



# THE SCRIBLERIAN

Spring 2009 Edition

Sponsored by the English Department and the Braithwaite Writing Center, the *Scriblerian* is a publication for students by students. Revived during Fall Semester 2004 after a two-year hiatus, this on-line journal is the result of an essay competition organized by Writing Center tutors for ENGL 1010 and 2010 students. The Spring 2009 contest was planned and supervised by Chair Kellie Jensen with the help of Andria Amodt, Trent Gurney, Chelsea Oaks, and Whitnee Sorenson.

## Contents

Argumentative- English 1010.....	2
1st Place Winner: Sara LaFollette, “Mr. Marvel” .....	2
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Megan Magelby, “Rhetorical Analysis” .....	12
Expressive- English 1010 .....	15
1 <sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Brittney L. Park, “Heroin Chic” .....	15
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Kristy Stoll, “My Piano” .....	16
Argumentative- English 2010.....	18
1 <sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Erica Wardell, “Tragedy in Technology” .....	18
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Sorina Busch, “Monsters Creating Monsters Creating Monsters” .....	21
Expressive- English 2010 .....	25
1 <sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Alex Scroggins, “A Change in Seasons” .....	25
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Erin Teuscher, “Science Fair” .....	28
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Tessa Garrard, “Culinary Chemist” .....	30

## Argumentative- English 1010

1st Place Winner: Sara LaFollette, "Mr. Marvel"  
For Professor Charles Cuthbertson

Imagine you are sitting at a table with a partner. On the table sits a single piece of paper, a pencil, some coloring tools and an ink pen. Now imagine that it is the job of you and your partner to create and design a comic book superhero with the tools provided. You both excitedly jump into action and talk out the personality, super-power, costume design, opposition and other aspects which will flesh out your character. Eventually, you reach a mutual decision, and the character has been fully drawn with explanations and notes trailing up and down both sides of it on the page. Your creation: "Dartboard Man."

As soon as "Dartboard Man" hits the shelves, he is a hit. Copies sell out nation-wide, and "Dartboard Man" becomes a name worth millions and billions of dollars.

Now imagine as the years go by you begin to notice that your friend, the co-creator, is slowly moving more and more into the spotlight while you are drifting into the shadows. Your friend is gradually receiving and accepting most, if not all, of the credit for what you know was a joined effort. Eventually you back out, unable to compete with your friend's success.

Later on, you die. "Dartboard Man" has slipped into all but the complete ownership of your former friend who to this day is claiming the millions and billions of dollars that "Dartboard Man" continues to create. You tell me: Fair, or unfair?

This situation is similar to the story of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. Partners in the creation of the Marvel Universe where comic book heroes like Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk and the Fantastic Four vanquish the powers of evil; their separation remains one of the most tragic separation stories to comic book fans everywhere. But what lives on more than the story itself is the controversy behind it.

Who deserves the credit for creating the Marvel superheroes, Kirby or Lee? Who is getting it now? These are questions hundreds of people, comic book fans or not, have been unable to answer for years, but looking into Lee and Kirby's backgrounds puts these questions in perspective.

Stanley Martin Lieber was born into a Jewish family in New York, 1922. With Lieber's vivid imagination, supportive family, friends and people in his life; it would seem he was destined for greatness from the beginning. His favorite teacher, Leon B. Ginsberg, for example, taught Lieber that it was easier to face life's difficulties with humor ("Stan's"). It was the influence of people like Ginsberg that enabled Lieber to have a positive attitude—even during the Great Depression—and to encourage the development of his own skill: writing.

When Lieber entered "The Biggest News of the Week Contest" at age 15, he was rewarded with a letter from the editor which complemented Lieber's literary skill. The editor suggested that Lieber become a professional writer; something that Lieber took seriously ("Stan's"). Martin Goodman, Lieber's cousin-in-law, owned the firm Timely Publications. Comic books entitled "Marvel Comics"—which was a name that would show up again in the near future—and pulp-magazines featuring science fiction, horror and western stories were the firm's specialty, but the comics were what Lieber would be getting into when

he joined Timely's staff as a "general gofer" following his high school graduation ("Stan's"). The Sub-Mariner, the Human Torch and the Angel were only a few of the superheroes that made their debuts with Timely Publications.

This was far from his dream of becoming a playwright or novelist, and Lieber considered his writing to be "hack-work" (Heer). For these reasons he adopted a pen-name. There were a few: S.T. Anley, Stan Martin, and Neel Nats, but it was the name Stan Lee that was popular and would eventually stick. Stanley Lieber later changed his name to Stan Lee ("Stan's").

Also from New York—and a member of a Jewish family— Jacob Kurtzberg was born in 1917. Contrasting to Lee's childhood, Kurtzberg was raised in the lower east-side of New York City where the streets were teeming with rival gangs and street fights. To escape such horrors, Kurtzberg delved into the world of novels and adventure films, but it wasn't until the late 1930s that Kurtzberg would completely break away from the ghetto society by becoming a cartoonist. It was in this field that Kurtzberg, too, adopted a new name (Heer). He eventually became Jack Kirby, but other previous names were Bob Brown, Jack Curtiss, Lance Kirby, Teddy, Ted Grey, and a few others (Evanier).

Whether or not it was a coincidence that both of these men had their names changed is uncertain, but Mark Evanier, a professional writer who became an assistant of Kirby's, said that Kirby's name didn't change because he was afraid of Jewish discrimination.

"Jack was very proud of his heritage and faith," said Evanier. ". . . It wasn't so much a matter of concealing one's religion as of having a name that sounded like a professional cartoonist" (Evanier).

Again it is uncertain, but the same reasoning may have applied to Lee. He may have just needed to sound professional. The 1940s proved busy for both Lee and Kirby. Kirby and his old friend, Joe Simon—who he met at Fox Comics during his early comic book work— created Captain America for Timely Publications, the company that both of these men had been employed for at the time. Simon was the editor and Kirby was the artist for the all-American hero and sales were fantastic.

By this time, Lee was a leading writer for Timely. He reached this position due to Timely's limited staff, which included Kirby and Simon, and its "unlimited" deadlines. Lee had been put to work and given the task of writing a text piece titled, *The Traitor's Revenge*, for Kirby and Simon's *Captain America #3*. Though *The Traitor's Revenge* was his first published work, *Captain America #5: Headline Hunter, Foreign Correspondent*, was his first comic book script ("Stan's"). Already published and fresh out of high school, this was no small feat for Lee.

The comic was a hit. Due to its political focus, Captain America became an icon, (especially in the midst of World War II). Kirby's childhood shone through the pages, coming alive with realistic fight scenes and epic battles, but it was his war service that further pushed the realism that the comic portrayed.

Pearl Harbor brought Kirby and Lee to a near stand-still, calling both of them to service. Lee joined the Signal Corps, a military branch responsible for military communications, through which he designed war-related posters and advertisements. Kirby served in the infantry, aiding in the invasion of Normandy. Both Lee and Kirby returned to their original comic book work when the war ended only to find that there had been some changes.

Masked men and superheroes were losing popularity, the new craze being horror and westerns. Regardless, Kirby and Simon continued, presenting new approaches which concentrated on romance and drama. Young Love, Young Romance, and Western Love are some of the titles they created, none of which were very popular. Lee, too, tried to bring something new to the table while working with Timely, but with mild success.

The Blonde Phantom, Millie the Model, Venus, Namora and other superheroines poured out of Timely Publications in the late 1940s; all of which Stan helped to create. These crime fighting super women were an attempt to re-capture the reader's attention, but only a few of them managed to do well. The Blonde Phantom and Venus were two that had a fair amount of popularity, while some, for example: Sun Girl, only lasted three comic book issues (Nolan).

The 1950s were even harder on Lee and Kirby. Bombarded with the public out-cry against comic book violence, comic book companies created the Comics Code Authority (CCA) to censor their comics. Though the CCA appeased the mobs, it dramatically lowered sales and by the early 60's, the public was ready for something other than moral lessons and over-all "goody-goody" comic books (Staples A16).

On top of the CCA difficulties, Atlas Comics, a branch of Timely that Lee now managed, was forced to cut staff, leaving Lee as editor and chief writer for eight monthly comic books; and Kirby's partner, Simon, left the comic book field to seek a career in advertising. It was during this difficult time, when the public was screaming for something new and Lee and Kirby were on the lower end of the scale, that the two men came together.

Armed with a quick artistic hand, Kirby became a great asset to Atlas. Lee, on the other hand, with his heavy work load had little time to write out stories in detail. This was why he created the "Marvel Method," a method in which the artist, Kirby, did the artwork and plotting for the story while Lee, the writer, added dialogue (Heer).

This has become the basis of many future arguments involving Lee and Kirby. Many suggest that Lee's work was minimal in comparison to Kirby's. This is a fair assumption, considering that about three fourths of what makes a comic book is the imagery, but could you imagine reading a weekly or monthly comic book that didn't have dialogue? Unless the artist's original intention was to create a story using only pictures, I consider both art and dialogue to be important.

John Romita, the artist who picked up working with Lee on Spider-Man after Steve Ditko, expressed his opinion with The Comics Journal when confronted with whether or not he ever pursued, or felt he should be, getting credit for plotting the comic books:

"I didn't ask for [the plotting credit]," Romita said. "Jack Kirby demanded it, and Ditko demanded it. I didn't demand it because I didn't feel the need for that kind of stuff . . . Frankly, I was a good soldier. I never made waves, even though a lot of times I would grumble . . . But I would never go in and say to Stan, 'I'm tired of this,' or 'If I don't get this, I'm not going to stay' " (Romita).

