitely try to move it back to Jamaica. Even when analyzing the title, “This is what it means to say Phoenix Arizona.” One can come to the conclusion that it means nothing at all, because there is no relationship between place and story, because there was no story to be told. This is why Victor could not have let his father and his memory stay in Arizona because there is no memory there. The only memory is on the reservation, this goes back to my earlier point. There is a major connection between place and story, the place we are in can drastically affect your story.

In the end there is major relationship between place and story. Many readers will try to disagree with this statement, because they want to be independent. Or they are basically trying to fight where they came from and the affect it had on them. If one can take the time to deeply analyze every place they have lived and how it affected their story, one would come to the realization. Place can affect your story drastically without any warning. For example, until writing this essay I finally realized how being in Jamaica affected my story. I realized the history of Jamaica affected me as well; it changed my perception on the history of many topics. As well as, the pride in my islands fight for independence, and uprising. The relationship between place and story is very important; the place
you are in can change your story into an uplifting story, or a sad story. Regardless, your place will always have a relationship to your story.

Work Cited


---

**Tania Yvette Rivera**

**Why Do Authors Represent Females as “Naïve” in “Coming to Age” Stories?**

Thoroughly reading “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” by Joyce Carol Oates, “Drown” by Junot Diaz, and “A&P” by John Updike, one can see the clear difference between the female protagonist and male protagonist in every story being told. As a female protagonist, Connie is portrayed as an irresponsible, selfish young teenager. While Junior and Sammy are both male protagonists, they each show characteristics that prove them to be more mature and have a better sense of thinking. An audience who are exposed to “Coming of Age” short stories, can easily tell that if a female is cast then they will not have the strong characteristics that some women have to them. There are gender roles set in all stories that one cannot step out of the boundaries and write about a female being a hero without being fully aware of the real world around her. A relationship between two characters that may develop can set up a naïve, weak character and stronger, manipulating character. The relationship adds an emotional component that makes the weaker character willing to do anything for the other stronger character. It gives them the mindset that the future does not matter and the past does not matter but the present is what is most important factor. Evidently, when there is a sexual encounter between two characters, one of the characters is impacted greatly by it. Usually the female becomes more socially conscious in the story if and when
she does have a sexual encounter with someone else. As a female may fully expose herself to her partner, she is giving up a part of herself that she will never get back. After a sexual encounter, she is now a woman that is part of a new world and does not live in a fantasy land like Connie once had.

In Oates’ story about Connie, Oates portrays Connie as the typical teenage girl who refuses to do as her parents want and just hang out with her friends. She is given the attitude that she rules her own world and she will do as she pleases. Connie is the female protagonist that makes it apparent that she is oblivious of the dangers in the world. She seems to make herself invincible to put her above all danger when, in reality, she is equal to everyone else in her generation. She takes advantages of her parents when they only let her sister, June, go out with her friends and makes sure they don’t know what she is really doing behind closed doors. Relating back to my narrative “Taken By Surprise”, the female protagonist is a girl that lets her heart take over and doesn’t think logically. She subconsciously allows her boyfriend, Jayden, to take advantage of her when she refuses to let the idea of him being with other girls bother her. She is given the characteristics of a typical love struck teenage girl.

As a “Coming Of Age” story, Oates wants other girls to not make the same mistake as Connie. While Connie was too busy trying to differ from her sister and not be “plain and chunky and steady” (Oates 930), she was unaware of what was going on surrounding her. Her absent father did not discipline her because “he didn’t bother talking much to them” (Oates 930). It pushed her away and wanted her to spend more time away from home to do what she wanted. Her rebellious ways brought her to a drive-in where she would meet and hang out with teenagers older than her. Just like Cleo, the main protagonist in my narrative “Taken By Surprise”, thoughts of the boys flooded Connie’s mind. This was a huge distraction from reality since Connie and Cleo were living in a fantasy world that they had made for themselves. She “[thought] and dream[t] about the boys she met” while Cleo was consumed by her own relationship with Jayden.

In the other stories about Junior and Sammy, the two male characters seem to be engulfed by their responsibilities. Junior was watching out for his mother while Sammy had a job and was capable of fending for himself. These two characters have a sense of maturity to them and less naivety. After Sammy quit his job, Lengel mentions Sammy’s parents briefly when he says, “Sammy, you don’t want to do this to your Mom and Dad.” (Updike 971) This quote proves to the reader that he was helping support his mother and father or even trying to show his parents that he can do something for himself by working at a reasonable age. These two male characters have reliable
personalities even though they have other problems that conflict with their lack of real world experiences. They also have relationships to maintain within family and elsewhere.

A relationship that can blossom between two characters can become destructive if one character becomes more dominant towards the other. Normally, in a relationship, the masculine person becomes in charge and bosses the other around, having that sense of power. When Diaz describes Beto and Junior’s relationship, he portrays Junior as weak. As Beto touches Junior, Junior “kept [his] eyes on the television, too scared to watch” because Beto was doing what he pleased to Junior. Junior did not want to “end up abnormal, a fucking pato” (Diaz 104) so he attempted to avoid Beto. A scenario that showed that he did not enjoy the relationship they had was after the second sexual encounter, Junior “nearly cut his dick off” (Diaz 106) and while he was dressing, Junior said, “Fuck this.” (Diaz 106) when someone came to the door. He realized that Beto “was [his] best friend and back then that mattered to [him] more than anything” (Diaz 104). Beto had given Junior the option to have him stop his actions but Junior did not object because what they did behind closed doors was what kept their friendship alive. Beto seems to run the activities that he and Junior do together. Since he is older, he seems to believe that it is acceptable to do as he pleases to his friend, Junior. As Beto is depicted as the masculine figure in their friendship/relationship, Junior is the weaker character who can relate to my character, Cleo.

