

# SCRIBLERIAN

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# ENGL 1010 ARGUMENTATIVE

# “Gene Editing and CRISPR/Cas9”

1st Place: Colton Koch

Professor Natalie Johansen

In 1997, *Gattaca* was released to theaters. This movie portrayed a world where everyone was genetically modified to become the best that they could be. Many watching the film thought that gene editing was a part of the very distant future and would not happen in their lifetimes. Recently scientists have discovered a new way of gene editing that can make the changing of our DNA cheaper and more precise. This editing tool called CRISPR/Cas9 and has made gene editing more available to the public, meaning that anyone with the proper equipment can perform gene editing. Gene editing is the process of changing the DNA to have the desired trait. Gene editing can have positive or negative impacts on society. There needs to be more research on gene editing and what can be accomplished from performing it. However, before continuing the exploration of the new frontier of gene editing, the government needs to place regulations on who and when gene editing should be used so it does not cross any ethical boundaries.

In the past, the only way for humans to perform gene editing was through the process of artificial selection. A breeder would select a desired trait and

breed animals with that feature until the population expressed that same trait. This method can take many generations and may not be perfect. Scientists wanted a more direct and quicker way of gene editing, so they developed new methods of performing genome editing. Within the past couple of years, scientists discovered a new way of genome editing using CRISPR/Cas9. “CRISPR technology is based on naturally occurring mechanisms that many bacteria use... to fight viral infections” (Scherz 30). When large animals get sick, such as humans, antibodies are used to fight off the virus. Bacteria do not have that same ability to use antibodies. Bacteria use CRISPR/Cas9 to find the virus in the genetic code and then remove the virus to stop the infection (Scherz 30). This allows a doctor to use CRISPR/Cas9 protein to target genes and perform gene editing on any species of animal.

A Harvard magazine article describes CRISPR as a word processor for the DNA sequence, which allows the doctor/scientist to add, edit, or entirely delete entire traits. Once injected, CRISPR/Cas9 acts as a scanner and scissors. It scans the DNA sequence until it finds the targeted feature when it cuts it out like a

pair of scissors and changes the sequence (McIntosh). This new process “has made editing of the genome much more precise, efficient, flexible, and less expensive relative to previous strategies” (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 1). CRISPR/Cas9 means that we can target specific traits and change them to the desired outcome. This can be anything from eye color to body type. Another massive benefit of using CRISPR/Cas9 is that the old ways of performing gene editing “can cost upwards of \$5,000 per use, while the price of CRISPR can be as low as \$30” (Smolenski 35). This low cost means that CRISPR/Cas9 makes gene editing more practical and easier to use with less of a chance of performing editing errors.

Since CRISPR/Cas9 is easier to use and cheaper, more people can get a hold of the needed material to perform gene editing. An issue that has arisen from this is that people with no formal training on gene editing are performing experiments of their own. A Netflix docuseries titled *Unnatural Selection* goes and follows people who perform these experiments and call themselves biohackers. One of the biohackers that they followed is a dog breeder who bought all his equipment through eBay and has had no formal education on genetics. He works in his shed and tests his experiments on the dogs that he breeds. His goal in experimenting with CRISPR is to make a puppy glow in the dark (Egender and Kaufman, Episode 1). This Netflix documentary brings to light that a lot of peo-

ple are messing around with CRISPR/Cas9 when they should not be. Most of the biohackers want to be either rich or famous, and they do not stop to think that what they do have repercussions. They only care about if it works and not how it works. An example of this would be if a biohacker creates an untested cure for a disease and then goes and injects a lot of people. This could have the repercussion of the disease mutating so that any later cure could have no impact on the patient.

If CRISPR/Cas9 is in the right and proper hands, then it can do great things for humanity. In a Science and Technology article talking about the benefits and downsides of gene editing, the authors bring up that the “CRISPR/Cas9 system could be used in the treatment of complex diseases such as cancer” (Gomes and Soares 8). Any disease or genetic issue such as HIV has the possibility of being cured through genetic editing, and CRISPR/Cas9 plays a crucial role in making that a reality. CRISPR would go in and take out the sequence of DNA that leads to HIV, curing the patient. Treatment and medicine could be based on the patient’s genes and would make it more effective. Genetic editing can also help reverse the effects of muscular dystrophy, which is a disease that leads to the progressive loss of muscle mass. Muscular dystrophy leaves the individuals suffering from this genetic disorder bedridden and unable to move any part of their body. In these cases, many have called for more research on gene editing so it can benefit those in need.

Another benefit of gene editing but is also

controversial in that it allows parents to choose the traits of the baby. The parents could pick eye color, hair color, and many other characteristics and in the process have a “designer baby.” A baby could be genetically modified to have the eyesight of an eagle or be designed to be incredibly athletic and muscular. Most people think that these types of enhancements are unnatural and not normal, so, therefore, they should not be done. In the book *Human Genome Editing: Science, Ethics, and Governance*, normal and natural are talked about and what they mean in the context of gene editing. The conclusion was drawn that “normal” and “natural” cannot be used as an argument against enhancements. Since in nature, there are genetic variations, random variation may be beneficial or harmful to the individual who expresses the trait. Their argument against using “normal” is that there is no normal human and genome order (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 157). Many other arguments are that glasses, vaccines, and braces are a form of enhancement. Glasses bring a person’s eyesight to the accepted level of vision. Vaccines enhance the immune capability of whoever receives it, and that is not based on their genes. These arguments make it even harder to decide in what cases should gene editing should be used, therefore restrictions need to be established by the government to answer these questions.

Even though gene editing can do marvelous things, just like the enhancement question, there are many ethical issues and concerns behind gene editing.

The first one is whether gene editing should be allowed to be performed on the germline of a patient. The germline is the genes that are passed from parent to child and then to grandchild and so on. If gene editing is performed on a germline, then it could eradicate genetic issues from entire family lines. This can be a great thing; however, if the wrong gene is edited, then it can lead not just to lifelong problems, but it can affect many generations. This means it is impossible to get informed consent from the involved party. Since we do not know CRISPR and gene editing entirely, many scientists and other organizations have agreed that gene editing should not be performed on a patient’s germline because the “risk cannot be justified by the potential benefit” (NHGRI). To go along with this is that we are not entirely confident in the safety behind gene editing of any time germline or not. Even though CRISPR/Cas9 is incredibly accurate, there is still the possibility that off-target edits can occur. So instead of having a blue-eyed baby, there is a possibility of having a blind baby. There are a lot of unknown factors when it comes to safety and knowledge of what is to come. These unknown factors are why there needs to be guidelines and regulations in place before large scale experimenting continues.

Another ethical issue is that of equality. In the early stages of gene editing, rich people will have the first use of gene editing and its benefits. This will increase the inequality between the rich and poor even more. When only a few companies have the capability

of fixing genetic disorders, this can lead to extreme price inflation for large profits. An example of this is also shown in the Netflix docuseries *Unnatural Selection*, where there is a boy who suffers from a rare disease that slowly makes him blind. Throughout the series, his story gets told, and by the end, it is said that there is a cure to his disease using gene editing. The downside is that the treatment costs almost one million dollars, and the only response that the company gives is how much is your kid's eyesight worth (Egender and Kaufman, Episode 2). The costs of these treatments are exceptionally pitiful that large companies can help hundreds of thousands but are too worried to make a quick profit that they will leave the majority without the ability to receive the necessary treatments. Since this is happening many have called for government intervention to place a cap on how much these treatments can cost.