Romita admires Kirby as "the genius of comics," and personally knew him (Romita). Their relationship was friendly, making the above a simple statement of fact with no intention of discriminating against Kirby.

At first, Lee and Kirby kept it simple and basic, but by the late 60's, it was time to kick it in to high gear. DC Comics, Atlas' rival, was finding success with comic book heroes like the Flash, and Green Lantern, so Atlas concentrated on getting back into the masked men genre in an attempt to beat the competition (Heer). This act alone was the birth of some of the greatest names in comic book history.

The name of the company itself was the first name to appear. Atlas Comics became Marvel Comics – referring to the title of the comics published in the company's early years— in 1961, and it was under this name that the names of hundreds of other comic book heroes would arise; the first being, the Fantastic Four (Heer).

The Fantastic Four was considered unique to the comic book world. It certainly had its share of action, but it also had a very thick, dramatic flavor. It was Kirby's dramatic/romantic comic book background mixed with the skill Lee got from making sharp phrases on war posters –creating exciting dialogue— that made “The Fantastic Four,” a category all its own. It was this collaboration of different skills that became the Marvel Formula: “flawed superheroes fighting crime while worrying about their personal lives” (Heer). It was this formula that made the Marvel characters in-depth and relatable.

Ben Grimm was a man whose entire body was constructed of rocks and man-power, Reed Richards had a rubber-band body, Johnny Storm could light up like a Roman candle, and his sister, Sue Storm—who is also Reed's fiancé— had invisibility (Heer). All of these abilities were thrust upon these individuals who were struck by a terrifying, cosmic blast; thus creating the Fantastic Four. The super-powers themselves were, and are, the basis of just about any comic book; but it's the characters and their personalities joined with these powers that made the Marvel Formula.

Ben Grimm often had a temper just as monstrous as his body, Reed and Sue had their dramatic, soap-opera like spats; and Johnny was a “hot head.” None of these were typical, “all-American superhero” traits, and it was new to comic book fans. The Marvel Formula was revolutionary.

Joining the Fantastic Four, Captain America was revived and Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk, the X-Men, the Mighty Thor, the Silver Surfer, the Black Panther, and many others became new additions to the Marvel Universe. In 2003, a recorded 4,700 comic book characters were in Marvel Comics ownership (Croal 50).

The golden age of comic books lasted an incredible 10 years before it came to an end (Staples A16). As time passed, Lee was slowly coming into the lime-light. He was named spokesperson, manager, figure-head and the public voice of Marvel Comics; while artists, including Kirby, were slipping into the background (Heer). Lee was receiving a lot of credit for the ownership of characters that he had co-created.

Steve Ditko, who assisted in the designing of Spider-Man and Dr. Strange, was another one of these fading artists. Ditko and Lee's separation was just as harsh as Lee and Kirby's to fans. This separation was due to conflicts concerning the creation of Spider-Man.

The wall-crawling, web-spinning superhero made his first appearance in 1962 as a result of Lee and Ditko's collaboration. It was Spider-Man's debut that revolutionized the comic book world of powerful, bold and fearless men running around in tights (Subramanian). Peter Parker was your typical teenage nerd with an Aunt May to care for and a criminal record of his own just after his first attempt at fighting crime. Again, as with the Fantastic Four, we see the Marvel formula in action.

"The most important thing is to do the right thing," Mr. Lee said, referring to the main message in the Spider-Man comics. "You don't have to be the greatest at anything. That young kid with no special power who does right is more of a hero than a superhero" (Nichols B29).

But was Lee himself doing "the right thing" behind the scenes? The Lee – Ditko partnership, like the one with Kirby, was gradually falling apart. Lee was claiming millions for giving the characters voice, while Ditko was getting minimal profits for both the art and plotting. Ditko left Marvel in 1966 due to unpaid royalties and broken promises, leaving Spider-Man in the hands of artist John Romita (Subramanian). Though Spider-Man managed to weave his way back into the lives of fans, quotes Blake Bell, ". . . It changed from a revolutionary series to just a well-written, well-drawn superhero book" (Subramanian). Bell is the author of, *Strange and Stranger: The World of Steve Ditko*.

Unable to compete with Lee's rise in popularity, Kirby also left Marvel in 1970 to join DC Comics (Heer). Both Kirby and Ditko left Marvel on non-speaking terms with Lee.

Years later in 1994, after several years of harsh words, downsizing and battering directed at Lee, Jack Kirby died of heart failure. But during an interview with Lee and *Underground Online's* (UGO's) Daniel Epstein, Lee commented that things had been smoothed over between himself and Kirby before he passed away.

"We did patch things up," Lee said. "Everything was fine. I met him at a convention and we talked for a while. I even spoke to his wife. In the later years, people had been telling Jack that he had been cheated and not treated well, so he sort of lumped me in with the rest of management. But at the end, he realized I wasn't management in those days" (Lee).

Also pre-death, Lee reunited with Kirby and did a novel-length version of the Silver Surfer, published in 1978 ("Stan's").

In the same interview, Lee also commented concerning Steve Ditko. He said, "Steve and I didn't socialize at all, but I liked him very much and still do. He was just an independent guy and very reclusive in a lot of ways. I met him again a few years ago at Marvel and we even discussed working together on a new strip, but we couldn't agree on what it would be" (Lee).

A "recluse" indeed. Ditko does not give interviews and he hoards thousands of his original comic book pages (Subramanian). Having lost most of the creative-control and credit for "Spider-Man" to Stan Lee, it's not difficult to assume why he wouldn't be talking. He probably has nothing too good to say. From Lee's viewpoint, it generally sounds like it was all a big misunderstanding. He and Kirby were well in the end, and even he and Ditko had spoken –even if it was once, and it didn't assuredly resolve former conflicts. It would seem all ended on a better note between the comic book makers, Lee, Kirby (and Ditko); but one event about six years later changed all that:

In November 2002, Lee filed suit against Marvel Enterprises, Inc. Yes, this is the very same company he helped establish in 1961; now one of the largest comic book companies in the world. Suit was filed for Marvel's failure to uphold terms of a 1998 employment agreement that clearly entitled him to 10% of profits made from live action or animated movies and television shows that use Marvel characters (Marvel).

When asked in the interview with UGO how the suing of Marvel was going, Lee said, “Yeah, it’s going, but it’s probably the friendliest lawsuit in history. It’s just a case of there being a clause in my contract that I interpret one way and [Marvel Enterprises] interpret another way. We decided to let the court decide and there is no acrimony on my part. I love Marvel and the people there. I’m glad I’m still part of it” (Lee).

January 2005; the gavel falls, ending the case. A Manhattan federal judge ruled in favor of Lee, entitling him to \$10 million –10% of profits— from Marvel Enterprises. The ruling lit the old, “who gets the credit” flame right back up.

“It’s amazing that he walks away with all the credit and all the money for some of the creation of these characters,” Robert Katz, Jack Kirby’s nephew, said concerning the case. “The artists who did the lion’s share of the creation have walked away with absolutely nothing” (Ives C8).

I believe this statement is true. I have a high respect for Jack Kirby and his contribution to the creation of comic books and the heroes on their pages. Stan Lee has certainly received the money, and most of the credit, for the creation of something he merely added dialogue to. As Marvel’s chairman emeritus, he receives \$1 million a year (Ives C8). More so, his wife, Joan Lee, is entitled to 50% of that million for her entire life should he die; and should both Joan and Stan die, their daughter is entitled to \$100,000 over a five year period (Marvel). Lee and his family are financially stable. The Kirby family is a little different.

“I don’t know how they live with themselves,” said Jack’s daughter, Lisa Kirby. “The [Kirby] estate gets no compensation at all” (Ives C8).

Though Lisa Kirby may not see it, and my respect for Jack remains, the point of the matter is that Jack Kirby has no contract with Marvel which entitles his family to any amount of money. Looking at it from an even less specific point of view, the family didn’t draw or create anything; Jack did. Why should the family be entitled to anything? I feel the same way about Lee’s family, but Lee ensured he had a contract under his belt which provided family support whereas Jack didn’t.

I am unsure whether or not Kirby sought or was offered signing a contract that would ensure compensation for his family, but an article in *The Comics Journal* described Kirby’s reaction to a contract offered in 1979:

“ . . . he balked at the new contract and departed Marvel for good. He told *The Comics Journal* then, ‘Maybe this is the right time of life to try other things’ ” (Dean).

The details of the contract are unknown to me, but I find his reaction interesting enough. He obviously was not interested.

Unlike the Kirbys, Marvel responded to the ruling with the same, collective manner that Lee had:

“Stan is one of the founders of today’s comic book industry,” said John Turitzin, Marvel’s Vice President and General Counsel. “We are pleased with the settlement and are happy to have resolved all of our disputes with him” (“Marvel”).

This was obviously not a heated argument between Lee and Marvel –proven by their statements. It’s clear that the Kirbys remarks had been focused on the fact that Lee was getting more money in his

pockets, and not the court case itself which concerned an entirely different matter: Stan's employment agreement.

"The Stan Lee dispute is really a dispute about an employment agreement that's very specific to Stan Lee," said Turitzin. "It's not an agreement about his role as a creator of Marvel's characters" (Ives C8).