In Connie’s case, she did not necessarily have a friendship with Arnold Friend, but she had some interaction with him which led to Arnold taking her away from where she lived with her family. Their interaction consisted of Arnold being in control of Connie so if they were to have a relationship, Arnold would be the masculine figure, controlling her. He admits to knowing “all about [her]” because he “took a special interest in [her].” (Oates 935) Connie cannot handle the situation as it escalates into something more. As Arnold gets closer and closer, she becomes frightened and does not react as quickly as she should have. When she panics and runs to the phone, after picking it up, “she was so sick with fear that she could do nothing” (Oates 941). With this quote, it supports the idea that Connie was feeble towards Arnold. She was considered naïve enough to not be able to fend for herself and leave with Arnold without putting up a fight. Arnold told her to go with him and she obliged, but as she was exiting her home, she was coming to a sudden realization that this was the real world. She was exiting the fantasy that she had made for herself and was now becoming a woman without the help of her mother. She mentions as she is leaving that “[she’s] not going to [her] mother again” (Oates 941) and “[she’s] not going to sleep in [her] bed again.” (Oates 941) This is her way of growing up and Cleo can relate to Connie’s situation.
In my narrative, “Taken By Surprise”, Cleo exits Jayden’s house after a heated confrontation to realize that she was silly enough to believe that such a “wonderful” guy like Jayden would be attracted to her for emotional reasons rather than physical reasons. It was apparent when Rebecca had traveled up to the university to party, there was something going on when she spotted Jayden trying to hook up with girls that was not Cleo. She “refused to believe that Jayden would lie to [her].” (Rivera 2) Jayden continuously lied to her about being “with so many girls” (Rivera 2) and it had been obvious that he was not committed to her emotionally. Jayden was the masculine portion of the relationship making Cleo, the feminine character, more likely to do what he wanted. Cleo was depicted as an easily manipulated, innocent character just like Connie who was another female character who was naïve throughout her story of maturing.

To branch off from the subject of being in or having a relationship, if the female character has a sexual encounter with a male, she seems to mature through that experience while a male seems to mature from something outside of sex. Oates’ short narrative tells the story of a teenage girl having her own fantasy world. In her fantasy world, she thought of a boy that she had met in her rebellious adventure to the diner. Just by thinking of a boy, she is already getting in touch with her sexual side. She is exploring her sexual desires by letting her thoughts drift off about a boy. Along with this boy, Arnold Friend takes her away to make her his own little slave and to bring her into reality. Arnold openly admits to Connie that she is “[his] lover” (Oates 938) making a sexual reference. With these forward remarks said by Arnold, he insinuates a sexual demeanor that Connie had never expected to conflict with. After claiming Connie as his lover, he says, “You don’t know what that is but you will.” (Oates 938) By stating that, he knows how naïve she is and is willing to take advantage of her. He knows how easy it is to get her to oblige to what he wants.

The case is different in Diaz’s “Drown”. Beto “reached into [Junior’s] shorts” (Diaz 104) and by not reacting, he is proven to be manipulated and proven weaker than Beto. He cannot stand up for himself even a second time even as Beto offers to “stop if [Junior] want[s]” (Diaz 105)Junior had the option to refuse the sexual encounter he had with Beto. He could have pushed him away and move on to someone who would respect him more than Beto ever would. With these confrontations that they had, Junior’s failure to speak against the activities shines a light on his naivety. It is noticeable due to the fact that he was not able to speak up for himself. He couldn’t use his own voice to rid of the bad essence surrounding him. Diaz included the sexual abuse and Junior’s denial to bring out the truth of sexual abuse to a younger crowd. When exposed to sexual activity as a child, the child will begin to believe that it is okay to let the abuser do as they please.
This supports the idea that a relationship can prove to bring out the naivety in some people. In this case, that person is Junior.

“Taken By Surprise” depicts the average teenage relationship between Cleo and Jayden. She is given the opportunity to please her boyfriend sexually and she takes it. Ultimately, it ends with her realizing that she was naïve enough to believe that Jayden loved her. She fell into his trap and he got what he wanted. Their sexual encounter had brought the light to Cleo’s eyes. In the end, she was the one that matured and learned that love would not always be a fantasy.

Authors represent their female characters as naïve since society has always pointed fingers at the female being the less dominant and unintelligent character in “Coming of Age” stories. Men are continuously labeled as the heroes and have more sense to their decision-making. Although in the “Coming of Age” narratives about Díaz’s Junior and Updike’s Sammy they learn through their experiences, their reasoning and their way of learning to mature was not as obvious as Oates’ female protagonist, Connie. By giving the female an oblivious mind that creates fantasies, the author can get the point across easily about maturing through certain events. Within the text, the relationships that formed between some of the character proved to support the idea of men or masculine figures being in charge of the female or feminine character. The naïve character had proven to bend and please their partner. As the author highlights a relationship, or even a meeting between two people that has the potential to become something more, the author can clearly tell the story that the feminine character does not have enough courage to stand their ground to the dominant character. It gives off the idea that all females will consist of these characteristics and it is not accurate as to some women. Along with the relationship that can form, the sexual activities that could take place in a “Coming of Age” narrative can assist with the idea that the feminine character will give in to the pressure of the dominant one fairly easily. In “Taken By Surprise”, my character realized her mistakes and what she would never do again. Along with her, Junior in “Drown” seemed to grow from his sexual abuse caused by Beto. The author uses sex to bring out the maturity of another character.
Why Wouldn’t the Perfect Image of Teenagers Work Whereas Being a Problematic Teenager Does?

