

Best of Freshman Writing

Volume 11

Student Voices

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Best of Freshman Writing

WELCOME to the eleventh volume of **Best of Freshman Writing**. For the past several years we have been publishing student writing with the intention of celebrating the work that our students do and of sharing it with others for a variety of instructional purposes. Beginning this year, we began accepting student essays from not only the twelve former Commonwealth College campuses but also from seven additional PSU campuses (see list on back cover), from students in English 004, 015, and 030.

Many of our readers have asked about our editorial guidelines, which we publish on our web site (www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/bof.htm). We only accept essays produced in the courses listed above, and the essays must be submitted by faculty members from the campuses. In other words, **Best** is not an “open submissions” publication.

Some faculty have asked if we will accept short stories or poems or essays produced in other courses. The answer is quite simply no. Other Penn State publications are better suited for this purpose.

At the end of each fall and spring semester, we send out an email call for papers to the various campuses within the university, but our final deadline

for papers is May 15 of each year. The papers must be typed and double-spaced, with the student’s name on them. All documentation should be in MLA parenthetical style and verified by the student’s instructor. (Please see the editorial at the end.) Faculty should gather the students’ papers and send them in one envelope from each campus, along with a signed publication agreement form, which can be downloaded from our web site. (See above.) The student’s return address should also be included so that we can send him or her a copy of the publication in which his or her essay appears.

We hope you like this edition of **Best** and that more of you will participate in its production in the future by submitting essays to us. We are all very curious about how students are writing throughout the system. **Best** provides a meaningful link between faculty and students throughout the state. Let us know what you think about it. We want your suggestions and help.

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Best,
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George W. Melcer
English 004
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My Zaidy

THE U.S. MILITARY has a commercial that asks, “If your life was a book, would anyone want to read it?” As for my grandfather’s life, I could respond to that with a “yes.” In fact it is a book, titled: *Chaim’l: The Story of a Survivor*, and a little over 50 pages in length. Known to me as “Zaidy,” which literally translated is “grandfather” in Yiddish, his life has been written from when he was nine years old to current times, though about 95 percent of it is dedicated to only three years of his life.

Born in 1930, during that time, my Zaidy lived in a small village known to the world as “Sobibor.” About a mile from my Zaidy’s home was Sobibor Death Camp, which most Jews don’t think of as a cozy little village, but instead the place where their immediate and extended families were murdered. This was true for my Zaidy, as his mother, Fayga Melcer; brother, Elie Melcer; second brother, Yaakov Melcer; sister, Ennie Melcer; and mother’s father, his grandfather, were all murdered there. In fact, this Sobibor Death Camp was located so close to my Zaidy’s home that he remembers being able to smell the incineration of innocent Jews and hearing the screams of helpless victims as they were shot. The German soldiers sometimes for fun would enjoy tormenting the Jews living near the camp by going up to them and saying, “You smell that? It will be you someday.”

The fate of my Zaidy and his father was to be quite different from the rest of their family. Neither entered the Sobibor Death Camp, located so close to their home. Instead, they jumped out of a small window that was not covered by barbed wire, on the moving train that was taking them to their doom. At the age of twelve, my Zaidy jumped first, not knowing that anyone else had followed him out or what lay ahead of him. My Zaidy survived the wilderness, with no supplies and snow on the ground, for seven days before reuniting with his father.

They found each other in a Jewish ghetto located in Wlodava that was set up by the Germans. It housed about 2,000 Jews, some of whom thought that my Zaidy’s story was similar to that of someone else living in the ghetto. The person who had a similar story hap-

pened to be Zaidy’s father. They were reunited and hugged for about five minutes.

During this time apart, my Zaidy was rounded up, put in a cattle car, hauled off as if he were going to a slaughter house, survived seven days of winter with no supplies, no shelter, no encouragement to keep him going, and no food or drink besides what he could find.

From June of 1942 to the summer of 1944, when my Zaidy was liberated by the Russian Army, he went through various events which it would not be respectful in any way, shape, or form to even try to summarize in a paragraph. The best that I can do is say he was starved, shot at, hunted like an animal, and generally treated as lower than dirt by some of the people whom he had trusted the most before the war. During those times my Zaidy lived in any hole in the ground, usually in the forest, a barn that housed cows or horses, forced to seek shelter that was more often than not home to rats and other vermin.

While I am not a big fan of what religion stands for, I am proud to say “I am Jewish,” as I know what people in my family and religion have gone through to give me the privilege to openly say that. Although I am not in a rush to start a family of my own anytime soon, when I do, I will be proud to bear the “Melcer” name, as I know thousands of people know the significance of what that means. My Zaidy’s video, which was produced by the SHOAH foundation, created by Steven Spielberg, is played at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum of Washington, D.C. and is shown to thousands of people each year.

Frank Manganella

English 004
Worthington Scranton

Joe

AS A BUNCH of my buddies and I were walking down the boardwalk in good old Ocean City, Maryland, for our Senior Week, we saw a young white kid, about twenty years old. He had long hair like Jim Morrison and looked like he hadn’t shaved in a week. He had a cut under his left eye, maybe from a fight or just a scratch. His face was oval shaped, and he had a pointy

nose. He had two big earring in his ears, a tongue ring and a lip ring, and he wore a Grateful Dead tie-dye T-shirt with an old brown and maroon wool sweater over it. His jeans had holes at the knees. He wore old raggedy flip-flops, which were too big for his small feet. He sat on a bench playing his acoustic guitar, a cigarette in his mouth, right on Sixth Street, next to the public bathrooms. The street light hanging over him blinked on and off.

We walked closer to him while he was playing a Dave Matthews Band song, called "Crash," and started bobbing our heads to the music. As he finished playing we decided to stay and talk to him. When he stood up, he looked about six-feet-four-inches and a good 200 pounds. He walked over to us like he was walking on air, just floating. He said, "What's up?" and I could tell my buddies were thinking what I was thinking; his breath smelled of cigarettes, booze, and marijuana. He talked like he had just taken some pills and was laid back, not caring about the world, just chilling.

After rolling a joint, he said "Hi" to us. He started telling us how he lives with his grandmother and wakes up in the morning and goes surfing. After he is done surfing he comes to his spot and plays for people. We could tell he was just a beach bum by the way he talked, spoke, and dressed. It didn't seem like he had much money either. We only saw four one dollar bills and a couple of quarters in his old guitar case that was covered with Pink Floyd, The Doors, Styx, Bob Dylan and Led Zeppelin stickers. The old case had chipped paint and was in very bad condition. We asked him if he could play Tom Petty's "Free Falling" and he said in a deep voice, "Of course I can." As he reached in his ripped up pocket to pull out his pick, I looked quickly at his hands; they were dirty and cut. His fingernails were bitten down to the cuticle. Between his thumb and index finger was the tattoo of a devil.

As he started playing, we joined him in singing the words,

She's a good girl,
loves her momma,
loves Jesus and America too,
she's a good girl,
crazy 'bout Elvis,
loves horses and her boyfriend too.

Here we were, twelve guys, screaming this song at 2:00 A.M. on the boardwalk as people were walking by. They saw us jamming out with this hippie looking guy we

had just met ten minutes before.

As he was playing he looked at me and said, "You guys are awesome," with his eyes bloodshot, laughing and just having a good time, not having a care in the world. As the song came to an end, we didn't care how he smelled, or how he was dressed or how he looked. We had met an awesome guy who was there with the same intention we were, to have fun and not be arrested. As we all slapped hands good-bye, we knew we were the only ones who would stop and talk to him. And now, wherever we may be, in Ocean City or Pennsylvania, we still talk about that stoner Joe who played "Free Falling" for twelve strangers, just for a cigarette.

Justin Podunajec

English 004

Worthington Scranton

Warwick Castle Dungeon

STANDING ON THE EDGE of the first stone step that leads down into the dungeon would send shivers up anyone's spine. A cold breeze blew up from the deteriorated stone steps that turned many young ladies away. The ceiling above was falling apart and a sign on the wall warned others of falling stones. The walls were cold and damp from the moisture of the ground. The smell of moist mildew and dirt lingered through the air as visitors made their way down the stairs. At the bottom of the deteriorated stone stairs stood a solid steel door so large it took two large men to swing open. The door had solid stainless steel cages built over the windows that allowed little light through. The bars were covered in steel spikes that looked like knives when projected on the walls from the light. A sharp whistling sound of air blew through the two small windows. The walls were made of flat field stones with mortar missing and edgings in them. As I brushed my hand across the walls, I could feel the carved letters of prisoners' names who had died down in this gruesome place. The letters were deep and were carved from stones that had fallen from the ceil-

ing. Beside me fastened to the wall was a sign that read, "Loose debris that fell from the ceiling was used to create carvings in the walls." Above me on the ceiling hung an old rusted steel cage suspended from a rusted steel rod that must have been driven in the ceiling. Under the cage and below my own feet was a small oval hole created by the constant dripping of blood from tortured prisoners. Whispering came from students. A young boy asked his father, "Dad, did people really torture other people?" The fear was obvious in their eyes as they were wide open and constantly looking around. The creepy feeling constantly played with our minds and at times it even felt like someone was tapping us on our shoulders, but no one was there. The walls were painted white, and upon them were metal hand clamps. I could hear the rusted steel clamps rattling as they tapped against the wall. I could taste the dust blowing and at moments I found myself struggling to breathe. The feeling that the dark and ancient dusty chamber left went straight to the heart and embedded itself their forever.

NOTE: *This piece was written in response to an assignment to produce a descriptive paragraph.*

Clinton Gibson

English 015

Berks – Lehigh Valley

Exit Strategy

NOWADAYS no one wants to agree with George W. Bush. No one has any money. People aren't sure who they fear the most, the terrorists or the U.S. Government. And atheists everywhere are considering an emergency move to Canada. But President Bush is right about one thing: We cannot pull our troops out of Iraq.

Abandoning Iraq is tantamount to creating a terrorist state. If you think things over there are bad now, think about an Iraq with nothing to prop up an already tenuous government. In 1973 U.S. troops pulled out of South Vietnam. Look at Vietnam in 1975 after U.S. military forces pulled out. In January of 1974 the North Vietnamese Army invaded South Vietnam. By May 1975 Vietnam was a unified country.

With religious and ethnic tensions at an all-time high, what would happen to Iraq if U.S. forces pulled out? An all-out war between the Sunnis and the Shiites would be inevitable, bringing yet more foreign fighters from throughout the Islamic world. This would undoubtedly create a conflagration with untold political and religious consequences. And whatever happened to those Kurds in the north?

Since the invasion of Afghanistan, Al Qaeda has had its main base of operations in the hands of the enemy. The U.S. has been able to maintain antiterrorism operations in every corner of the globe, despite the diplomatic ineptitude of the current administration. With U.S. forces out of Iraq, not only would Al Qaeda have a new staging ground, it would have a huge supply of new recruits.

In the past the U.S. has used post war occupation to create regional bases of operation in the more dangerous parts of the world. Instances of this date back to Cuba in the Spanish American War, Germany and Japan in World War II and South Korea in the Korean War. A large part of U.S. military policy counts on this.

At the end of the 1990s, Saudi Arabia formally asked to have the U.S. military presence removed from their soil. The Saudi government, a long time

ally, was facing enormous religious pressure to remove all foreign influence from what is essentially holy land. Since then U.S. military operations in the regions have been staged out of Qatar (pronounced cut-ter). A large country, Iraq is several times the size of Qatar, and the U.S. could base large amounts of men and material there, securing U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf.

Despite the President's assertions, all U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is chiefly dictated by the nation's energy consumption. Plainly stated, it's all about the oil. The U.S. is the largest consumer of petroleum products in the world. The Middle East is home to a large part of the world's petroleum reserves. You do the math.

President Bush has pledged large amounts of money and support to the scientific and business communities in an effort to jump start the commercial use of alternative energy sources. These energy sources, however, are years from being commercially relevant. In the meantime, inexpensive petroleum should be the paramount concern for the U.S. government. Having a U.S. presence in a secure and stable Iraq would be an important step towards this goal.

Even if the U.S. is able to greatly scale back its petroleum consumption, control of oil will be one of the largest, if not the largest, future geopolitical concerns. There is only a finite amount of oil on the planet and the human race is consuming it at an alarming rate. As governments begin to realize this, control of the oil will become a hot button issue around the world. Having a strong presence in Iraq would ensure U.S. oil interests for the foreseeable future.

Few would argue today that the invasion of Iraq was a mistake. Recent polls suggest that the majority of Americans believe that we were duped into supporting an illegal military action. Mounting casualties (although nowhere near the amount of casualties seen in previous conflicts) and a growing anti-war movement in the press and congress will almost certainly result in a forced U.S. pullout from Iraq. This will prove to be the biggest mistake of the decade.

Peter Madonna

English 015

Delaware

The World's Greatest

"IT'S JUST A JOB. Grass grows, birds fly, waves pound the sand. I beat people up," said the self-proclaimed world's greatest heavy-weight boxer Muhammad Ali. To many, though, Ali was much more than just an athlete. His stance on social and political issues during and after his long career, and his flamboyance in and out of the ring has influenced many Americans as well as people all over the world. Muhammad Ali was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War because of his Islamic faith. He refused to be drafted, which cost him his championship belt and his boxing license and a five-year prison sentence, later overturned on appeal. His controversial viewpoints turned much of America against him during the highpoint of his boxing career. All through this time he did not waver or change his beliefs to gain back his career that was hurt by such controversies.