The court case had nothing to do with the argument concerning Stan's character ownership, or even Jack Kirby. Whether or not the Kirbys' remarks and their continuing hatred of Stan Lee are influenced at all by jealousy, greed or other reasons remains unknown, but I find it curious that they would pounce on Lee with accusations as soon as he was making money; money that a federal court had proved he was entitled to. Do you see now the conflict behind the "Dartboard Man" analogy? In a very complex series of events, Stan Lee has become a symbol of hatred for those who believe Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko were ripped off. All he did was dialogue. Should he be getting any credit for that? John Romita was in the same situation as Kirby and, particularly, Ditko. What would Romita have to say about Lee having worked along-side him for several years? In the same interview with *The Comics Journal*, he states:

"A lot of people [including Marvel artists] claim that Stan took too much credit. My attitude is that if I had done the same work for another editor, it wouldn't have been as good. Jack Kirby was a genius, but the fact of the matter is that Jack Kirby didn't have any long runs on any books . . . all the magnificent things that were done in *Fantastic Four* in that ten-year run. He didn't do that with Joe Simon . . . Don't you think Stan Lee deserves some credit for that? . . . As much credit as Stan gets, I think he deserves most of it. I think he was the best editor that ever lived, and one of the best writers. I always felt 'Why should I ask for equal credit with the guy who did most of the creation here' " (Romita)?

Having gone through Kirby's history, this appears to be true. Other than *Captain America*—which was done through *Timely* and which Lee assisted with on occasion—Kirby hasn't necessarily had a taste of fame, bulging pockets or a house in Hampton. I don't believe that it was because Kirby had a lack of talent that his other comic books were not popular, but he met success when his comics were done through *Timely/Atlas/Marvel*. Lee just so happened to be part of that company. Perhaps Kirby's dispute was more with the company than it was with Stan.

I agree that dialogue doesn't sound like much of a challenge, and I agree that I would not grant anyone full credit to a co-created work like "*Spider-Man*" for simply putting words in bubbles while the other person drew those bubbles, the characters using them and the backgrounds that these bubbles and characters are set in; all while developing a plot. But it is not just the dialogue and the art that we are talking about here. I believe that Lee's success and claim to the characters is not solely based on how much work he put into the physical comic book; but his status, how much he has done for the company as a whole, and his "Hollywood" appeal.

Head writer, editor, art director, top creative force, president, executive producer, Stan "The Man" Lee, "Mr. Marvel," and now Chairman Emeritus: all of these are titles which Stan Lee has held over his 67-year period with *Marvel Comics*. In those 67 years, no one has given *Marvel* more.

The *Marvel Method* and the *Marvel Formula* were revolutionary to the comic book world, and it was Stan Lee who created them. The *Marvel Method* shortened the time it took to create a quality image/comic book, while the *Formula* gave comic book readers a glimpse into the life of a character. They weren't just reading a perfect, "good triumphs over evil" story with a "goody-goody" moral at the

end of it; but thick, juicy stories that had colorful characters that they could relate to and sympathize with. It was a huge step towards making the Marvel Universe a reality, and one that obviously made an impact.

Lee has been involved many “activities” over the past few years. He currently owns his own company, Purveyors of Wonder (POW!), specializing in entertainment through movies, television, DVDs, video games, etc.; and continues to write for a Spider-Man comic strip that he syndicated in 1977. His younger brother, Larry Lieber, does the penciling, and it’s one of the longest running comic strips in history (“Stan’s”), but both the company and the comic are small in comparison to Marvel’s latest source of income: cinema.

Lee is the executive producer of many of the Marvel films that we enjoy today. Spider-Man, Daredevil, the Incredible Hulk, the X-Men, Iron Man, and many more of the Marvel characters have come back to life on the big screen, making the company expand even more because of Lee’s efforts (“Stan’s”). Spider-Man, the movie, alone grossed \$822 million when it was released in 2003. The movie’s popularity caused the sales of 2 million Spider-Man video games, and \$290 million in profits made from the sales of comic books, action-figures, and other merchandise. In 1998, Blade collected \$70 million, and in 2000, X-Men brought in \$157 million at the box office (Croal 50).

“Things are fantastic [at Marvel],” said Allen Lipson, CEO of Marvel Enterprises in 2003. “I don’t think they could get much better” (Croal 50). The only problem Marvel ran into with the big screen was bad experiences working with studios that were outside of Marvel’s ownership. Spider-Man and its sequel were made through Sony Pictures, while X-Men, X2: X-Men United and the Fantastic Four were made through 20th Century Fox. Because of this, Marvel lost a lot of the revenues from DVDs and box-office sales to these companies (Ives C4).

To prevent further money loss, Marvel has organized Marvel Films with Stan Lee as the head of operations. With Marvel Films, Marvel will be able to pay for its own productions, and keep the revenues (Ives C4).

The next Marvel movies we can expect are The First Avenger: Captain America, and Nick Fury; which, in 2005, were expected to be in theatres in 2007 or 2008 (Ives C4). Now, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) states that Nick Fury will be released in 2010 and The First Avenger: Captain America in 2011 (IMDb). Stan Lee himself makes cameo appearances in just about all of the Marvel movies. This alone presses the idea that perhaps a lot of the credit Lee has received is based off of his “Hollywood” appeal and popularity.

“It started out (with 2000’s X-Men) as a courtesy,” Lee said concerning his cameos, “but [the movie makers] are beginning to realize that’s what brings people into the theaters” (Keck 06D).

In the same article, Lee comments on his movie-going experiences:

“When I go to the theater to see [Marvel movies], I’m able to just sit there and enjoy the movies without thinking, ‘Hey, I created that’ ” (Keck 06D).

Sound conceited? In the early creation of this essay, I had yet to decide whether or not I sided with Lee. Then I read the article the above quote was taken from. Here Lee was in Keck’s article from USA TODAY, relentlessly using the word “I,” as if to mock the very names of Kirby and Ditko. It made my stomach

churn with disgust. I thought for sure that this would be the article that would prove him as nothing more than a conceited, old man that had plundered all the credit for creating the Marvel Universe from Kirby and Ditko. . . . But then I read the UGO interview.

“I realize that you don’t have a lot of duties on these Hollywood movies,” UGO inquired, “but as the executive producer, did you ever lobby for Jack Kirby . . . to receive credit” (Stan)?

Lee responded. “I would have loved it, but when you say executive producer, it’s sort of an honorary title. I really don’t have anything to say with the movies. I thought it would be nice if everyone of these movies said ‘Based on characters created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby’ or Lee and Steve Ditko, or whoever the book was done by, but they have not done that with these movies” (Stan).

“Why is that?” UGO asked (Stan).

“I don’t know whether it’s an oversight, or whether they figure those people will start suing them for a share of the profits,” Lee replied (Stan).

At first, I was skeptical. He’s got to be covering it up. I bet he’s being his conceited, old self by claiming he’s innocent and that he had nothing to do with it. He just wants all the credit for himself, without a doubt. But throughout my research, I found otherwise. In all of the many documents I have searched through, I have found no ill word directed at Steve Ditko or Jack Kirby spoken by Lee. That, and considering the nature of Hollywood, I believe he is sincere. Hollywood is focused on the money and staying out of court. It would seem Lee has not forgotten the names of Kirby and Ditko. As for, “Then why hasn’t he done anything about it?” I cannot say, but remember –tragic as it may be— Kirby is deceased, and Ditko has, thus far, remained reclusive.

As you can see, Lee has given a great deal to Marvel Comics, but what I consider his biggest contribution is his power-house of imaginative ideas, leading to the development and co-creation of the characters that today sit comfortably under the company name. Stan Lee has never grown out of his childhood imagination. If Marvel were Disneyland, Stan Lee would be Walt Disney. This seems a fitting analogy, too, because Disney, though he drew Mickey Mouse and what-not, was not the only man behind the animation/cartoon magic. It was a whole team of animators that brought Mickey Mouse to life.

In the case of Lee, there may have been other people that threw out ideas which ultimately created Spider-Man, or the Incredible Hulk, (Stan might have thought up the name, but Ditko might have thought up the costume; etc.); and I am positive that no one man is deserving of all the credit for the creation of these characters. Creating a comic book hero is a collaborative effort, but I know that there’s one man in this world who deserves no less than what he gets –if not the credit for the creation of Spider-Man— for the hard work, revolutionizing ideas and creative spirit that he has contributed to Marvel Enterprises. That man is Stan Lee.

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Megan Magelby, "Rhetorical Analysis"

Car ads have many ways of attracting potential buyers. Because of the spiraling economy, car ads have had to become more and more creative in order to elicit more sales. By using rhetoric concepts, the ads can target specific people. The main target audience of most car dealers is the family, and middle aged adults. Words such as marriage babies, and kids are used to grab a mother's attention when they flip through the pages. Making a car look sexually appealing and dangerous helps to attract the attention of men. Putting certain types of rhetoric in the ads can help it appeal to the types of people that would read the magazines the ads are printed in.

Because of the family friendliness of the magazine, a lot of pathos was used in these two ads. In the ad for the Subaru, the designer chose to use a lot of bright warm colors to appeal to the passionate side of people. The reds, yellows, and oranges make the ad exciting and noticeable. Warm colors invoke happiness and a sense of adventure, two important things people look for when purchasing a vehicle.

