



# VOICES of freshman writing

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FLORIDA  
COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE  
★  
AT JACKSONVILLE

## **Crib Concerts**

by David Blaquire

The morning sun was still in China when the bellow of our ten-pound bundle of joy pierced the walls of the bedroom and found way to the conscious part of my sleep. The anxiety was as immediate as the light entering my opening eyes. I was quite positive my wife, mother of the child, would fulfill her motherly duties and tend to the unrelenting request of the restless wonder. It wasn't until after about thirty distressed minutes of quiet debate did I realize that it was my turn in the rotation of parenting duties. While anatomically inferior to physically sooth the beast, I relied on the time tested remedy of singing the nursery rhyme "Hush Little Baby."

This particular sleep deprived night, during the third eloquent rendition of "Hush Little Baby," I realized a stunning thought. The words of the song were asking an illiterate infant to "not say a word." The logic of this was a bit puzzling; however, more perplexing was the fact that I was trying to bribe a little baby. Buying gifts to reform a screaming banshee to docility causes a moral dilemma, not to mention that any of the gifts associated with the song would obviously have some type of life altering ramifications.

For instance, buying a singing mocking bird would be a noisy proposition, only compounding any efforts of getting the child to sleep. If the bird didn't work, then I would have to buy a diamond ring. The chances of the ring becoming a choking hazard are very high, and HRS would throw me in jail for child endangerment. When the ring didn't work, I would have to purchase a looking glass. This would be thrown to the ground shattering into a thousand pieces, thus causing harm to my bare feet as I stumble into the restless infant's room. With the baby screaming, because his looking glass is broken, I now promise to buy him a Billie goat. While I may get the benefit of keeping the lawn groomed, the fleas and mites would be unhealthy for such a small susceptible being, there again prompting a visit from my friends at HRS. The list goes on to include carts and bulls, barking dogs and horses. I think to my

half-conscious self that most of these gifts would be fine if we lived on a farm, but the financial ramifications would be staggering.

As I sing to my now quiet child and his angelic face returns to a less offensive color, I wondered if he is considering the language for a contractual agreement. My anxieties relax when his eyes begin to close, and the last words of song leave my lips. I know in my heart that if he doesn't make me buy all the stuff, "He will be the sweetest baby in town."

*Submitted by Professor William Strickland  
Narrative/Descriptive Essay*

## My Own Little Sanctuary

by Janine Landowski

Right there, not five steps from my back door, is my own little sanctuary—a place that many people will never get to see. My backyard is truly a special place. It's a space of tranquil beauty and peaceful solitude, a playground for a variety of birds, insects and animals, and a haven for relaxation. I visit often to soak up the quiet beauty and unwind from the stresses of daily life.

In the morning, right before the sun comes up, my backyard refuge begins to come alive. The quick, green lizards scurry across the pool screen, searching for tasty spiders and flies for breakfast. A large, snowy white heron swoops across the pond to rest on the edge of the lawn. He surveys the water, cocks his head, and then zap — snatches a fish in one quick, graceful motion. His intricate feathers glisten in the rising sun as he continues to carefully stalk the water's edge. The heads of snapping turtles pop to the surface of the murky water as they smoothly glide through the wind-blown surf searching for food. Our resident squirrel scampers up a tree, thrashing his fluffy tail as the joyful golden retriever clumsily bounds into the back yard for his morning visit.

Occasionally, I will be blessed by a visit from the wood storks. They are recognizable by their black heads contrasting against their white bodies and the black wing tips as they glide through the air. They are huge with large, black beaks ready to scoop up fish as they wade through the water. I wonder where they have come from, where they are headed,

and what kind of adventures they've had. Possibly they're traveling south as the winter approaches, using my sanctuary to feed and rest on their long trip to a better climate. I feel fortunate that I've been honored with a visit from these endangered birds. It gives me joy and pride to think that maybe they have purposely come to my safe refuge as a stop on their journey.

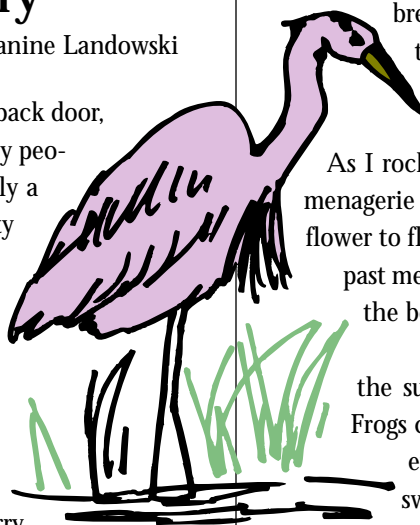
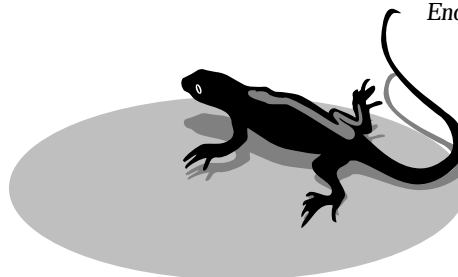
Throughout the day the animals and birds come and go attending to their daily routines. As I float in my pool, I watch the birds flit from tree to tree. The cardinals delight me with their bright red plumage and beautiful song. The egrets are my favorite with their long slender white necks and thin graceful legs. The squirrels play tag as they jump from tree to tree. I just have to laugh out loud at their crazy antics! Lizards bask on nearby leaves, enjoying the mid-day sun. I toss bread into the pond, watching the fish scramble to the surface to catch a morsel.

After my swim, I sit on the swing and continue to enjoy the wonderful surroundings. As I rock in the gentle breeze, small members of nature's menagerie entertain me. I watch butterflies flutter from flower to flower. Bees, dragonflies, and hummingbirds breeze past me. Nature gives me a calming, inner peace as I view the beauty around me.

Toward evening, the world quiets down. As the sun sets, lightning bugs twinkle above the water. Frogs croak, loudly echoing across the lake as the crickets chirp beneath the vegetation. A gentle breeze swirls through the trees carrying the fragrance of floral potpourri. A pair of raccoons scurries down the path looking for food left over from the cat's dinner. Their comical looks and clumsy stride make me smile. Joy wells up inside me as I delight in the spectacle before me.

As the stars come out at the end of another day filled with nature's blessings, I give thanks for my little retreat. Spending time here has given me a break from life's hectic demands and has filled me with feelings of joy, serenity, and peacefulness. It renews my spirit. I am truly thankful for my special sanctuary filled with life, energy, light and happiness.

*Submitted by Professor Arnold Wood  
Enc 1101 Telecourse  
Descriptive Essay*



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# What We Can Learn From Squirrels

by Andy Layman

Today's college students are mesmerized by visions of e-commerce, computer-geeks-turned-billionaires, and media notoriety. We go to college to get a degree -- a piece of paper that says we can move on in this world. The world is a big scary place. The job market is competitive, and we want to compete. We have been cautioned and warned against useless degrees like "Philosophy" and "European Literature." We want practical expertise and advice that will help us to succeed in the business world. Generations past may have looked at college differently. For instance, ancient Athens or 1960's Berkeley may have been havens for free speech, poetic license, and mind expansion. Today's youth sees this liberation as frivolous. Education for education's sake may be idyllic, but today's generation sees it as a summer frolic that will leave us unprepared for the harsh winter ahead (the job market).