Cassius Clay (Ali's birth name) was born in January of 1942, in Louisville, Kentucky. A stolen bike was the motivation for the young twelve-year-old Clay to start boxing. As a teenager he completely devoted himself to boxing and training, not having any other hobbies or jobs to distract him. He fought 108 bouts during his amateur career, culminating with an Olympic Gold medal in 1960 ("Muhammad Ali"). Cassius Clay was only eighteen years old with a gold medal around his neck, and most people had never heard of the young fighter from Louisville. This would all change when his heavyweight career took off, catapulting him to worldwide recognition.

Cassius Clay's fighting style is characterized by his ever moving feet, the "Ali Shuffle" as it was later called. Together with his unorthodox boxing style was his "Louisville Lip" that garnered as much attention as his knockout punches. During the time it was standard for the boxer's managers to deal with the media, but Clay took care of that himself, often intimidating his opponents with his lyrical phrases. Before his fight with then heavyweight champion Sonny Liston, he boldly stated he would "float like a butterfly, and sting like a bee." During his training for that famous fight, he met Malcolm X and was

introduced to the Nation of Islam. He converted to the controversial religion, and soon was given the name Muhammad Ali by the Nation's leader, Elijah Muhammad. Many journalists refused to call him by this name, and the reaction by the nation was largely negative. During his 1967 fight with Ernie Terrell, Ali yelled, "What's my name?" after every blow he dealt to his opponent, who would not acknowledge his new name. In the same year, Ali's public image was dealt another blow when he was accused of dodging the draft.

Because of his religious beliefs, Ali was a conscientious objector of the Vietnam War. That is why he refused to serve in the U.S. Army when he was called up for service in 1967. Almost every state and local boxing commission cancelled his boxing licenses in response to his refusal. His championship title was stripped away, and he was given a prison sentence of five years after his initial court battle. For the next two and a half years, Ali did not have any matches but did speak out against the war in Vietnam at many colleges. One of the first national figures to oppose the war, Ali made an impression on many people. While facing a lengthy prison term, he did not falter in his beliefs or his passion. As the public's support for the war declined, Ali made a comeback in 1970 with fights against Jerry Quarry and Joe Frazier (Howard). After a victory against Jerry Quarry, Ali won an even more important fight: his conviction was overturned by the New York Supreme Court, which meant he could fight anywhere in the world once again. Ali went back to boxing, and fought against George Foreman in the "Rumble in the Jungle" fight in the African country of Zaire in 1974. Ali won a decisive victory after eight rounds of sparring, even though he was the underdog. A year later, he would fight one of the greatest boxing matches of all time, the "Thrilla in Manilla," a fight against Joe Frazier in the Philippines. Ali beat Frazier after fourteen grueling rounds. He continued to box until retiring in 1981.

Muhammad Ali called himself the "King of the World" after his impressive win against Sonny Liston, giving hope to many people who also had to rise up as underdogs. His mastery of the sport of boxing was matched by his exuberant personality in and outside the ring. When most people turned their backs on him during his banishment from the ring, he kept his head up and feet moving. His controversial views and words were misunderstood in the rapidly chang-

ing times of the late 1960's, but this did not discourage the world champion fighter. Muhammad Ali truly deserves the Presidential Medal of Freedom recently given to him by President Bush in November of 2005. This is one of highest civilian awards given by the government and is an honor to such a great man.

Muhammad Ali was one of the greatest heavyweight boxers of all time, yet he was no match for Parkinson's syndrome, which he was diagnosed with in the early 1980s. This degenerative brain disease causes slowed motor function control and tremors. Even though the disease has progressed, Ali still has no regrets over his career and life. He has said that if he had not been a boxer he would be painting houses in Louisville, Kentucky. His determination during times of turmoil and stress has inspired millions of people around the world.

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Erinn Turner
English 015
Delaware

Lack of Motivation

AS I PICK UP MY PENCIL and get out a fresh pad of paper, I try to decide what I will write about for my history essay. It is not that I put writing my paper off until the night before it is due; it is just that I lack the motivation to write about events or subjects that do not interest me very much. I have not always been like this. When I was younger, I could pick up a pencil and write about anything at all. Only over the past several years have I been unmotivated to write about certain subjects.

“Write about the Civil War.” Those were my instructions. What about the Civil War should I write? Should I outline the whole thing? Or concentrate on one aspect of the war? All this thinking about what I should write about just makes my head hurt, so I take a break. I do some other work for a while and end up watching a fascinating movie on TV. By the time the movie is over all I want to do is crawl into bed.

The next day is the day before the essay is due. My lack of motivation has turned into severe procrastination. I finally sit down with my pencil and paper and begin to write my essay. I have decided on an aspect of the war that I will concentrate on and from then on, the words flow from my pencil to the paper. I have no problem writing the essay once I choose this topic; it is the beginning of the process that I have trouble with. I finish the essay, read it over to make sure I have covered what I wanted to and read it over for mistakes before I finally type up the final draft.

My lack of motivation for writing about certain subjects has shaped my life both positively and negatively. It has negatively affected me because it has made me procrastinate in other areas of my life that don't interest me as well, not just school. Sometimes at work I seem to put some things off until the last minute. As much as I try not to procrastinate, my lack of motivation, for writing about history for example, always gets the better of me, and I end up always putting it off and saying that I will “do it later.”

As strange as it may seem, my lack of motivation for certain things has affected me positively as well. When it comes to things I want to write about, or subjects that interest me, I always finish my work ahead of time. For reasons I do not exactly know how to explain, I have no problem doing work for subjects that interest me or doing tasks for other areas of my life that interest me such as classes that I find interesting or doing things for my extracurricular activities.

When I have an assignment due for a subject that doesn't particularly interest me, my lack of motivation sets in. This lack of motivation may turn into procrastination as the days go by and the due date starts growing closer and closer. While this lack of motivation has definitely affected my life negatively, it has also had some positive effects. As the months go by and I write more and more of these essays, I have tried shortening my procrastination period, in

the hope of doing away with it altogether in the near future. But for now, every time I hear my history professor begin to talk about an upcoming essay, my head starts to hurt as I think about what is in store for me.

Ryan Dewar

English 015

Hazleton

The Final Game

SATURDAY MORNING I stepped into my high school locker room to pack for the game. The stale smell of sweaty football pads and unwashed practice uniforms filled my nostrils. To a normal person, the smell could cause a temporary coma, but it was a familiar aroma to a football player. Football players are a special breed of humans who are tough, fearless, and unwavering.

On this particular morning these defining traits were lost on me. All I found was nervousness, a knotted stomach, and an overwhelming amount of fear. I remember thinking to myself, “this could be my last football game in a Honesdale uniform.” It was a miserable, gut wrenching thought that had crossed my mind. The only way to prevent the end of my career was for my team to defeat Berwick High School, and advance to the State Championship Tournament. I thought today could potentially be my last game, as well as the most important game of my high school career, since we were playing for the Pennsylvania District II Championship.

I climbed onto the bus, took my seat, and turned my I-pod on. The music helped to drown out additional noise so I could concentrate. Berwick was a two hour bus ride. I planned to use the time I had to focus and clear my head. I became relaxed, allowing visions of my season to run through my head. I smelled the grass, felt the big hits, heard the fans screaming at the top of their lungs, and I saw the

Friday night lights. I looked around the bus at each of my teammates, and I discovered the reason why I played football. I played for the memories, the laughs, and the struggles I shared with my team. With them by my side I felt all my doubts and fears depart my body. There was nothing for me to be worried about; it was another game to be played, just like all the other ones.

When our bus arrived at Berwick Stadium, I stepped off with a different attitude than when I had stepped on. The headstrong, confident football player in me had returned. Before I dressed for the game, I decided to examine the field and become acquainted with my unfamiliar playing environment. The turf was dried out and frozen from the cold. The weather conditions were difficult to adapt to. It was 35 degrees; the sun was faintly shining; the sky was cloudless, and the frigid November wind was unrelenting.

I re-entered the locker room and started to put my pads on. It was a slow unhurried process; each item was put on carefully. When I finished I sat down and waited for my coach's pre-game speech. As he paced the floor to speak, I felt adrenaline pump through my veins. I felt the energy build in the room. I looked around at my teammates, and they had focused stares and breathed deeply. Each player was coiled in his seat like a predator preparing to attack. At the end of the speech, chaos erupted in the locker room, like a riot through a city.

We exited the locker room to the roar of the stadium. It sounded like the Coliseum from the movie *Gladiator*. Taking the field for offense, I started at tight-end and wide receiver positions. The second play of the series, the ball was thrown to me. My hands were numb from the cold as I stretched out my arms and the ball fell into my grasp. I ran towards the end-zone when a defender grabbed my arms and jerked them back causing the ball to come free. I dove to cover it, but was unsuccessful; a wave of embarrassment crashed into my body. I had let my teammates down.

After several failed running attempts the Bulldogs passed. Playing safety, I scanned the field; my zone was covered. I watched the quarterback's eyes, and I took off for the end-zone. Despite my efforts, I was too late. My teammate was beaten, and our opponents had scored the first touchdown of the game. In a cocky attempt to embarrass our defense the Berwick coach ordered his team to try and complete a two-point conversion. Our defense was ranked third in

the state, built around our defining characteristic, teamwork. Each player relied one another to get the job done. If one player struggled, another teammate would pick up the slack. Proving our worth, the two-point conversion was stopped.

On our second attempt on offense, we drove down the field, scored, and kicked the extra point. We were up 7-6, a shock to everyone, including myself, because we were coming into the game as the underdog. My attitude toward the game had changed dramatically; we could actually win. The quarterback rolled out into the flat. I barreled down on him like a train. I lowered my body and lunged into him, slamming my head into the ball. The ball fell to the ground, and I watched my teammate grab it and head for the end-zone for a touchdown. Our chances of winning this game became obvious to us all at that very moment. We entered the locker room at half-time with the score 14-6.

The first half instilled false hope in my team and me. Our chance of winning in the second half was quickly diminished. Our quarterback threw two back to back interceptions for touchdowns. This turn of events caused a downward spiral. Until the final whistle blew, all our attempts to score were denied; play after play was stopped. We had lost the game. My heart sank, and I started to cry. The season and my career were over, and I would never play with this group of guys again. It was an empty feeling, like I had been robbed of my identity. For four years my life was football, and when the clock clicked zero, it was all taken away. My two-hour bus ride was different the second time because instead of focusing on the game I was focusing on showing no emotion and holding back my tears. The most important game of my life became the final memories of my football career.

Matthew Krone
English 015
Hazleton

Penn State—University Park or Hazleton?

GRADUATION from high school marks a rite of passage for millions of young people each year. It signifies the culmination of more than a decade of hard work and intellectual development designed to prepare individuals for entry into the “adult world.” Regardless of how well prepared they may be, teens will soon find themselves inundated with a variety of new responsibilities and decisions, many of which will either positively or negatively affect the remainder of their adult lives. Some graduates may choose to enter the workforce, while others elect to serve their country in some branch of the military. Yet another segment of the population is deciding, in ever-growing numbers, to attend an institution of higher learning, such as a trade school or university. There are literally thousands of colleges scattered across the country and the rest of the world, each offering a variety of courses of study, and the decision-making process can become extremely difficult for any teenager with so many variables present.

For those who choose to attend Penn State, another decision will soon have to be made about which campus they will attend: a branch campus close to home, such as Hazleton, or the main campus at University Park. Both can offer a world-class education and the socialization of the “college experience,” yet different individuals may find certain aspects of one to be more appealing. Although there is a wealth of similarities between them, the subtle differences can greatly affect success both in the classroom and in life. In making my own assessment, I have examined a few of the many factors that should be weighed in making such a choice: campus size, costs and social life. It is my belief that many individuals, such as myself, would be better served to begin their matriculation at a local branch campus.

A number of facts are simply indisputable in comparing the Hazleton campus to University Park, most notably in terms of size. The main campus boasts an undergraduate enrollment greater than 30,000, while

Hazleton has never surpassed 1,500, a figure rivaled by many large high schools. Another more obvious difference is in terms of facilities and the layout of the two campuses. Hazleton campus is comprised of a handful of classroom buildings spread out over a few acres of land, while University Park encompasses hundreds of acres, spanning several square miles. Those who choose to attend the main campus will quickly realize that a significant portion of their time and energy will be devoted to traveling from place to place within the sprawling campus. For the average student attending a branch campus, walking to class or to and from where their cars are parked takes only a few minutes, whereas completing the same tasks at University Park can easily consume 30 additional minutes of a student’s time. Imagine walking more than a mile in the rain or snow to an 8:00 a.m. class, and it will probably come as no surprise that taking the bus or riding a bike is the preferred mode of transportation for thousands of students and faculty members.

Another stark contrast between Hazleton campus and University Park exists in terms of class size. While the vast majority of class sections at a branch campus will be comprised of 20-30 students, this number can grow exponentially in a classroom such as those in the Forum Building on main campus, where it is not uncommon to find enrollment exceeding 200-300 students. Those who require extra attention from a professor may be better suited to the smaller, more personal environment available at Hazleton campus. For those more capable of success in a larger academic setting, University Park can provide a wealth of intellectual diversity, as well as state-of-the-art facilities.

Tuition and costs for room and board are standardized throughout the Penn State system. There are, however, a number of implicit costs which any college student will accrue on a daily basis. Many young people probably take for granted most of the less-obvious benefits of having resided with their parents for the better part of two decades. Whether they live in an apartment or dorm, new students will find many new responsibilities thrust upon them, such as doing their own laundry, paying a cable or phone bill or shopping for groceries for the first time. With each passing day, young people will find themselves developing more as adults as such “chores” become a more significant part of their everyday lives.