Since gene editing requires all the genetic information of the patient, this would mean that everything about their life would be on file. All of the patient's information on file would "raise issues related to privacy and discrimination" (Gomes and Soares 8). If a patient's information were leaked, it would mean that they could face discrimination and harassment. An unfavorable outcome from that would be that patients would not tell all the information about themselves or change small details about which they are embarrassed. Gomes and Soares go in to say that this would have a terrible impact on treatment because they left

out critical information. This would not only be an individually harmful impact, but it could become a public threat (8). Left out information like contagious diseases can cause widescale harm to the public.

To get ahead of all these ethical issues and questions, guidelines need to be established by the government before gene editing is fully used across America and the world. There have already been some international guidelines placed with twenty-nine countries ratifying a ban that would limit certain types of genome editing. One of these countries, "the United States, has a de facto ban insofar as it is not possible to proceed with germline genome editing" (Baylis 43). This law is the reason why it is illegal to perform any genetic editing that affects anyone's future posterity. Baylis also continues that many organizations say that there needs to be a societal consensus before any germline editing occurs. However, he says that societal consensus is an unattainable goal to achieve (44). This is true because everyone has different views on gene editing and its uses. It is also hard because not everyone is informed about everything that is needed to be known to form a proper opinion. The government needs to establish a guideline saying that only people with a certain level of education or sponsorship can perform gene editing experiments. This will address all the unregulated experiments from biohackers. The government also needs to say when it can be performed, such as only for medical reasons and not for any vanity reasons or enhancement. They also need to



pass laws that limit the price of treatments, so the less wealthy individuals can still benefit from the new technology. However, if the government passes laws that entirely restrict gene editing, people will then leave to other countries to have gene editing done.

In conclusion, gene editing has an infinite amount of possibilities. It also has an endless number of ethical issues that are associated with it. To quote the famous saying, “with great power come great responsibilities,” and gene editing is no different. There needs to be government intervention, so gene editing is being used humanely and for the good of society and not just for personal gain. This will lead to a better world for everyone and will help if any other new ethical issues arise in the future.

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# “The Effects of Smartphones and Social Media on Adolescents”

2nd Place: Grace Collier

Professor Natalie Johansen

Smartphone and social media use has become an addiction for many adolescents. Smartphones are the first thing people see in the morning, and the last thing people see at night. With the release of each new smartphone, teens have become more and more sleep deprived, sedentary, socially awkward, and depressed. Technology is becoming increasingly prevalent as each day goes by, and because of this, parents, educators, and adolescents should be aware that excessive smartphone and social media use increases the risk of adolescents developing anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.

Although there are many problems with smartphones, there are also many benefits. Social media can be positive and can help people to build self esteem. For example, if someone posts a picture of themselves on a social media platform, peers, family, friends, co-workers, etc. may comment compliments which could help people to have more confidence. Another positive aspect of social media is that it can help people to make new friends and stay connected with loved ones. In an article entitled “Benefits and Costs of Social Media in Adolescence,” it says that “Nearly two-thirds of

teenagers report that they make new friends through social media, and >90% use social media to connect with existing offline friends every day. Adolescents also report that these media help them understand their friends’ feelings and feel more connected to them” (Uhls et al.). There are countless apps in which people can message new people that they relate to, or current relations that they had already. It can build friendships, partnerships, etc. Smartphones can also be used for learning. There are many websites, databases, and apps that have literature available to read, and there are hundreds of online resources that are there to help students to learn any subject. Because online communication has become so popular, it seems necessary for people to have at least one social media platform just to stay caught up with their loved ones, and work and school. In fact, many schools are implementing online homework, more online communication, etc. This ensures that parents and their young students get the information needed for upcoming schedules, events, and homework assignments. Clearly, some social media use is necessary because of its prevalence in society.

While there are these benefits of smartphones

and social media, people should be aware of the risks and should try to limit social media and smartphone use. There are many mental illnesses such as Nomophobia, depression, anxiety, insomnia, etc. that have been proven to have been at least partially caused by social media. Nomophobia is the fear of being without a phone. This is a surprisingly common phobia. Smartphones are an absolute necessity for many, and when people don't have them, it evokes a sense of anxiety in them. "As time spent in social media environments increases, these media environments are expected to become a part of life and anxiety from not being able to access them is expected to increase" (Durak). The more adolescents are using their phones, the higher the chance of there being Nomophobic behaviors. In addition to Nomophobia, there have been studies that have shown that cellphones can be an actual addiction. The satisfying noises that mobile phones make can be related to slot machines while gambling. Neuroimaging has shown that the substance addiction area of the brain is stimulated when people receive notifications, and when they use casino slot machines (Cain). This information shows that cellphones can be addictive. Classical conditioning also plays a role in social media addiction. Classical conditioning is when "...two stimuli are linked together to produce a new learned response in a person..." (McLeod). For example, when someone receives a notification such as a like, positive comment/message, etc., they will tend to automatically associate a notification with their positive self-image.

The next time they hear the "ding" of their smartphones, the positive feelings of previous notifications will likely make them want to check that notification even more. It may even make them uncomfortable if they are in a situation where they can't check their phones to see what the notification is. This is yet another way that smartphones have been proven to be addictive.

Not only has nomophobia been shown to be a risk factor of excessive phone use, but so has depression and anxiety. Many studies have shown that depression and anxiety in teens has significantly increased since the release of the first smartphone. "The ACHA reports that within the last 12 months, 41.5% of students "felt things were hopeless," 51.8% "felt very lonely," 55.3% "felt overwhelming anxiety," and 33.5% "felt so depressed that it was difficult to function" (qtd. in Cain). These are large percentages, and serious problems. These students are in need of attention from parents and educators. If it is getting to the point where it is difficult for students to function, cell phone addiction is clearly a problem that needs more attention. If students were better educated on how smartphones affect them, they would understand the importance of limiting their use of technology. Furthermore, they would possibly be willing to find more hobbies, set a better sleep schedule, etc. to help them to be healthy and free of an addiction to their device.

There is also a significant correlation between cellphones and insomnia. The blue light that

smartphones emit tricks the brain into thinking it is daytime, which decreases the amount of melatonin being produced, therefore extending the circadian rhythm (Ruder). So when people stay up too late on their mobile devices, it throws this internal clock out of balance, potentially leading to insomnia, or other sleep disorders. These are a few, out of many negative, physical, and mental effects of smartphones.

There are many dangers of social media, especially because social media is so easily accessible. Cyberbullying is a very common problem. It is very easy for bullies to harass online. With cyberbullying, bullies can be anonymous, which could lead to even more aggression because they don't have to worry about being caught. It can happen anytime or place, and the rumors/mean comments/inappropriate photos can be seen by anyone. According to Yolanda Evans, a professor at Seattle Children's Hospital, approximately 26% of adolescents have been the online bully, and more than 42% of kids have experienced being harassed online. Almost half of teenagers in the United States have been a victim of cyberbullying, and it has likely affected them in several ways. Many studies have shown a strong correlation between cyberbullying, depression, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts (Hamm). With the amount of children being cyberbullied, and the effects being so serious, parents should be aware of this and should make sure that their child is safe from it.