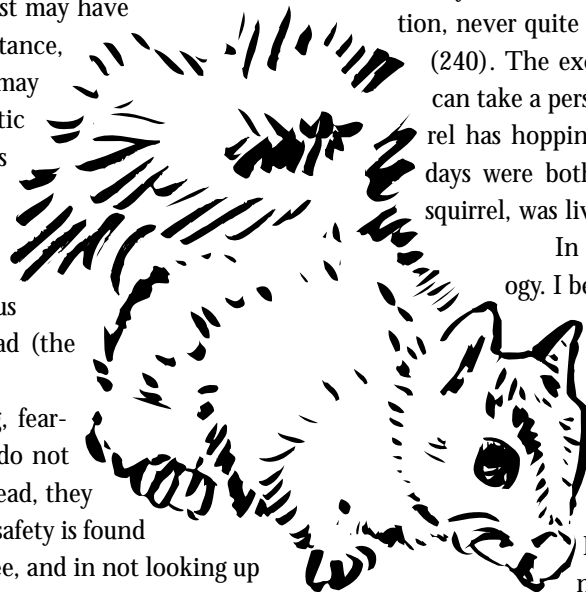
Much unlike the high-flying, fearless squirrel, today's college students do not take freewheeling acrobatic risks. Instead, they choose to remain earth-bound. Their safety is found in not taking chances, in not being free, and in not looking up at the sky to see the truly limitless possibilities this life has to offer. Liane Ellison Norman draws a striking analogy between the "soaring" squirrel and the gravity-centered students in her short essay, "Pedestrian Students and High-Flying Squirrels." Norman stresses that neither the student or squirrel is "perfectly free." The squirrel "must go on all-fours...dogs are after him...He is no freer from industrial ordure than I am." The student must face unemployment which according to Norman, "looms as large as the horizon itself" (240).

Both the squirrel and the student have no certain promise. Norman says the difference is that the squirrel "...plunges and balances, risking his neck because it is his nature." The squirrel is living not working. His chores of preparation do not deter him from looking about, exploring things, and jumping from branch to branch, undaunted by the possible failure. "Even a high flying squirrel may zap himself on

an aerial live wire," says Norman (239). The student, on the other hand, wants to learn the easiest way to do things without taking risks. Norman's point is that even with training and education, career and fortune are as uncertain as a squirrel's fate. So, why don't students take a few of the squirrel's risks? Norman wonders, "Why not...demand, for the well being of their souls, the liberation of their minds" (239).

Norman believes that she resembles the squirrel in her depiction. She describes herself as a college student with a much different agenda than today's students. The goal for her was education for education's sake. Norman describes her time in college as "dizzy" like she imagines the squirrel's time must be. Norman says that like a high-flying squirrel, she "pitched from fairly firm stands into the space of intellect and imagination, never quite sure what solid branch I would light on" (240). The excitement of finding out where the mind can take a person is compared to the adventure a squirrel has hopping tree to tree. Norman says her college days were both a luxury and a necessity. She, like a squirrel, was living and not just preparing for life.

In many ways, I agree with Norman's analogy. I believe that students today are too focused on becoming professional. We sorely lack a sense of drive and purpose outside that of the almighty dollar. Yet, I feel Norman grossly underestimates the risks taken by today's generation. Microsoft was a risk. The very fact that Ms. Norman's students choose the journalism profession is a risk that can only come from a passion and excitement for the field. Journalism is a very risky venture. Like the squirrel's next leap, there really are no certain correct moves. What about the students who take time off to backpack around Europe, start their own software companies, and even hack their way into the FBI's top-secret files? These are today's risk takers. Never fear Ms. Norman. Some of us are still passionate about poetry, art, and knowledge. There is no doubt that this generation is shrewd. We have an overwhelming amount of information at our disposal. We are looking for shortcuts and safe ways to secure a lucrative job. However, it is not true that we fear falling from the tree more than we value the risk of jumping. We are young and agile. Unlike the squirrel, we recover quickly from injury. Moreover, yes, we do love to start our own businesses, explore technology, and take huge risks!



Norman's main point and central analogy is the last line of her essay. She says, "There are no sure-fire tricks to make it as a squirrel" (240). This idea is universal because it is true for everyone in life. No one is handed a free ride or a certain destiny. The squirrel in the tree is not sure where he will get his next meal or how he will survive the winter. He lives simply and bravely. There is no way to know what is in the future. As a teacher, Ms. Norman could not teach her journalism students a "sure-fire way to write a news story" (238). The same is true in life. There are no guarantees.

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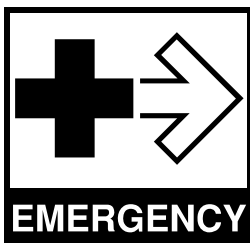
*Submitted by Professor William Strickland  
ENC 1102  
Analysis*

## The ER Experiment

by David Tillman

Most people have had a bad experience with a doctor at some point in their lives: an inaccurate prescription, an overlooked illness, a bad bedside manner. However, few situations can compete with the level of encroachment available in today's emergency rooms. These visits, because of their sheer physical and emotional trauma, are often more accurately described using terms normally reserved for hostage situations.

From the onset of injury, the patient is torn from the comforts of his everyday life and thrown into a foreign, privacy free environment. As he rolls through the automated sliding doors, he is ambushed. Three cold figures, with even colder hands, converge on him from different angles. Each attacks a different area of his body: his head, his torso, his legs. Questions fly overhead, "What day of the week is it? ...Do you have any allergies? ...When is the last time you had a bowel movement?" As they talk, scissors cut away at the seams of his clothes.



Within moments he is naked, strapped to his bed and on the move.

Like a hostage, the patient is not only exposed and completely vulnerable; he is forced to trust his life to a person who stands ready and willing to inflict bodily harm. Explorations, amputations and reconstructions are just a few of the surgical options available to an attending physician who deems them necessary. Unfortunately, emergency room doctors often perform the most invasive of these procedures without the benefit of general anesthetic. For the sake of life and limb, they pry inside a person's most prized possession -- his body.

The physician, too, like a well-trained terrorist, assumes his role in this hostage situation. He is the abductor. Rigorously trained through four years of medical school, one year of internship, and three years of residency, he has been freed from the intrusions of his conscience. He is an emotionally distant judge of any given situation. People are no longer human to him. For example, Mrs. Smith, who suffers from severe belly pain, is simply referred to as, "The appendicitis in room three." Oddly enough, hostage takers are known to use virtually the same tactic. Emotional distance allows them to bind, to torture, and to kill their victims without a moment's hesitation. With the veil of humanity removed, the physician is free to violate any number of the individuals he sees every day.

I am not trying to say that members of the emergency room's staff are terrorists. On the contrary, I realize that the system is made up of dedicated, hard-working people. However, as a patient, I am never given the opportunity to leave my humanity at the door. I enter the emergency room with clay feet, dirty underwear, and enough fear to convince me that I have somehow left the real world and entered the ninth plain of hell. How hard could it be for a doctor to learn my name, to shake my hand, or, God forbid, to empathize with me just a little bit. It seems odd to me that, in a world where the cure is often more painful than the illness, so few people have figured out that a little common courtesy goes a long way.

*Submitted by Professor Sharon Cleland  
ENC 1101  
Analogy/Example*

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# The Triumph of Perception

by Tina Wood

Beauty is a quality that gratifies and appeals to both the mind and the senses of an individual. It is important that the focus is on the word "individual." What determines the beauty of an object, person, or place? A person's environment plays a major part in what he perceives as beauty.