Teenagers have always been perceived in media as: moody, crazy, partying maniacs, out of control, intolerable, distant, not family orientated, lazy, snobby, hurt, or emotionally challenged people. Every coming of age teen movie, shows, novels, and narratives all use this image of teenagers to show the transition they go through and how they all seem to come around and realize they need to be more like the way adults are seen: aware, hard working, knowledgeable, ambitious, caring and responsible. If the use of the problematic teen wasn't thoroughly used the lesson that's being taught in these coming of age stories they would seem washed out and lacking depth to keep readers engaged because the transition of problematic teenagers into Adults gives realism to the narratives. In Joyce Carols Oates, "Where Are You Going? Where Have You Been?" the protagonist Connie the one who is coming of age is categorized as a problematic teenager. She sneaks away, doesn't attend family functions, thinks of boys, and dresses in a manner her mother doesn't quite approve.
In Junot Díaz's, "Drown" the protagonist Junior is also problematic, but to a farther extent than Connie. He is a drug dealer that struggles with his sexual experiences. He also partakes in multiple criminal acts. For instance in "Drown" is states, "We were raging then, crazy, the way we stole, broke windows, the way we pissed on people's steps and then challenged them to come out and stop us"(91), both Junior and his best friend ,Beto, both did disrespectful and law breaking things fitting into being a misbehaving adolescents." Though his character is a bit lost on who he actually is this plays into the idea of teenagers being confused and not knowing what paths or morals they have. In my story, "Just a Little Fun" the protagonist Jordan is missing his father leaving his mother in a stressful state where she is trying to make ends meet. His personality is carefree and jovial like Junior, and they both had no sense of directions for where their lives would be going. Junior also steals money from his mother so he would be able to buy candy or snacks for him and Jake before school.

In each narrative there is a character that is the exact opposite of each problematic teenager. In reality this is called the "Good Kid", they are rare but always acknowledged. Connie's sister June, Jordan's best friend Jake, and Juniors best friend Beto. Though they are mentioned, the attention of the narratives never focus mainly on them. To the becoming of age experience using a "Good Kid" would fail, they wouldn't get into predicaments such as the problematic child because the characteristics of these teenagers would never lead them into the conflicts that the problematic teens face and it wouldn't be considered coming of age because their sheltering ways. The purpose of the coming to age experience would be defeated as there wouldn't be any lessons taught. The actuality that most teenagers aren't "Good Kids", They are curious rebellious, and very irrational connects to real teenagers and reality. The "Good Kids" used to help and represent the type of characteristics a teenager should have on their way into adulthood. Without these characters the protagonist wouldn't seem as problematic because of the emphasis this brings.

The characteristics of the teenagers in the narratives play out into their surroundings as well as it plays out on to them including where they go, who they hang around, what things they part take in, and how its shaped them. Whether they come from an urban or rural area; being rich or poor they still endure the same conflicts. In "Drown", Junior part takes in criminal acts as and stealing. Because, Junior spends a lot of time at the people he becomes very familiar with the kids there. When he said," Two of them swim past, Black and Latino, and they pause when they see me, recognizing the guy who sells them their shitty dope.(93)" it isn't surprising because its almost accepted by his neighborhood. The police care but majority of the residents and even most of the
other teenagers buy drugs from him, its formulated to them as just another casual job in this urban neighborhood. Even though it isn't said if Junior uses the drug it emphasizes on the concept that teenagers want to be distant from their surroundings and even Junior comes to realizes he can't stand where he lives like Beto. His single mother isn't very aware or present in what's happening in Juniors life because she looks after her family by working . Junior tells readers," She has discovered the secret of silence: pouring cafe without a splash, walking between rooms as if gliding on a cushion of felt, crying with out a sound.(94)." When she is home its  as if she's gone. This absence around them also shows how teens are vulnerable to entering adulthood. As he spends most of his time in these places with Beto his coming of life experience comes about. Because environment is so heavily emphasized it again connects readers by showing that even though their environments are different the same lessons are learned and taught when growing up.

Connie in "Where are You Going? Where Have You Been?" lives in a rural middle class area. She enjoys her beauty. "She was fifteen and she had a quick nervous giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors, or checking other people faces to make sure her own was all right." Like most teens see is always of her appearance as its very essential to them that they always look presentable to themselves but she enjoyed sneak off to hang out with boys. She'd, " Duck fast across the busy road, to a drive in restaurant where older kids hung out(931)." like Junior she was very engaged in the areas she hung out and at home her father wasn't present either, like Juniors mom he spent most of time at work and when he was home all he wanted to do was eat and rest. Because she tends to act grown her and go to the place as her escape she ends up meeting Arnold the guy who came to her house threatening her and telling her to come with him. With her looks and crowd she's now mixed in with unpleasant people like Arnold how takes notice of her initiating her coming of age experience.

In my narrative, "Just a Little fun" also a thief like Junior who lives in an urban neighborhood. His mother is away and absent as Connie's father and Juniors mom so home is quite lonesome for him too. Before school he takes money out of his mothers purse and buy candy for Jake his best friend and himself. Though Jordan area is bad he spends most of his time at a very prestigious and structured summer class. As he spends most of his time with Jake, they both began to strive for fun seeing as how they are always accounted for. When they decide to go to the lake the beginning of his coming experience begins.

To reach adulthood the teens of this narrative must over come an eye opening experience that shapes their identity and knowledge throughout their lives. However not adult have been
through any critical event and as it may seem that not all adults hold any of the characteristics of being a problematic teen. These narratives are insinuating that everyone has these qualities because they are used over and over to teach lessons. Reasons why the good kids Fade throughout each narrative they never actually become adults even though they have certain characteristics of Adults.

Jake dies before he even has his experience, Jane never really gets to branch out because she was twenty four and still lived at home, and Beto never actually speaks to Jordan about the pressure he puts on him. Because, Jordan, Junior, and Connie pursue the attributes of an adult to do as they please they do have the characteristic of thinking of themselves but that doesn't make them adult because they are still problematic. So the use of the "good kids" isn't to say they are adult but they are used as a distinguishes on what the problematic teenager is and what they are missing before they transition into adults as well as what "good kids" lack to be adults. This relates back to reality in making readers more connected with the text because most adolescents and adults have experienced similar conflicts and traits coming up while growing up. As this unifies adults it gives the sense that problematic teens will fall into the same steps.