The car in the ad is shown with wheels spinning, flying through the scenery so the background turns into blurred shapes. This appeals to the wilder side of people, of wanting to go fast and feel free. The motion in the wheels helps suggest that the car is going somewhere off the page and the viewer wants to follow it. Also, by blurring the background, we put the car in an indefinite environment. This tells the audience that they can go anywhere in this car if they buy it.

The ad uses specifically chosen words to continue the feeling of passion in the ad. The ad states, Needs change. Passions don't. The designers boldly state that the purpose for the ad is to invoke passion in the reader. Then the text goes farther by saying, It's the perfect marriage of style and substance. This uses pathos by applying the words style and substance to appeal to the carnal desire for attractive physical objects. Also, humans have a desire for perfection, and here it is stated that this vehicle is the perfect marriage between two things. The quote at the bottom, Love. It's what makes a Subaru, a Subaru directly appeals to pathos using the word love. The viewer gets the idea that they will love the car, and it will love them back.

The Volkswagen ad also relies heavily on pathos. The model used in the ad is described as an actress and humanitarian. By using a recognizable and admirable figure, the ad is trying to appeal to the part of humans that wants to be famous. It is trying to get the point across that if you purchase this car, you can be as great and well-known as this person. The actress is attractive, standing with her arms folded, a serious look on her face and looking the viewer straight in the eye. This stance, along with the clothing choice, gives off a no-nonsense feel to the ad. By looking the audience straight in the eye, the model is showing that she can be trusted. Also, the clothing and the conservative look of the model reiterates the feeling that this is a family car.

The environment that the car is placed in plays a role on pathos. There is green grass, trees, a well kept road, and a beautiful sky. This gives off the feeling that the car is environmentally friendly and shows that the company cares about natural beauty. It also makes the industrial vehicle fit in the natural world, providing a comfortable contrast.

The quiz right above the car asks questions about family and children, still working with the pathos idea. The writers give an answer key right below the quiz, stating that all of the correct answers are the ones

relating to love and family. By involving children, the writers portray the car as being safe for children and family friendly.

The ad is set up like a self help ad, bringing humor into the text. The answer key gives the reader a website to get the help you need. in case the readers score was less than 100% on the quiz. The text at the bottom of the ad uses humor to make it interesting and memorable. It plays the part of a sympathetic commercial for some drug, making it sound like you can self diagnose yourself. Volkswagen is using pathos in using the ideas of love and family to promote this as a family car.

Car ads use logos to draw in potential customers by showing that they have facts to back up what they are trying to sell. Specific words can be used to stimulate intellectual interest in the viewer of the ad. The Subaru add uses logos by listing a website where someone can see more information about the vehicle at the bottom of the ad. This tells the audience that there is a way to get additional information about the car in order to make a more informed decision.

Logos is also evident in the short paragraph at the bottom of the ad. Here the ad tells the reader a little bit about the parts of the car that the average viewer would understand, such as the horsepower. At the end of the paragraph, it also tells the viewer that the car won the Top Safety Pick Award, making it more attractive to the safety conscious person. By not overwhelming the audience with too much information, the designer allows the viewer to feel like that's all they need to know about the vehicle. If the audience isn't convinced to buy the car by the few sentences on the ad, they can go to the website to further their knowledge about the vehicle.

The logos in the Volkswagen ad is located primarily in the quiz, though some information is repeated in the paragraph at the bottom of the page. A curious reader is going to see this ad and wonder what type of quiz would be on a car ad. When reading through the multiple choice answers, the viewer is learning about features of the car, and thinking about family and babies because of the questions. The writers mixed logos and pathos into the body of the quiz to make it interesting and to inform and capture the audience.

Like the Subaru ad, the website for the Volkswagen vehicle is added at the bottom of the ad so the viewer can look at additional information about the car. Unlike the Subaru ad, the Volkswagen ad has the website for the car listed twice, in the answer key in the middle of the page and at the bottom. Because of the placement of the web address in the ad, the viewer has it introduced to their mind in the key, then after they have moved through the ad, the reader's eyes finally rest at the bottom of the page, where they are reminded of the website. The address at the bottom of the page is written in the same font and color as the rest of the information, making it only a small temptation to go and look, and not a bold order.

In the answer key to the quiz, the writers say, Visit RoutanBoom.org to get the help you need. This sentence involves logos by showing the website address and pathos in the humor of making it sound like the website can be something more than another advertisement for the car.

Ethos is important to car ads in the media. The name brand and logo of a company sometimes has more of an effect on the audience than the content of the ad itself. In both the Subaru and Volkswagen ads, the logo appears in the bottom right hand corner of the page. By doing this, the designers ensure that

the reader will see the logo last. The designers know that because reading is done from left to right, top to bottom, the viewers eyes will naturally flow this way down the page.

The Subaru ad uses its name multiple times in the text to remind the reader repetitively what the ad is trying to sell. While the ad states the company name over and over, it's harder to find the name of the car they are advertising. It is only listed twice in the whole ad, and the audience would have to read everything on the page in order to find it.

The Volkswagen advertisement uses the fact that it is not an American company to promote itself. It uses German engineering to promote the reliability of the vehicle to the viewer. By reminding the viewer that Volkswagen is not an American company, it plays on the stereotype that foreign things are better manufactured than American items.

The audience needs to be kept in mind when designing an ad. An advertisement for a sports car wouldn't do as well in a Home and Gardening magazine as it would in a Sports Illustrated magazine. The Subaru and Volkswagen ads were found in the same issue of a Travel + Leisure magazine, where the general audience is middle aged adults. The Subaru ad uses specific rhetoric to appeal to middle aged parents who have children and want to feel young again. The Volkswagen ad appeals to newlyweds and couples by using the idea of having children and starting a family.

Rhetoric is a big part of advertising and can be seen in many ways in these ads. Using rhetoric helps to personalize the advertisement in a way that will be appealing to the audience. The type of magazine that the ad is printed in also plays a huge role in what type of rhetoric will be used.

## Expressive- English 1010

1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Brittney L. Park, "Heroin Chic"

Withheld by student's request

2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Kristy Stoll, "My Piano"  
For Professor Toa Tawa

I sit at my piano, and as I begin to play, I enter my own world--oblivious to my surroundings and problems. I allow my subconscious and fingers to take over my mind with the music that creates harmony in my soul. I can forget where I am until my six-year-old son enthusiastically chimes in on the keyboard accompanied by his permanent shadow, a black lab named Bob, howling in unison. There is no quicker way to snap out of a reverie.

I was introduced to playing when my grandparents loaned my mother the piano from their house. I was thirteen, and I fell in love with it. I wanted to be able to make it play so desperately that I could taste it. I begged my mother for lessons, but she insisted that she didn't have the time or resources for piano lessons. Out of despair, I picked up the sheet music for Everything I Do, I Do It for You, and using a diagram I found showing the notes on the music staves and their corresponding location on the keyboard, I slowly and deliberately taught my fingers the song. I correlated the beats with simple math, and through this process, I was able to close my mind to unpleasant things, for a time at least. Months later I was able to play it perfectly, and I really felt that I had earned the music. I found another song in the stack, Beethoven's Fur Elise, and I repeated the process, finding it a little faster this time. Once I had mastered a piece of music, I felt that I owned it--that I was worthy of it.

Eventually my mother abandoned my sister and I, and we went to our grandmother's for the remainder of our teen years. They were the most peaceful years of our lives, and a time that I would look back on with longing from adulthood. Some evenings I would play the piano for hours with my grandmother listening and encouraging me, and making requests for her favorites. Gradually, I associated playing the piano with safety, love and hope.

After leaving my grandmother's house, I entered a bleak period of my life where my soul did not make music. I was in a physically and emotionally abusive situation, and I despaired at learning that I was expecting my son. Having never lived alone or supported myself, I was afraid to leave with a baby. Eventually, the violence in my personal life escalated to a degree that trumped my fear of raising a baby alone. The police came, and I spent a night in a California battered women's shelter with my one-year-old son. I knew that he deserved better. I decided that night that my son would have better if I had to walk through fire to get it. I awoke to a new outlook, squared my shoulders, and left for Utah.

We were given space in emergency transitional housing, and I went to the food bank, as I did not have enough money for even the barest necessities. I found my first real job. Three months later I rented a house, and my pride refused any further public assistance even though we were eligible. We didn't have extravagances like cable TV, and we entertained ourselves with gardening, building snowmen, taking nature walks and reading. Michael is the center of my world, and I was devoted to his growth. We had eyes only for each other. Though challenging, it was a very happy and gratifying time for us. The result of such specific focus would be a four-year-old who could read and was completely comfortable and confident in the stability of our small family. He was vibrantly happy, which thrilled me to the core. I was making a life for us by myself, and the knowledge empowered me. I began to set my goals even higher.

I was rapidly promoted to the top of my company and began receiving commission from my superior negotiating tactics. I was able to save more than I needed for a down payment on a brand new three-bedroom house, and I closed on our new home three years after the night I decided to forcefully change my course. I also had enough money to buy a brand new piano. The day that I went to the piano store, I only played four pianos because I immediately recognized a kindred spirit in the solid oak Hobart M. Cable. It had keys that moved like they were made for me, and it seemed like it already knew “my song.”

The day that the most beautiful piano in the world was delivered to my very own house was one of the best days of my life. I sat with my four-year-old in my lap and played. He held my face in his hands and said, “Why do you cry, Mama?” I couldn’t answer. I just held him and allowed my tears of happiness fall. I had made it. There was music and all the wonderful things I had learned to associate with it in my home again, in his home.