Increased expenses and responsibilities are inher-

ent in the life of any college student, yet many may find the cost of living in the Hazleton Area to be more manageable than the larger State College/University Park community. Nearly every aspect of life, from parking a car, to renting an apartment or house, or going out for a night on the town, costs less in the Hazleton area. For example, parking a car on campus or in a residential area of State College will cost between 50 and 100 dollars each month, an expense most people are probably not used to having. Furthermore, those who choose to ignore the abundance of rules relating to parking will eventually encounter one of the many colorful tow truck drivers who prowl the street. Student lots are typically located on the outer edges of the campus, and there is virtually no parking allowed on the streets. This is in stark contrast to South Hall at Hazleton, for example, where residents can park for free and have access to their vehicles with relative ease.

Renting an apartment in State College can be an extremely complicated process. Students can expect to pay \$300 or more each month for the right to share a small bedroom and even smaller bathroom with two, three or even four of their best friends. Students attending Hazleton campus will find that a similar investment in the Hazleton area would allow the individuals to rent an entire house, rather than just a few rooms. Regardless of location, these young “heads of household” will soon find paying bills on time, house maintenance and interpersonal relationship issues to be a fact of everyday life.

The final consideration in choosing between a branch campus and University Park lies in the perceived social needs of the individual in question. Many young people can find themselves overwhelmed by one of the larger universities, while a branch campus can provide an equally fulfilling college experience. Interacting within groups, developing relationships both inside and outside the classroom, and becoming a more capable adult are all important aspects in intellectual and social development. Some young people may find the social atmosphere in the Hazleton area to be a bit lacking in terms of culture as a result of the older, less wealthy population. State College, in contrast, represents all the best and worst aspects of a “college town.”

In examining the academic and social aspects of University Park and Hazleton campuses, I have found that many students can have a far greater degree of success academically by choosing to attend a smaller,

more laid-back branch campus, rather than the main campus. A support system is extremely important in the transition from high school to college, and bigger is not always necessarily better. Many young people have found their collegiate experience to be just as fulfilling when they choose to attend a branch campus, while many more will attest that two years attending University Park is more than enough time to experience all that a large university has to offer.

Iaisha Smith

English 015

Hazleton

The Definition of Hip-Hop Culture

HIP-HOP MUSIC originated in 1979 as a way for inner city youth to express thoughts and tell stories about their everyday lives. Today hip-hop is no longer just a form of music, it has become a culture of its own. Hip-hop culture is a blend of music, fashion, language, and a lifestyle made trendy by some of the most popular musicians of the past two decades. Hip-hop culture can be seen all over, from the inner cities to even the richest areas; young people can be seen sporting the latest style of clothing from a music video and using slang words and phrases fresh off of the pages of lyric books.

The progression of hip-hop culture can be traced back to 1979 when the first hip-hop song, “Rapper’s Delight,” by the Sugarhill Gang debuted. The track featured a group of young men rhyming over a popular disco track, looped and mixed by a DJ and his set of turntables. Some thought that hip-hop was a fad that would eventually fade away, but others foresaw the beginning of a new era in pop culture.

Today, hip-hop music is one of the biggest selling genres of music worldwide that has facilitated a movement among young people all around the world. Hip-hop music has provided a voice to inner city youth to express their opinions regarding the state of life in the ghettos to even analyzing African-Ameri-

can politics. In the mid-1980s groups such as Public Enemy created songs with politically charged lyrics that addressed serious subject matter like police brutality, black militarism, and other concerns of the African-American community. The songs caused listeners to reflect upon the issues brought up in the lyrics. The late Tupac Shakur's songs often expressed the reality of life in the ghettos in addition to several other issues that he faced as a young black man in America in the 1990s. During the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of hip-hop listeners related to the subject matter in the songs, but now the audience of hip-hop is no longer limited to inner city youth and minorities. Hip-hop music has evolved from a genre mainly focused on political and racial issues, to a genre of music in which the majority of the songs are about women, jewelry, cars, and money.

Perhaps the most important element of hip-hop culture apart from the music is the fashion. Hip-hop fashion compliments the music and helps to create a certain image for hip-hop artists and their fans. Young men with jeans worn significantly below the belt line with a fresh pair of sneakers and a fitted baseball cap tilted slightly to the side can be considered to be wearing a style influenced by the hip-hop culture. One of the key elements in hip-hop fashion is the ever-changing trend of footwear. Run DMC, one of the pioneer hip-hop music groups coined the phrase *my adidas*, with the debut of their single with the same name. Shortly after the song reached the top of the charts, Adidas sneakers became one of the most popular sneakers for hip-hop fans to wear during the 1980s. Even today, hip-hop artists mention a certain brand of footwear in a song or wear a certain sneaker in a music video and fans mimic the artist, paying big time bucks for a pair of Timberland work boots or Nike Air Force Ones. Hip-Hop music is no longer the principal source of income for artists, as hip-hop moguls Russell Simmons and Sean "Diddy" Combs have proven with the success of their clothing lines. Phat Farm Clothing and Sean Jean are the respective labels that provide everything from T-Shirts sporting the emblem to footwear and accessories worn in music videos by popular artists. Simmons, the CEO of Def Jam Records and Combs, the CEO of Bad Boy Records paved the way for several other hip-hop artists to create and distribute styles to the public that were representative of the artists on the label.

Another element of hip-hop culture is language. Hip-hop music has influenced not only the English

language with its slew of slang terms and catchy phrases, but it also influenced body language and expression with the hottest new dances. Hip-hop songs often introduce terms that spur trends within the genre of music such as *bling-bling*, creating a slew of songs focusing on jewelry, diamonds, and gold. With the recent addition of *bling-bling* to the Oxford English dictionary, it is safe to say that hip-hop culture has affected the English language as a whole.

The hip-hop lifestyle is one that has evolved just as much if not more than the music itself. The symbols of status become more extravagant with the constant change. Gold chains and the hottest new stereo systems represented to the world that one is a participant in the new era of hip-hop, whether as an artist or simply as a fan. Presently, both hip-hop fans and artists seem to have incredibly similar lifestyles despite the drastic difference between salaries. Cars with spinning rims on the tires, diamond encrusted jewelry, and extravagant houses in humble neighborhoods are some elements that make up the exclusive lifestyle of the hip-hop culture. There is also a slightly egotistical attitude to go along with the lavishness of the environment, causing the hip-hop community to continuously evolve.

Hip-Hop can no longer be pushed aside and considered as a fad, as it has been going strong for over two decades. Hip-Hop has come to represent the population of inner cities and youth who struggle with everyday life. When hip-hop music first debuted in 1979, it was considered to be rebellious, but it has transformed into one of the most popular genres in pop culture.

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The Ban on Smoking in Public Places: Its Effect on the Hospitality Industry

AFTER A LONG HARD DAY of work, a man stops off at his neighborhood bar for a few beers with the guys. He sidles up to the bar, orders a draft and pulls out a pack of cigarettes. He lights the cigarette and takes a long drag, then slowly exhales the smoke into the air. A fitting end, he feels, to his long hard day at work. Meanwhile across town, Mom and Dad take the kids to the local Outback Steakhouse for a family dinner. They approach the hostess podium and are promptly asked their seating preference—smoking or non-smoking. As non-smokers, they immediately respond that they prefer non-smoking. While the family is happily enjoying their Onion Blossom, they notice the person at the table directly across from them lighting up a cigarette. They are dismayed to find that the smoking and non-smoking sections are only a short cigarette smoke puff away from each other. With their appetites ruined the family vows never to return to the restaurant again. These scenarios could soon be a thing of the past if the current trend of anti-smoking legislation continues. Although the hospitality industry alleges that smoking bans have a negative economic effect on their business, the negative health effects of smoking present a much greater risk to public health.

Since 1998, when California enacted the first ban on smoking in public places, the anti-smoking movement has hailed the bans as a triumph for public health that signals a shift in our social behaviors (“State” 5). Smoking bans in public places such as hospitals, shopping malls and airports have all been met with strong public support. According to William T. Godshall, MPH, Executive Director, Smokefree Pennsylvania who provided testimony before the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Health and Human Services Committee,

Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution states, “The people have a right to clean air....” In contrast, smoking has not been recognized as a right by any Constitution or by any courts. But cigarette companies have spent billions over the decades fooling smokers and the public into believing that burning dried leaves indoors is a protected right. (Godshall)

The R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, the second-largest tobacco company in the United States, manufacturing about one of every three cigarettes sold in the country, confirms Dr. Godshall’s statement. *Smoker’s Rights*, posted on the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company’s Website states,

“Along with those responsibilities come certain rights that are associated with the use of any legal product. Consumers have the right to voice their opinion on the various proposals, both legislative and regulatory” (Reynolds).

The tobacco industry has been subject to significant litigation for many decades, and R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company has been involved in this litigation since its inception. In many cases, the company has been a defendant, frequently with other members of industry. The company has a strong track record in defending tobacco-related litigation in court, and it will continue to take appropriate steps to maintain a successful litigation record. With the large tobacco companies supporting smoker’s perceived rights, the proponents of smoking bans are up against a powerful adversary.

A growing number of municipalities are implementing smoking bans that could have an effect on the hospitality industry, and many restaurant and tavern owners are crying foul (Dynes). In an article that appeared in the September 24, 2005 *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle*, writer Michelle Dynes interviews Laramie bar and restaurant owner Trudy McCracken. McCracken claims that in the first month of the city’s smoking ban, revenues were down \$4,000 at her bar. She said revenues had increased three percent during the previous three months. The fight on smoking bans is sweeping the country, including right here at home in Pennsylvania. There is currently a bill before the State House, House Bill 1489, which if passed would expand the current list of places where smoking is prohibited and require establishments that do not ban smoking to create separate rooms with separate ven-

tilation systems. The bill, co-sponsored by Rep. Susan Cornell, R-Montgomery, is in the House Health and Human Services Committee. A similar Senate bill would not allow employers to circumvent the ban by using separate ventilation systems. Previous measures to ban smoking in all public places in Pennsylvania have failed to reach the floor for a vote. The hospitality industry is fighting the smoking bans with full force. At a September 21, 2005 public hearing on House Bill 1489 before the House Health and Human Services Committee, the Pennsylvania Tavern Association provided testimony opposing further smoking bans (Scott). According to Tommy Scott, Owner of McGrath's Pub in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania,

The PA Tavern Association believes that HB1489, in its current form, would have a negative impact on our industry. It takes away the consumer's and the tavern owner's freedom of choice. Considering the detrimental economic consequences of forcing tavern and restaurants to go "smoke free," the Association must oppose it as it is currently written.

The current Pennsylvania smoking laws allows restaurants and bars with seating for fewer than 75 to choose whether they want to be smoke free. Additionally sale of tobacco products in vending machines is prohibited anywhere except in bars, taverns and other places where minors are not permitted by law. Pennsylvania has also increased its sales tax on cigarettes.

Although the hospitality industry continues to fight increased legislation to ban smoking, smoking and secondhand smoke present a far greater threat to everyone's health. The negative effects of smoking are widely known. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death and has negative effects on people at all stages of life. It harms unborn babies, infants, children, adolescents, adults, and seniors. The CDS further adds that smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causing many diseases and reducing the health of smokers in general ("The Health"). According to the American Cancer Society, approximately half of all Americans who continue to smoke will die from their cigarette smoking addiction. In the United States, tobacco use is responsible for nearly one in five deaths or an estimated 440,000 deaths per year from 1995 to 1999. Smoking accounts for at least

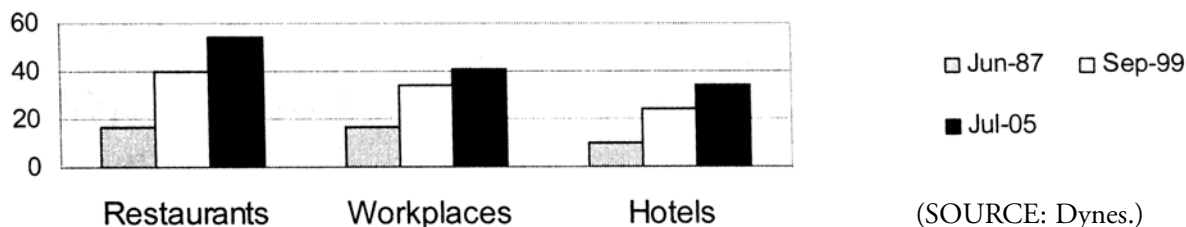
30% of all cancer deaths and 87% of lung cancer deaths ("Cancer" 38).

The crux of most smoking bans is to eliminate secondhand smoke primarily in the workplace. Second hand smoke, sometimes referred to as passive smoking or environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), is estimated to kill as many as 50,000 Americans annually, according to Dr. Randolph D. Smoak Jr., member of the board of trustees of the American Medical Association (Smoak). ETS contains carcinogens that Smoak says have a higher concentration than mainstream smoke. The Environmental Protection Agency has classified ETS as a Group A carcinogen, meaning that there is evidence that it causes cancer in humans. Non-smokers have the right to breathe clean air; smokers have the right to smoke, but not at the expense of those who choose not to. As people learn that ETS is not just an annoyance but also a serious health problem that can cause disease, there should be increasing support for creating a smoke free environment.

It is now commonplace to see workers huddled in the cold outside of their workplace smoking a cigarette. A number of studies have been conducted to evaluate the success of workplace smoking bans. One such study was conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health. In their Preliminary Report on the Evaluation of the Massachusetts Smoke-free Workplace Law, April 4, 2005, the group determined, "While state-wide smoking regulations are still relatively new in tobacco control, these study findings underscore the importance of comprehensive smoke-free policies" (Connolly). The Harvard Study and others of its nature are widely discounted by the tobacco industry and proponents against a smoking ban.