Smartphones have also been shown to stunt learning. Because of the addictive qualities they have,

adolescents can easily spend hours on their device being completely entertained. Since it is so entertaining, students are likely to not want to spend time doing anything else. Kimberly Young, author of the book *Internet addiction in children and adolescents: risk factors, assessment, and treatment*, explains that since they are lacking in sleep, social life, exercise, etc. they have a higher risk of developing learning disorders, and having difficulty paying attention (Young 4). So much time is being spent online, with detrimental effects. All of these basic needs of life are getting ignored to play digital games, scroll through social media, and text. In addition to that, when teens stay up late on their phones, they are missing out on their REM sleep which is necessary for the formation of memories (Ruder). This means that they are less likely to remember what they learned in class, making it even more difficult for them to learn and do well in school. Smartphone use should be contained and supervised, so that students can have a healthy and balanced life.

It is very important to know how parents/educators can deal with their teens' obsession with their smartphones without overreacting or ruining their relationship with them. Overreacting could cause teens to want to use their phones even more, which obviously increases the negative effects. However, if dealt with correctly and patiently, adolescents are much more likely to be respectful of their parents' wishes, and hopefully listen to the warnings of excessive smartphone use. In Leah Shafer's article concerning the

connection between social media and anxiety, she stresses that taking the teenager's phone away would not solve the problem, in fact it would likely make it worse. Common Sense Media explains that in a recent study, approximately one third of parents had fights with their teens because of excessive cell phone use ("Technology Addiction: Concern, Controversy, and Finding Balance"). Parents should be firm in their decisions, but should make sure to not isolate the teenager or set too many restrictions because this could cause contention, which could lead to the teen isolating themselves even more. Another point they bring up is that in order for parents to expect their teenagers to have a balanced life (not dominated by cell phone use), parents must first set the example. When teens see that their parents are not constantly using their phones, they will probably be more willing to comply with the rules. Young provides a list of age guidelines such as: children from ages zero to three should not be allowed any screen time, children from three to six should only be allowed one hour, from six to nine should be allowed two hours of supervised time, from ages nine to twelve, they should be shown that there can be helpful media, and harmful media, and lastly, ages twelve to eighteen, parents should be respectful of their online privacy, but should still make sure they are not spending too much time on screens (155-157). Setting time limits from an early age can be very helpful, so that the child will know what is expected of them, and will be more likely to comply with the rules.

If rules are not set at a young age, that is alright. There are still treatments available to help children to stay healthy and to grow in a balanced environment.

In conclusion, there are many issues and health problems- mental, physical, and social- that are largely affected by excessive amounts of smartphone and social media use. Students are struggling with depression, anxiety, insomnia, etc. at such a young age. They are getting bullied online, and are having a difficult time paying attention in school. However, if education is provided to help raise awareness to this surprisingly impactful issue, students will hopefully be able to do better in many aspects. Parents, educators, and adolescents should all be aware of these issues so they can take the necessary steps to ensure a healthier, and more stable environment.

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# ENGL 1010 EXPRESSIVE

# “Perfect”

## 1st Place: Brooke Bellon Professor Jennifer Sorensen

I've always dreamed of meeting my dream boy, in one of those dream movie situations where you run into each other on the street of a big city, the girl spills coffee all over the boy's nice shirt, she starts apologizing and then they look up at each other. Both hesitate. Immediately there is a connection, basically love at first site. A date is soon set up, and after multiple series of events, with a little bit of drama mixed in, they live happily ever after. I know movies are fake, but besides the fact I don't drink coffee and don't live in a big city, that seemed like a pretty realistic possibility in my little child and teenage mind. I think lots of young girls grow up watching cute fairytales and dream of meeting the love of their life. If only movies were real.

When I first met Noah, my first impression definitely was not love at first site. I had recently turned 17 and started new job at a retirement home. On one of my first days on the job I walked in and saw a kid I'd never seen before sitting on a stool in a corner looking at his phone. I couldn't see anyone else around so I decided I should probably ask this kid what to do.

We introduced ourselves. He looked older so I asked him, “Did you graduate last year?”

His reply surprised me, “no I am a junior.”

Same age as me. But I had never seen him before, so I figured he went to my school's rival. However, it turned out he was my age, in my grade and went to the same school as me. After continuing the conversation for about 10 minutes, I had heard all about his football career, how he was on the wrestling team, so basically his life story. The work day consisted of him doing pull ups on the little door ledge. I basically saw him as a major show off. Again, not love at first site.

We continued to be coworkers and nothing more. Not even working together that often. The conversations we would have were awkward. One specific conversation was about mold growing on the ceiling in the room where you would wash the dishes and a plant growing between the cracks in the wall. He had come back to hand me a dish when I had pointed the plant and the mold out to him. Me, being the awkward human I am, told him my mom and I had named the plant.

“Oh yeah? Did you name the mold too?”

Again, me being awkward and knowing very well we hadn't named the mold because who in the



world names mold said, “uh, yes! Its name is, uh, moldy and in that corner is moldy Jr.”

The look I received from him as he gave me that fake little laugh was one that basically called me a weirdo. As he walked away all I could think was how socially impaired I was. I am sure it wasn't love at first sight for him either.

It wasn't until his friend started working that I started building an actual friendship, however, that friendship wasn't with Noah but with his friend. His friend was the one that would ask me out. He took me to a Jazz playoff game, Prom and multiple double dates with Noah. I would watch Noah on these dates, which might sound kind of creepy. He was such a gentleman. He was the one that would open the door, he would pick up his date from her house and then walk her back. He made sure to show her all the attention. He was funny and witty, super outgoing and easy to talk to. All this his friend lacked. And slowly I became jealous of the girls with Noah.

Soon, the little fling with his friend died out. I wanted someone sweet and funny and it just wasn't happening with him. That summer I continued talking to Noah on a rare occasion at work. Still, I never thought of him as more than a coworker.

When the school year started, it was the beginning of my senior year. I had made a promise with my friend to go to every dance for my final year of high school. Sadie's was the first dance for that year. I sat in my friend's room as we were throwing out names

of boys we could ask. I thought of Noah's name and immediately was filled with butterflies. Asking Noah was way out of my comfort zone of my friend group who I usually went with dances with. I was nervous. I could just remember all the awkward work conversations we had had. Once I suggested his name my friend volunteered herself to ask him. Now my friend was very flirtatious and was basically fearless when it came to boys. Seeing her confidence in her ability to ask him made me know there was no way she was going to be the one to go with him. I decided that if anyone was going to ask him it was going to be me.

One of my least favorite things about high school was asking boys to dances. Through high school, I had gone to all the boy's choice but refused to ask to a girl choice just because of the stress and anxiety it brought. So here I was, not only facing my fear of asking someone to a dance but asking someone I really didn't know that well.

I had gotten my cousins to help me that night. We had gone to Walmart, gotten all the stuff and everything ready. I stayed confident until we pulled up in front of his house. All my courage was gone. I could not find the strength to get out of the car and knock on his door. My cousin was yelling at me to get out of the car and just get it over with.

After much convincing, I finally found enough courage to open the door to the car. My heart was pounding with each step I took up his driveway. My hands were shaking as I strategically set up my poster

and various candy items. My finger hesitated over his door bell for a couple seconds before I got the strength to press and run. My adrenaline was pumping. My cousin zoomed to the church parking lot down the street before we waited to drive pass to make sure he got it. I felt relieved that it was over but still the butterflies were there along with the questioning of if he would be disappointed it was me who asked him.

A couple nights later, I received a knock on the door and his response of “I would love to ‘glow’ with you to Sadie’s” with an arrangement of glowsticks that spelled out yes. Whether he was happy about going with me or not, there was no going back now. This slowly began to replace some of my nerves with excitement.