Now my life is very different. I am happily married, and I don’t worry about the same things anymore. I get to worry about remembering to get dog food and preventing door “dings” in my brand new car, not where the money for the electric bill is going to come from or how to pay for my little boy’s medicine. My piano stands as testimony to my struggle and a trophy to my triumph. When my young son stomps his foot and insists he doesn’t want to go to piano lessons, “my cup runneth over.” I thank God that my son doesn’t understand why it matters so much to me.

And so, from the sidewalk of our home, music can often be heard in the evenings. It is sometimes accompanied by the random pounding of either very high or very low notes, dog howling and laughter. The most important part is the laughter. I welcome my son’s disruption to my meditative playing like the desert welcomes the rain. My love for him has been the driving force in my life, and that love has made all the difference.

## Argumentative- English 2010

1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Erica Wardell, "Tragedy in Technology"

For Dr. Bryce Christensen

The early 20th century proved to be a time of immense progress in both the medical field and in weaponry. Numerous improvements were made, including tetanus and typhoid fever vaccinations, improvements in surgery and new use and development in X-ray technology. Doctors and scientists also reached a new milestone as they improved amputation and the use of prosthetic limbs. New weapons such as grenades, machine guns, flamethrowers, tanks, and poison gas are only a few examples of the weapons which found use in World War I. These advances in medical technology and the improvements in weaponry have greatly contributed to our thriving medical world and the efficiency of our armed forces. The irony, however, appears in the tragic results of these improvements. World War I's military advances went hand in hand with the atrocious number of soldiers being physically and mentally wounded and killed for their country's cause, and surprisingly advances in both weaponry and medical technology contributed. Concurrently, when soldiers returned from war, they faced "shell shock," amputated limbs, and other injuries which alienated them from society and caused them much pain and heartache.

World War I was among the deadliest wars in world history. Between nine and ten million soldiers died in the four and a half year war. An estimated 19.5 million soldiers were wounded between all participating nations (Michael E. Hanlon). Over fifty-five percent of mobilized soldiers were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. In Great Britain, over 250,000 suffered total or partial amputation due to combat injuries and the effects of gangrene. Weapons technology takes the blame for the inconceivable amount of injuries, deaths, and mental suffering in the Great War, but the even more heinous tragedy, ironically and unexpectedly, lies in the advancement in medical technology.

Weapons technology had vastly improved prior to the First World War, resulting in chlorine and other poisonous gases, tanks, and several high-powered explosive devices. Similar weaponry had been utilized in other wars, but new technology allowed for sizeable advances in these weapons, which in turn caused more damage than ever previously reported. Complex weapon technology made warfare a more intense and traumatic experience, resulting in many soldiers returning home with physical and psychological damage. Historian John Keegan wholly illustrated the effect of weaponry in World War I when he remarked, I constantly recall the look of disgust that passed over the face of a highly distinguished curator of one of the greatest collections of arms and armour in the world when I casually remarked to him that a common type of debris removed from the flesh of wounded men by surgeons in the gunpowder age was broken bone and teeth from neighbors in the ranks. He had simply never considered what was the effect of the weapons about which he knew so much, as artifacts, on the bodies of the soldiers who used them. (Understanding the Great War) This comment clearly demonstrates how destructive and violent the weapons used in World War I proved to be. Though advances in weaponry helped the Entente Powers win the war and protect their families and countries, awful and violent scenes were no rare experience for soldiers on the front line of duty.

World War I saw the development and exploitation of an especially distressing new weapon called chlorine gas. Chlorine gas was a new technology invented by the Germans, derived from the previously

formulated tear gas and other such gases. Chlorine gas is a poisonous gas that enters the lungs and almost immediately starts to destroy the respiratory organs, giving the effect of drowning (Michael Duffy). In the poem “Dulce Et Decorum Est” by famous war poet Wilfred Owen, the horrific scene of a chlorine gas attack is depicted. He writes,

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,  
 Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
 But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,  
 And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...  
 Dim, though the misty panes and thick green light,  
 As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.  
 In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,  
 He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning. (lines 9-16)

The event in this poem portrays the awful experience of a soldier in combat watching his fellow comrade suffer an agonizing death due to the effects of poison gas technology. This and countless other accounts have been given that depict terrible scenes soldiers encountered every day on the battlefield. The weapons utilized in the Great War not only proved physically destructive, but they also taxed soldiers mentally. Large quantities of soldiers left combat suffering Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (then called “shell shock”). During World War I, shell shock was believed to be the result of being buried alive or exposed to heavy bombardment, but doctors later disposed of the term, attributing the change to the fact that soldiers who had not even been on the front line developed the same symptoms.

Symptoms ranged anywhere from severe diarrhea to ruthless anxiety. There were stomach cramps, facial tics, nightmares, and even blindness. Most cases seemed to be in some way related to an action taken during combat. Soldiers dreamt, sometimes in mid-conversation, about knifing the enemy or repeatedly shooting the foe. Ernest Jones, president of the British Psych-Analytic Association, commented that soldiers were indulging in behaviors that had previously been deemed cruel or sadistic and there was a state of conflict in the mind, creating neurotic disorders. Men suffering from this mind-controlling disorder, primarily caused by new and technologically advanced weapon use, received no sympathy. While physically broken soldiers received careful and compassionate medical attention, those suffering from broken minds were shunned. Their problems were ignored and while great medical strides took place in amputation and surgery, doctors gave no thought to the mental illnesses that commanded the minds of countless young soldiers. Soldiers suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder were seen as losing masculinity. The once strong, brave men that handsomely and courageously left for duty were now losing their reputations. One medical officer stated that the patient “must be induced to face his illness in a manly way” (Bourke). Regular men reported for duty expecting to return home as heroes, but according to society, only those who came home “whole” were considered heroes. A large number of soldiers returned “broken,” either mentally or physically, and faced detrimental blows in their appeal to women, employers, and even every day encounters with society. Because of technological advances in weaponry, the lives of these soldiers changed dramatically, in countless cases seeming ruined.

Moreover, for the first time in history, soldiers from all over the world were able to be saved on the battlefield and returned home through improvements in amputation. Amputation became a common practice in the Great War and while it saved men’s lives, it also meant that many soldiers have to face the excruciating consequences of amputation, which were not always limited to physical impairment.

Wilfred Owen's poem "Disabled" illustrates the experience that numbers of wounded soldiers faced after returning home from war. He remarks,

He sat in a wheeled chair, waiting for dark...  
 Legless, sewn short at elbow...  
 Some cheered him home, but not as crowds cheer Goal.  
 Only a solemn man who brought him fruits  
 Thanked him; and then inquired about his soul...  
 To-night he noticed how the women's eyes  
 Passed from him to the strong men that were whole... (line 1, 3, 36-38, 42-43)

This poem describes the experience of a typical wounded soldier returning from duty in World War I. Young men left for battle awaiting the praise and glory that would accompany them when they returned strong, brave, and victorious. Instead they were shunned for having, as Owen describes, "a queer disease" (line 13). Motivation for joining the war derived from the need to prove masculinity and to impress women. Those who did not leave for war were seen as unpatriotic, weak, and effeminate. Unexpectedly, however, the brave men who left for war did not receive the honor and glory constantly advertised by society in general. Like Owen states in his poem, "the women's eyes/ Passed from to the strong men that were whole." Rarely before had soldiers returned from war with missing limbs and with such intense psychological damage. This was a new experience and society did not know how to approach it. Medical technology intended to save and prolong lives, instead ruined them in many ways. Instead of helping soldiers through these difficult times, society pushed them away and treated them not as the heroes that they were, but as a "queer disease."

Although medical technology phenomenally improved in the early 20th century, it came at a heavy price. The death toll in World War I was unfathomable and a shocking number of the soldiers who lived were left wounded physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Society was not ready to face the new challenges that medical and weapons technology would bring to their war veterans. Medical technology in World War I brought new advances that successfully prolonged life, but it returned glory-seeking soldiers home to rejection and disapproval. While the incentives for going to war derived from a search for glory, honor, and masculinity, the consequences incongruously included death, physical, mental, emotional, and psychological distress, and a lifetime of rejection from society.

2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Sorina Busch, “Monsters Creating Monsters Creating Monsters”  
For Dr. Todd Petersen

Humans are fallible. Subject to our emotions rather than discipline, we cause all of our worst problems. We turn our nightmares into reality. We are the ones who take our deepest fears and unleash them into the world as monsters. Stories of humans creating horrible monsters and evils have been around for centuries, even millennia. We create our own monsters, but in creating them, we reveal ourselves to be even greater monsters than they are. This concept is explored in the graphic novel *Hulk Gray*, by Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale. For this discussion, it is important to define what monsters are and what rhetorical purpose they serve in society and literature. The basic definition of a monster is a legendary animal that combines human and animal forms, or any creature that is hideous and horrifying, and stereotypically evil. Basically, monsters are any creature significantly different enough from humans and known animals to defy description in those terms; however, they are not merely the ill-formed creatures of nightmares, but a reflection of the society they sprang from. Monsters show us what the community “feared and also found fascinating, what worried them, and what (in contrast to monstrosity) was felt to be good and normal” (Murgatroyd 2).