In Alice Walker's "When the Other Dancer Is the Self," from her early childhood the protagonist perceived herself as beautiful. No doubt this was due to the positive reinforcement provided by her family. It is obvious that her mother taught her to value herself and to realize her worth. This is evidenced by her mother's refusal to accept the demeaning salary offered by the woman who needed her services, despite her own desperate need for the money. After an accident with a bb gun leaves her deformed, however, the protagonist changed her entire perception of herself. Following the accident, as she peered into the mirror, she was no longer confident and happy when she saw herself. She no longer expected to be chosen as special as she had been before; therefore, she was not. She found herself hiding from others instead of making herself visible to show her intelligence and beauty as she had before, and, for this reason, she often went unnoticed.

To further illustrate my view that beauty is unique to one's perception, consider the question that she asked her family. "Have I changed since my accident?" Though the answer

was that she had not, she strongly disagreed and even saw herself with less intelligence than before. This became evident when her grades dropped and she was no longer quick

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**"The reality is  
we are all  
God's creation."**

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of mind. Leaving her home and going off to school, she now had to face the perceptions of others outside of her family. Their thoughts of her were governed by their upbringing and environmental differences. At the same time, the way she saw herself played a major part in her mental perception of how she was seen by others. For example, before the accident people would stare at her, and she was sure that it was because she was "the cutest little thing." That is what she believed, and she was convinced that this is what others perceived. When people stared after the accident, she felt ugly, stupid and ashamed of herself and her appearance. This had a profound effect on

her behavior and negatively impacted her performance in school.

For many years, as she underwent various transitions in her life, being seen by others based on their scope of knowledge and environmental differences, she never saw her true beauty until her three-year-old daughter opened her eyes to it. Through the eyes of this child, everything was pure and good; that is all that she knew. Her world was influenced by the positive reinforcement of her family, just as her mother's was at that age. The television show that this little girl watched each day, known as "The Big Blue Marble," depicted the awe-inspiring creation of the world as beautiful and wonderful to behold. The love that she felt for her mother as she looked into her eyes extended her perception of beauty, lending great credibility to the trite expression that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." From that point on, she beheld herself as beautiful. Finding one's own image to be gratifying and appealing more often than not means it is just that. Individuals should never allow the perception that others have of them to negatively affect how they view themselves, their performance, and their behavior. The reality is we all are God's creation. As he looked upon he said, "That's good!" If we gratify and appeal to the senses and the mind of God, who are we to see in ourselves anything else but beauty.

*Submitted by Professor Sue H. Pine  
ENC 1101  
Definition Essay*

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## Tickets Please

by Peter G. Wolf

Your fingers are black with newsprint. You're in a state of agitated panic. You're frantically circling everything in sight with your highlighting pen as you flip the pages: back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. In front of you, such outlandish slogans boast "O'HARE-LONDON \$75"; "GUARANTEED LOWEST FARES" and "IF YOU CAN BEAT THESE PRICES START YOUR OWN DAMN AIRLINE!" You think to yourself "My god, do I need a vacation! A vacation from looking for one!" In trying to find the best deal on airfare, you might ask yourself "Whom should I call?" or "Is this a scam?" and "How can I prevent from spending all of my precious, hard-earned vacation money before I even get off the ground?" Standby Flights. Courier Flights. Red-eye flights. How am I ever going to get out of here? All right, just calm

down. Sit back, relax, take a deep breath and allow me, the Red Baron of the friendly skies, to be your guide through the painstaking but rewarding adventure of finding the cheapest airline ticket for your next vacation.

Are you familiar with *The New York Village Voice*? Otherwise referred to as simply *the Voice*, this vital tool is mandatory to begin the hunt for the lowest airfare for your vacation.\* *The Village Voice* has by far the largest travel section of any newspaper in the country; however, getting one might be a problem. If you can't find one at your local bookstore, most Tower Records will carry them in their magazine section. This two-dollar-and-fifty-cent investment can save you hundreds of dollars in the final cost of your ticket. Another essential tool is having a credit card. You have to be able to snag the best deal before it expires, and a credit card allows you to do this fast. Also, have a highlighting pen handy (preferably pink because yellow washes into the newsprint and is hard to find once you go back over the ads).

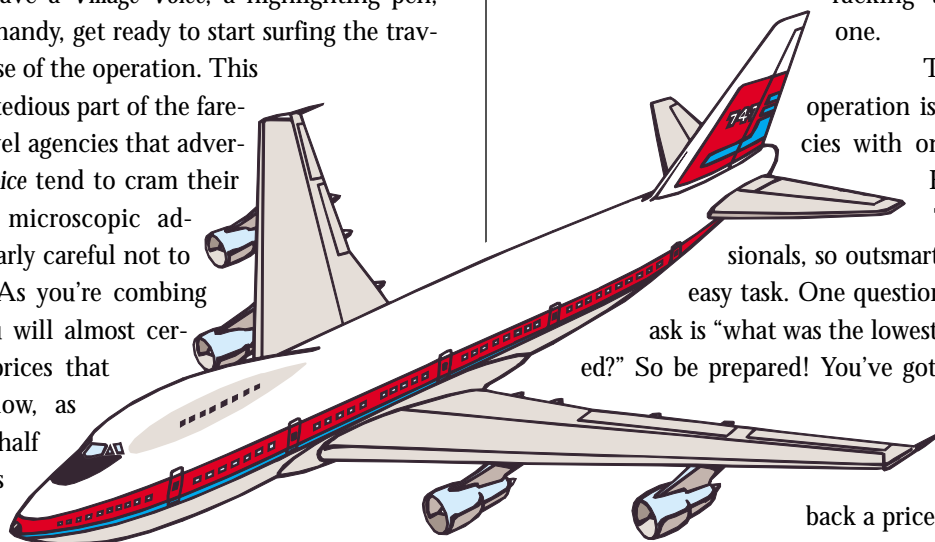
Once you have a *Village Voice*, a highlighting pen, and your credit card handy, get ready to start surfing the travel pages, the first phase of the operation. This is probably the most tedious part of the fare-hunting process. Travel agencies that advertise in *The Village Voice* tend to cram their flight specials into microscopic ad-spaces, so be particularly careful not to skip over anything. As you're combing through the ads, you will almost certainly come across prices that seem outrageously low, as these prices reflect "half or one-way fares based on a round-trip ticket" (usually stated somewhere in fine print as "O/W based on R/T") and generally don't include tax, agency fee and sometimes an airport fee. (What an airport fee is exactly, I still haven't figured out). The first flight you should look for is a round-trip flight going out of JFK to your FINAL destination (JFK will offer the largest variety of inexpensive flights). The best deals on flights are those that go from JFK to the following cities: Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, Atlanta, London, Paris, Amsterdam and Frankfurt (the high volume of air traffic to these cities keeps the prices reasonably low). This flight will essentially be the "base" of your vacation and will give you something to work your other flight around.

Next, you should look for another round-trip flight going out of JFK to your city of origin. Now, you're probably thinking that trying to get two flights going out of JFK doesn't make any sense, which leads me into the fun part of this phase of the operation, and probably the best tip I have to offer (as well as the first phone call you'll make): Find out if you can get the second flight in reverse. Usually (unless there's a odd restriction) the agencies will allow you to do this. When you're hunting for the best airfares, keep in mind you can play a "mix-and-match game" with the flights and airlines. Say, for example, you want to go to Amsterdam. You find a New York - Amsterdam flight on Sabena Airlines for \$400. You still have the matter of getting to JFK. Play the mix-and-match game. You see a special from JFK to Jacksonville on TWA for \$250. See if you can get the flight in reverse. To simplify matters, find out if the agency that works with Sabena also handles flights with TWA (if they do, they will most likely offer the same special). Working with two agencies is far more nerve-racking than dealing with just one.