As the next couple weeks past, I kept my upcoming dance with Noah in the back of my mind. The only conversation I would have with him were over text about what we were going to wear to the dance.

Come the morning of Sadie’s, I woke up, my heart was pounding, and my stomach hurt. I had cleaned my suburban and picked out my outfit for the day the night before. I was picking up Noah at 12. As I drove around and picked up those in my group who lived right by me, the anxiety just got more and more intense. I watched as my friends knocked on the door of their dates’, dreading the moment it was my turn.

We finally pulled up to his house, about 10 minutes late. My friends basically had to push me out of the car to get me to go up to his door. Again, my

hands were shaking as I rang his doorbell. He came to the door with a warm and excited smile. I was trying to rush out of there, trying to avoid any contact with his family.

I said a simple “Hi! You ready?”

I almost didn’t even wait for his response before I was about to turn around and walk down the stairs of his porch, when his mom came. She basically just asked us what we were doing and to have fun. All I could think was I hope she can’t see the shivers going down my body.

The car ride had its good moments, thanks to Noah, but honestly it was pretty awkward, thanks to me. It consisted of those small talks of “how was your morning” or “so how are you?” The rest of the couples in the car weren’t even talking to each other, so I guess we were doing a little bit better than everyone else at least.

We drove to my grandparents’ house where we were planning on playing games for the day date. After busting out a few intense rounds of Disney Princess Uno, things started lighting up a bit. Everyone was feeling more comfortable with each other. Puns were being made, inside jokes began forming, and my nerves were being laughed away.

We had transitioned into playing the headphone game; a game where you blast a song in a pair of headphone and sing, not being able to hear yourself. I had a split second of confidence, so I was stupid enough to volunteer myself to go first. Though my

voice was shaky with anxiety, I belted Carrie Underwood's "Since You've been Gone." I was giving it my all, knowing I sounded awful, when Noah got up and went in the bathroom. I stopped singing, trying to hide my embarrassment with a little sarcastic laugh. When Noah appeared from the bathroom after about 10 minutes, he informed me he had thrown up and should probably go home. My first thought was, "Wow, I knew my singing was bad, but I don't think I've ever made someone throw up before."

We decided to call that the end of the date. Noah felt awful, physically, because he was sick, and because he would not be able to go to the dance with me. He apologized nonstop on the drive back to his house and even called me once I dropped him off promising to make it up to me. I couldn't help but think there was maybe a slight chance he was faking and just not wanting to go with me. However, Noah did not seem like that kind of guy and truly seemed to mean his apology.

I ended up embracing the situation and going to the dance by myself.

Fast-forward a couple months later, I received a knock on my door. Upon opening, I found a poster with the invitation "star light, star bright, first star I see tonight, I wish you may, I wish might, be my date on homecoming night, -Noah." At the time, life was kind of rough. My grandma, who had been struggling with cancer for the past few months, had just been assigned hospice, put on morphine and given only a couple

more weeks to live. Due to this, I spent my days at her house with my family, spending any last few moments with her. Having this to come home to brought happiness and excitement to me during a time it was so hard to find anything positive.

I continued spending the few weeks leading up to homecoming with my grandma, not being able to really think of anything but. This basically numbed me of any nervousness I may have felt otherwise. Rather, it was something I would turn to when I needed to think of something good. I was excited, hoping it could be one last thing I told my grandma about.

My grandma ended up passing away exactly a week before the dance. The funeral was set for the next Saturday, the same day as Homecoming. I would not be able to go to the day date, and I can't say I didn't consider canceling for the actual dance. I probably would have had it been anyone else who had asked me, but I knew it would be worth it, plus there was no way I could pass up this night with Noah.

When Saturday finally came, it was a major mix of emotions. I had about four hours between the end of the funeral and when Noah was coming to pick me up to pull myself together. Come 4:45, the nerves were finally kicking in. I was worried I wasn't going to be able to hold myself together the rest of the night. I was scared I would break down and make an absolute fool of myself.

I was awoken from my deep thoughts of anxiety by Noah's knock on my door. Opening it to be

greeted by Noah's warm, inviting smile, immediately started melting my stresses and grief from the day. I remember him telling me I looked beautiful, even though I knew my eyes were still swollen and red from the previous events. My hands began shaking as I pinned the boutonniere on his shirt. He watched me as I struggled but was patient and kind. His smile gave me the confidence I needed to make it through the night.

Though the last thing I wanted was to be social, Noah made me feel so comfortable. He made things so light and was so respectful that I wasn't yet in the big social mood. He opened the door for me and gave me his suit while we were taking pictures, he really just made me feel like a princess. Slowly, I began feeling happy and excited about where the night was going.

Following dinner, he walked me to his car. It was a really cold night, so his friends stayed inside while we went for the car. He wrapped his suit around me and left his arm lingering around my shoulders as we walked. Once we made it to his car, he pulled me into a long, warm hug. My stomach turned, wondering if he was going to kiss me. He pulled away and looked at me when we heard his friends coming. As we broke apart, my heart was pounding. It continued this pattern the whole drive to the school for the dance.

The dance was perfect. By this time, I had forgotten all about the rest of the day and all I could think about was Noah.

We were dancing the night away, when the first slow song came on. I turned to Noah, putting my hand

on his shoulder and reaching my hand out for him to grab. He grabbed it, bringing it up to his shoulder so I was hugging his neck. He moved his hands down to my hips. My heart was beating, my hands were shaking.

He was unlike any of the other boys I had ever danced with. I usually kept an awkward foot space between us, and both the boy and I would look anywhere but at each other. Noah, on the other hand, pulled me in close. He kept constant eye contact, slowly getting closer and closer. I attempted to match the eye contact, but my nerves got the best of me. My solution to the problem was to bury my head in his chest. He wrapped his arms around me. When the song was over, he gave me one final squeeze and we broke apart.

The night went on. I can't really describe how I felt. The way Noah made me feel, the way he took away my sadness, the way he would smile at me, the butterflies I would get while I was with him, I just can't explain it.

Before I knew it, the final song came on: "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran. We had found ourselves in the back of the gym when the song came on, somewhat away from the crowd of the other High School students. Again, I buried my head in his chest as we slowly rocked back and forth. By this time, we were both sweaty from dancing our little hearts out, but I don't think either of us cared.

I was hoping this would never end as the song slowly faded out. We pulled apart but this time we

stayed close. Noah continued looking at me, not letting me go. I felt like something needed to be said rather than just staring at each other in silence.

“So, uh, what do we do now?”

Noah, not breaking eye contact, replied, “that is entirely up to you.”

My heart was about to beat out of my chest. In the background I could hear the others in our grade start to chant, “Senior Year! Senior Year!” The sound was faded as my focus was entirely on Noah. The moment slowed as we continued to get closer.

I leaned in, closed my eyes, and he kissed me. The whole day disappeared. My nerves melted away. The butterflies refilled my stomach. The moment was perfect.

We pulled away and he looked at me again. This time, I didn’t want to be the one to look away first, I didn’t want the moment to end. I looked back at Noah as he again gave me that warm smile. Though we were surrounded by people, it felt like it was only us on that gym floor. There was nothing else in that moment that mattered.

Although our meeting and our beginning wasn’t love at first sight or like a scene from a movie, looking back now, I wouldn’t have changed a thing. It is the beginning of our love story and in my opinion, it is perfect.

# “When One Door Closes”

2nd Place: Maya Humphries

Professor Jennifer Sorensen

There are times in our lives that influence how we act. Whether that be how hard we work at school or work, our outlook on difficult situations, or even how we view our personal relationships. They make us who we are. One of the most significant of these circumstances happened the summer before my freshman year of high school.