In "Just A little Fun", Jordan goes experiences the death of his best friend where he subconsciously blames himself for because he kept enforcing Jake to go to the lake with him even though they were allowed. His attitude and priorities changed from that event motivating him to do something productive with his life, which he ends up getting a business award and thanking Jake for it. Jordan became responsible and hard working as before there was no sense of path or ambition in his life. Ultimately if Jordan hadn't experience his best friends death he his life would have been very different and even if he was more like Jake and was a "Good Kid" he till this day would not be an adult. His age might say this but his state of mind and characteristic would say he hasn't quite grown up yet.

In "Drowns" ending Junior doesn't change, he is affected by the sexual experience that was a shocker to him but he didn't make any self progression. He was confused on what he wanted and how the way he's always lived his life was changed because he engaged in sexual activities with his male best friend. Because, Junior doesn't change "Drown" addresses that not all coming of age experience allow the characters to become adults as well as in "Where are you going? Where are you coming from?" Readers are allowed to make the decision on what happens to Connie and if she's to ever reflect on the even or change herself other than becoming aware of some the negative things about life. Where as in majority of the readings the audience begins to see the pattern of redemption in characters the is always a point in life where you become aware of what's actually taking place
outside of your world. The reflecting gives the narrative a more conscious view of life and doesn't make it a heart breaker and unrealistic narrative. "Just a Little Fun", tells readers what has happened to Jordan after the experience and how he's changed and made progression. Jordan's coming of age experience completes the transition into adulthood. By making their narratives ambiguous Diaz and Oates' allow readers to use their own influence or interpretations to conclude their own endings. This shows that even with the use of background and independent thinking readers still accumulate the same types of endings.

In essence, using problematic teenagers in transition into adulthood is essential because the use of the "good kids" shadowing the narratives emphasizes the qualities of the average teenager. Their environments influence and is influenced by their coming of age experience. Signifying these importance on how the view of teenagers is perceived also explains why they are mentioned incoming of age narratives. These aspects help give the narratives a sense of realism because this is the idea of how everyone enters adulthood in real life and with out it you can never be an actual adult whether or not age says otherwise. Without any problematic character one may never grow up because without making a choice about themselves whether for value, what they want, morals, or who they are; they aren't adult.

Paul Torres

The Reason Behind Innocence

The justice system says that one is innocent until proven guilty. This custom should not only apply for suspects and those that are accused of breaking the law, but also for every human being that is born into this world because everyone is born innocent and will remain that way or will fall victim to the influences of life itself leading to an altered state of the pure mind. What does it mean to be innocent? In terms of the law and the justice system, the answer can get very complicated. However, the innocence that is going to be analyzed here is the state of mind that is absent from corruption and wrong doing in any human being. The goal is to try and determine at what point a human being gains knowledge of immoral behavior and acts in support of such behavior. Not only that but to establish a reason behind the corruption of a pure conscience. Fingers are always being pointed for the mental contamination of a clean mind and parents, friends, family, teachers, etc. think that it's TV, profanity, music, weapons, war, and drugs that make adolescent have guilty minds. Those aren't
the things to blame but instead, the idea of nature vs. nurture. Babies are born with no intentions to kill, swear, hate, or break the law but either they will keep away from those intentions because they naturally can or they will gain those intentions through the nurture of external factors in life. Knowing this can help one analyze themselves to determine how their innocence has been affected throughout their life and if it was due to nature or nurture. There are four pieces of work that I’ve chosen because of the vital message that each one tries to get across and the idea that each one emphasizes. Each one of these works show different situations in which human morals are tested and examined leading to the comparisons between innocence and guilt. The story “A Good Man is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor depicts multiple characters that have lost their innocence each through different causes. The movie Big Fish by Tim Burton exemplifies how a pure mind can be taken advantage of yet sustained. A novel The Lord of the Flies by William Golding reflects the idea of nature vs. nurture and questions whether or not certain people are born to be evil. Last but not least a scholarly article “Flannery O’Connor’s Spoiled Prophet,” written about “A Good Man is Hard to Find” analyzes the moral state of the characters in the story. All of these tie in to suggest that as much as society, media, family, friends, jobs, money, etc. try to break through the barriers that preserve innocence, none of those will have an effect unless the barriers are opened voluntarily by the conscience of the individual.

First of all, innocence is best found in the early stages of life which is from infants to young teenagers and that is why it is so vulnerable to corruption because adolescents do not fully understand life and become overly exposed. Nowadays the media is full of bias news, politics, movies, and shows that are of such easy access to the youth. Besides that, school, friends, and even family expose young minds to things such as relationship issues, discrimination, and violence. The fact of the matter is that people who have lived longer shape the next generations way of thinking because they know the ropes of life and they have established a view of life. What ends up happening is the experienced ones tend to think for the less experienced youth instead of letting them think on their own. Once that has happened, the gift of innocence that everyone is born with is put on the line and one either protects it or surrenders it to society. In “A Good Man is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor, the child John Wesley demonstrates his violent thoughts, “Yes, and what would you do if this fellow, The Misfit, caught you?’ the grandmother asked. ‘I’d smack his face,’ John Wesley said” (948). These words are a result of a loss of innocence in the mind. This child’s moral principles have been contaminated with hatred and aggressiveness from outside factors. That is what happens to a corrupt mind. Now there are also those who go through the same
exposures of society and still ask questions, still don’t understand why life is the way it is, still don’t
believe in the things they see. These are the ones who have a strong moral sense and a conscience
that avoids the corrupt influences of our world.