The next phase of the operation is calling the travel agencies with one thing on your mind: **HAGGLING PRICES.**

These people are professionals, so outsmarting them may not be an easy task. One question they'll almost certainly ask is "what was the lowest fare that you were quoted?" So be prepared! You've got to go "lower than low" with these agents, which means you will have to quote them back a price \$50 lower than the lowest fare you found. They'll most likely tell you that the agency's advertised price just went off special, and that the price is now two, perhaps even three times what you originally saw in the paper. In this case, it's time to pull out the oldest haggling trick in the book: tell them you'll have to think about it and will get back with them later. Works like a charm. When you call the agency back, you'll discover that they have magically produced a ticket priced closer to the fare you read about in the *Village Voice*. You may have to do a lot of talking with several agencies, but eventually you will get a ticket at a price you agree with.

The third phase of this operation is working with flight schedules. If you're lucky enough to get an agency that



works with both of your chosen airlines, the agency will organize an itinerary for you. If not, it's up to you to make sure that the days and times match up as closely as you can get them. For instance, you're looking at a flight on TWA from Jacksonville that arrives in New York at 2:00 p.m. Then you might consider a flight on Sabena that is scheduled to leave New York for Amsterdam at 2:30 p.m., thus allowing you only a half-hour between flights. I would not recommend trying to coordinate two flights with such a short connection period. For one, JFK is one of the largest and most confusing airports in the world: just getting from one terminal to another can take anywhere up to an hour- since terminal-to-terminal transport as well as cars and taxis, all occupy the same circular drive that surrounds the terminals. Secondly, in this scenario, you would also have to consider showing your passport, retrieving your luggage from one airline and then checking it in with another. Finally, you would also have to put into consideration that your first flight could be delayed, reducing your connection time even more. I would highly recommend that you allow at least a two-hour gap between two domestic flights and three hours between a domestic and an international flight.

A final word to anyone thinking about purchasing a standby ticket: Don't do it! The pain and suffering associated with these types of tickets is far greater than anything I've mentioned in this article. You must purchase what is called a voucher ticket: a ticket only good on participating airlines. Once you have your voucher, you must repeatedly call the agency that handles these tickets to receive "tip-offs" as to which airlines might have available seats, because, just as the policy on the voucher states: you are not guaranteed a flight on any airline. You take your chances, as well as your luggage (which, by the way, is only allowed as carry-on), when you go to the airport. The chances of getting a "tip-off" about a flight going to a city of your choice is extremely low, since some of the participating airlines may not go there at all. You might show up at the airport one day with a "tip" on an available flight, hang around the airport for hours waiting for a seat to open, and then find out that the flight is unchanged and booked solid. You might have to go through this procedure the next day, and the day after that, and still not get a seat. Sure, standby tickets are cheap, but are they worth it? Don't make me say, "I told you so."

Well readers, gotta fly (yes, the pun was intended). Bon Voyage! Have a pleasant flight! Don't forget to pack your Dramamine, a bathing suit, plenty of reading material and an extra pair of jeans. And please, bring back a souvenir for me.

\* Please take note that since you are working with a New York based newspaper, most of the flights are either out of the JFK, LaGuardia, or Newark airports, so this method of purchasing a ticket may not work for everywhere you want to go; for example, going from Miami, Florida to the Bahamas via New York would seem slightly ludicrous. I would, however, highly recommend it if you are planning an over-seas or long distance domestic trip in which a connection in New York would deem appropriate. New York travel agencies deal with flights other than those out of JFK, LaGuardia, or Newark; however, the occurrence of such is a rarity.

\*\*After purchasing the ticket by credit card, the travel agency will mail the ticket and itinerary to you. In some cases, you may be required to fax a copy of your credit card, drivers license, and/or passport to the agency.

Submitted by Professor Tammy Cherry  
ENC 1101  
Process Essay

## Daddy's Mirror

by Karen D. Billings

*I don't want to be here*, I thought, as I sat on the side of my father's bed. It was not that I did not love my father because he was the world to me. It was the fact that this skeleton of a man, with his flesh just hanging loosely off his bones and no muscle whatsoever, could not be my father. This man, who was dying of pancreatic cancer, could not be my father because *my father* had quit drinking at least twelve years earlier. However, when I looked into this stranger's pain-filled hazel eyes, I saw my daddy staring back at me, and I knew I could not deny that this man was my father. *This cannot be real. God, tell me it's not real!*

"Karen, he said in an unfamiliar voice, "promise me that you will go on living after I'm gone."

"Daddy, don't do this," I pleaded.

"No tears, please." He gasped for air again. "I need you to promise me you will go on living because you're smart, and you can achieve the things I should have been able to give you. I'm sorry I couldn't give you more, Betsy."

I think about that night often, for it was the last time that I saw my father alive, the last time I talked with him, the last time that I even hugged my father, and it was the last time that I was his little girl. For six months,



my father hid the fact that he knew he was dying. It was only one week prior to his passing that he sent for my baby brother and me. Maybe that was why it was so hard to keep the promise I had made to him, or was it because he had been the only person in my life that I could trust and could be myself around? Maybe I was like any other girl who believed her father was invincible and would live forever. All I know is that dealing with my father's death was the most critical point in my life.

After my father passed on March 6, 1996, my life became a whirlwind. I had dealt with other traumatic situations, but none could compare to his death or the pain I felt then. The pain was so severe in my chest that I completely shut down and was running on autopilot for my children's sake. My world was falling apart around me. Frightened and alone, I felt like I was standing naked against the world. All I could do was withdraw even further into myself and wait for the storm that was brewing down deep inside of me. It was threatening to wipe out my very existence. I was becoming my own worst enemy.

A month had passed, and still my dark cloak of depression engulfed me. I tried shaking it off every chance I had, but it was no use. My mind ached, and all I wanted to do was sleep, but the haunting image of my father's wasting body kept seeping into my dreams, shaping my nightmares every night. My eating habits had declined as well, so my own physical health was at risk. Compounding this problem, I previously had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome that often caused me serious depression. Thus, I had to find a spark of hope somewhere before it was too late.

It wasn't until about two years later that I had a real breakthrough. I was getting ready for work when I found myself staring at my own reflection in the mirror. There was something about the way I was looking back at myself that caught me by surprise. My father's reflection was staring back at me. The words "Live, Karen. Live," echoed in my memory. I sat down on the edge of the tub and cried like I hadn't done in a long time. I thought about what I had been doing in the past two years, and I didn't like it. I had been working in construction as a drywall finisher to support my children, but I was doing this out of duty not out of a desire to fulfill a life-long dream. I hadn't felt any real emotions, and this made me feel hollow. This was not what my father meant when he said, "Live."

I had to begin at the end and work my way back through the years I had lost. I had to untwine my confusing thoughts on life and begin anew. I needed to let go of my wor-

ries about just making it through the day and start planning my life before it all slipped away. Finding my way back to what I was doing before my father passed was the challenge I faced. What was I doing? I was going to school, filing for divorce, and finally starting to feel free from the pain I had felt from previous situations in my life. I was actually starting to feel as if my life could be normal for a change. My only concern now was had I let too much time elapse to start over.

My first step to recovering from my father's death was dealing with and sorting out all the feelings I kept pent up. In order to heal, I had to feel every ounce of pain that I had denied myself previously. Opening the floodgates to the emotions I had hidden for so long was like opening a shaken bottle of champagne. My emotions flooded me. My chest felt as if it were about to burst as I sucked in the long awaited air and began to breathe again on my own. My robotic self was fading rapidly. I began to laugh and cry and to feel the anger and joy of such a sweet release. For the next few weeks, my emotions were like live wires until I found an even plateau to stand upon.