Even before I was a freshman, I had decided I wanted to try out for the high school soccer team. When I decided to switch from recreation soccer to competitive soccer in fifth grade, that is when I started to prepare for tryouts. Most competitive coaches focus completely on getting as many of their players onto high school teams as possible, and as it was my dream to play on a college team, making the high school team was one of the biggest steps I could take to make that happen. I had spent all summer training in the mornings and practicing with my competitive team in the evenings. I even went to several extra trainings on Monday and Wednesday nights with the club trainer, who also happened to be the coach of the Layton High School Girls' Soccer Team. I had been working my butt off, and I was ready to prove myself at tryouts.

The first morning of tryouts, it was pouring rain and the track and the field we were going to be on was practically a swimming pool. The coach told us we would keep it short and just run a mile around the track. This wasn't too hard of a task, except for the foot of water we would be sloshing through. I, like many of the other girls, decided it would be easier if we just took our shoes off completely and ran the track bare-foot. That day I ran one of my slowest miles, coming in at about ten minutes. We had to go report our time to one of the assistant coaches, so we knew it would affect how they viewed us. When we had all finished running our mile, the coach told us that there would not be any cuts that day, and we could all go home early. As I waded my way back to my mom's car, I was already thinking of ways that I could step up my game for tomorrow's tryout.

The next day I got to the field fifteen minutes early and eagerly awaited the day's events. It was still chilly outside, and the fields were still very wet from the puddles the day before. Now that I wasn't focused so much on the conditions of the field, I looked around to see that there were over sixty girls there, and there

was only room for thirty-six on the team. We started with our usual warm ups, got split into teams of eight and then started scrimmaging.

With everyone striving to show off their best skills, most of the scrimmage teams were not getting along. There was quite a bit of shoving, toe stepping, and jersey pulling. On my team, the strikers didn't want to share, the midfielders were taking poorly aimed shots, and the defenders, which was where I was at, were just trying their best to pick up the slack.

With team sports, if one player isn't on the same page as everyone else, there is a breakdown in communication. My team wasn't even reading the same book. We were all over the place. Shots were off target, passes were all over the place, my defensive line was getting run ragged. In between scrimmages I pulled my team aside. There was a quick conversation about needing to pull it together if we wanted to make the team. We agreed to do a little better at being a team player. The best way to show off everyone's skills was to work together. When we got back out there, our team rocked it. Now that we had all agreed to help each other shine by being good teammates we were dominating. We had caught the coach's eye and we knew it.

At the end of the day, my team was super excited, we had made a good impression and we couldn't wait for the list to be posted to see if we made it past the first round of cuts. I walked back to my parent's car and we drove home. I was talking to my dad about everything that had happened, and he was excited for

me. I remember he specifically told me that tomorrow I had to show off a little bit more now that I had caught the coach's eye. I had to be at the top of my game so there would be no doubt that I deserved to be on the team.

A few hours later, I hopped in the car with my mom to go check the list for my number. I was so excited to go find my number that I could barely sit still. When we got there, I jumped out of the car and ran up to the front doors of the school. I quickly searched the list for my number, and when I got down to the end of the list, I was sure I missed it. I checked again, my heart dropped. One more time. And then it sank in. My number wasn't on the list; I was crushed. I couldn't move. It felt like all my hopes of playing in college were crashing down around me. After a few seconds that felt like years, I turned around to see my mom waiting for the verdict. I just shook my head and walked back to the car and we drove home in silence.

When we got home, I didn't talk to anyone, I just went straight to my room. I looked up at the poster of Nick Rimando, the Real Salt Lake goalkeeper, on my wall and wanted nothing more than to rip it down. I was so frustrated and upset with myself. A million different reasons for getting cut shot through my head, each one driving home the devastation I was feeling more than the one before. Obviously, I didn't have the skills to be on the high school soccer team. All those girls that had made first cuts trained more than me, or could juggle for a longer period, or could run faster

than I ever could. There wasn't anything special about the way I played, or how hard I fought for my place. After about an hour, my dad timidly knocked on the door. When I didn't respond he pushed the door open and took a few steps in. When I continued to ignore his presence, he came and sat at the end of my bed.

He put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Chocolate or vanilla?"

I sat up on my bed and told him, "Chocolate."

Without saying anything else, I stood up, put my shoes on, and followed my dad outside to the car. We drove down the road, still not saying anything to each other, and pulled into the Wendy's drive-thru. My dad ordered a chocolate frosty for both of us, and then he parked the car in the parking lot. We were quiet for a while, but then he gave me some of the best advice I have ever heard.

"I know you hurt right now, but you have to take all that hurt and anger and turn it into drive. Strive to do better, improve yourself, and prove those coaches wrong by being the best player you can be."

We continued eating our frosties and listening to the radio when my dad spoke again. "Also, some of the best players in history got cut from their high school team. Look at Michael Jordan, he took the disappointment and made something from it."

We laughed a little at that and kept talking until our ice cream was gone, and then we drove home. I felt a little better about missing my opportunity to be on the high school team, but there was always next year,

and I had 365 days to make sure they didn't consider passing over me next year.

Even now, over four years later, I remember all those feelings I had when I first found out I had been passed over. For a while I blamed the politics of the situation. It wasn't how I played, it was the competitive team I chose to be on. Or it wasn't me that was wrong, it was that the coaches knew me too well and would have been playing favorites. While all of these could be true, I think I needed to learn a specific lesson from this situation. I needed to learn what disappointment was. This may seem harsh for a fourteen-year-old kid, but it has better prepared me for future disappointment. I now know how to receive bad news, brush myself off, and continue to strive towards improving myself. I tried out for my high school team two more years after my initial tryout and I got cut two more times. However, each time I made it farther than I had before.

Looking back, I wouldn't have changed a single thing because not making that team is probably the best thing that could have happened to me academically. Instead of having practice every single day after school for two hours, I worked on school projects. Instead of reviewing game film, I was studying for the ACT. Instead of skipping my first class of the day to sleep in, I was excelling in all my classes. All of this came together to get me to where I am today. I have a scholarship to an awesome school with amazing opportunities that would have never been an option on



an athletic scholarship. I have made friends in a myriad of places that I wouldn't have been at had I made the high school soccer team. Overall, I am not upset anymore that I didn't make the team because I took that disappointment, I brushed myself off, and I went after other things that ended up being more important in the long run.

# ENGL 2010 ARGUMENTATIVE

# “Is the Man Who Pushes the Rock Happy?”

1st Place: Jack Nielsen

Professor Nozomi Irei

Of all the qualities that a casual reader of Greek mythology would assign to Sisyphus, the least likely would be “free.” Confined to a form of Greek hell, the fate of Sisyphus has long been viewed as both a divinely-appointed punishment and a secular token of life’s mundanity. However, in Albert Camus’ essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he describes the fictional man as an absurd hero, free to recognize the absurdity of his existence and, by effect, attain happiness. There appears to be a disconnect between our everyday definition of freedom and the freedom that Camus proposes. We then must ask: in what ways is this “absurd freedom” different from the secular and divine definitions of freedom? How does Camus’ definition of freedom compare to other existentialist writers? Most importantly: how can Sisyphus, in any sense, be considered happy? To answer these questions, we will compare absurd freedom to secular and religious concepts of freedom, as well as compare it to the works of a few existentialist works, namely Jean-Paul Sartre’s lecture *Existentialism is a Humanism* and Dostoevsky’s book *Notes from Underground*. Doing so will allow us to understand the nature of absurd freedom, and for-

mulate the truth that a “meaningful” absurd existence depends on characteristics attributed to neither secular or religious definitions of freedom, but rather it is formed by what we will ultimately label as absurd choice, or the ability to choose while free from deterministic limitations.