With that said, it is important to understand why the people that are inborn with the ability
to filter out the negatives and preserve their innocent mind are the ones who make change in the
world. Not a lot of people are innocent and those who are can lose it very quickly. A story written
by Flannery O’Connor is titled “A Good Man is Hard to Find” It needs to be viewed as “An
innocent man is hard to find” because part of what I believe the author is trying to say is that when a
good man is found, he or she should be valued because he or she is naturally like that and it can only
improve society. Innocence brings peace to society since there are no opinions, arguments, and
prejudice involved with it. Utopia does not exist and that means not everyone can be innocent. The
innocent human beings in this world balance out the corrupt and evil power. Imagine if from now
on people were born with no morals. They would act how they were taught to act and nowadays the
saying “if it bleeds it leads” is truer than ever. All people want to hear about whether it is on the
news or in person are deaths, accidents, disasters, disease, robbery, etc. and that is why the media
gives it to them, it improves ratings. If humans didn’t have a moral sense that filters out evil
temptations then this is all they would know and it would just make them want to do it as well. This
would not be a pretty sight. In essence, innocence is what society hopes to find in people as it
improves human interaction, relationships, and social behavior.

As an illustration of the value of innocence to relationships I’ve considered the movie Big
Fish by Tim Burton. Its main character was the father, Edward Bloom, who was the type of person
to bend the truth slightly and say things that never actually happened. His primary exaggerated story
was that of how his son, William, was born and he told many people this half true story of catching
a really huge fish with a wedding ring as bait and he mentioned befriending a giant, finding a hidden
town, seeing Siamese twins, etc. In one scene of the movie, Edward is in William’s room tucking
him in for bed and William asks him to tell a story. Edward warns William that last time he told the
story William had nightmares. William didn’t mind and wanted to hear it again (Big Fish). In a way,
Edward valued the lack of knowledge and innocence that his son William had because it allowed for
him to sort of shape the mind of his son with ideas and stories that would influence William’s
beliefs. As a result, Edward was able to pass a little bit of himself onto his son. That is the value in
innocence, attempting to put a little bit of one’s self into a pure mind that is waiting to be filled with
knowledge, whether it is negative or positive knowledge. It helped Edward bond with his son and
helped William learn a life lesson on communication. Innocence brings peace and is valuable to social relationships.

Consequently, William’s conscience was well grounded to his moral values and as William grew older his conscience became less gullible to lies and more protective of his values which developed naturally, since he was born to be unaffected by environmental influences. This is why William was able to be away from his father for so long. In the beginning of the movie it starts off with present time and Edward is telling his tall tales to all the guest at Edward’s wedding including William. As a grown man, William wanted nothing to do with the tall tales and left the wedding. Edward later joins him outside by the dock and they have a huge argument over the fact that Edward can’t just tell William the truth about his life. After the argument they end up not talking to each other for years. As William described it, they were “strangers who knew each other very well” \((\text{Big Fish}).\) This implies that as much as William loved and trusted his father, he still had his own values and his conscience would not let Edward’s influence break through the barriers that protected his innocence and as a result they became like strangers. Eventually, Edward was suffering from health problems and was approaching the end of his life. William finally decided to settle matters between them. Indeed it was William’s strong moral conscience that encouraged him to fix the father-son relationship but what needs to be made clear is that this ability comes naturally since birth. Notice how William enjoyed believing the stories as an adolescent yet as a grown man he was annoyed with them and didn’t encourage it. What this means is that as a child William didn’t know any better so he didn’t have knowledge to sense how ridiculous the stories were. However, he still had an innocent conscience that lead him to stop believing lies and demand the truth. His father was unable to influence him with the stories since William was born with a conscience that would eventually filter out all the influences of life and keep only what was related to his true beliefs.

Additionally, how is it possible for someone such as William to preserve his conscience state of wanting to know his father’s true life story even though his father explains to William that his stories are not lies but indeed the truth? There are people who gain knowledge and experiences that change their way of thinking into something far from the pure and blank mind that nature gives them. These people have a very weak and unstable innocence. Then there are the ones who are born with a firm conscious that isn’t manipulated as easy as others. That’s the conscience that William has and that is why he is innocent because he doesn’t settle for phony tales, he needs sincerity. The novel \textit{The Lord of the Flies} by William Golding shows exactly how nature vs. nurture works. These children become stuck on an island after their plane crash lands on it. All of them survive and the
pilots and every other adult are killed. With no one but each other for support, the adolescents are forced to survive on their own. At first all is well but soon enough conflict emerges over leadership, personal priorities, survival tactics, and power. The children on the isolated island either became cold hearted and evil or they stuck with their morals and did what was right to survive. The antagonist, Jack, rebels against everyone and starts his own group of kids who strive to murder pigs, bully the others, and act on violence. Piggy and Ralph on the other hand, strived to maintain peace and goodwill amongst each other (Golding). The difference between these two acts is significant as it is an example of how one can conserve the innocence they were born with vs. losing sight of their moral beliefs due to their incapability to follow their conscience. One may wonder how a child can preserve their innocence in such a struggling situation as being stuck on an island with no adults, food, or safety. It’s all in the mentality of the person. Certain people are born with a conscience that is capable of preserving the blank slate in their mind while certain people are born innocent but only until they learn the physical and mental attributes of evil and prefer that kind of behavior. Of course no one is born with hate in their thoughts for instance, and that is because no baby has ever showed signs of this. That does not mean that they can’t be born with a mind that has a different way of thinking that causes them to support hatred as soon as they learn about it. Think of a human as being a gun. By itself a gun is innocent and can't cause harm. If it is acted on by something else and the trigger is pulled then it can cause damage but not if the safety switch is on. The safety clip is like the human conscience preserving innocence because it’s maintaining the harmless state of the gun. Anyone can have their trigger pulled by influences but not everyone can keep the safety switch on. Nature gives humans a safety switch but nurture can get rid of it. Preserving innocence is possible if the person is not affected by what society tries to teach them or change about them.