Also, monsters are often used in didactic tales to establish the morals of a society, especially for children. Monsters are portrayed either as the consequence of wrongdoing—if you don’t go to bed, the bogeyman will get you—or as the end of wrongdoing. There are countless tales such as *Beauty and the Beast* where someone who is immoral is transformed into a monster. The storyline of the Hulk follows the second line of reasoning, for it is the scientist who put his brilliance into the manufacturing of ever more horrible weapons that is turned into a terrifying monster. But even when monsters that aren’t connected to such clearly cut moral stories, morals still shape their conception. Monsters are “the curse that results from immoral actions. There is always some ‘original sin’ at the source of the generation of the monster” (Groves). Yet as time progresses, philosophy and literature begin to take a different look at the nature of monsters. Are they inherently evil, or just a product of our society? A few centuries ago, monster stories began to include a new character to explore this developing dynamic: the creator of the monster.

Man creating monsters is a common trope in English literature, one that was consciously exploited by Stan Lee in his conceptualizing of the Hulk. He drew inspiration from several classical texts, one of them being *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In it, Dr. Jekyll creates a potion that literally metamorphoses himself into a creature with no morals called Mr. Hyde, in an attempt to separate his good nature from his evil desires. But though Jekyll and Hyde appeared to be two completely dissimilar people, they were one in the same. They were merely different facets of the same soul. The Hulk’s story bears many similarities to the tale of Dr. Jekyll. Firstly, Bruce Banner and Dr. Jekyll are both scientists whose research led to their splitting, both physically and personality-wise. Also, their monstrous ‘alter-egos’ reveal suppressed emotions of the man they began as: Hyde expresses Jekyll’s repressed selfish and violent desires, while the Hulk portrays Banner’s inner hatred of the army and its demands on him. It is interesting to note that both men, when their internal emotions are released, become brutally violent. It would seem that society and manners are a mask that represses the violent, carnal nature of man, but that repression worsens those emotions when they finally are released. By unique virtue of the

fact that in these cases the creator and the monster are the same, the idea that the 'monsters' they created were already inside their hearts is an especially poignant one.

Another classic tale of men creating their own monsters that influenced the making of the Hulk's character is Frankenstein. The young Dr. Frankenstein is eager to put his genius to the test and try to create life. He gathers human and animal body parts and strings them together, and manages to reanimate them. However, the monstrous thing he has created terrifies him so badly he runs away and becomes ill. The monster, abandoned, does its best to figure out its life and integrate into society, but is rejected at every turn because of his hideous and horrible body. The Hulk and Frankenstein's monster are, indeed, nearly parallel beasts. Both are rejected by all those they meet because of their appearance, accidentally wreak havoc they never intended, and are very alone. Bruce Banner and Dr. Frankenstein are also parallels. They both have a bit of a power trip, but lose control, with disastrous consequences; however, they both are basically well-intentioned men. The key difference between the two stories, of course, is that Banner actually physically transforms into a monster while Dr. Frankenstein and his monster are two separate physical entities, and the Hulk is eventually perceived as a hero while Frankenstein's monster remains a hideous creature. This partially was because Stan Lee, the author of the Hulk comic, wanted to create a completely new type of superhero. He took on "the challenge of...making a hero out of a monster" (Lee 75). The only way for a monster to be a hero is for it to not be monstrous inside, but to have a certain innocence. Both the Hulk and Frankenstein's monster "never wanted to hurt anyone; [they] merely groped [their] way through a tortuous second life...trying to come to terms with those who sought to destroy [them]" (Lee 75).

The common theme between these literary influences is that all of these 'monsters' were created by man. They all were the byproducts of a quest for power, and all had unintended consequences. Also, the fact that Hulk was created in an effort to make a weapon more powerful and dangerous than the atomic bomb is a severe warning; pursuing ever greater weapons, destruction, and power will turn people into monsters, whether they physically look it or no.

The origin story of the Hulk is perhaps one of the greatest examples of a monster creating a monster, because the creation of the Hulk has several layers. The most immediate creator of the Hulk is Bruce Banner himself. Banner invented the gamma bomb in an attempt to make a weapon more terrible than the atomic bomb. He himself is not a violent or vicious person; yet he is creating weapons of mass destruction. Even if he would not ever unleash such a weapon himself, making it and putting it into the hands of those who would fire it is wrong; Banner is, effectively, personally murdering every person that his bomb will kill. Though he tries to deny this, it preys on his mind; he laments to his friend Leonard that his brilliance could have been set to finding a cure to cancer, yet he'd created death instead. So when Banner is exposed to his own weapon, it is interesting that it turns him physically into a violent monster. The bomb merely externalized Banner's inward atrocity, both by its existence and the effect it had on him.

Yet for all of Banner's shortcomings, he at least felt guilt for the potential danger he had caused the world. But what of the monster that created him? The army, in particular General Ross, hired Banner and paid him to create new weapons for them to destroy their enemies with. The army begins aggression, even against peoples or nations that have not precipitated such a violent reaction. The army is much worse than the Hulk because their primary purpose is to destroy, whereas the Hulk wants to be left alone. The army is actively seeking out a fight; the small detachment of soldiers the Hulk meets right

after he transforms for the first time attack him without even trying to figure out what he was. True, coming upon a massive figure in the dark would be terrifying, but it was the violence of that first group forced the Hulk to be violent, which created a spiral effect of ever increasing violence between the Hulk and the army. The army struck the first blow. The creators of monsters—in this case, the army—are far more horrible than the monsters themselves, because the human inventors have the power to think and reason and still choose a path of violence and vying for power.

The 2008 movie *The Incredible Hulk* emphasizes the travesties and lack of morals in the military even more than the graphic novel. In the movie, the army is pursuing the Hulk not to try and kill him and remove his menace from the world, but to try and get his DNA in order to weaponize the power that the gamma radiation gave to Banner. The army isn't trying to get rid of the 'monster,' but to create more monsters in order to strengthen the army. If they succeeded in creating super-soldiers of unlimited strength, their next step would probably be to go conquering—their goal is always to gain more power, even power too great for them to control. In a beautifully ironic twist, in an attempt to weaponize the Hulk's power, they create an even worse monster called Abomination that they have no control over, and the Hulk must save them from it. The only thing that kept the army from self-destructing and quite possibly destroying America is the responsibility of the first 'monster' they created. William Hurt, the actor who played General Ross in the film, said his character "wants Hulk's power but is humiliated by Hulk's conscience: he actually sees and recognizes that it's more developed than his own" (Rappe). But even though Ross recognizes that Banner is morally superior to himself, his greed still overcomes his shame and spurs him to continue hunting the Hulk.

America's actual army seems very similar to the army portrayed in the Hulk. Just as General Ross' army is trying to create horrific weapons such as the gamma bomb and super-soldiers, the American army in the 1940s commissioned and used atomic bomb research and in the Cold War researched and created nuclear weapons. General Ross' army attacks the Hulk repeatedly without fully understanding what he is, just as America struck Iraq under a hazy blanket of confused motives, such as "terrorism, oil, Saddam Hussein, al Qaeda, 9-11, and the desire to spread 'freedom and democracy'...throughout the middle east" (Thorn). General Ross' army serves as an allegory for the worst aspects of the American army, both in the 60s when the Hulk was first conceptualized and in modern days, when the Hulk has been readapted.

Yet there is another layer of the monster creation in the Hulk that both the graphic novel and the movie neglect to explore: politics. Scientists create the weapons and armies carry out war, yet it is politicians who dictate their movements, much like the players of a massive game of chess. It is politicians' and the leaders of nations' disagreements that beget war. Politicians cause endless problems by being the ones who dictate war: they are removed from combat, so many see war only as an equation: if our input exceeds the enemy's input, we win, so all we need to do is send more soldiers. But the worst facet of politicians running war is that some use it to fulfill their own political agendas, while beguiling the public with "just war concepts" which thinly mask wars "chosen for other, less noble reasons...[like] expanding and consolidating power" (Fiala ix). Politicians are hypocrites in this because their entire purpose is to solve problems through words, negotiations, and compromise, not throw soldiers at international problems, many of which they helped create, and hope to beat the other country into submission. Their selfish and ignorant directing of armies creates a massive monster (war), and armies seeking to win war create horrible monsters (weapons), and, in the case of the Hulk, the weapon finally created something

recognizable as a classic monster, the Hulk. Yet the Hulk is far and away the least of our worries in this chain of terror.

Monsters creating monsters is a common occurrence in literature because it is such a frequent problem in real life. Stories are but mirror-images of reality. This idea of monsters creating monsters is just as prevalent in modern societies as it was in ancient ones; the only variation is that our monsters have different names and faces, ones that often disguise their true nature. However, when the next monster appears in our society, the root of the problem will probably be a few levels up, waving and smiling.

## Expressive- English 2010

1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Alex Scroggins, "A Change in Seasons"

For Dr. Kurt Harris

It had started in farthest corner of my apartment, first as only the slightest hint of coppery red, before oozing from the ceiling and down the wall. I stumbled towards it, tripping over a laundry hamper full of ripe clothing and knocking it to the floor. It was funny looking, really. Against the yellowing wallpaper, it looked almost like a poor attempt at graphite, still fresh and drying. I lifted a hand to touch it, but thought better; up this close, the stench was overwhelming.