Finally, I was following the steps to straightening out my life. I returned to college, made payment plans for past due bills, and concentrated on being a better mother to my children. I also began to realize that it was okay to feel sad, but it wasn't okay to stop living because someone I loved and trusted was gone. I realized as well that it was okay to smile without feeling guilty.

Dealing with my father's death was the hardest thing I ever had to battle, but I have grown to realize that my father is not really gone. As I always predicted, my father is immortal. As long as I hold tight to the memories, I know that my father lives and breathes today through me, my children, and their children to come.

*Submitted by Professor Antonia Grant Bryant  
ENC 1101  
Narrative/Process Essay*



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# Do You Wazoo?

by Margaret Blajian

At the start of this writing assignment, my head was twirling and racing to find a word to use. I was sure that I could impress my reader with how deep and philosophical I could be if I could just choose the right word. I pondered on all the great meaningful words such as death, love, serenity, faith, good and evil. I found that trying to pick only one word to define was driving me up the wazoo. But what exactly was the wazoo? Was it what most people really thought, the posterior? Maybe it was a state of mind, a level of spirituality that one might reach. Either way, I was determined to find

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## ?? WAZOO ??

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out. I made it my word to define and started my search. What I found in my search was that wazoo does not have one specific meaning. The wazoo changes meaning with content, and therefore has a plethora of definitions.

The first thing I did when I started on my quest was to question people around me what they thought wazoo meant. Every individual I asked found that he or she did not have a single clue as to the meaning of the word or the origin but gave his or her best educated guess. The highest percentage answer I received was the posterior. One person thought that maybe it was a term his grandmother used, a polite way of saying "take this job and put it where the sun don't shine." I found it slightly appalling that people would think vulgarly about such a bland word as wazoo. Besides, "my wazoo hurts," does not have that certain ring to it.

I was impressed when I got varied answers. Almost every person I asked thought it was a part of the human anatomy: the ears, the nose, the mouth, and the digestive track. But one great philosopher, my mother, thought it was a river, to be exact, a tributary of the Wabash. Therefore, if one were driven up the wazoo, one was lost. Another idea that came across was a wall, giving the phrase new meaning. One was no longer lost but had gone gaga. Then again, saying, "I need to repaint that wazoo," still did not sound quite right to me.

I dismissed the silly meanings that people had conjured up. The wazoo is not the Washington Zoo, a battle cry

for amazons, the goop that snails leave behind, or the great leader of the Wa people. Wazoo should not be mistaken for watsu, an ancient Japanese remedy which calls for underwater therapy. A wazoo is not a relative of the kazoo, a musical instrument; nor is it the sound the kazoo makes. However, it is the title of a song and a search engine. Do you wazoo? Probably not, since it is not very well known.

The word wazoo was beginning to grate on my nerves. No matter where I looked, I could not find a clear or concise definition of wazoo. I looked in books, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. I searched the web and asked a variety of people for its meaning. So, I decided to pick it apart. I looked up the words wa and zoo. Wa, as defined by *World Book Dictionary*, is Scottish for wall; or is a member of an aboriginal tribe of the Mon-Khmer linguistic family. A zoo is a place where animals are kept and shown. It definitely was not a gated attraction where one could pay to see aboriginals interact.

After awhile, I forgot about the research and what others thought it was. I pondered on my meaning of wazoo. My theory is that it is an evolved blurb. It is a word such as thingamajig or doohickey. It is used creatively on the spur of the moment to substitute for a word one does not particularly want to say or remember. It has its own meaning.

Just as salut has many meanings in French, so does wazoo in English. Depending on the context you use it in, it can mean a great many things. Perhaps it was the battle cry of some ancient civilization or the slimy residue that snails trek behind them. Maybe Wazoo is another name for our Creator. It all depends on situation and context. Therefore, wazoo means everything and nothing all at once.

Submitted by Professor Sally Nielsen  
ENC 1101  
Definition Essay

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# A Lesson in the Wind

by Nathanael Schuman

I found contempt, one August day, for the bitter wind. As a twelve-year-old seated alone on a grassy hill, overlooking the verge of adolescence, I suddenly perceived its invisible figure. How could I not? It rose up, like a monster out of the sea; its sharp tendrils, flailing frigidly about, decapitated all the children to make them adults; it bled their virtues and imaginations and sucked the bloody nectar from each retreating wave. That day I vowed to never grow up, to never

get swallowed by the odious beast nor let my eyes become blind to its predatory presence again. I felt regal and permanent in my decision, like the noble oak trees that stood patiently around me. Three elements wore away my crown like the wind wears away the oak's emerald crown and reduces it to rust upon the autumn ground: time, or, more accurately, the effects of time's passing; humility; and logic.

Dynamically constant, time's paradox seeped into my life unnoticed as all of humanity withered on the branch of purpose and fell spiraling onto my head. It held me still but pulled and twisted my mind into an unfixing anchor, scraping along the unsure bottom of life's undersea deathbed. Seconds ticked and tocked into eternity as I traced their surface patterns passing tenderly above. Ripples brought waves, then currents, then tides of change, until I washed ashore on a land of strange new things.

Entering a new world where growth and adaptation were everyday necessities, I was ill-prepared. The tenor of adolescence is that of a season's changing: a capricious series of climatic fluctuations, never certain but always leading to a certain end. Mine was no different. The harrowing vibrato of this seeming requiem brought insult after insult to a once confident sense of awareness. The death of certainty left a wake of new questions as well as the humility to embrace them and pursue their solutions. I felt dressed to battle any weather and trudged on into the bleak snowdrifts of winter.

Somewhere in the December of my enlightenment, I found a new friend. Her name was logic, and she embodied all of the romance and mystery that drove me through life. She too felt shunned by the world, being cast out each winter when humans, inmates of their own emotions, sought warmth in simplicity. Though I held her hands, danced with her, grew to love her, and felt the warmth that others were quick to abandon, she kissed me in secret alleyways and hidden corners of reasoning.

However,  
time found  
its way to  
our  
enchanted  
play-  
ground,  
and I  
found  
myself  
more and



more often alone and naked in the cold and empty dead ends of my own psychological constraints. These were pleasurable painful places that left me exposed to the shadowy figures, the voyeurs from my past and the promises I made to myself.

The monster seems no more than a Muse now. The wind is no more than a light breeze. All the certainty of youth has been reduced to one truth greater than what I could then imagine but revealed to be the outcome of a pursuit of ideas. Adulthood was never the true enemy; it was conformity and blindness. Those traits I recognized in the world that bitter autumn day were true in their abomination though they were not the result of growing older but of growing blindly and conforming to a colder world.

*Submitted by Professor James Cobb  
ENC 1101  
Multiple Patterns Essay*

## Academic Independence

by Derek Nankivil

Throughout the school system in the United States, academic standards vary according to the obligations and abilities of teachers and students. Among the world, the United States stands strong, boasting a relatively strict criteria for academia. Our standards are among the top in the world, and we continue to be highly competitive in the intellectual realm. I view our current organization as sufficiently appropriate, but I believe this because I have made good use of it. In America, students are taught at their own pace; in other words, a student who doesn't want to learn will be allowed to choose not to learn and vice versa. Our entire arrangement allows for independence, enough independence for people to determine their place in society. Considering America's comparative intellectual superiority, I believe that our academic standards are adequate because they allow for freedom.