All fifty states have clean indoor air provisions restricting smoking in certain places. Eight states including California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New York and most recently in 2005 Rhode Island and Vermont are considered smoke free states because they prohibit smoking in almost all workplaces, including restaurants and bars ("State 5"). As more smoke free air laws are passed around the country, public support for such laws has increased. A July 2005 Gallup Poll (See Fig. 1) showed that support for prohibiting smoking in the workplace and in restaurants has increased since 2003—by five points for the workplace (from 36% to 41%) and by nine points for restaurants (45% to 54%). The poll

**What is Your Opinion About Smoking in the Following Places?
(% Saying Totally Ban Smoking)**



(SOURCE: Dynes.)

Fig 1. Increase for support of smoking bans in restaurants, workplaces and hotel has remained consistent and has reached an all-time high in 2005.

also found that, for the first time, a majority favors a total ban on smoking in restaurants.

There are more than 1800 United States municipalities with some sort of local clean indoor air laws, 336 of which provide 100 percent smoke free protection for private workplaces, government buildings, restaurants and/or bars.

Eighty percent of Pennsylvanians support a ban in the workplace and seventy-seven percent of them believe people should not be allowed to smoke in public places where others might inhale the second-hand smoke. About two million Pennsylvania adults smoke. This accounts for twenty-five percent of the state's population.

So why are so many businesses with the hospitality industry up in arms about the anti-smoking laws? Many restaurateurs complain the ban amounts to unwarranted government regulation and will hurt business by putting them at a competitive disadvantage relative to restaurants in neighboring cities that do not have a smoking ban. In a November 1, 2005 interview with William J. Aldom, Bar Service Manager at Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Mr. Aldom complains, "The government has no business regulating whether patrons can smoke or not. It (smoking) should remain a personal choice of the patron and the bar owner." Aldom further adds, "Let the bar owners do the cost benefit analysis and they should decide whether they want to make their facility smoke free." Aldom is a State Board Member of the Pennsylvania Tavern Association. Seven Springs Mountain Resort is known for its après-ski atmosphere where smoking is a common and accepted behavior in all bar and lounge areas. Actually, Seven Springs

was rated fifth in the East for après-ski/nightlife by *SKI Magazine*. Aldom is concerned that once the government gets involved in what he perceives should remain a personal choice, who knows what will be next. "A recent report said Big Macs and chocolate are bad for your health. Are we next going to ban McDonalds and Hershey bars?"

However, not all resort managers feel the same way. In 1996, Seven Springs Mountain Resort designated 40 percent of their 418 hotel rooms as non-smoking. This movement met with great success among resort guests, and the number of non-smoking rooms rose to 80% by 2005. According to Robin Nickelson, Seven Springs Hotel Manager,

We continually run out of non-smoking rooms. Our guests want them and we just don't have enough. I have never had a guest complain because they couldn't smoke. Quite the opposite. In fact, many of our guests are so appreciative that we have non-smoking rooms.

The smoking ban was expanded further in 2004 when all corridors within the high-rise hotel were designated smoke free.

According to Nickelson, she and many of her co-workers smoke. After many complaints by hotel guests and other employees, Seven Springs will soon establish a "smoking room" for employees who smoke. This room will be out of the public eye and in a well-ventilated area. "I do not have a problem with the smoking room. I consider myself a considerate smoker. If I offend someone with my cigarette smoke, I move somewhere else," say Nickelson. Stud-

ies show that crackdowns on workplace smoking have actually led to a drop in the number of smokers (“State” 5). “Because I am now limited to where I can smoke at work, I’m actually thinking of trying to quit. It’s just too much of a hassle to find a place to smoke” (Nickelson).

Quitting smoking has immediate as well as long-term benefits, reducing risks for diseases caused by smoking and improving health in general. Adoption of smoking cessation programs and tobacco prevention programs for employees should be embraced by employers. In addition to complete bans on smoking, additional efforts can be made to help individuals quit smoking. The evidence that well-funded, comprehensive tobacco prevention and cessation programs are effective was bolstered in 2005 according to American Lung Association (“State” 7). Studies indicate that thousands of illness and deaths from tobacco use could be prevented and billions of dollars in medical expenses could be saved if all states made long-term investments in a sustained campaign to prevent tobacco-related disease and death. We have all seen the pink ribbons promoting breast cancer awareness and have seen the television commercials showing seven-time world champion cyclist and cancer survivor Lance Armstrong encouraging early cancer screenings. But cancers related to cigarette smoking have garnered little sympathy because the cancer can easily be prevented if the individual just quits smoking. As a non-smoker, I too have little sympathy for the two-pack-a-day smoking emphysema patient. Banning smoking in public places is a step that can be taken to help in the fight against cancer and other diseases related to smoking and second hand smoke.

From the evidence, it would appear that the effects of smoking bans on the hospitality industry will continue to be debated for many years with a gradual movement toward increased bans across the country. Even with the opposition, I can only hope that the bans on smoking continue so that the man in the bar will not succumb to lung cancer brought on by continued exposure to cigarette smoke, and the family in the restaurant will share many more meals together.

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English 015

Schuyllkill

Predator’s Playground

“Nooooo! Not my baby! She was supposed to be meeting a friend!” Danielle Moore, a 14-year-old freshman, had been internet chatting for more than six months. It was just innocent fun—or so her mother thought. What her mother was oblivious to was that Danielle was actually meeting a 37-year-old man who she thought was only 18 years old. After

meeting her “chatroom friend,” it was clear the man had lied about his age. Danielle decided she didn’t want to “hang out” after all, but it was too late. This man had one intention—sex—and he got it. To make matters worse, this man didn’t want others discovering his evil scam, and keeping Danielle alive would escalate that chance. After weeks of continuous fear, Danielle’s mother received a dreaded call from the police: “We’ve found your daughter’s body.”

Though this is just a fictitious example, situations like this are very much real. For instance, in New Jersey, Majalie Cajuste is grieving the murder of her 14-year-old daughter Judy, who reportedly told her friends she met a man in his twenties through the popular internet site MySpace. A similar situation occurred in Northern California, where 15-year-old Kayla Reed was active on MySpace until the day she disappeared (Hughes 1). Will exploiting acts of the innocent ever come to an end? I seriously doubt it because there will always be those who ignore the “warning signs.” However, that doesn’t mean we can’t try to prevent such horrendous tragedies.

I’d like to focus my paper around the dangers of internet chatting through MySpace and discuss how a simple website can open the door to a whole new world of evil. I’d also like to offer some solutions to this problem; hosting sessions to educate parents about these dangers may be an effective step that schools can take in order to protect our children. But I believe we could do even more. For example, nothing can leave a stronger impression than hearing about internet crime straight from the perpetrator’s mouth. Hence, I propose this solution: Public and private schools across the country should host informational sessions where the “guest speaker” is a sexual predator who has committed his crime with the help of the internet. These individuals would speak about their experiences utilizing MySpace to find their victims. Furthermore, school officials could voluntarily record these sessions. For those unable to participate, each school would have a DVD or VHS available so parents and guardians are not denied the opportunity to experience the risks that many adolescents take when logging onto MySpace.

Before getting into the specifics of this solution, however, I’d like to provide some background information and relevant facts about MySpace. This will clarify the realities of the site, especially for those who might be unfamiliar with its so-called purpose. Allow me to introduce you to the most popular com-

munication site—which is also one of the most dangerous and includes explicit photographs, obscene language, stories of drinking, drugs, and partying. No, it’s not a pornographic website—it’s MySpace.com (Johnson 1). Anyone can build and own a profile on this website, and anyone can be seen and reached by anybody else. Of course, this includes sexual offenders, rapists, and even murderers who have access to these profiles. F.B.I. Special Agent Patrick Kieran acknowledged these dangers when he stated, “You are bringing the outside world into your house, and strangers can come in through the internet just like they can come in through your front door” (Johnson par. 12). While this site increases in popularity each day, it is important for parents to sample some of the questions being elicited from MySpace members: Are you still a virgin? How many people have you had sex with? Do you smoke, do drugs, or like to party? As an adult, you might find these questions a bit too probing, but they are, without a doubt, completely inappropriate for young children. Nevertheless, thousands of pre-teens have built, and actively maintain, web pages on MySpace.

In a poll of online teens, the Polly Klaas Foundation found the following: 42 percent of teens post personal information on the net; one-third say they have chatted online with strangers about sex, and 12 percent say the person they thought was a teen turned out to be much older (Thomas 2). Do you think kids are going to be interested in chatting with someone who is 47 years old? Probably not. This is why so many predators lie about their age. Maybe even worse than the information kids are offering (phone numbers, addresses, email), are the photographs they post of themselves. Nathan R. Iwanyszyn, a father from Exeter Township, said he came across MySpace when checking the history of the sites on his computer. He wasn’t familiar with it, so he clicked on the site. “I saw a picture of my stepdaughter dressed very inappropriately” (Herman 1). If a predator were to view a sexy picture of a young girl or boy on this site, that adolescent is likely to become a target.

So, while this site has clearly become a predator’s playground, how can we possibly put a damper on the dangers it poses? As I mentioned previously, hearing the crime described by the perpetrator himself can have a stronger influence on someone who might be likely to ignore mere hearsay. I believe if we brought these predators into public and private schools, or

any type of school for that matter, and have them explain in detail how they enticed and lured their victims, this would open the eyes of parents and children to the realization that these human hunters really do exist. Additionally, making these predators speak publicly about their acts would be a requirement for probation. What compelled you to do this? Did you get a thrill out of it? Was it challenging to persuade these young kids to meet with you? These are questions they would be made to answer in front of all who participate. By recording these sessions, one can pass them on to someone else who might be unaware of the dangers, and so forth. It can become an effective chain reaction. Time is always a requirement if anyone is serious about taking action to solve a problem. In this case, it would only take time—no money. The principal would decide the dates to hold these sessions, and he could meet with other teachers and parents about volunteering. Making flyers or newsletters can turn into an art project for the students to do. These sessions would be free and open to all who would want to attend. Otherwise it would be like putting a price on your child's life. The officers escorting the predator would be specifically chosen by the bureau. Schools would not have to pay a cent to have their guest speaker because it would be part of the criminal's parole. The only way one would have to pay anything is if they wanted to order a copy of the session. People may question the outcome since my solution requires one to make a decision whether or not to be present. However, after one realizes the importance of these educational sessions, I have no doubt the room would fill quickly.

After sharing my solution with numerous people, they agree it could be effective, but many shared the comment, "It starts at home," and they're absolutely right. However, Jesse Fawson, a user of MySpace, states: "There is no way to make sure a site is 100 percent secure ... individuals should monitor themselves, and must be accountable for their information" (par. 1). Tell me what curious teen is going to think like that? "I know I'm accountable for my actions, so I'll be extra careful." If these teens are not fully aware of the dangers, why would they take precaution? Well, again, many people say MySpace is really not dangerous, so why did MySpace decline CBS News' request for an on-camera interview? They stated: "We dedicated a third of our workforce to policing and monitoring our site" (Fawson 2). They also say the site requires users to be 14 years or older,

and these members are warned not to post any personally identifiable material. Nevertheless, teens say that advice is routinely ignored (Fawson par. 2). I agree that no matter how protected a website may be, there will always be technologically savvy individuals who bypass the rules. That is why we need to take more action.

It is only normal for a child to disobey his or her parents, and we do not always follow the advice given to us. That is why I think my solution would be effective. Kids would hear stories about other kids who once said, "It won't happen to me." Parents along with their children would be able to hear the voice of an actual predator say, "This is what could happen to you, if you are unaware about someone like me." Connie Cunningham is a woman who was an extern for the SCI Frackville Prison, located in the northeastern Pennsylvania. She would sit with the parole board and listen to the inmates confess about their gruesome crimes—some had no mercy. She stated, "When I was first told this man was a rapist, it didn't faze me. After hearing him describe what he did to his victims, it gave me a completely different feeling towards the situation." Why is this information relevant to arguments against MySpace? I could tell someone until I'm blue in the face that MySpace is potentially harmful, and he or she might just shrug his or her shoulders. However, I'm sure if the same person heard the words from a murderer who utilized MySpace to locate his or her victims this would be a good enough reason for one to think before taking the chance of flirting with danger. Susan Granger, whose daughter was sexually assaulted by a 26-year-old man, pleads with parents not to allow their children to enter the MySpace site: "It's a very unsafe environment for them to be in" (qtd. Hughes 2). Unfortunately, for thousands of teens who are hooked on the site, this may sound like a warning that's lost in cyberspace. There is nothing to lose in trying my solution—only innocence to save.

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My Scrantastic Accent

“TUDDY UDDERS.” I have an accent that would make your ears bleed, but as compared with many locals I speak “especially” well. From “updee Eynon” to “downda line” we are all alike in our dialect. “Supposably” we have this way of massacring the English language. Sure, our dialect is about as formal as a pair of dungarees, and we have this uncanny ability to make four or five words into one jumbled mess, but I would hardly consider myself or my neighbors “stupit,” we’re just “diff’runt.”

I hail from the sixth largest city in Pennsylvania, “Scra’in.” Here in “Scra’in” we have no use for the letter “T.” We climb “moun’ains,” drink from “foun’ains,” and Bernie Williams plays “cenner” field. I wear “contack” lenses, and when I’m thirsty, I have a nice refreshing glass of “wodder.” I am fairly “cer’ain” that the common belief is that at least ten or fifteen letters in the alphabet are superfluous and their sole purpose is to make a pretty song. “Hayna er no?”