In fact, it's hard to describe just how horrible the smell really was. It was like when the sink clogs and you pull out the stopper to find an enormous glob of hair. A smell somewhere between bile and ammonia that I could literally feel clawing down my throat, attempting to pull up last week's dinner. In a panic, I ran to the window and was alarmed when it wouldn't open. Furiously I scrambled to unlatch the lock and rattled it open for the first time in years. As I swallowed the tastiest air I've ever had, I could only think, At least I know where the smell is coming from now.

One month ago had been a party for me. I'd gotten home early from my janitorial duties at the hospital and had even had time to pick up a pizza on my way back. Now, I don't like in the best of areas, I'll admit, and whenever I pull into the unpainted parking space of my building, I always get the feeling that something bad might happen today. The apartment's at least two hundred years old, and it shows. From the chipped red bricks to the way it tilts slightly as it approaches the upper tenth floor, "The Queen," gives a sense of both unreliability and experience. And I'm sure it's experienced a lot.

I push through the glass front door, complete with its head-sized hole, and begin the solemn march to the eighth floor, and my room—Number 48. I say solemn march because that's what it is; I don't want to see or talk to anyone here and that's best accomplished by staring at the floor as I walk, my face suitably blank. The first person I come across seems to have the same idea. He's wearing cheap plaid over a greasy t-shirt, which matches his messy hair. He doesn't even look my way as he slips into Number 9: The Queen's nightly brothel, if I'm not mistaken. The Queen's a classy place.

I cross up the stairs past a room that has smelled heavily of curry since I moved here, the same screaming rock music playing like a theme song. The door is open and I see a huddle of kids shooting up heroin or cocaine or maybe even bleach mixed with water, who cares? I certainly don't. The walls up here are covered with what could either be mud or human excrement, and I try my best to guide the bulky pizza box up the stairs without touching anything.

I see old man Taylor wobbling up the steps ahead of me. He's got his veteran's cap on again and he's humming some sort of old-timer's tune under his breath. I feel bad for him, I really do. It's hard to watch as his arms shake each time he releases the railing to climb up another step, his legs moving slowly with arthritis. Luckily, I'm on my floor now, so I won't have to wait thirty minutes before getting to my room.

"You having a pardy t'night, boy?" His voice is raspy from smoking and muddled from time. I turn to have a look at him, hooking the box under my arm.

“Every night’s a party,” I remark, failing to come up with anything better. “Why, what are you doing tonight?”

“Not’ing, I jest want to say hello. No one says hello an’more.”

I smile to him and nod, thinking about how cold the pizza must be getting. He smiles back, a toothless thing, much more apt to cause sadness than joy. He turns back to his journey upward as I jingle the keys into my door’s lock. Inside, I smile when I see the pile of DVDs on the coffee table, the humming fridge with various appointments and magnets stuck to it, and the window overlooking the sleeping town. I’d survived another day.

I throw the pizza down on the side of my mildew-streaked orange couch and turn on the TV. The television is older than Christ and doesn’t have cable, but that’s beside the point. I put in my favorite television series, “That 70s Show,” and begin the party with my best and only friends.

My parents came to visit three weeks later. The first thing they said when they walked in wasn’t about how messy the room was; it wasn’t about how I hadn’t called them since last Christmas or how they thought I could do better than this dump. They complained about the smell.

I blushed and pointed at the sink full to the brim with soap water and old dishes, but they were sure that wasn’t it. “It smells like something died in here,” they said. I fought back the urge to reply, “Yeah, my hopes and dreams.” Honestly, I couldn’t smell anything. Needless to say, they didn’t stay long, and I was alone again.

That night, lying in bed, I began yearning for the past. I vividly lived through my childhood for what must have been the eighth time. I saw all the mistakes I had made and all the chances I never took. I saw her again, standing by the pool, waiting for me; but I’d never show up. I had told myself it was because I hadn’t wanted to get my hair wet at the time. Now it felt like self-sabotage and I investigated every what-if scenario that might have followed if I’d gone.

There was a sudden crash above my bed as if a television or even a small bookcase had been kicked over. I was jolted out of my self-pity and back into reality. The crash was followed by a much smaller thump that was somehow more rattling than the first. That old man lived above me, of course; he might have fallen over for all I knew. And yet I did nothing. It all went downhill from there.

The next night I was haunted by what was the unmistakable sound of dripping. It was hard to hear, impossible during the day, but at night, when everything was quiet, that excruciating sound would begin. Like the ticking of a clock, getting louder and louder, never missing a beat. I envisioned a puddle of blackness being filled by an unnatural cloud; within, my loved ones were drowning. I would turn to my static-strewn friends, but still the dripping continued, taking bits of sanity with every drop.

And the smell, that horrible, yellow smell, like a portal into had been opened. I was reminded of when I’d found my pet birds trapped behind the couch as a child, their rotting flesh and fecal fumes leaping off the carcasses, causing my body to shake with the knowledge of mortality. I had cried for my parents then, as I do now. But what could they do? I was enveloped in this travesty and I had shut them out of my life.

Desperately, I searched my prison for the source of this evil. I pushed through all the toxins under the sink, scattered the mothballs under my bed, and checked the vents for dead creatures. That’s when I

found something odd. It seemed as if the source of the stench was the vents themselves, and not my room at all. Immediately I bought a roll of duct tape and sealed off every vent I could find with three layers of tape. Gradually, the air began to clear and I finally began to think rationally again. To finish the job, I sprayed air freshener into every corner of the room, and that's when I noticed the spot.

A single, crimson red drip was gathering in the very corner by the window. Building in size like a blister, I watched as the bubble popped and streaked five inches down the wall. Several other red stalactites appeared and grew in size before following their comrade down toward the floor. It was bizarre; they began to take the shape of an upside tree, its branches a glaring sea of blood. I felt dinner begin to rise up my throat and I hurriedly shoved the window open, gasping for breath.

I was even more shocked by what I saw below. There was a group of at least ten men in bulky yellow HazMat clothing exiting two white vans and running into the apartment. I couldn't believe what was happening. I pulled my head back inside to look at the growing red mark as it began to reach and soak into the carpet. Already I could hear the men as they charged up the stairs past my door, towards—my heart skipped a beat—old man Taylor's apartment.

I slammed open the door and waved down an approaching HazMat man. I could tell he was out of breath without even seeing his face.

"Please exit the building, sir," he gasped.

He didn't wait for me to reply and so I did the only thing I could: I walked down the stairs with everyone else into the cold night air, on the eve of winter.

Old man Taylor had been found dead, I was told later. It turns out he'd hung himself over a month ago, and there he'd stayed, like clothes in a closet or beef on a meat hook. No one had even noticed he was gone. His family never called him, nor he them; he didn't have any friends to speak of because he'd never speak a word to anyone. By the accounts of the few who knew him, he was a lonely man because he never took the time to be anything else; either he was too busy or he just didn't care. And he died that way.

After a month hanging there, his head had separated from his body. The crash was the body hitting the ground and the following thump had been the rest of him. Everything inside him flooded out and dyed the white carpet around him red before soaking through the floor to repeat the pattern in my room. The only reason anyone noticed he was missing was because of the smell, and his unpaid rent.

I look back on this and realize with horror that we really weren't so different. I had shut myself off from the world into a cold loneliness I'm sure Taylor was very familiar with up until the bitter end. I've started going out more as a result. I've shut off the television and sold all my DVDs. I even called her again. I almost didn't, at first. But during the past month, I've learned that life is too short and sanity too fragile to lock myself in my room anymore. In the search for change, I've put away my noose for good.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Erin Teuscher, "Science Fair"

Anne Frank once wrote, "Parents can only give good advice or put children on the right paths, but the final forming lies in their own hands." On the other hand, Maridawn Wadsworth said, "Students who have parents to guide and lead them on the path to education have a much smoother road." Where do we draw the line in what is actually just helping with homework versus doing all the work for them? What should the compromise be? Today, it seems like parents are doing much more than just "guiding" students; they are in fact doing the work for them. Term papers, math homework, science labs, nothing seems out of bounds to today's parents. We are raising children who do not have to be responsible for their own work. One of the key ways I saw this most demonstrated was at my own middle school science fair.

I started to feel the first tingling of nervousness flutter in my stomach as I carried my colorful poster board full of scientific graphs and charts in the school's gymnasium. I had spent weeks working to make sure all of the figures were correct and met my hypothesis. The night before had been a long one as I cut out lively photos and pasted them to my otherwise boring presentation board. There was little time for sleep! However, it was worth the little less sleep I had received the last few weeks while I had been completing this project. I remembered how bummed out I had been the first day of the quarter when my science teacher began explaining how we would have to do a science project to be presented at our school science fair. I had never been the greatest scientist. In fact, science was always my worst subject. I stressed for weeks about what to do it on. Even after I finally chose my topic, "What materials glow under black light and why", it took a lot of effort and time to accomplish exactly what I had hypothesized would happen.

I had kind of started to enjoy working on my project and was a little sad to see it end. I knew that my work was not apt to win a Nobel Prize. Nonetheless, I could not help but be proud of my eighth-grade work.

As I found my name and started setting up my 4x4 spot, I suddenly noticed the other students' projects. Jim Nelson, the dumbest kid in the grade, was positioned immediately next to me. I was completely dumbfounded as I read his report topic—The Effect of Pollutants on Light Bioluminescent Bacteria. Light bioluminescent what? How in the heck did he come up with that? Overwhelmed by the caliber of Jim's project, I walked around, looking at the other students' projects, and my shock intensified: Weak Lensing Mass Estimates of Low Redshift Clusters of Galaxies. Microfluidic Image Cytometry To Detect PI3K Pathway Markers in Brain Cancer. Even my best friend Michelle prominently displayed How to Build a Homemade Magnetometer to Study How the Earth's Magnetic Fields Are Affected By Solar Storms. How could she prepare such an advanced project? She hated science.