Within a classroom, all the students receive the same assignment, but the boundaries of the assignment decrease as one ages. In eighth grade I was placed in an advanced science research class. With only eighteen students enrolled, it was the only class of its kind. Originally, the only restriction was that everyone had to produce a science project. Everyone worked at his or her own pace, but two students who did no work were dropped after a month. Then, six students convinced the teacher to allow teamwork. This two-man, yearlong project produced one presentation per team. Nine of the remaining

students submitted one individual project at the end of the year. There was a driving competition between two other students and me, but I was the first to display a completed project, which I presented just before Christmas break. The purpose of my project was to determine why a laser is so concentrated and how it is produced. This led to another project, in which I researched the possibility that the visible diameter of a laser widened at the same rate of the diameter of a small concentrated light. This project was completed with two weeks left in the school year, and no other students in the class had finished two projects. While I was researching the nature of light, other students were making paper airplanes and hiding plants in the closet. This is a prime example of the fact that school is what you make of it.

Looking back on this experience, I can see how I made more of this class than other students did. I saw students who did less work than I did, studied less complicated subjects than I did, and they still earned the same grade. I have never complained because they wanted to slack, and I learned more than they did, and they respected me for that. By the end of the class, even the teacher held me in high regards as an intellectual being. People know what they want to do and that what they do now affects their future. Even though I was more advanced than the other students, they received the same grades. Out of sixteen students, half received A's, but that was not the issue. The individuals involved knew about my input. People still recognize advancement, whether it is through conversation, a resume, or knowledge application. These differences will always exist, and this is how we decide what job a person does. Nearly everything fits into the puzzle. If it weren't for high school drop outs, who would clean our toilets; if it weren't for college graduates, who would teach our classes and design our man made environment; and if it weren't for doctors, who would save our lives with open heart surgery? These differences are essential to our modern society.

There is a direct correlation between the amount of education one has and the type of job one has; however, the job is not strictly limited by the time one spends in school, but it is restricted by what one learns in school. Today, there are extremely advanced students who have earned their bachelors

at fifteen, and there are slow kids who do not graduate from high school until twenty-one. These people are all important to our civilization, and the leniencies in our educational procedures allow for their existence. If the boundaries of our educational system were incredibly restrictive, then how would this abundant amount of variety be served? Lastly, I am content with our educational techniques because its individualistic manner allows United States' citizens to freely choose their own destiny and because that independence depends upon a necessary variance of experiences.



In support of the statement that the United States is highly competitive in the intellectual realm, I recently read that we have won the high school level international Science and Mathematics Fair six years in a row. Lately, we have virtually hoarded international awards such as the Nobel Prize. The Nobel Prize is awarded in Physics, Chemistry, Peace, and Literature, and the prize is usually given to more than one person. The United States' system of academia doesn't need an alteration because its colleges are among the top in the world. In fact, most of the foreign winners of international awards were for

advancements made in American Universities. Americans have dominated physics over the past decade. The winners of the 1998 Nobel Physics award for the discovery of a new form of quantum fluid with fractionally charged excitations include the following: Robert B. Laughlin, a native of the U.S.A.; Horst L. Stormer, a German who was working in America at the time; and Daniel C. Tsui, a U.S. citizen. Counting these winners, twenty-two Americans won the Nobel Prize in Physics in the nineties, but only two foreigners were given the same recognition. Americans have developed methods to cool and trap atoms with laser light; we have discovered the lepton and the neutrino; we have discovered a diffraction technique for the neutron; we have discovered a new kind of pulsar and much more over the past decade alone. Chemistry is not as exclusively American as Physics, but Americans have nearly dominated it also. Over the past decade, five chemistry awards were given to foreigners, and practically owning science, Americans have won thirteen Nobel Prizes. On the other hand, Americans have rarely won the prize in Peace or Literature, but the excessive awards given to Americans for

studies in the factual fields greatly supports acceptance of our system of academia. Hence, when compared to other countries in the world, America dominates in intellectual opportunities. Therefore, large revisions in our academia would jeopardize our opportunistic dominance.

From personal experiences, I have seen how our current educational system allows for one to become knowledgeable in any subject. The present level of standards and stints can not be altered significantly without the loss of an essential diversity. Thus, our academic standards are precisely suited to our system of society. Besides, Americans are on the cutting edge of intellectual competition. Considering the products of our arrangement of academia, I don't believe that a modification would be advantageous, and for now, I think that we are doing just fine.

Submitted by Professor Sally Nielsen  
ENC 1101  
Argumentative Essay

## Hot Heads

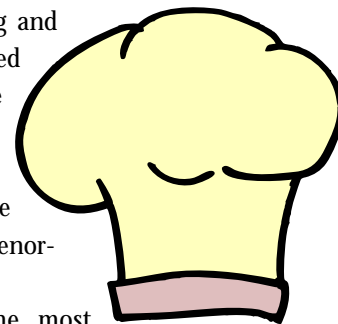
by Karen Bruner Upright

The kitchen at a restaurant for fine dining is hot, noisy and full of cranky, underpaid, overworked chefs. The constant banging of pots and pans makes the chef edgy, and the heat rising from fryers, stovetops, ovens, steamers and dish machines makes even the coolest head heat up. In addition, pressure from wait staff and management to produce quickly and perfectly adds fuel to the fire already smoldering beneath the surface. Of all the chefs I have known, Michel, Jeanne, and Karen were particularly inept at keeping their tempers cool when the kitchen got hot.

Chef Michel gave me my first restaurant job and treated me like an apprentice. When we had paperwork to complete, we would spend the day in his office, sharing stories and recipes. After our work was done, he would make a delicious dinner for the two of us to share. He shouted strange sayings and bullied me in his thick, French accent. "Madame, Upright!" he would yell at me, "Never forget; it is not the first beer that gets you drunk!" This warning meant that something left on the stove or in the oven too long was in danger of overcooking. When he was in a particularly foul mood, the sound of his clogs clomping on the tile floor of the kitchen would send cooks

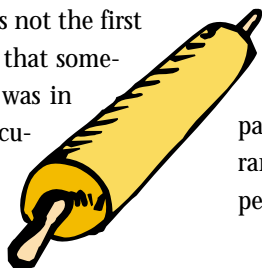
scurrying out of his way. On very bad days, he would pick up a large cast aluminum rondeau and throw it across the room in a fit of temper. The sound of that heavy metal pot hitting the stainless steel walls of the sink area made his staff cower in fear.

Chef Jeanne, who owned a catering accompany, was overworked, overtired, and overstressed like most small business owners. Chef Jeanne chain-smoked in the kitchen. When she was having a good day, she would tell us stories about her life. We would swap recipes and joke about how difficult it was to clean out the frozen yogurt machine. When she was angry, her eyes would bulge until they looked as if they were going to pop out of her head. She would leave mounds of dishes in the sink and promise she would wash them in a minute, but she never did them. She played favorites with her staff and made unfair, cruel comments about the rest. Her constant gossiping and visiting with friends who stopped by the shop interfered with the production schedules in the kitchen, making everyone else on the staff work harder. The time pressure in her little kitchen was enormous.



I am Chef Karen, the most obnoxious chef I have ever known. Chefs Michel and Jeanne trained me in both cooking and management, but I hired job candidates with whom I felt most comfortable, instead of those who had the most experience. My staff included a teenage drag queen who plucked his eyebrows, wore makeup to work and drew cartoons of female superheroes on the chalkboard and a retirement-aged waiter who told awful jokes and whose hands shook so badly he could barely carry full coffee cups. I tried to break the pattern of abuse but failed miserably. If I was nice to my employees, I would feel as if they were taking advantage of me. I tried to avoid *micromanaging*, and as a result, often did not explain procedures thoroughly, which was frustrating for both the employee and me. I worked so many long, difficult hours that I had no sympathy for employees requiring days off for illness or personal problems. When frustrated, I had a tendency to shout at my staff.