Moreover, once innocence is lost there is no getting it back. The damage that is done by acting on an impure mind is irreversible. One can’t go back to original purity if they made an impact on society and others with an influenced attitude; corruption occurred and it’s engraved in the conscience of the individual. The author Flannery O’Connor has multiple messages in her story and one in particular is relevant to the loss of innocence. The Misfit, who was the antagonist, was a wise man who knew his life very well. I believe that O’Connor used him to emphasize a life lesson. The Misfit explains, “I never was a bad boy that I remember of,’ The Misfit said in an almost dreamy voice, ‘but somewhere along the line I done something wrong and got sent to the penitentiary. I was buried alive,’ and he looked up and held her attention to him by a steady stare” (957). The Misfit at one point must have been an innocent person with a weak conscience though. He must have been
influenced to do what he did. He appears to be very smart and know exactly what he is doing and that is why he admits that although he is corrupted now, he was innocent at one point. He brought down his barriers and society got to him, and the barriers were forever gone.

Furthermore, people will disagree with me and believe that anybody can be corrupted by society whether the conscience allows it to or not. In other words, one's atmosphere makes them who they are. This can’t be true if there are children who come out of ghettos, slums, and gang affiliated neighborhoods and still treat others with respect, act loyal, graduate high school, go to college, and have determination to make something of themselves. Wouldn’t their surrounding environment cause them to be just like everybody else and rob stores, kill, and do drugs? If a person doesn’t believe in the wrong doings surrounding them, then they will maintain being innocent because it is not in them to think in favor of such corruption. This can be anything from prejudice to violent acts. Surely there are people who hide their true beliefs and put on an act for others but at the end of the day they always go back to what they believe in, what they live for, what makes them who they are. Those true beliefs that humans live by are either a product of innocence or an impure state of mind. For instance, William from Tim Burton’s *Big Fish* was always told half made up stories by his father. He was expected to believe those stories but he later realized how false they were. The rest of his life William just wanted to know the truth about his father. His beliefs didn’t allow him to accept all the stories he was told. Similarly, external influences like parents fighting in front of a child don’t always change the child. He or she can still oppose violence and believe in a better life. An article by T.W. Hendricks analyzes the negative behaviors of the children in “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and brings out a message that Flannery O’Connor might have wanted the reader to get. The article mentions, “John Wesley, whose name suggests that his parents had high hopes for him, is rude to his grandmother and scornful of his family's history” (Hendricks). The fact that the name the parents gave their child was due to high hopes for him leads one to assume that they were not bad parents. If they were not bad parents then it is strange that John Wesley would be so scornful, especially if critics against my argument believe that innocence is lost by a negative atmosphere and influence. John Wesley’s parents did no harm to their son yet he still became corrupt. A more reasonable explanation for this is John Wesley’s natural morals and conscience decision to be as rude as he was regardless of how he was treated by his parents. His parents were laid back and often times gave him what he wanted to please him. Wesley still chose to be as snotty as he was due to corruption that he voluntarily allowed to act on him. An individual who sticks to his or her morals would understand right from wrong better and wouldn’t create difficulty for a family that didn’t
make life difficult for him or her. Each human is in full control of their conscience and nobody can force a change on it. That is the great thing about our conscience, it is isolated from everything and anything in the world and it is where innocence lives.

In conclusion, it is unquestionably certain that the conscience of the human mind has been premeditated by nature itself. If one is not born with a firm grasp to his or her beliefs then he or she is born ready to be taught on how to think and what to believe. This relates to the theory of nature vs. nurture which has been a controversial issue for centuries now. Some people think that genetics and heredity are the reason a human behaves how he does, like a natural instinct. Others believe that nurture shapes a life and humans are taught to behave how they do. There really isn’t one right idea. A combination of both these theories contributes to mankind. The ideas of innocence mentioned earlier support these two claims. If a person is born with the ability to protect his or her innocence then that is nature’s role on humanity. On the other hand, if a person comes to life being dependent on the lessons life brings on him or her then nurture is playing the role. The role of nurture can only corrupt the innocence of those with an unstable conscience. The barriers protecting innocence will be brought down at some point in life, sometimes they are never brought down but it’s understood that this depends on the person not society.

Works Cited


China is a country that has a long history. I was born in China, and lived there for sixteen years. When I first moved to the United States, I felt so out of place. Even now, I am not really adjusted well.
My language is always the biggest problem that I have. I am the only one in my family who can speak a little bit English; that is the reason why I have to try to communicate or solve the problems that my family may have. It started when I stepped on the airplane. We took a Korean Airline to get here. The flight attendants were really polite to us, but they spoke Korean! In order to communicate, we had to use English, the world-wide language. Even though I had learned English in China before, when I really use it to talk, it was so different. All the announcements and movies were in English. I just could not understand. Even the games were in English. We all had played the game called hang man, which was one of the games that they had on the airplane. The poor man was always hanged in six seconds. I could not help it; I only knew a few words. Also, when I got nervous, I could not even remember all the words that I knew. Here comes the funny part. At the airport, during the immigration inspection, one of the prosecutors asked me whether I brought any moon cakes, and I did not understand it. Finally, he had to use his hand to point up to the sky and draw a circle, and he said: “the moon at night”. It took me a while, but I figured it out he meant the moon, because it was the time of Mid-Autumn Festival. After that I was so mad at myself: how could I do not remember what the moon means? I had learned the word when I was in middle school.

Because it was a long trip to travel all the way from China to the United States, we had a transition stop in Korea. There was a huge mall in the airport. There was plenty of time to go window shopping there. So my mom and I walked in each store to look around. When my mom saw something that she really liked, she told me to ask the price. I did not want to ask any questions, because I knew that my English was poor. Nobody could understand me; I could not understand anyone else’s talking either. I was so upset. But I had to ask, so I just acted like I understood some of it. I kept nodding and saying, “Oh, oh, okay”. It looked like I knew something, and understood a lot, while, actually I did not understand anything at all. Maybe it was not nothing, at least, there were a few words that I could catch. I also made something up, when I was trying to translate to my mom. She knew I did not understand that much, so she said: “I know you are just guessing”. Then I replied: “At least, I am not guessing without any bases!” It sounds funny, but at that time I did not think that was funny at all.