“Scra’in” also has a real problem with the letter “G” if it follows “I-N” in the word. We also find that

letter quite simply superfluous. We go “dancin’” and “ice skatin’” and when we go to the park we go down the “slidin’ board.” As you can see there was really no need for the letter “G.” “Scra’in” did us a favor by chopping it off “dонтcha” think?

“A couple two, tree” years ago I first stumbled upon the disheartening discovery of my notorious accent in a chorus class I was taking in high school. It wasn’t until then that I was made aware of my painful and somewhat nasal short vowel sounds. When someone says ball, mall, fall, or call, you will know they are from our “beeyouteeful” city just by the relaxed and somewhat offensive noise that the “A” makes. Apparently it’s not much better when we sing. My chorus teacher dedicated not one but several classes (hear it?) to correcting our less than musical speech impediment. Despite his best efforts, for the majority of our angelic harmonies, our “Scra’in” accents prevailed.

Although I was somewhat insulted by my chorus teacher’s accusations that I do not speak “correc’ly,” my recently discovered accent did not really bother me. I went to school with 800 people who spoke just like me. College was the real shocker. I quickly found out that people from New York and New Jersey pronounce their “T’s” and find it hysterical that we don’t. They also had no appreciation for the contractions we developed such as, “dонтcha, betcha, aincha, getcha, and whatcha.” You “prolly hafta” be from the area to appreciate the shortcuts we made for everyone.

Here in “Scra’in” we also make ourselves sound stronger and more talented than we actually are in our everyday sayings. For example, in the morning we do one of two things; we either “hop in the shower” or “grab a shower.” Despite what you may think, “hopping in the shower” is not a cardiovascular activity that really gets our blood pumping, and “grabbing a shower” is not as skillful as it sounds, seeing as we grab nothing and simply stand there. When “comp’nee” comes we “straighten the house” and I “pick up my room.” On those days I make sure I eat the Wheaties my mother purchased at the “Ack-a-mee” in “her order.” For those of you who may not be from the Valley, an order is a cart full of groceries. A single box of Wheaties does not qualify. You have to “plunk down” around a hundred bucks to have a real “order.”

Speaking of food, we order our pizza in trays, not pies! It is baked on a tray and that is how we order it.

It does not have to be round to be pizza! With our trays of pizza we order hoagies. Although that is not strictly a coal cracker's term, it is regional. We have a "conniption" when someone asks us if we want a sub, grinder, or hero. If you want a sub, go to Jersey! We wash down our pizza and hoagies with a "slug" of "Birchola." If we aren't in the mood for pizza, you may find us eating a "hawdog" or a "hangburger" or a "samwich." In the morning you may find us having "dippy eggs" and a "swig of cawfee." I suppose what we are eating depends on our mood, but I guarantee whatever it is that we happen to be "munchin" on, we renamed it.

"Scra'in" really is a fantastic place to live, but in case you are new, I have a few pointers for you. No matter what you say, put a "the" in front of it. In Scranton, we go "up the Eynon and down the line." We also go to one of our many malls, "The Steamtown, the Viewmont, or the Wyoming Valley." Another useful tip is to combine as many words together as possible, such as "jehafta," which loosely translates to "Do you have to?" It may all seem a bit complicated now, but "fer cryin' out loud" just come visit. As I said before, it's a fantastic place to live, and I'm not "fulla canal water."

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Mortality

OVER THE YEARS I have made some good and bad life choices that have got me to where I am today. The best choice I have made was the one to take a life-guard training course. The class held a high interest for me before taking it, and after I finished it, my desire increased to pursue a health-related field after high school. With all this in mind, I worked hard for nine months learning everything I could about the field, and at the end of the class I received my certification. Once I was certified I found a job at a local park. At the job I practiced my newly learned skills, and along the way I acquired new friends that have made a lasting impression on my life.

Life guarding required me to deal with all kinds of scenarios. When I was sitting in the chair I'd observe the water and keep all the swimmers under my close supervision assuring them their safety. When I wasn't in the chair, and I walked the beach, I would care for all sorts of injuries that happened throughout the park. The wounds I dealt with ranged from minor scratches to dislocated shoulders. This job was very demanding and required considerable interaction with the public, as well as bonding among myself and the other guards. I enjoyed every minute of it and wouldn't change my experience for anything.

On the job I met an unforgettable group of new friends. Each person had something unique to bring to the rest of the group. Over the next four months we worked side-by-side, every day building closer bonds to one another. Among the group was one young woman, Marla, who stood above us all. She was the center of the group, our beating heart which kept us all alive. Marla was the kind of person who could make us smile by just mentioning her name. She was always there for anyone who needed any kind of help. Not only was she a great friend, but also she was a great teacher. She always knew what to do for every situation and how to make the best of things.

In my lifeguard training, my instructors taught me many things too. I was taught how to respond to what I thought was every possible accident that could happen. The one thing they never told me though was how to react when something happens to someone close to me. On August 15, 2004, my friend, my teacher, Marla was killed in a car accident. She was on her way home from work when a drunken truck driver ran a stop sign and broadsided her car. The moment I heard about this tragedy it was as if a part of me died too. I was confused by how such a promising young life like hers could so abruptly be taken away. It's times like that which make me stop to think about how short life really is. Marla was around the same age as I am, and she was only ten days away from starting college. Her life was only just starting. Realizing the possibility that in the seconds to come they could be my last, I feel I should live my life to the fullest extent, and enjoy everything that comes my way. Marla's time may have been cut short, but she definitely lived a big life, and touched the hearts of everyone whom she met.

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The Procrastinator

A PROCRASTINATOR is one who puts off doing a task until a later time. This is a person who has never learned the importance of doing something before the last minute. Sometimes it is only reading the paper instead of going to the store. Other times it might be counting down the hours until an important presentation is due. Do you know a procrastinator, or even worse perhaps are you one? If so, it can be very difficult to break the captivating habit. You might procrastinate unintentionally at first, but once the stone starts rolling it is hard to stop. Many associate a person who procrastinates with being lazy but, as you are about to ascertain, this is not the case.

Some procrastinate because they do not like doing things. For instance, at work someone might save something for the last minute because he or she does not enjoy doing it. Some even prolong doing things which they enjoy. Who has not heard of the daunting people who do not go on vacation year after year, constantly pushing it away, saving vacation days for the summer? Others have poor time management skills; they could be twice as productive if they would just sit down and finish the job at hand. Many lose themselves daydreaming about better times they have had. People who procrastinate are great excuse makers, such as "I need to take a short rest before I begin," or "after I watch fifteen minutes of television." My favorite excuse is "I work better under pressure." So if I wait until I only have a few hours to study for an exam I will have no choice but to study and I will do better. If the procrastinator continues to excel at his field he never learns his full lesson and is up late the next night burning the midnight oil.

If you do find yourself putting things off, I advise you to stop immediately, because that gremlin that works itself inside of your engine will prevent it from running correctly. The pale path of procrastination is extremely long and little light shines during the wee hours of the morning. If you examine any person who is successful in life, you will find that procrastination is a drug with which they have seldom experimented.

I am not just making all of this up. I have experienced it first hand, for I suffer from the disease of procrastination. It affects me in every facet of my life. I first came to this realization when I caught myself masking it as not being able to make up my mind. An amazing event happens when the body covers for itself and makes excuses. For example, "I will start that as soon as I finish this," or "I have not painted that because I have yet to decide on a color." This is how the addiction starts, like a preteen on recess coughing after he has just taken a drag of a cigarette. If you continue smoking the cancer stick of procrastination you will soon miss out on important things in your life. Then nothing can help you quit, no patch, no gum, not even the famous cold turkey. You must learn to live and die with your painful cancer.

The way procrastinators think is quite amusing. If given a list of tasks in order from most to least important, they will always start from the bottom. Then at the end of the day the things not completed on the list are the most important. Then they always tell themselves if "I only have a few things to do I will finish them." This is not true. If the procrastinator knows he has time he will simply do nothing. The tasks not completed on the list usually have a close due date and are hard to complete. As the procrastinator ages he will mix the order of the list but will still complete the easiest first saving the most difficult for last. I am not saying that they will never become successful in life, only that it may take longer for them to reach where they would like to be.

The more one relies on procrastination the stronger his character becomes. For this is a natural defense or coping scheme. If large amounts of stress, anxiety, fear of success or fear of failure strike, some might use procrastination as a survival strategy. Procrastination can be either good or evil. It can either make or break a person. The few who come out on top by having extreme deadlines or rushed lives are surely brilliant. There are many who give procrastination a bad name. However, when handled correctly by the right person, it builds quality of character and quality of work produced.

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A Baptism of the Imagination: C.S. Lewis's Narnian Enchantment

MANY NOVELS operate on an allegorical (or more than one) level and in doing so, they prove a point that is often unnoticed by the casual reader. Such is the case with C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. This series of seven books was written for children and contains all the elements of a children's fantasy book, such as talking animals, witches, and magic. Yet once past the subject matter of the books and deeper into them, the reader will find that they are really a Christian allegory written by a man who hoped that by appealing to children, he could transcend the oppression of church and Sunday school and give children an unwavering devotion to God. It has been said by many critics that Lewis's books represent the seven deadly sins and that each contains a reference to a different story in the Bible. This is seen in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*; the book references gluttony and also tells the story of Christ's death and rebirth through a series of symbols. Although Lewis claimed that all his stories began with pictures, often provided by his dreams (*The C.S. Lewis Reader's Encyclopedia* 121), in the end his novels prove to be deeply religious allegories. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in particular contains heavy themes of faith within children and is what Lewis called a "supposal," seeking to describe how God might appear were he to intervene in an entirely different world (*The C.S. Lewis Reader's Encyclopedia* 254).

The character of Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is a representation of Christ. Throughout the novel, the great lion stands for goodness and justice, much as the real-life Jesus did. There has been much speculation as to why Lewis chose to make Aslan a lion and in his novel, *C.S. Lewis: Spinner of Tales*, Evan K. Gibson speculates:

Why did Lewis make him a lion? Probably for two reasons. In Revelation Christ is called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. But after all, the lion is the king of beasts. In a land of beasts who talk and make moral decisions what better form could he have? And the more one reads the tales the more [one] feels Lewis's choice was exactly right. (142)

By making Aslan a lion and relating him to Jesus, Lewis hopes to convey the Bible's story to children on a level they can understand. Each of the children in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* has a different reaction upon hearing Aslan's name as well. Peter feels suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan feels as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music has floated to her. Lucy gets the feeling one has when one wakes up in the morning and realizes that it is the beginning of the holidays or summer. Only Edmund reacts negatively toward Aslan. Being under the spell of the White Witch, he is horrified at the mention of the great lion's name and feels very uneasy at the power Aslan exerts (Lewis 74). Lewis carries the lion's connection to Jesus even farther, as Aslan sacrifices himself to expunge Edmund's sin. His death parallels Jesus's crucifixion to expunge mankind's sins, which allows for passage to heaven. This redemption later allows for Aslan's rebirth, which again parallels Jesus's similar rebirth. Both gave up their lives willingly having committed no treachery, so they are therefore reborn to reform tradition and save their respective worlds. Although many children may be unlikely to pick up on these parallels directly, they still learn to love Aslan and therefore indirectly learn to love Jesus. Aslan's animal qualities also make him appealing to children. He may be a great lion, but in some ways he is just a big, playful cat. After his resurrection, he romps and plays with both Susan and Lucy and acts almost as though he is a cub again. Perhaps this act is meant to sugarcoat his death for children, but Lewis refers to it as an "eucatastrophe." The word, invented by Lewis's friend J.R.R. Tolkien, was used to cover the kind of joy the children felt, which grows out of their acknowledgment of sorrow and death (Hannay 64). Ultimately, Aslan's death and resurrection is the backbone of the story and the basis from which so many scholars have drawn their religious parallels.

The Stone Table on which Aslan's death occurs is another element of the novel's religious backbone. Meant to symbolize Moses's stone tablets on which

the Ten Commandments were written, the stone contains many scribbles and much writing. This writing, which is in an unknown tongue, represents the law. Although Aslan would never dream of going against his father's (the Emperor of the Sea's) laws, the Stone Table shatters when he is resurrected. Gibson suggests that the breaking of the Stone Table is Lewis's way of showing the frightening side of God's law due to the fact that it is inflexible (144-145). Because the White Witch needed blood to satisfy the law's need for repayment of Edmund's sins, Aslan sacrifices himself and in doing so, satisfies the ancient law and cracks the table, destroying the enmity in the law. Death will never again be demanded.

Aslan's journey throughout *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* also parallels the Bible in another way. The very apparent change of seasons in the novel is a way in which Lewis explains the story of Jesus's birth, death, and resurrection. When the children first enter Narnia in the beginning of the novel, they walk into an eternal winter. The White Witch, who is representative of Satan, has taken over the land. Although Lewis's version of the devil brings ice instead of fire, his purpose is clear. When the White Witch and Narnia's other inhabitants hear word of Aslan's return, they are disbelieving. After all, the land is still covered in eternal winter. Shortly afterward though, Father Christmas arrives, bringing with him presents and the news of Aslan's return. Because Aslan is a representation of Jesus, this celebration of Christmas along with his return is symbolic of Christ's Christmas Day birth. Likewise, Aslan's death marks the beginning of Spring in Narnia and his resurrection therefore symbolizes Easter, which is the day on which Christ was also reborn. All of these parallels between Aslan and Jesus make up an integral part of the story, and although the storyline is hidden to the untrained eye, the similarities are indisputable. According to the biography *C.S. Lewis* by Margaret Hannay, one little girl wrote to Lewis asking Aslan's other name. He instructed her to guess:

Has there ever been anyone in this world who
(1) Arrived at the same time as Father Christmas
(2) Said he was the Son of the Great Emperor
(3) Gave himself up for someone else's fault to be jeered at and killed by wicked people
(4) Came to life again
(5) Is sometimes spoken of as a Lamb... Don't you really know His name in this world? (57)

In writing this, Lewis solidifies the argument that Aslan does indeed represent Jesus.