The heat of a commercial kitchen comes from both the ovens and the chef. It is difficult to be a kind and patient manager in the hectic environment of a busy restaurant. The overwhelming pressure often causes even the nicest people to lose their cool. Although the poor behavior of Chefs



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Michel, Jeanne and Karen is easy to understand, such behavior is never excusable. In other words, if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.

*Submitted by Professor Marian Beaman  
ENC 1101  
Classification Essay*

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## The Inconveniences of Cellular Phones

by Alicia Magazu

Too often we look to find convenience in our lives through the many inventions that have been developed through technology, such as those made in the area of communication. Take cellular phones, for example. They are intended to provide convenience for the consumer, but they can also be more trouble than they are worth. Sure, it is nice to know that you can make a call at any time, from wherever your heart desires, and without having to deposit thirty-five cents. However, there are also a lot of negative sides to owning one of these devices. Though cellular phones appear to provide convenience, they may also create inconveniences that outweigh any advantages they may provide by causing embarrassing situations, by interrupting work and social efforts, by producing unnecessary high costs in your budget, and by creating dangerous conditions when they are used while you are driving in a car.

One of the most annoying sounds in the world is the sound of a ringing telephone in an area where silence is considered golden. Having your cell phone go off in the middle of a business meeting or during class at school can be very embarrassing. I can guarantee that every head in the room will turn in your direction, and everyone's eyes will focus on you. It is also definite that the person in charge will shoot a look so evil that it makes you wish you could crawl into a hole and hide.

The fact that anyone can get a hold of you at any time can also cause a lot of grief. Sure, it seems convenient to

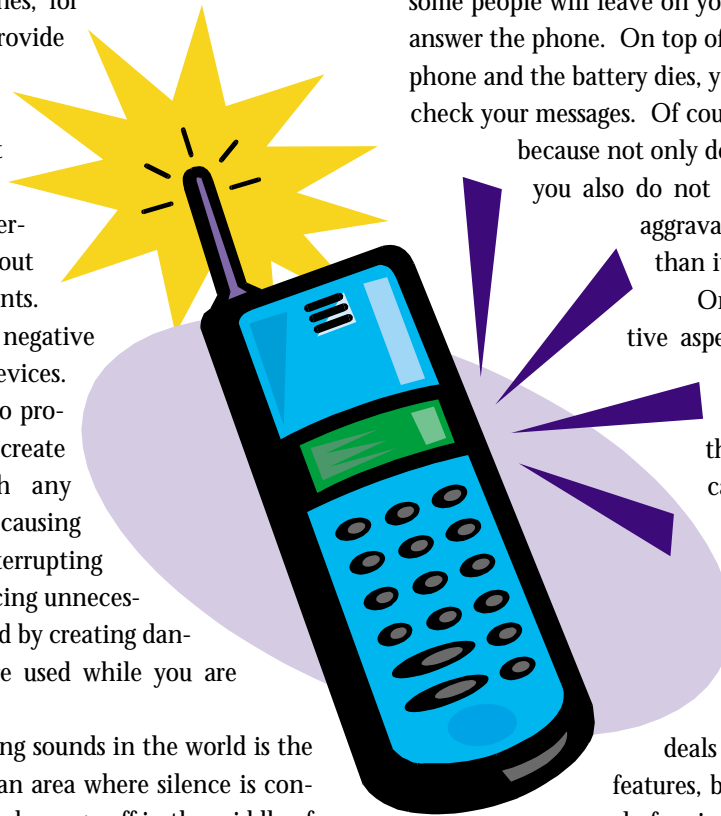
know that you can be reached at any hour of the day, especially in case of an emergency, but this may not be nearly as nice as it sounds. There are not many things that are more irritating than receiving numerous phone calls, one right after the other, while you are trying to carry on an important conversation with someone, or if you are trying to get some work done. There are people in this world that are convinced that you have nothing better to do than give them your full and undivided attention. This, of course, is not possible, and trying to make them understand this concept can be exhausting.

To prevent receiving phone calls at inconvenient times, you can do the obvious and simply turn the phone off. This seems like a good idea, but it can also create a mountain of problems. There must be a written law that states that all cell phone owners must always answer their phone, or they shall be punished. You will not believe the nasty messages some people will leave on your voice mail because you do not answer the phone. On top of that, if you forget to charge your phone and the battery dies, you cannot talk to anyone or even check your messages. Of course, this makes people really mad because not only do you not answer your phone, but you also do not return their calls. This type of aggravation is certainly more trouble than it is worth.

One of the most concealed negative aspects of owning a cellular phone lies in the matter of the dreaded monthly bill and all the extras that go along with it. In many cases, consumers are unaware of how costly a cell phone can be. The amount of money required to own and operate the phone can actually burn holes in your wallet. Many phone companies promote their great

deals that offer free minutes and free features, but let me tell you that things are rarely free in this world. The price of the bill

more than covers everything that is labeled "free." Along with the cost of the phone bill, there are also other costs involved with owning a cell phone. Usually you must purchase the phone itself, which can be rather expensive, and if you want the phone to actually work, then it is wise to invest in a battery charger too. On top of that, there are other added accessories you can buy, such as colored face plates, a battery charg-



er that plugs into your cigarette lighter, a leather case, a hands-free headset, and even a headset that comes with a speaker phone that sits on the dash of your car and allows the passenger to participate in the phone conversation. If you include the cost of any amount of these accessories and add it to that of the bill, you are starting to see some very high numbers. So, if you have money to burn, then I guess you are all set. But, if you are anything like me, and have to count your pennies, be careful how caught up you get in the cell phone frenzy.

Another misconception about cellular phones is that most consumers expect their phones to work anywhere. One of the glories of owning a cell phone is having the luxury to bail yourself or anyone else out a jam. Say you are driving on a deserted highway and blow a tire, and you do not have a spare. You think to yourself, "Hey, it is a good thing I have this trusty cell phone!" The funny thing is, though, when you try to make a call for help, your phone seems to be unable to put the call through. It turns out that you are out of range, and the phone will not work. Hey, how convenient. Even funnier, not only does the phone not work in the middle of nowhere, but sometimes there are certain places in town that the phone will not work or the reception is so bad you can only hear bits and pieces of what the person on the other end is trying to say. So, do not be misled about the conveniences of cell phones and how they can help you in times of need because here is proof that they cannot always do what you need or want them to do.

Perhaps the most dangerous problems that are created by cellular phones occur on our roadways. A ringing telephone takes just about every ounce of concentration you, as a driver, use to focus on the road and funnels it all toward getting your hands on the phone to answer it. Then, you are so consumed by the voice on the other end that not even the massive sight of an atomic bomb explosion would catch your attention. Not only will your attention be lost, but it will also alter your reaction time. It is especially important to pay close attention to the car in front of you while driving on the highway because at the rate you are traveling, it will only take an instant to find yourself sitting in the trunk of that car. You need to be able to react quickly to the changes in speed of the cars around you, and having your attention focused on a phone conversation will certainly slow your reaction times.

Perhaps even more dangerous than incoming calls are those you try to make while driving. Making a call to someone actually requires you to take your eyes off of the road so that you can see to dial the number of the person you wish to reach. This activity completely destroys any hope of reacting

to a traffic situation, such as a sudden stop, leaving you unaware of what is going on around you. Again, this is a very dangerous situation, and it is one that could be fatally inconvenient for those sharing the road with you.