Almost in tears by the triteness of my own project, I began to interrogate Michelle. I asked her how she came up with such a brilliant project. She whispered that she had not done anything to prepare for her project, but her Dad, who was a meteorologist, had all of this material prepared and even put it together for her. She told me that she had memorized some answers that would make her look smart if a teacher asked a question, but that she really had no clue what her project was about. Remembering how my own father had only shook his head and told me I would figure it out when I had asked for help made me have to ask her, "How did you get your dad to do this all for you?"

"It was so easy," she said. "All I had to do was tell him how we had to come up with a project for the school science fair and that I wanted to do a project on something to do with meteorology since it was such a cool subject." I had to roll my eyes at this point I knew she thought what her dad did was boring. Then from that, he just did the whole thing for you? "Well", she looked a little embarrassed as she lowered her eyes, "Not exactly," she stammered. "I did have to cry a few times whenever he started trying to make me get involved my dad is a huge sucker for tears, especially if it's a girl." Now I was the one in tears. I had spent so much time on my project and it looked like a Sesame Street cutout compared to these professional, scientifically prepared projects.

Regaining control of myself, trying desperately not to make a scene, I went from booth to booth asking the same questions and getting the same cheery answers. Amber's mom spent weeks on her project, Johnny had his grandpa piece something together, and Jim had his dad's entire lab put together his project. As I reflected on the injustice of this science fair, I could not understand why a parent would do all the work for them. What was the point? They had already passed science and had probably participated in science fairs themselves. Did every student have parents do their projects for them? Why had I been so naïve? Just 15 minutes earlier, I was feeling good about my project and myself and now I knew I had the most amateurish project the school had ever seen. I cursed myself for not having my parents prepare my project for me. I should have known that when the instruction said to "make sure that your parents or older siblings do NOT do the majority of the work for you," it was simply a cruel inside joke that everyone was in on but my parents and me. As the day dragged on and I watched the parents be more interested in who had won than what the student had really learned, I knew that something was wrong with this system. I left with a participant ribbon, vowing never to put my own time into a science fair again.

Later in the week, after my teenage pride had cooled off from what I considered to be a quite embarrassing moment in my life, I reflected over this whole experience. This is not how a science fair should be or, really, how any school functions should be, but what can we really do to change it? I thought the point of a science fair was to allow kids to look at science in a fun different light. A way that science is used in his or her everyday life. It should never be just a homework assignment for someone else. As a society, we have the wrong mind set regarding education. We are more concerned about a grade than what the student has learned. Parents want their kids to get into the right college or get the right grade more than they want their child to learn. We now have parents competing against each other rather than the students. I feel sad for those students who are going to go out and face the real world without their parents help.

I recalled a story a student once told me about how her dad taught her to learn. She used to hate having to ask her dad for help with math because he would always make her pull out a piece of scratch paper and explain how the equation was to be solved. As she went to high school and had a lot more time in class to finish homework, she was able to figure it out on her own instead of having to go home and have him help her so much. Her dad was not the smartest guy when it came to math, but he taught her how to learn on her own. So, yes, at the end of my 8th grade science fair I did not win any prizes or have the most advanced of projects, but I did do the work myself, and I did learn a lot. In addition, the lesson I learned far outweighed the blue ribbons of my classmates who got the glory for someone else's work. Subsequently, who really won more, the student who got first prize and learned nothing or the student who did it themselves and will forever hold the knowledge of what they learned? I, for one, think it is the latter.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Tessa Garrard, "Culinary Chemist"

I was ready. My glasses were well set and adjusted to keep my eyes free from any chemical agents. I was equipped with gloves that reached half way up my forearms, to protect against any splatter that might occur. A protective apron also adorned my torso, combining with the heat coming off the inferno to make my body uncomfortable with its rising internal temperature. I was nervous and sweating, but I was ready... to cook!

This was a normal bright sunny day of backyard barbequing, and I was outside in charge of cooking. To some, barbeque is as foreign and intimidating as chemistry. The intricate network of specific things, amounts, and sequencing can get confusing and discouraging. But just as a chemist must experiment and learn how things react to get a desired outcome, a chef must do the same with food. The chicken that was being cooked had been marinated in barbeque and Worcestershire sauce for the past three hours, and was partnered on the menu with Ballpark hotdogs. The chicken seared as I turned it over on the grill, and I could almost see the meat soak up the marinade, encasing itself in flavor. I could hardly wait for this delicious meal to get off the grill and onto my plate. Twenty minutes later the table was set and the scent in the air started immediate salivation in the eaters' hungry mouths. Luckily for me, this meal had turned out palatable. I felt as accomplished as a chemist who had just successfully made a cycloethane. However, there have been over times when I haven't been so lucky.

Growing up in a family where food was deeply enjoyed and viewed as a key social component, I learned to cook at a very young age. With that age came many bad batches, burned bread, and dozens of bitter cookies. As I grew, these instances became fewer, but they did still happen, and they were forever engraved into my memory. I remember one particular experience vividly. I had been helping my dad cook pancakes since I was able to pour the flour into the mixing bowl and laugh as it produced a white puff that sometimes landed on my dad's nose. I was positive that after my many years of apprenticing under the watchful eye of my dad, I was ready to try it on my own. So one Sunday morning, I woke up extra early to get breakfast ready for everyone before we left for church at ten o' clock. Being only eight or nine years old, I had to pull a chair over to the counter so I could reach the mixer and find all the ingredients in the cupboard. Finally I had all the ingredients and measuring devices gathered, so I began.

First I got one cup measure and as concentrated as an eight-year-old could be, I measured three cups of the soft powdery substance into the mixing bowl. (I laughed to myself as each cup puffed up a little white cloud.) Next came the salt and milk, which were easy enough to add. After the milk and salt came the eggs. This is going to be tough, I thought. Dad always added the eggs because the shells always broke into little pieces when I tried to crack them open. But I was determined not to let anything stop me. So I cracked the eggs, and only a few pieces of the shell landed (and stayed) in the mixing bowl. The last ingredient I couldn't find, and that was the baking soda. I tried looking for it, but with no success. Thinking it wasn't that big of a deal because I only needed one and a half teaspoons of it, I continued on. I turned the mixer on and mixed all of the ingredients together until it formed a liquid-like, semi-lumpy mixture.

When the pancake mix was done, I found the skillet, put it on the stove, and turned on the burner. I carried the pancake mix over to the counter next to the stove and then moved the chair. My family was starting to stir, and I wanted to get breakfast ready quick enough to be a surprise. Confidently, I pulled the big ladle out of the second drawer, climbed up onto the chair and started pouring the batter into the

skillet. I did it! I thought. Everyone is going to be so surprised! But my excitement quickly turned into sadness when I discovered that the pancakes weren't fluffing up like the ones my dad made. I concluded that it must have been the first few scoops that were that way. So I turned the pancakes over and took them out of the skillet when they were done, greased the pan, and poured in some more. They were doing the same thing! They weren't taking shape or rising, and I was starting to get nervous.

Just then, my dad walked into the kitchen. He was surprised to see me and asked me what I was doing. At that point, I began to cry. I explained how I had tried to make a surprise breakfast for everyone, and the pancakes weren't working. My dad asked if I had added all the ingredients, and when I said I had left out the baking soda, he started to chuckle. While he added the baking soda to the rest of the pancake mixture, he explained that the baking soda was what made the pancakes fluff, and after adding the missing ingredient, he let me finish my surprise. This time, as I poured the mix into the skillet, the pancakes seemed to inflate and become a tall, golden brown masterpiece.

Breakfast was wonderful as my mom, dad, brothers, and sisters all commented on the delicious pancakes I made. To adorn them, we had butter, maple syrup, and buttermilk syrup that my dad had surprised me with as a small reward for my hard work. The butter melted on the steamy surfaces of the pancakes as people spread it across in a sporadic fashion, and the pancakes seemed to absorb the syrup with an almost selfish desire, like dry sponges in water, sealing in the sugary flavor. Laughter and praise filled the room as the pancakes filled our bellows, and after breakfast had been enjoyed, we washed off the sticky sweetness and headed to church. The pancakes had turned out perfect, as had my planned surprise breakfast.

Not all my cuisine endeavors have been as lucky as the near disaster I had with the pancakes. Once I made a batch of cookies that have no brown sugar or vanilla in them, and no one noticed until they took a bite. After they had, the whole batch was discarded because even milk could not cover the bitter flavor. Another time, I was preheating the oven to bake french fries and didn't double check to see if any pots or pants had been left inside of it. That day I succeeded in melting off the bottom of a pair of dad's work boots that he had set in the oven on low temperature to seal in the waterproofing treatment he'd applied. The oven stank for days! Even now, there will be times when I forget I'm cooking and happen to let macaroni noodles boil dry on the stove or unconsciously void eggs from a cake recipe.

Still today, I arm myself against the ongoing discoveries and experiments that the culinary world presents. My gloves don't reach all the way up my arm now, but my interest in the science of cooking is still as intense as it was when I started. I don't work with hydrochloric acid or potassium bromide, but working with oregano, rosemary, or thyme can prove just as dangerous and complicated.