Besides the parallel of Aslan and Jesus's death and resurrection, the novel also contains one of the seven deadly sins. Each novel is said to represent one of these seven sins; if that is the case, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* symbolizes gluttony. When Edmund first finds his way into Narnia he stumbles upon the White Witch who promptly offers him Turkish Delight. Although his sister Lucy has already explained to him that the Witch is evil, Edmund accepts the Turkish Delight. This acceptance parallels the familiar Bible story of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace. Edmund's desire for the Turkish Delight mirrors that of Adam and Eve's desire for the forbidden fruit while in the Garden of Eden. Although Edmund commits the deadly sin of gluttony, he is not yet expelled from Heaven due to the fact that he is human. He must repent for his sins and although he does feel pity and sympathy, it is ultimately Aslan who saves him through his own sacrifice. This then rectifies Edmund's sin, and he eventually reforms completely, reverting to the good side and helping to stop the White Witch at the end of the novel.

Although C.S. Lewis did not intend to make his novels religious when he began writing them, he arrived at a very different end result. He continually referred to them as *supposals*, always explaining that Aslan was his invention in response to the question of, "What might Christ have become like if his life had been carried out in a world other than ours?" (*The C.S. Lewis Reader's Encyclopedia* 121). Lewis's novels, although meant for children, carry an important subtext. He seeks to inspire faith in children, but a different faith than the devout church-goers have. In writing *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis hoped to transcend the rules of organized religion and allow children a view of Christ which they could understand. By appealing to them with a fairy tale containing talking animals, magic, witches, and a hidden land, he is able to pursue his story freely. In describing his stories, Lewis stated,

Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need for the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a hundred years.
(*The C.S. Lewis Reader's Encyclopedia* 121)

The statement echoes an on-going argument in our culture today, as people seek to define their beliefs in God outside of the corruption and the politics that have worked their way into churches all over the country. Perhaps by appealing to children Lewis hoped to influence those just starting out in the world, before their minds could become confused by the complexities of religion. Perhaps he simply wished to access the minds of adults reading his books to their children and observing his hidden storyline, causing them to think back to a time when their beliefs in God were simple and pure. According to *The C.S. Lewis Reader's Encyclopedia, The Chronicles of Narnia* can be seen as Lewis's

seven-volume Magician's Book written to disenchant children of all ages of all the things that Lewis found illusionary and to re-enchant, by way of a baptism of the imagination, all the things that really matter. (121)

Ultimately, this statement could be applied to all aspects of life, both then and now. A baptism of the imagination used to discover things that matter can only help people in this ever-busy world discover what matters most to them. Lewis's different perspective on faith is perhaps the most important theme in his novels, as he disregards the general ideas of society and pushes the limits so that he himself and the reader can discover their personal beliefs and learn to value them.

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Chaos in Iraq: Who Is Responsible?

KARL ZINSMEISTER, editor in chief of *The American Enterprise*, wrote an editorial for his magazine titled, "Fighting Cynicism in Iraq," which appeared in the March, 2006 issue. In this piece of Zinsmeister claims that cynicism among Americans in Iraq ("compassion fatigue" he calls it), came about as a result of various flaws in the character of the Iraqi people (4). Zinsmeister fails to consider the possibility that many of the current dysfunctions in Iraqi society were caused by the inability of U.S. forces and their civilian auxiliaries to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis.

Zinsmeister makes several sweeping generalizations about the Iraqis, calling them selfish, brutal, and dishonest (4-5). "Iraqis lie easily to Americans, but they also lie habitually to each other," Zinsmeister claims, "because that is an accepted way of gaining advantage in their dog-eat-dog world" (4). This statement is telling not only because of the racial stereotype presented by Zinsmeister, but also because of the implication of U.S. cultural superiority. Most important, however, is the omission that this "dog-eat-dog" post-war chaos is a situation created by U.S. forces and sustained by their failure to secure the safety of the people. Samer Shehata, professor of Middle East and Arab politics at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, explain, "Iraqis simply do not feel safe, and many—quite possibly the majority—hold the U.S. responsible for this situation." Zinsmeister argues that the Iraqis are to blame for the growing security crisis. "The courage, integrity, and patriotism needed to face down the minority in their midst who are committed to terror (perhaps 20,000 individuals in a land of more than 27 million)," Zinsmeister states, "was in short supply" (5). Is this then the direct threat to the safety and security of the Iraqi people? Are they living in fear of the terrorists among them?

Haifa Zangana, an Iraqi-born novelist who endured captivity under Saddam Hussein, argues that

the danger facing the Iraqis comes not from within. Zangana writes in the Nov. 19, 2005 issue of *The Guardian*,

On October 16, for example, a group of adults and children gathered around a burned Humvee on the edge of Ramadi. There was a crater in the road, left by a bomb that had killed five U.S. soldiers and two Iraqi soldiers the previous day. Some of the children were playing hide and seek, and others were laughing while pelting the vehicle with stones, when a U.S. F-15 fighter jet fired on the crowd. The U.S. military said subsequently it had killed 70 insurgents in air strikes, and knew of no civilian deaths. Among the “insurgents” killed were six-year-old Muhammad Salih Ali ...; four-year-old Saad Ahmed Fuad; and his eight-year-old sister, Haifa. (32)

Civilian casualties, euphemistically called “collateral damage,” are unavoidable whenever military forces clash in urban areas. But as a “friendly” occupation force, the U.S., it is assumed, actively tries to avoid incidents like the one Zangana relates. Success in such an effort is hard to gauge because the U.S. military does not keep track of civilian deaths. There are, however, various non-government organizations that do track this type of data. Even a cursory glance at the most prominent of these will show that events like the Ramadi example might not be as rare as one would hope.

Niko Price of the Associated Press reported in June 2003 on a five-week study that the AP had conducted regarding civilian deaths in Iraq. The AP reviewed the records of 60 of the 124 hospitals around the country, and found that “At least 3,240 civilians died throughout the country, including 1,896 in Baghdad” (Price 4). A feature in *The Economist* dated Nov. 1, 2003 cited a report by an American think-tank, the Project on Defence Alternatives (PDA), which put the civilian death toll in a range from 3,200 to 4,300 (64). The AP and PDA studies both focus on the period of time from the start of hostilities to the fall of Baghdad. Robert Schlesinger, staff writer for *The Boston Globe*, reported in the Nov. 12, 2003 issue on another study, this one undertaken by a British non-profit health group, Medact. “Using figures culled from the website IraqBodyCount.com [sic],” Schlesinger writes, “the study pegged the number of civilian deaths directly attributed to the war at be-

tween 7,757 and 9,565 as of Oct. 20” (AP). Whether the violent death of a civilian happens as a result of the complete lack of security, or by direct military action of the U.S. (the above studies show this to be the most common scenario), the perception is that the U.S. is responsible. Yet there is no mention of non-military Iraqi deaths in Zinsmeister’s article.

The civilian figures from Iraq are currently hosted on the website iraqbodycount.org. This website is described by its founder, Hamit Dardagan, as “an ongoing human security project which maintains and updates the world’s only independent and comprehensive public database of media-reported civilian deaths in Iraq.” According to the site’s overview, Iraq Body Count (IBC) tracks these deaths because nobody else is doing so, and believes this type of history is best not forgotten. The methodology used is fairly simple. When an incident involving civilian deaths is reported by at least two independent news sources from IBC’s approval list, those deaths are added to the index. The approved media list is quite small, and includes organizations such as the Associated Press, the International Red Cross, and Reuters. As casualty reports often vary, IBC lists the minimum and maximum reported deaths, resulting in a casualty range. The latest numbers as of April 11, 2006 are 34,030 (min.) to 38,164 (max.).

The cost in terms of human life is staggering. It is disappointing that the most powerful military on earth could not prevent the deaths of over 30,000 human beings that were ostensibly under its protection. However, the disappointment Zinsmeister expresses in his article falls as far off-target as so many U.S. munitions have. “The disappointment is in many of the people of Iraq, and the foul inheritance of Arab cultural baggage, Islamic obscurantism, and political brutality that weighs them down” (Zinsmeister 5).

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Changing Mailboxes

ENORMOUS Mayflower trucks pulled into our driveway on a weekday morning in the beginning of August 1993. My parents had been talking about this for weeks: moving. I was only six years old. At such a young age, this only meant my family would be living in a new house in another small town in Pennsylvania. I was excited for this new adventure because my parents told me, "You'll make new friends and

have fun." I never knew until later how much this move would change my life forever.

Closest kin as any friends could be, the neighbor kids on the other side of the road had also been waiting for the moving trucks, secretly hoping they would never arrive. As soon as the trucks parked, Abby, Cory, and Luke came walking across the blackened road that separated our houses, because their curiosity stirred an interest to participate in this unfamiliar passage in life. In my bedroom, they helped me pack up my toys and stuffed animals carefully into the standing upright cardboard boxes. It was one of the greatest joys to have my friends help me pack for my trip to a new home. I was so happy to be going somewhere different to create new friendships. The older neighbor kids were not as excited, not even close to saying they were happy for me. Obvious gloom and sadness showed on their faces as they were hopelessly pulled towards the floor of my bedroom. As they packed the boxes, they did so with care and sadness. It was as though they were trying to hang on to the good memories that enlivened the toys we played with. They slowly packed up the toys, hanging on just a little longer to the memories we had created together in my basement, in our yards, and on our back porches. They knew our bond of friendship would be broken, and we would never share in the same dreams, hopes, and futures to come our way.

On the road for over seven hours, I never thought we would make it until daylight of the next day. My family and I finally passed the welcome sign to New Freedom, PA around eight o'clock that night. My younger brother, Jonathan, at the age of four, was already asleep, not really caring where our family was or what we were doing. I stared intently outside the mini-van window looking at everything we passed as we drove along. My whole life was back in Prospect, and now I had to look out onto life in New Freedom.

When we arrived at my new home, my mother prepared me for bed. The long seven hour trip left me with no energy to examine my new play area.

The next morning, I began unpacking the cardboard boxes with all of my Barbies, My Little Ponies, and teddy bears in my new bedroom of pink sponge-painted walls and matching carpet. I was remembering Abby, Cory, and Luke helping me pack the boxes just a day ago, and now I was unpacking them all by myself. It was the first time I realized I did not have my friends to help me anymore. I would have to rely

on myself to accomplish the tasks needed done.

My mother walked in while I was unpacking and reminded me that I would be starting first grade in a couple of weeks. I was thrilled to meet new classmates, my future friends, but I was still attached to my friendships in Prospect.

Back in my previous hometown, I had grown accustomed to the parents and their children living an extroverted life full of friendly parties and fun-filled play dates. These people lived off of each other's energy and excitement for life. I lived in denial, expecting people of all places to be just like my hometown, but my innocence was shattered on that first day of school.

Once I walked into the white concrete classroom, I noticed all of the other little children sitting on their red, blue, and yellow metal chairs. Every four formed a square and created several squares of desks around the room. I sat at one of these square groups and began to look over my classmates. It was hard to tell what these children really looked like for their heads were bowed, and they were staring at their freshly-cleaned, cream-colored desk tops. All I saw were the bushels of hair protruding from the top of their heads, brown, blonde, sandy blonde, and black. Occasionally, if lucky, I would see the eye of these nervous children peek up from their desks to scour the room full of other anxious children. They would look at me, directly in the eye, then cower behind their desk tops once more. Their physical behaviors revealed a lack in self-confidence that I had never seen before in the children of my hometown. The children of Prospect were never ashamed of expressing their individual identities and thrived on diverse personalities.

My first day of school was not as exciting as I had hoped it would be. Twice a day we had recess, and each time the classmates would split up into small groups. I was so used to going around the playground and spending time with all of my classmates in Kindergarten. Mrs. Salzgeber and Mrs. Wallace had encouraged us to act as a unit of cooperation and consideration towards our other classmates. They would say, "Have fun and play together." There had never been a sense of exclusiveness and snobbery. In contrast, these new teachers cared little if the children respected one another, just as long as there were no fights. I had to rethink my tactics of playtime in order to become a part of one of these selective groups. No one seemed to appreciate my sociable personal-

ity. The children conformed to groups, preferably of the same gender, and this exclusiveness provided for them a sense of security. When I asked the girls if we should play tag with the boys, they hastily replied, "No. We don't want to play with them."

I begged them, "It'll be fun. Let's go ask them."

"Don't ask them," the girls advised, "They'll just say no. They don't want anything to do with us."

I irritably questioned, "Have you ever asked them before?"

The girls bashfully answered, "No, but they'll say no. It won't be any fun anyways." It shocked me that the girls did not even want to try, assuming the boys would say no and that playing tag was no fun. I should have taken the time to receive the reply from the boys myself.