There is actually a show done on Oprah about how dangerous using cellular phones while driving can be. A married couple tells their story of their newborn child who was killed in an automobile accident by a person driving while talking on the phone. To further prove that driving while on the phone can be dangerous, they videotape a woman who consistently uses her phone in the car because her job is so demanding. Not only do they find that she uses her phone almost the whole time she is in the car, but she also chows down on her breakfast and finishes getting ready for work. When they show the car from the outside, you can see how she is swerving around. It is really scary to think how easily you could cause an accident while talking on the phone in your car. Some states have actually made it illegal to drive while talking on a cell phone because doing so really is that dangerous.

Time and again, we get too caught up in finding the most convenient way to do things, and we don't really stop to think if it is really the best way to approach making our lives a little easier. Technology seems to be coming up with so many new ways to make life run smoother for the common man, but putting less effort into life may not be the best solution. Cellular phones offer convenience in many ways, but they can also develop problems that you may never have thought of before. They can create embarrassing situations, large amounts of stress, a major pinch in your budget, and disastrous results on the road. So, even though the need for wireless freedom seems like a necessity, and because almost all of America feels the need to own a cellular phone, there are times when our need for freedom can lead us to less convenience and more trouble than we had bargained for.

*Submitted by Professor Mary Sue Koepel  
ENC 1101  
Exemplification Essay*



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# I See the Signs & Hourglass

by Sarah Katie Farrow

Technopaegnia is a literary device in which the literal shape of the poem imitates and reinforces the content of the piece. The poems are structured in the manner of Seventeenth Century British poet, George Herbert. *I See the Sign* is in the shape of an octagon, which should appear to look like a stop sign. It refers to my life and to all of the things I should stop doing in order to make my life a happier one. It states a few of the many faults I feel that I possess and basically admits how I truly see myself.

## I See the Signs

I need to stop punishing myself  
And I should try to get some more sleep  
I need not focus so much on material wealth  
And sometimes let myself break down and weep.  
One day I should stop procrastinating as much as I do  
Or keep things bottled up so tightly that I start turning blue  
I should be proud of all the things that I have accomplished  
And try to stop thinking of everything that needs to be done  
I should stop pretending that my life is exactly like I wished  
And take time to let my hair down and have some fun  
I set my standards too high and let myself down  
I shouldn't bash myself and bruise my soul,  
Start planting my feet firmly in the ground  
And stop setting unattainable goals.

*Hourglass* is formatted in the shape of an hourglass. The poem refers to life as tiny grains of sand that are running out quickly. *Hourglass* focuses on the thought of living for today because one never knows if tomorrow will come. The poem poses the question, "Have I accomplished all of the things in life that I need to?"

## Hourglass

The sand of time are running out  
The grains grow fewer everyday;  
If they ran out tomorrow  
Imagine the things about you  
People might say  
Did you  
Live life to its fullest?  
Will you be punished for your crimes?  
Were you adventurous, adored, and admired?  
Or maybe you just simply ran out of time.

Submitted by Professor Marian Beaman  
ENL 2012  
Poetry Expressed Through Device

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# The Lady in Room 206

By Christy Thomas

One cold winter night in Tucson, Arizona, my shift at the hospital had just begun. My nightly routine started at the patient board with the other patient care technicians (PCTs). This is where each of us chose the workload for the night: our patients. To an unsuspecting visitor, we must have sounded like children on a playground bargaining for the best kick ball players. After a few minutes of haggling and swapping, I accepted my fate and proceeded to the conference room to receive report on my patients. During report, the condition of each one of my patients was disclosed to me. Most of my patients were only hospitalized for routine cardiac monitoring, which was very normal for a telemetry floor. The only patient that seemed out of place on my team was the lady in room 206. During report, I learned that she had been diagnosed with a Gastrointestinal bleed and required a lot of care. I could have never known that this sick patient was going to teach me one of life's hardest lessons.

After checking in with my assigned nurse, I made my rounds. I began taking vital signs and caring for the urgent needs of my patients. I made the lady in 206 my top priority. As I entered the room, I was startled by the sound of labored breathing. She sounded like an out of shape smoker that had just run up two flights of stairs. I peered around the corner cautiously to find a large woman lying in a filthy bed. Her sheets

were soaking wet with perspiration and soiled with her own bodily waste. I introduced myself to her and explained that I would be cleaning her up. She nodded in agreement, unable to speak due to the tremendous effort it took her to breathe. I worked diligently, cleaning the helpless woman and straightening her bed, trying to give her comfort from her ever-worsening condition. After much time had passed, I left the room confident that I had done everything I could to make her comfortable.

As I stepped out of room 206, the bright light in the long, narrow hallway blinded me. The hall was bustling with visitors and nursing staff, and I felt disoriented with all of the commotion on the floor. My call lights were going off like blinking Christmas lights, and my name was being announced over the intercom, "Christy Thomas, please report to rooms 202, 203 and 205." In my quest to care for the woman in room 206, I had forgotten everyone else. I moved down the hall quickly, stopping in each of the rooms I had so carelessly neglected. After seeing all of the patients that were so desperate for my assistance, I felt as though their needs were trivial in comparison to the needs of the lady in 206. Some of them needed pillows while others just wanted someone with whom to talk. None of these needs seemed as urgent to me as those of the lady that was fighting just to take a breath.

As I exited my last room, I saw that it was time to hand out the dinner trays. I quickly assisted the other PCTs in distributing the dinner trays to all the patients on the floor. The last tray I delivered was to room 206. I greeted her and told her that her dinner had arrived. I lifted the lid off of her tray to find that all of her food was puréed like baby food. I sat down next to her and began to feed her like I would a small child. She had no appetite, but I encouraged her to eat. She accepted only a couple spoonfuls of food before pushing my hand away. I put a straw up to her mouth and let her wash down her dinner with a couple of gulps of juice. Gasping for air, she said thank you and then closed her eyes and attempted to rest.

As I left her room, my concern for her condition consumed me. I made my way to the nurses' station and attempted to get more information from the nurse about her continuing decline. She looked up at me and said, "She is a very sick woman," and then she continued with her charting. As I

began to stand up, the monitor tech shouted at the nurse to go to room 206. I followed her into the room to witness a scene that would forever be etched in my memory. I was horrified as I watched my patient violently vomiting blood from her mouth. I screamed in pure terror, "Oh my God!" and the nurse quickly told me to shut up. I watched in disbelief as the blood that once coursed through her veins emptied onto the floor in massive amounts. She choked and gagged, finally drowning on her own blood.

I left her room sobbing uncontrollably. I had never watched anyone die. I paced back and forth down the narrow hallway overcome with grief. As I choked on my tears, the words, "I'm sorry lady" rolled off my tongue over and over again. I knew that I had done everything in my power to help her, but it wasn't enough. I tried to think happier thoughts, but mental pictures of her death crept into my consciousness like a thief in the night. Tired and disillusioned, I was told to go home for the night. As I walked to my car, I realized that my life would never be the same.

Most people learn about death through the loss of a pet or a loved one, but I had been spared those experiences. Watching the lady in room 206 die was a sobering reality that was hard for me to face. Before her death, I walked the earth feeling invincible like nothing could ever happen to me. Witnessing her demise helped me accept that death happens to all of us sooner or later. The lady in room 206 was only in my life for a few hours, but her death has been with me ever since.

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*Narrative Essay*