The concept of freedom is and has been held as a virtue for nearly every society to exist. How would we define such a seemingly lofty ideal? From a purely lexical definition, it is often described as an absence of constraint or necessity in a course of action (Merriam-Webster). This seems to be the antithesis of the fate of our poor Sisyphus, who suffers both constraint and necessity. Additionally, many psychologists agree that our sense of freedom relies not only on the ability to choose but also on the options that are present in the world around us. In an unstocked grocery store, for example, the man with money is just as free as the man without money (Stein 37). Likewise, even if Sisyphus wasn’t required to push a rock up a hill, but was left with no other option, he would remain just as confined to his seemingly torturous demise. Psychologists have also identified a difference between con-

scious and unconscious intentionality in our perception of freedom. Having to do with a direct expression of will, conscious intentionality would be Sisyphus abandoning his rock and choosing to do something less ridiculous. Unconscious intentionality would be Sisyphus acting non-exclusively by conscious will, but by some other force, like the physiological desire to rest his assuredly tired muscles (Mills 1). Both are seemingly important to what constitutes the secular view of freedom and, sadly, our hero can't do either. With these modern and psychiatric elaborations, we could craft a crude interpretation in which the social concept of freedom has to do with the uncoerced, voluntary ability to choose, both consciously and unconsciously, from many diverse options. From this perspective, calling Sisyphus a heroic personification of any kind of freedom seems, well, absurd. How can a man condemned to a single, forced task in any sense be considered free or happy? Perhaps we are to find an answer in a religious context outside of the Greek.

Religion serves as a good indicator of how we view freedom because it often exemplifies our understanding of desired (and undesired) outcomes. In most major religions, the concept of what we shall term a "hell" is consistent with being a freedom-less state. In the Buddhist Narakas, for example, beings who have accumulated sufficient negative karma are born in different states of misery that last a finite yet inconceivably long amount of time. For example, in the Samghāta, the tortured are crushed into a pulp by giant rocks

and then are restored only to be crushed again (Braarvig 255). In these different "hells," people are left with nothing to do but be tortured, a fate similar to that of our poor Sisyphus. The Hindu Narakas share similar characteristics; those who broke certain commandments in life are sentenced to an eternity fitted to the supposed crime. Kumbhipaka, for example, is a Naraka in which the tortured is cooked alive by the God of Death for as many years as the number of hairs on all the animals they cooked (Williams 340). While Sisyphus likely wouldn't change his fate for this one, the apparent lack of freedom remains a common thread. The last major hell we will look at is that of the Judeo-Christian world, in which the definitions of hell vary widely. In ancient Hebrew tradition, hell was simply described as a state of death and inactivity. It wasn't until the more modern Christian installment that hell was described as a torturous place-- one with "eternal fire" and the "weeping and gnashing of teeth." It would seem that the Hebrew hell would coincide with what has been previously established as torturous; however, modern depictions of hell in the Judeo-Christian world vary widely on a sect-level interpretation (Oestigaard 329). While there are notable differences in what major religions conceive hell to be, and our brief descriptions listed here aren't comprehensive in the slightest, it would benefit us to craft the crude interpretation that "hell" is a place in which the tortured are given no capacity to act for themselves. This definition coincides with what we previously established to be the secular

definition of freedom, which depends on uncoerced, voluntary choice. While the fate of Sisyphus coincides on the surface level with the conception of hell in other religions, there is something remarkably unique about the utter mundanity of his punishment. Free from unfathomable physical torture, Sisyphus' fate is more banal than physically torturous. However, it has yet to be established how Sisyphus can be considered happy in any sense, making Camus' statement even less likely. We then must ask: is Camus alone in imagining Sisyphus happy, or would other existential writers agree with him?

Existentialist literature exemplifies mankind's search for meaning. Additionally, the concept of existential freedom is a central topic in existentialist literature, which makes existential philosophy a viable qualifier when analyzing the fate of Sisyphus. If we are to find any external collaboration with Camus' claim, we would assuredly find it here. In Dostoevsky's book *Notes from Underground*, the Underground Man attacks the notion that human nature can (or should) be calculated. He says, "[Suppose] some day they calculate and prove to me that I made a long nose at someone because I could not help making a long nose at him and that I had to do it in that particular way, what FREEDOM is left me" (73). Here, Dostoevsky is essentially stating that the ability to act and choose independent of any law or rule, even non-advantageously, is imperative to existential freedom. By this definition alone, Sisyphus is unlikely to even crack a

smile, as he is confined by divine punishment. Adversely, Kierkegaard states that dread is the only proper response to freedom, as the capacity to entirely choose for ourselves is a source of great anxiety (4). Although Kierkegaard would likely not propound the alternative, he recognizes that freedom is coupled with the anxiety of choice. While this concept is novel to both the secular and religious definitions we have previously established, Camus does not suggest that Sisyphus is happy due to his lack of freedom, but rather the opposite, leaving us just as frustrated. Nietzsche, when defining freedom in his essay "Will to Power," stated that "...it follows that 'all freedom of spirit,' i.e. instinctive skepticism, is the prerequisite of greatness" (368). This highlights the common Nietzschean belief that any institution that dictates behavior limits freedom, and we should, therefore, approach everything with skepticism. Since Sisyphus has found himself in a situation where his behavior is, in the most literal sense, limited, we may start to assume that Camus is misguided. However, while all three writers provide valuable commentary to what constitutes existential freedom, we are still without a universal definition of what existential freedom really means, and further elaboration on the matter is needed before we resign Sisyphus to his seemingly torturous demise.

In Jean-Paul Sartre's famous and potent lecture *Existentialism is a Humanism*, he provides us with a valuable clarification on what it is to be existentially free. As he states in his lecture, "For if indeed existence

precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one's action by reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words, there is no determinism – man is free, man is freedom" (353). Here, Sartre identifies a concrete concept that we are to negate: determinism, or the concept that all actions or events happen by some cause external to the human will. Sartre denies this and states that since there is no inherent pattern, law, or essence in the universe to dictate man's behavior, he is free to create these things for himself. In short, we make our own meaning. Sartre successfully identifies a common thread through all existentialist literature. In pushing away from determinism, we are able to be existentially free. In summary, Sartre states that determinism is the belief that there is some underlying force, rule, or law to which we are subject, and existentialism is the negation of determinism. This will provide a valuable comparison as we analyze Camus' absurd freedom, which, hopefully, will get to the root of Sisyphus' joy.

There have been, however, those who suggest a positive relationship between determinism and freedom. In John Mill's essay aptly titled "Freedom and Determinism," he claims that "[psychological] determinism is propelled by unconscious intentionality, which situates the locus of mental life within an unconscious agency responsible for determining the material expression of conscious choice and action. What we call [psychological] determinism is actually the expression of underlying freedom, the freedom of

unconscious expression" (121). In short, behavior can still be ruled by unconscious laws, such as hunger or fear, and we can still be considered free. While it is undeniable that our behaviors are affected by unconscious physiological processes, Mill errors in assuming that freedom coincides with unconscious expression. A proper rebuttal to his claim would be Dostoevsky's *Underground Man*, who states that if some external force caused all behavior, what freedom is left to us (73)? If all behavior could be attributed to some causal and advantageous unconscious drive, how could any of our choices be considered our own, and not the result of physiological processes? We need, as the *Underground Man* would suggest, the opportunity to act against these unconscious influences, even non-advantageously so. To suggest otherwise attributes no genuine ownership to one's own actions, and renders us no more free than the secular and religious view of the man who pushes the rock up the hill, only to have it roll down again.