At the end of my school day, I was bewildered. I could never socialize with my classmates the same way I had before. All of the students would go to their individual mailboxes and retrieve their mail for the day. Bus numbers were being called on the loud-speaker, and kids were leaving to go home. The office lady would declare, "Bus numbers twelve, five, twenty-four, and thirty-six are here for dismissal." I noticed one of the mailboxes was still full of mail. Looking at the name and then looking around the classroom to see if he was still there, I luckily spotted him. He was about ready to leave for his bus. I hurriedly picked up his mail and went over to give it to him. I expected a form of appreciation, but instead he responded hastily: "Don't touch my mail." I was so taken aback, unsure how to respond, that I stood for a moment and then apologized: "I'm sorry." Never before had I felt so ashamed and confused.

When I came home, I described the entire day to my mother, especially the mailbox situation and the unappreciative boy in my class. My mother just reassured me, "Not all children are rude. You'll meet people who like to have fun and like to be with you." I knew it would take me longer than I wished to make new friends.

Several times a year, I would write letters back to my friends in Prospect. We would discuss daily occurrences and weekend trips with our families. It was never the same through letters as it was from being across the road. By the time I was in the fourth grade, the letters had stopped, and we all had moved on to new friends and interests in our lives. Our addresses did not change, just the letters in the mailboxes.

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Outbreak in Wonderland

IN LEWIS CARROLL'S *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, many of the Wonderland creatures seem to be infected by a strange disease, adulthood. This disease is characterized by such symptoms as fury, sorrow, madness, exhaustion, and irritableness. The Duchess, the Cook, and the Red Queen all suffer from anger and unhappiness. The Cheshire Cat, the Mad Hatter, and the March Hare lose their sanity. The Caterpillar's symptoms make him irritable and argumentative. The Caterpillar, unlike the other diseased characters of Wonderland, chooses to take an active approach in fighting his ailment. He would appear to make use of the narcotic opium; he also seems to be quarantined from spreading the disease of maturity to Alice. Apparently, even in the fictional Wonderland, medical devices can be utilized in an attempt to alleviate symptoms caused by adulthood and to ease the spread of such a horrible disease to other creatures.

In John Tenniel's traditional illustration of the Caterpillar and Alice in *Chapter V: Advice from a Caterpillar*, the Caterpillar is seen using a hookah, a water-pipe which can be used to smoke opium ("United States: Smoke Like an Egyptian; Hookah Bars" 64). While such a drug can obviously be used as an everyday attempt at a general "high," it has also been used for medicinal purposes in the past. Before the use of common contemporary opium alkaloids such as Pantopan and morphine, which are derived and purified from opium, pure opium was smoked as a common, everyday painkiller ("Opium Alkaloids"). It is logical, therefore, to infer that the Caterpillar could have been seeking an escape from pain. Could this pain be the result of a debilitating disease? Could it be the result of an unbearable case of adulthood?

Many creatures, when tortured by pain, seek comfort in pain-killers and sedatives. In Carroll's first description of the Caterpillar, he is described as "a large blue caterpillar, that was sitting on top [of a

mushroom]" (51).¹ While it is quite feasible that the Caterpillar's natural skin pigment is a shade of blue, it is not necessarily the only possibility. A blue tint to the skin is commonly related to a shortage of oxygen in the body, or suffocation. The Caterpillar in this novel may have been suffering from respiratory depression, a common side effect of the sedative nature of opiates ("Opium Alkaloids").

While the text never states that this large, blue Caterpillar is indeed using an opiate drug, it can be inferred not only by his coloring, but by his actions and his use of the hookah. Opium and drugs derived from the sedative opium produce a dormant and sleepy state ("Pills Killed Man, Not the Pain; a Spiral to Death Went Unmonitored"). The description of the Caterpillar addressing "Alice in a languid, sleepy voice" implies such a state (55). Another example of the Caterpillar's drowsiness arises near the end of his conversation with Alice, when "In a minute or two the Caterpillar took the hookah out of his mouth, and yawned once or twice, and shook itself" (61). The obviously sleepy creature may, quite reasonably, have been sedated by some sort of opiate and by displaying its accompanying side effects. On the other hand, his exhaustion may also be the outcome of a long, tiring life, which he has gone through on his journey to adulthood.

Between his bouts of near-unconsciousness, Carroll's Caterpillar rarely speaks. As stated, in the first description of the insect, it is mentioned that he "quietly [smokes] a long hookah" (51). Before he ever speaks a word to Alice, "The Caterpillar and Alice [look] at each other for some time in silence" (55). In the middle of the conversation, he takes leave of all verbal interaction with the young girl: "For some minutes it puffed away without speaking" (57). Yet again, the Caterpillar's silence overcomes him when Alice finishes her recitation of "You are old, Father William." After stating that she was completely incorrect, "there was silence for some minutes" (60). These many examples of the Caterpillar's subdued, silent tendencies to drift off help to define him as sedate. One particular definition of "sedate" is "To make (a patient) sleepy or quiet by means of drugs. Hence sedated ppl. A., under the influence of a seda-

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all references come from *Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004).

tive drug" (*OED*). Both "sleepy" and "quiet" can now be used to describe the character. Thus, the description of being "under the influence of a sedative drug" logically follows. However, could his silence be yet another symptom of the Caterpillar's disease?

Yet another adverse side effect, aside from respiratory distress, lethargy, and silence, is the psychiatric effect of agitation ("Opium Alkaloids"). Agitation is exceedingly apparent when the Caterpillar overreacts and shouts at the girl to "Explain [herself]!" and when Alice notices that "the Caterpillar seemed to be in a *very* unpleasant state of mind" (55, 56). After Alice accidentally insults his height, the Caterpillar again loses his temper and screams at her "angrily" and rears "itself upright as it" speaks (60). Such hotheadedness furthers the assumption that the Caterpillar is indeed using an opiate. However, it is impossible to determine whether such a symptom is the result of drug-usage or the disease: his agitation may simply be the result of many, many years of dealing with people (or creatures) who misunderstood his commands and statements.

Opiates have also been known to result in both psychological and physical tolerance and dependence ("Opium Alkaloids"). The Caterpillar repeatedly inhales puffs from his hookah, which could be a sign of such a tolerance. Even when first encountered, the Caterpillar is described as "smoking a long hookah" (51). A short span of conversation is quite enough, and the creature must take a break and "for some minutes [puff] away without speaking" (57). After being offended, he again seeks solace in his comforting drug and puts "the hookah into its mouth, and [begins] smoking again" (61). How much smoke can one small, three-inch-tall insect possibly require to feel a response (without taking tolerance into account)?

The use of the hookah, an early biomedical drug-delivering device, is not only medical technology which appears in the novel. The practice of quarantining is also implied in John Tenniel's illustration of the child and the creature. Quarantine, as defined by the *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*, is "enforced isolation from public contact to prevent the spread of a contagious disease" ("Quarantine"). The hookah's long inhalation tube appears to form a protective bubble around the intoxicated larva. The question is whether it is protecting the Caterpillar or Alice. Considering that the old Caterpillar may have been contaminated by terrible adulthood disease and Alice is yet a child, it is only logical that Alice must be shel-

tered. She is one of the very few youthful beings left in Wonderland; the others being the Hearts, who are the doomed children of the royal cards, and the Duchess's baby, who soon turns into a pig, which is possibly the result of catching its mother's anger and influence (92, 72-73). Alice's healthy, pure body must be protected from the lash and contagions of the harmful symptoms of the grown-up disease.

Overall, these examples may not shed the most optimistic light on the medical field. It is, indeed, impossible to tell from the story whether the Caterpillar's silence, exhaustion, and agitation are the results of opium usage or adulthood. In either case, such medication does not seem to be greatly improving the creature's predicament. Of course, his symptoms may have been even worse before treatment. Whether or not the opiates eased the Caterpillar's symptoms would have to be studied further, examining the extent of the symptoms before, during, and after the conclusion of pain-killer administration. It would then be possible to verify which of the Caterpillar's afflictions may have been the result of addiction and which may have been the result of adulthood. His blue color, if it truly is the effect of respiratory depression, also does not bode well for the helpfulness of such drugs.

The quarantining technique does not seem to have increased Alice's chances of avoiding the disease: her rapid growth at the end of the novel is evidence of that. Again, it is impossible to tell if the medical technique was at all effective, as Alice could have contracted the disease earlier in the novel during one of her many occasions of contact with the Wonderland adults. To determine the efficacy of the quarantine, various underage subjects who had not had previous contact with infected adults would have to be tested; Alice is not a suitable subject. Until further tests are performed, the symptoms of both the Caterpillar and Alice must remain inconclusive.

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It Was All a Dream

“OH, I’VE HAD such a curious dream!” Alice remarks as she is awakened by her sister at the end of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll 117). Until this point it is unclear to the reader that Alice’s experiences throughout the novel are actually events in a dream. Many people would not think twice about a dream such as Alice’s because her unconscious incidents may appear extremely silly when we compare them to reality. However some people believe that our dreams act as windows into our unconscious minds and hold great meaning. One such psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung, greatly emphasized dreams, the collective unconscious, and the universal archetypes that make it up. According to Jung, even in Alice’s dream journey through Wonderland, we can recognize examples of those universal archetypes because of the consciousness we all share.

Jung described a part of our psyche as being a “psychic inheritance,” or a collection of experiences that we all share as a species. This is the type of knowledge that we are all born with, and although we are unaware of its influence, it affects the way in which we behave and feel (Boeree par. 19). Described as being the deepest layer of our subconscious, the collective unconscious is not usually accessed consciously (Edinger 4). The “unlearned tendency to experience things in a certain way” defines archetypes (a word coined by Jung himself), which are the components that make up our collective unconscious (Boeree par. 22). The ways in which these archetypes are displayed in dreams are referred to as archetypal images. These

images are also often the basic components of religion, mythologies and fairy tales (Edinger 6). As both a fairy tale and a dream, the presence of archetypes in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is unsurprising.

Alice herself could represent the child archetype. This archetype is represented by a child, like Alice, or other small creatures. The child archetype symbolizes the future and rebirth (Boeree par. 41). Being this archetype, Alice learns a lot about herself through her journey and is essentially “reborn” with new knowledge after she awakens. Because the child archetype is often blended with other archetypes to form a child-god or child-hero archetype, she could be considered a child-hero (Boeree par. 41). The hero archetype represents ego, which means that this character is the one with which we, the readers, will identify. Throughout the entire book the reader can assuredly identify with Alice since we would probably be just as confused and lost in such a strange and unfamiliar place as Wonderland. The hero also is often described as being ignorant (Boeree par. 42). This characteristic can be ascribed to Alice since she knows nothing of how the world of Wonderland works.

Aside from character archetypes such as the child and hero, Jung also describes situational archetypes. One situational archetype that is very common, especially in literature, is the journey theme. The purpose of this archetype is to send the hero on a quest within himself/herself to find some sort of intellectual truth and knowledge (Jung Archetypes 2). When Alice first arrives she arrives in Wonderland where she has no awareness of the rules by which this world is run. She makes many errors (Growing smaller and leaving the key on the high glass table, talking about cats to a mouse) in the beginning, but the more time she spends interacting with the creatures, the more she learns. When she finds herself at the glass table for the second time, she knows what to do. As Carroll writes,

‘Now, I’ll manage better this time,’ she said to herself, and began by taking the little golden key, and unlocking the door that led into the garden. Then she set to work nibbling at the mushroom ... till she was about a foot high. (Carroll 76)

She also knows when to hold her tongue to avoid offending the animals she encounters. “ — ‘and perhaps you were never introduced to a lobster—’ (Alice began to say ‘I once tasted—’ but checked herself hastily, and said, ‘No never’)” (94). She eventually

adapts herself and her thinking to the laws of Wonderland.

The situational archetype of transformation is closely related to the journey archetype, representing a growth process that manifests itself in dangerous journeys to unknown locations, investigations of dark places, and descents to the underworld (Edinger 5-6). Alice descends to a world beneath ours by falling down a rabbit hole while she travels deeply into her consciousness into the dark and unknown depths of the unconscious mind. She literally goes through a growth process of changing sizes a multitude of times; however she also grows mentally, learning new things about Wonderland and herself as she continues her journey.

Alice's journey neither starts spontaneously, nor does it proceed without guidance. The White Rabbit embodies the spiritual father archetype symbolized by a guide or an authority figure (Boeree par. 40). In her dream, the White Rabbit can be considered both. It is the White Rabbit that Alice continues to chase; though sometimes she loses him, she always manages to cross his path and continues to follow him. Sometimes when she is especially lost, the White Rabbit appears to give Alice a direction in which to travel. All of the animals disappear at the end of Chapter III. Finding that she is by herself, "Alice began to cry again, for she felt very lonely and low-spirited. In a little while, however, she heard a little pattering of footsteps in the distance ... It was the White Rabbit" (Carroll 39-40). Reinforcing his role as the father archetype by asserting his authority, the White Rabbit tells Alice to fetch another pair of gloves and a fan when she meets up with him in Chapter IV. He works under the Queen's command and orders Alice around like his housemaid. Because of these characteristics he could be considered an authority figure to the girl.

Other representations of the spiritual father include the sun and rain, which represent the idea of the masculine fertilizing forces that "impregnate the earth" (Edinger 5). Since rabbits are often recognized for breeding and fertility, Alice's guide could coincide with this fertilizing idea. This archetype is also said to convey images of "law, order, discipline, rationality, understanding, inspiration, and alienation from concrete reality" (Edinger 5). The White Rabbit works for the Queen (law and order) and is also overly worried about the time and being late (discipline). He also "inspired" Alice to follow him, and

thus, caused Alice to be alienated from reality when she fell down the rabbit hole into "un-reality."