Actually, after we finished our conversation, I felt bad. As I said before, it was Mid-Autumn Festival. That is a holiday in China that we celebrate the good harvest. It is also the time that all the family get together to join the moment of being a whole family. But our family was divided into two parts. My parents and I were on our way to the United States; my brother stayed in China. When I
looked up the sky, I felt it was so unfamiliar. I was in a totally different country and faced with a
different culture, different people, different language, and even more.
I am the main cause of why we decided to immigrate to the US, which needed to separate our
family. Everything was for my education. I am the hope of the whole family. When I noticed that I
could not help my parents to solve the problems, I was so sad. I thought I was disappointing them,
ev even though they did not say it. They kept saying that as long as I did my best, they would not blame me. But I watched everything that happened to my family and everything that my family did to support me; I could not let them down. I knew I had to catch up fast enough in order to have the ability to help my parents. Living in a new country is a big challenge for me and my family, but I am still trying to prove that it was worth it to come to America for my education.

Narrative and Place

“The unique features of a local environment always give special characteristics to its inhabitants”. This is a Chinese adage, which means different places give the people who live there different personality or more. In my opinion, the description of the setting and environment is very important to the narrative, because the place where the tale happens is one of the basic elements that should be in a narrative to help the readers understand the whole story. A place itself has its own story behind it. When we talk about winter in the North, for example, we will think of the snow, which gives the readers an idea about the setting or the background. Setting is really important, because it helps readers to understand what is going on. Every event that happens is based on the setting. Certain settings will make certain events possible to happen, or we can infer what will occur. For example, if one was born in China, then later when the readers know that he/she is the only kid in his family, the readers won’t be surprise because we all know China has “One-Child Policy.” A setting is like the foundation of a building; the whole story is like the building. Each level depends on the foundation. Without a good foundation, it is impossible to have a great edifice. An essay without a settled place will give the readers a lot of confusion, also may affect the development of the story. In Flannery O’Connor’s “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and John Updike’s “A& P”, they both showed how important the place is in a narrative.

As I said before, a place can contain a lot of latent story. When we talk about a café, we will think about food. So if I say the student throws a cheeseburger to the teacher, nobody will question where the student gets the burger. It happens in the café, the latent massage that is sent to the readers is there will be food there, so no wonder the kid has a burger in hand to attack the teacher. In my personal narrative, I said that I was born in China and lived there for sixteen years. I did not
mention any more about it. But there is latent information. First, my race is Asian. Second, I speak Chinese as my first language. Third, I am new in the United States, because I just moved here two years ago. As I wrote previously, I am new in the US. I did not need to use a whole paragraph to explain why I am so unfamiliar with everything. All the explanations are done by setting the place that I came from.

Sometimes, the place also has latent information about religion and how the place that relates to religion is important. Timeo Tho Bewes, a student who attended Duke University, stated, “O’Connor and Sebald relate to landscape, too, in radically divergent ways. In O’Connor, writing in the provincial American South, landscape is invested with apparently transcendental significance, closely connected with her Catholicism,” in his journal article “What Is A Literary Landscape? Immanence And The Ethics Of Form” (64). Landscape is a view of a large area of land, especially in the country (“Landscape”). In other words, landscape is the description of the environment in the story. In Bewes’ view, he believed that the description was important and well shown by O’Connor. It also related to O’Connor’s Catholicism. What he said could be proved by reading through O’Connor’s “A Good Man is Hard to Find”. In the story, the grandma kept praying to God, which showed her Catholicism. The whole story was set in the South, where the Catholicism in the US was rooted: “The first Catholic missionaries were Spanish… They established missions in what are now Florida, Georgia, Texas, New Mexico, California, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico” (Catholic Church in the United States). As we all can see, Catholicism arrived in the South first. It was understandable that the grandma was praying when she met the criminal. Even though I do not want to talk about religion, Bewes’ journal article still showed how the setting place gave the latent information.

The description of the place will help the readers to infer the developing of the story. O’Connor’s “A Good Man is Hard to Find” is a good example. When the family had an accident, O’Connor described the situation like this,

They turned onto the dirt road and the car raced roughly along in a swirl of pink dust… the dirt road was hilly and there were sudden washed in it and sharp curves on dangerous embankments. All at once they would be on a hill, looking down over the blue tops of trees for miles around, then the next minute, they would be in a red depression with the dust-coated trees looking down on them… the road looked as if no one had traveled on it in months. (952-953)
From all these descriptions, it was not hard to tell that they were at a dangerous place. “Hilly”, “sudden washed”, “sharp curve”, “all at once” were all used to describe how the road was there. From those words, I could tell how bad the road was, and I also could smell something dangerous. It was so rapid and hard to drive on. While I was reading this part, I thought about some horror movies which always happen on precipitous mountains. In those movies, there always are some creepy animals or monsters jump that out of the road. As I followed the regular common thought, I was thinking there would have some bad and creepy events waiting there. At this ominous condition, it was really hard for me to infer that there would be a beautiful happy sense. So I assumed that the criminal who was talked a lot about over the course of the whole trip would appear from somewhere, because that was the best place to have the Misfit. Of course, O’Connor mentioned him almost everywhere; the Misfit must be a really important character. As a cruel prisoner, this dangerous place was the best place for him to hide and commit crimes. As I talked so far, we all can see how the description of the place and environment could let the readers imply the developing of the story. Fabulously, this is not the only benefit of the description of the position; it also helps us to understand the text.