The same rebuttal could be made to religious proponents of determinism. Many religions attribute vice and virtue to be directly caused by some external force, like the Judeo-Christian concepts of the Devil and Holy Spirit, respectively. All effort expended on our part while in this world are directly tied to our fate in the next. However, this religious determinism leaves us in the same place as we were with the previously mentioned psychological determinism. If all good behavior is caused by the influence of the (religiously

relative) Holy Spirit, and all sin is caused by the influence of the (religiously relative) Devil, what decisions are actually our own? What chance are we given to make a decision that is not influenced in some way? If our only option is to decide whose influence we follow, we are merely left to decide from predetermined outcomes. This way of thinking implies no ownership nor contribution of meaning as a whole, and there is nothing left for us to do but play a part in a narrative that was never our own. Doing so, as our existential writers would assuredly suggest, is no different than repeatedly pushing a rock up a hill.

We have previously established that while secular and religious definitions of freedom depend on uncoerced, voluntary choice, existential freedom is freedom from determinism. However, we have yet to discover how absurdist philosophy and Camus claim coincide with what we have previously established as existential freedom. To continue further, we must define exactly what the absurd is before we can understand absurd freedom as a whole and how it relates to Sisyphus' daily routine. The absurd, a concept talked about by many and coined by Camus, is a name for the conflict that arises when we, as beings who crave meaning and purpose, recognize that we are met with a meaningless and chaotic universe. One cannot exist in the absurd without some sort of coping mechanism: escape by suicide, denial by believing in order beyond the absurd (in essence, determinism through religion, philosophy, etc.), or revolt by recognizing the absurd

and actively creating meaning in a chaotic universe in spite of it. Clearly, Camus would advocate for revolt. Absurdism (and therefore absurd freedom) negates the claim that there is any law, order, or meaning in the universe external to the human condition. It is then the absurd hero's duty to recognize this inherent lack of universal meaning and then create meaning for himself in a conscious revolt of the universe's indifference. We can then identify absurd freedom as freedom from determinism, equal with the previous definition we assigned to existential freedom. Absurdist philosophy not only supports the existential definitions of freedom we've previously mentioned, but it also helps to clarify them. Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* can be content with knowing that human behavior is not dictated by law. Kierkegaard is justified in his anxiety, seeing as the responsibility of a meaningful life depends not on external meaning, but rather from our own efforts. Nietzsche can sleep well knowing that anything that dictates behavior (a hallmark of determinism) should be met with heavy skepticism, and in no way is a qualifier for true happiness. With Sartre's definition, we may now begin to see how existential writers would agree with Camus in what constitutes existential freedom. Thus we see existential freedom is absurd freedom, and we can identify both simultaneously. While both the secular and religious definitions of freedom are comparatively different in appearance to our absurd freedom, they identify the same concept: the ability to act and not only be acted upon. However, the differ-

ence lies in the kind of action. While our previously established secular and religious definitions define a diverse and non-coerced physical choice, our absurd definition is not necessarily dependent on physical choice, but rather depends on what we shall call absurd choice, meaning freedom to choose without deterministic limitations. We are then able to be existentially free, which is to be free from faulty notions that anything other than our own selves predicts or dictates the meaningfulness of our own existence, even if and while captive by secular and/or religious definitions of freedom.

What, then, of Sisyphus? By both secular and religious definitions, he isn't free. His fate is the result of divine punishment, his choices are no longer his, and he has no alternative to his rock and hill. Most would, and certainly do, view Sisyphus' mundane fate as torturous because of its meaninglessness. However, this would be true if there was a preferable alternative to the absurdity of his current situation. It would be true if there was some activity Sisyphus could be doing elsewhere that would be inherently more meaningful and less absurd. If we are to accept these truths, we would have to admit that some activities have more innate significance than others. We would then have to admit that meaning is therefore found and not made, and that, in Sartre's words, "essence precedes existence." In short, if we think that Sisyphus' existence would be more intrinsically meaningful doing something else, we would have to admit to some degree of

determinism. Doing so would nullify existential freedom and enslave us to the notion that things could always be more meaningful if they were something other than what they are. It would make decision making a paralyzing endeavor of trying to identify the better choice, instead of viewing decision making as a truly creative act. Sisyphus would suffer indeed. However, it is the very absurdity of his fate that allows Sisyphus to move beyond determinism. In the recognition of such a meaningless task, he can recognize that all meaning in his life is his and his alone to assign. It is in this absurd choice where we find the true essence of existentialism, as has been previously stated by true existentialists. We can then imagine Sisyphus, on his return down a grassy, sloped field, smiling like a God, aware that his freedom is not dependent on his fate, but rather relies entirely on the meaning he creates.



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# “The Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.”

2nd Place: Min Audrey Gibson  
Professor Rosalyn Eves

**M**artin Luther King is a well known Baptist minister and renowned leader of the civil rights movement. King believed in nonviolent protests and advocated for equal rights from the mid-1950s until his assassination in 1968 due to his controversial social and political views. Despite this, King’s words were so influential that there is now a holiday in honor of him and his words are still studied today, fifty-one years after his death.

Martin Luther King’s work has been researched and analyzed by historians, rhetoricians, and writers. Some of his more prominent works include his speech, “I Have a Dream” and “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Often times, the focus of research on Martin Luther King remains on these two great speeches. Yet, King’s lesser-known speeches hold more patterns of his rhetorical strategies and are more significant to the rhetorician that he became. King’s use of Jeremiads, along with other rhetorical devices including patriotism, homilies, pathos, imagery, identification, and the way he addresses his audience is what makes his speeches so effective.

Background:

Martin Luther King was born on January 15th, 1929 during a time of turbulent political and social strife in the United States. As King grew up, the nation became more divided, arguments centered around if black people should have equal opportunity and the same freedoms/rights that were guaranteed to white people. Martin Luther King quickly became the face of this Civil Rights Movement. He participated in numerous boycotts and most notably, contributed through public speaking promoting non-violent actions to reach their goals of freedom. Because the speeches I plan to analyze are not as well known, I am providing a small summary and contextualization of each speech in chronological order.

Martin Luther King Jr gave the speech, “Our God is Marching On,” on March 25, 1965. This speech takes place on the steps of the State Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, just after the successful march from Selma to Montogomery. This speech takes place about three years before the Civil Rights Movement ended. King rallies his audience in this speech, insisting that this small victory will build to a larger one: equal rights

for all Americans.

On April 4th, 1967, King gave the speech “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence.” Taking place in New York City, this speech sparked controversy among some of King’s followers. In fact, King suffered public dissatisfaction and condemnation. Directly following this speech, King was disinvited from the White House by President Lyndon Johnson and was condemned by many public speakers at the time. King opposed the war on Vietnam, believing that money and resources that should have been used in the U.S. were being wasted on endless war in Vietnam.

On March 10, 1968, King gave his lecture, “The Other America,” in New York City. The event was hosted by The 1199, a union formed by African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other people of color. King was promoting the Poor People’s Campaign in this speech, advocating for all races to use their voice and stand up to the government. King’s call to action was to use the first amendment rights guaranteed to all in order to be heard.