Since *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a novel about a dream, archetypes become doubly important. From examining Alice's dream, we can see just how much could have been going on in her subconscious. If we stop to examine our own dreams, we might find insights into our own subconscious. Alice learned a lot about herself and how to adapt to new situations through her dream journey. Perhaps we too could learn something about ourselves if we look a little closer. So maybe the next time we have an unusual dream, we might not be too quick to dismiss it as meaningless.

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Family Is as Family Does

FAMILY. Our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters—our blood. It is often said that blood is thicker than water; the blood of a family is what ties the members together and makes them, even to the slightest extent, inseparable, despite distance and time.

The tragedy of family is that it is unending. Initiation and duration, beginning and the rest, throughout it all, we remain family. Through birth we join. "Unto you a child is born," that miraculous phrase that sang upon W.E.B. Dubois' heart on the addition of a fragile life to his family. Despite his "fear of

fatherhood," Dubois couldn't escape the "joy of creation," the perpetuation of the legacy of his family.

It was on the day Sherwood Anderson's father grew silent that he was finally willing to accept his father into his family. In *Discovery of a Father*, Anderson's essay, the shame and toleration that attach themselves to the members of a family are clearly visible and frankly understandable.

I have numerous photographs of ones whom I call family, holding babies, with joyful smiles. A tradition, it would seem, that by each family member passing around the new addition, the induction is complete, the name resolved into hands and feet and bones of the child. I can't distinctly remember every family member of mine, but I can feel them in my blood, the blood of the past, the blood of today, and the blood of tomorrow.

Through death we retire. "His little soul leapt like a star that travels in the night," says Dubois in his essay, *Of Passing of the First-Born*. The triumph of family is that it is unending. Though death ceases the rush and pumping of the blood in one member, the family's blood courses steady on.

Four years ago, on a very cold February day, we laid to rest a man whom I knew as "Grandpa," but really I "knew" little about him. It was an automatic response; my blood ran cold in my body and my heart felt weak. It was as if his passing opened a tiny valve in the stream of the family blood, if only to release his share, but the impact was felt greatly by every member. "Grandma" felt the draft of his passing most; we buried her a year later.

It is impossible to ignore the linking of one member of a family to another. In a room of people, we know our family; our bodies recognize in each other the blood that we share.

Three years ago I discovered my brother. I could sense him. I knew that he and I, somehow, were connected, but my mind had not fully wrapped itself around the possibility that his blood and my blood were the same. The moment he hugged me, I knew. My heart raced. My blood surged. Our bodies detected the link, the powerful blood connection. For years I'd reserved anger, hate and pain; I'd built a wall around everything I'd stored up against him, this "brother" that never cared to know me. But the blood that kept his heart beating was my blood. That surging in his veins was the surging in my veins. The magnetism of one family member to another was inevitable; I hated the fact that I loved him, regard-

less of what he'd done or who he'd been, because he and I were both parts of the same whole.

He was getting married, he said. He wanted his "sister" to be there. He needed his family to be part of the most significant day in his life. And on a very hot day in June, three years ago, he brought his wife into our family, but she wasn't family. I loved her; it was the same blood; he and I share it, which powered the hearts that loved her, his wife, my "sister-in-law." We both had different connections to her, but neither of our connections to her was as strong as the bond that tied my brother and me to each other.

The year following my brother's marriage, terrible news struck our "expanded" family. My brother's "father-in-law," the father of my "sister-in-law," had been killed. Should I cry? Did I know him? All the titles, the hyphenated names, left me confused as to who was in our "growing" family. I cried, but not the same tears I cried when my "Grandpa" died.

It wasn't long before my "sister-in-law" started acting like my "sister." She started calling our father "Dad." He's not her "Dad." He's my "Dad." The day my brother married her was the day the father that he and I shared became her "father-in-law." But she started calling him "Dad," and it hurt. She was not part of the bond; the blood tying my brother, my father and I together did not wrap around her. And in a crowded room, I may never know she was there. But if my father or my brother were in that room, I would feel it all the way down in my blood.

Family is an institution, inescapable, and though often heavily guarded, it is sometimes penetrated. Lies and deceit can bring a family to its knees. Betrayal, mistrust and secrets can knock it out. Separation, divorce and adultery can break it apart.

Divorce broke into our family and like a clumsy thief took away the life I should have had. My mother, my life-giver, raised me; my first-hand experience in a "family" was different than others, and as the years passed, I noticed I was the odd woman out in a game I grew to dislike. But I was a part of something greater than I was as an individual. Had my father never left, I wouldn't be who I am, the good and the bad. Over time the bonds of our family have pushed and pulled us to places and times that none might have anticipated, but spread out, even to the corners of the universe, a family is still a family. My family is part of me; for better or worse I am my family.

The tragedy and the triumph of family is that it is unending. Through birth we join, in death we re-

tire. Our lives are created under the establishment, the family name, and our every breath ties strings of glory and shame to each member of the family.

My blood is the blood of my ancestors, now renewed. My blood will one-day be the blood of my children. Someday, I will retire my life, leaving it in the hands and hearts and blood of every member of my family. My life in their life, my blood in their blood, will never allow them to forget who they are. My family is a part of who I am; for better or worse I am my family.

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Grave Fun

Corpse, corpse on my wall,
Who is the most depraved of all?
You are, it replied,
So I stabbed it in the chest,
For it still sighed.

DYING, DEATH, DEAD. D-E-A-D. Dead. Done for. Finished. The big come down. The end. The finish. The final conclusion. The final sleep. The deep sleep. Six feet under. Pushing up daisies. Buying the farm. Worm fodder. Fertilizer. Meeting the Maker. A date with the mortician. The last sign off. Etc, etc.

Whatever nifty-neat or poetically depressing piece of phrase you prefer, we are all going to cease functioning as we currently know and enjoy it. Oh well. Big deal. Or are you of the persuasion to fear the unknown? Do you find yourself afraid to walk down dark tunnels alone; do you find yourself unable or

unwilling to face your fears? Then this is for you! And for just three extremely easy payments of \$999.99, we can fully prepare you for your final resting place (and if you call now, we'll even send you floral arrangements, a twenty dollar value, at no charge to you)!

Okay, enough mischievousness (or maybe not), why can I laugh about this whole "death thing?" I don't see any reason not to. It's pretty funny what we, as greedy human beings, have done to it. Oh, I know, you'll out-live death. Why? You make sure to buy health foods, work out and tell the rest of us how we can get cancer by giggling. Good, great, wonderful. But I bet you're the first one to go. But why, you ask? Isn't it funny how hard you have to work to prolong your life a couple of minutes? I mean just at your job alone, all that health food and gym memberships are expensive. That is to say that lots of funds are required to capitalize. But it's no easier to kill yourself either. Why, just look at how much we pay for cigarettes and razorblades. It seems the general populace is doomed to live a life of mediocrity. We cannot afford to live well and we can't afford to die fast (shiny red cars set you back a couple, I'm told).

We really have made death ever so morbid, haven't we? Take the practice of building a cemetery. Why have we adopted this tradition anywhere, especially here in an overpopulated landmass? Allow me to put it like this: more people are born than are dying each year, therefore more will be dying, in the future, than there are now. Do the math, if we continually bury people in boxes, with little plots of their own, eventually the cemetery will run out of room, then a new cemetery will open its pearly gates. Okay, fine, but where does that land come from? The land store, perhaps? In my (possibly) twisted mind, this style of burying presents more of a danger to environmentalists than deforestation, as we may at least find an alternative to the use of wood. I don't see us finding an alternative to death, but that may just be me being pessimistic.

In the future I see, people will be selling their lawns to churches, which will pressure the populace with speeches of kindness to their fellow man and the prevalence of Satan, and what-have-you. Eventually we will resort to mass cremation, and then the dust of the dead will be enjoyed with every breath we take. You know with that amount of burning, some ashes will inevitably be scattered, even if we use a sealed off and secluded crematorium. Instead

of dust being composed of 90 percent plus of dead skin cells, it will be 90 percent plus dead skin and eyes and hair and guts and fingernails and so on and so forth. Sound pleasant? Well, since I am sure it is, I will continue onwards. What do you propose we do with those burned particles? Keep them? Scatter them? Eventually, the earth will be just as covered with dirt as with tombstones.

But of course, some people will still be important enough to bury whole. The constituents of this class being presidents, senators, stockholders, rich and forceful people in general, in other words. And of course, no plots will be left, so they'll seek to buy land from the poor, exhume old corpses, and invade, all in the name of patriotism. With a smile on our faces, pride in our hearts, and of course a check in our pockets, we will swap bodies and land like trading cards.

I personally frequent cemeteries often, and I can honestly say (Scout's honor) that cemeteries are filled with bodies. Bodies decompose, and when they do, they fertilize the earth. Why don't we turn our recently deceased into industrial-grade fertilizer? I'll never know. Besides that though, if we really need some monument to our loved ones, then why don't we bury them right in the ground, no embalming, no coffin? That way, everyone wins. The wormy-worms get their foody-goody, and we get their waste, which in turn we can use to plant something exotic, like a cactus, or whatever suits your fancy. A cemetery should be like a national park, covered in vegetation, and we could walk through them, hand-in-hand, and picnic around grandpa's palm tree.

Cemeteries are very calming too. Have you ever just walked through one for the experience of it? It's very liberating. I promise no creatures or freshly awakened dead will stalk you. I have never heard of anyone actually having the need to say, "They're coming to get you, Barbara!" while I have been visiting a cemetery. No, quite the opposite, the grave grounds are a playground. You can walk them, run them, crawl them, sit in them, eat in them, or (my personal favorite) have a date in one. Everyone seems so afraid of them, leaving a great space to be away from people, from live people, that is, by surrounding yourself by non-living people. That alone is joke-worthy: the more dead people you surround yourself with, the less live people will disturb you. Such freedom tombs have. Most "ordinary and rational thinking" individuals ignore the healing energy of cemeteries, which

lies in the fact that they are quite peaceful, plus most are public. It is very legal to waltz right in, even if no kin of yours resides there, and enjoy the unpolluted, fresh air.

This leads me to my next point. Think hard now, where have most of the grave lands, that you've had the good fortune to find yourself at, been? I would wager my personal place in the family shrine that they were all in places as secretive and out of the way as possible. This way, no one disturbs the dead. I wholeheartedly agree that it would be terrible to have to file complaints from a horde of corpses. Part of the beauty of places of death is this seclusion. On a clear night, autumn ones especially, the stars are bright and visible overhead, no (or few) city lights supersede them. Yet again, I laugh inside at this fact. The lights of cities of the living smother, or *bury*, the lights of the cities of the dead.

Nonetheless, I am acutely aware that my views here may be a tad off-kilter. So why do I find death and its entrapments so funny? I fear it not. That is not to say that I wouldn't cry like a little girl, and then wet myself if a gun were rested against my temples. It is rather hard to overwrite the nervous system, and shock sets in easily and tightly, like a good death shroud. No, I fear no death intellectually. Worrying does nothing but move me closer to it. So I have de-programmed the worry. Simple enough. I never asked to be here on this planet, and I won't regret leaving it. I will fill it with as much as I can before I pass into the void. I hope death is oblivion, without guilt, happiness, heat, or consciousness.

Regardless of your views on this most debated and one-sided argument (unless the dead *can* speak), something needs to be done about how we dispose of and deal with death and the remains it leaves us. If we don't start burning the midnight oil considering what to do with bodies, we may run out of room. Then not only will relatives be angry, but perhaps the owners of those bodies as well. There's a little phrase, and if you know the tune, sing along: "When there's no more room in hell, the dead will walk the earth."

A Note on Documentation

Some of the essays contained in this year's edition of *Best of Freshman Writing* contain documentation. The editors assume that the students' instructors have verified the authenticity of this documentation. It is important to note that we were not able to do so in all instances ourselves and thus we were not able to publish some that were submitted to us. In addition, we would like to call to everyone's attention that, in the past, we received some papers that did not follow standard MLA parenthetical style formatting of documentation. We assume that this format is taught in all sections of English 15 and 30 throughout the university and that it is an important aspect of these two courses. Having received such instruction is a prerequisite for entrance into two hundred level courses within the English Department, most especially the 202 courses.

However, knowing the proper format for documenting papers is only part of what is necessary in learning to document college level writing. Students also need to know when to document and what are considered proper sources. Use of quotes, paraphrases, summaries, and statistics is most often a matter of demonstrating to an audience the validity of the writer's argument and a mastery of the materials pertinent to making such an argument. Good sources make writing persuasive—certainly more so than impassioned speech—with the audience that college writing is intended to reach. Language such as “I think” or “I believe” has little resonance with educated readers unless the writer's point is a lack of total conviction. In order to validate one's convictions (*assertions* in writing terms) one needs to provide

evidence in a highly logical fashion. This includes providing the reader with the very best sources possible.

Since 1995, students have been availing themselves of the Internet and most especially the World Wide Web as a primary source of secondary information. The university has been highly supportive, even in some sense insistent, on the use of electronic source material. It has provided students, as well as faculty, with perhaps the best database of on-line secondary source material available anywhere in the world. (Actually this “database” consists of numerous databases.) The editors have found that local librarians on our campuses have been most helpful in providing instruction in methods of accessing this information; however, it is our job as instructors to help students understand the differences in the quality of information they have at their disposal.

In short, we, the editors, would like to strongly suggest at this time that instructors take a strident position within their classrooms toward the proper use of secondary source materials. It is not our place, obviously, to implement policy; however, *Best of Freshman Writing* is in a singular position to spread the word in cold print. We would like to know what you, the instructors, think. Please Email or write us at your convenience.

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P. S. A slightly altered version of this editorial first appeared in the 9th volume of *Best*.