As I said before, a well settled place in the essay helps to explain why some events happen or the possibility of having some events happen. Still in Flannery O’Connor’s “A Good Man is Hard to Find”, she stated that, “the road was about ten feet above and they could see only the tops of the trees on the other side of it. Behind the ditch they were sitting in there were more woods, tall and dark and deep” (953). From this description of the place where the family has an accident, I could tell that they were in a really bad condition. They were wrecked on an abandoned road far away from the main road and nobody lives nearby; they were barely able to get help from anyone. Now, in this kind of bad condition, it was the best place to let a crime happen. A criminal will not choose a noisy down town area to commit crimes. If that were to happen in the story, I would be so surprised and confused. As what I anticipated, the Misfit appeared at this moment. This place directly explained why the criminal dared to kill all six people in the family. That was a road that nobody would pass by, so no one would be able to find out what they were doing or why they went down the road. Also, all around them were trees, which made it much harder to find the corpses. If these conditions were not provided, Misfit and his followers would not have decided to kill them, because they just got out from the jail. Another crime would have made it easier to be caught. But they know exactly they would not be caught; they knew the place where they stood was the perfect location to get rid of those witnesses who saw his face. Now let us think, what if O’Connor did not
state a place like this? All the reasons that I analyzed before will become the questions that the readers will ask. Why did they dare to kill so many people? Where could they place the corpses? Why there was nobody saw or heard the crime happened? As we all can see, all the confusions were explained by setting the place.

In John Updike’s “A&P”, the narrative happens in a store, which indirectly helped to explain how plot developed. He stated, “In walks these three girls in nothing but bathing suits” (967). Then later the manager in the store just said: “We want you decently dressed when you come in here… Girls, I don’t want to argue with you. After this come in here with your shoulders covered. It’s our policy” (970-971). As we can see from these pieces, the problem happened because these three girls wore bathing suits in the “Store.” Wearing a bathing suit was nothing wrong at all, but the problem was where the bathing suits were worn. Everyone can wear bathing suit on the beach because that is a proper location to do so. But when they were wearing them in a store, it caused the argument. Because the story happened in a store, the developing in the story was understandable. If Updike had not set the location as a store, there would not have been an argument about dressing indecently, or there would not even have been a manager who started this argument. The whole story cannot keep going without setting the location.

The description of the place and environment can help us to analyze the character’s thoughts and feelings. Sometime, it is not necessary to state one’s mind directly. The imagery can affect the main character’s feeling. In Updike’s “A&P”, after the character quit his job, there was a description of the environment: “I just saunter into the electric eye in my white shirt that my mother ironed the night before, and the door heaves itself open, and outside the sunshine is skating around on the asphalt” (972). In these few sentences, there was not any description of the character’s feeling. But the sunny day outside the store serves as a foil to highlight how cloudy his feelings were. Imagine if I do not do well in my job and got your boss’ scolding, when I step outside the building and you see the sunny shine, I will feel worse. The day outside is so pretty, while my life is not as pretty as the day. I felt I was in his mind at that moment. That was how the description of the place helped me to analyze the main character.

The change of the locations also affects the developing of the story or explains why some feelings occur. It may also explain how certain feelings are caused by the change of the position. In my personal narrative, I said that I came from China. I spent my majority time of my life there. Then I said I moved to the United States two years ago. This is a big change in countries, which explained further in my writing, “My language is always the biggest problem that I have… At the
airport, during the immigration inspection, one of the prosecutors asked me whether I brought any moon cakes, I did not understand it. Finally, he had to use his hand to point up to the sky and draw a circle, said: “the moon in the sky at night” (Wang 1). I talked about that I had problem in language, and how bad it was. If I did not say anything about the variation of the place where I lived, there just would not be any difficulty for me in language. In other words, the changing places help the readers to understand the story. We all know Chinese people speak Chinese; Americans speak English. That is the difference. I moved from China to the US, so of course I would have problems. But if I did not say these changing places in my narrative, I would have made a big confusion. When others read my narrative, they will ask why she said she cannot communicate in English. The readers will assume that I was born in America. But after I set these two different countries as background, everything becomes clear.

“A Good Man is Hard to Find” is a story that based on the family trip which is changing places. The family was traveling to Florida, a place they do not know well. That was a reason that they would drive into an abandoned road without questioning the grandma’s memory. None of them know exactly where they were going. If they did not travel to another state and stayed where they lived, then the whole story would not happen. Also, the trip is the main cause that they met the prisoner, Misfit, as they did not live in Florida, if they had not decided to travel, they would not have had the chance to meet Misfit. As for the grandma in the story, she had a lot of experiences. She lived in Tennessee when she was young, and then, for some reason, she moved to the place where her family lived later. Because of this trip, she traveled to Florida. Since she had so many different memories of different places, she messed up her memories of Tennessee with those of Florida. She really wanted to go back to Tennessee, which was a reason that made her keep thinking of stories that happened in there. If there were not changes in places, how could she mess up her memories? If she had lived in Tennessee for her entire life and never visited anywhere else, then she would not have made any mistakes no matter how old she was. If she had not mixed the memories altogether, then there would not have been further writing. Her mistake was the main reason why the family was stranded on an abandoned road. As I have explained so far, we all can see how effective the changing places are. It makes the whole story’s developing so clear and understandable.

As what I talked about previously in my introduction, a well set place is really helpful to the readers. A setting and the description of it can contain more stories behind that place, which I may not get from the whole text. It can also will help me to understand the developing of the story and analyze the main character’s thought. When an article is too hard to understand, I consider it as a
pretty view that is behind a tall wall. It is hard to reach the top of the wall to see this amazing view. Understanding and analyzing the place are the steps that can help to raise ourselves to reach the top. After we know the importance of the set places and connect it to the whole story, understanding the writing just becomes an easy job. I believe this will help all the other readers with analyzing difficult writing.

Work Cited


“Landscape.” 好易通. E-Book