On April 3rd, 1968, Martin Luther King gave his final speech, “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop.” This speech was given one day prior to his assassination, in Memphis, Tennessee. King points out the flaws that America has and calls on citizens of every race to live up to the expectations of freedom and equal opportunity.

Jeremiads:

King’s use of jeremiads is arguably his most effective rhetorical strategy. A jeremiad is a long and sometimes mournful complaint. They are often seen in scripture and get their name from the prophet Jeremiah. In most cases, jeremiads call out societal flaws and prophecy imminent doom that will come to society if certain incentives are not met. Of course in scriptural context, this often meant that people needed to live more righteously or behave in a way that reflected what their God approved of. King uses jeremiads to pull religion into the argument, something that Americans can relate to. He mimics this strategy in the majority of his speeches and literary work.

Due to King’s experience as a Baptist Minister, he had the power of drawing people in with his strategic use of Jeremiads. In “Our God is Marching On” King relies on jeremiads to reaffirm his point. King quotes the Battle of Jericho, a biblical reference. He draws comparisons between the battle Jericho had to fight to the battle for civil rights. “The battle is in our hands. And we can answer with creative nonviolence the call to higher ground to which the new directions of our struggle summons us. (Yes, sir) The road ahead is not altogether a smooth one. (No) There are no broad highways that lead us easily and inevitably to quick solutions. But we must keep going,” (29). He lists the grievances and hardships that they have been through in their struggle for equal rights and encourages them to keep going because as children of God

they have a right to fight the battle for equal rights. It is significant that King points out that their efforts must come through nonviolence, which makes this an interesting jeremiad. Often times, jeremiads were used to provoke rebellion and they didn't usually resolve without violence. Yet, King insists that nonviolence is the only way to successfully win the battle. King could have compromised his standards and produced the same results. However, he stood by promoting nonviolence. This created a unique use of jeremiads.

In "I've Been to the Mountaintop," King insists that the right to freedom belongs to everyone. He affirms that there is no specific race that has rights over another race. Similar to Jeremiah, King doesn't leave any party out of the battle towards freedom. King uses jeremiads to unify his audience, encouraging people of faith to be actively involved in the fight for equal rights for all races.

*We need all of you. And you know what's beautiful to me is to see all of these ministers of the Gospel. It's a marvelous picture. Who is it that is supposed to articulate the longings and aspirations of the people more than the preacher? Somehow the preacher must have a kind of fire shut up in his bones. And whenever injustice is around he tell it. Somehow the preacher must be an Amos, and saith, "When God speaks who can but prophesy?" Again with Amos, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Somehow the preacher must say with Jesus, "The Spirit*

*of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me," and he's anointed me to deal with the problems of the poor." (23)*

Martin Luther King compares himself indirectly with Amos, Jesus, and preachers. This elevates his status and credibility. He makes the issue of civil rights into an issue with God. There is a reason that jeremiads are so effective. They have been used since Biblical times to call people to action and emphasize the need for change. Martin Luther King recognized this and used jeremiads to his advantage, to unify his audience to a common goal and to influence their emotions to encourage the change that he wanted to see.

Patriotism:

Patriotism is a vigorous devotion or loyalty to one's country. Naturally, during this time patriotism resonated with almost all Americans. It was a platform that Martin Luther King was able to use in order to give his audience common ground to build off of. It became something that King relied on in most of his work. It was especially useful in his lesser-known speeches because patriotism is not something that can be prohibited. In "Beyond Vietnam," King appeals to patriotism. He assigns the burden of the poor suffering in America to fellow Americans. "We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved

from itself until the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear,” (10). King gives America a soul in this speech. By using this analogy and Patriotism, King makes it hard for people to refute his points without refuting Patriotism.

In “The Other America,” King spends a majority of his speech drawing comparisons between a flourishing and successful America and the “Other America” that King believes we live in.

*“This America is the habitat of millions of people who have food and material necessities for their bodies, culture and education for their minds, freedom and human dignity for their spirits. In this America children grow up in the sunlight of opportunity. But there is another America. This other America has a daily ugliness about it that transforms the buoyancy of hope into the fatigue of despair. In this other America, thousands and thousands of people, men in particular walk the streets in search for jobs that do not exist,”* (2).

King appeals to the patriotism of Americans by describing America in a negative light. He compares two versions of America and emphasizes the bad version. This catches the audience’s attention because it attacks their patriotism. No American wants to believe that America is doomed in the way that King describes making King’s use of Patriotism an important contributor to his movement that was built by his less widely known speeches.

Identification and Homilies:

Martin Luther King was effective because he was relatable. He put himself on the same level as his audience, which allowed his speeches to resonate with his audience. Relying on religion was one of King’s greatest rhetorical strategies. It provided a basis of trust that a vast majority of Americans could relate to. According to Carson Clayborne, “King gradually learned to combine scholarly sophistication with oratorical skill that his peers so admired,” (100). Due to King’s religious background, it is fitting that King often relied on this strategy when giving speeches. Nick Sharman argues that “King’s rhetorical strategy is to associate his program of change with accepted ideals and homilies in American Society” (1). King became progressively more effective as he gave more speeches. The foundation of his rhetoric lies in his lesser-known speeches. King used “we” when referencing to making progress in all of his speeches. This was important for unification as well. King didn’t see himself as being above fellow civil rights activists, people of other races, or his own people. He promoted equality in every capacity.

*Beyond the calling of race or nation or creed is this vocation of sonship and brotherhood.*

*Because I believe that the Father is deeply concerned, especially for His suffering and helpless and outcast children, I come tonight to speak for them. This I believe to be the privilege and the burden of all of us who deem ourselves*

*bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation's self-defined goals and positions (Beyond Vietnam 14).*

King is suggesting that he is in communication or at least has a relationship with God. He makes himself an advocate for giving a voice to the voiceless. By doing so, he places himself in a position to be admired, yet he still brings himself to the same level as his audience. Martin Luther King came to “speak for the weak” and the unheard (14). It is incredible that King had the ability to promote religion while simultaneously chastising an entire nation for their actions regarding equal rights. King didn't care to be seen as a prominent civil rights leader, or he promoted that idea at the very least. It got his audience's attention, it made him humble in a way that other leaders couldn't claim.

Martin Luther King insisted that allowing injustice to continue was wrong. He used examples of preachers and religious stories to back up his positions. Religion held so much worth for Americans and it carried on to the civil rights movement. It was something that most Americans could agree on or at least relate to. In Bernard LaFayette's article on how religion influenced the civil rights movement, he states, “The church was not only the meeting place for the movement in the South, it also was the center of the movement in that it served as the symbol of the movement. That is to say that the church represented the freedom

that the movement participants sought. It was a facility in the community beyond the control of the white power structure,” (3). King knew that building the movement off of religion was critical. He depended on religion and homilies to create a foundation of trust with the American people. In “I've Been to the Mountaintop,” King describes how he expects people to feel through several homilies.

*Somehow the preacher must have a kind of fire shut up in his bones. And whenever injustice is around he tell it. Somehow the preacher must be an Amos, and saith, “When God speaks who can but prophesy?” Again with Amos, “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” Somehow the preacher must say with Jesus, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me,” and he's anointed me to deal with the problems of the poor, (23).*

King supports his argument by using religious examples, switching back and forth from a sermon to a speech effortlessly. This method keeps his audience engaged and helps them identify with him. Religion has been a persistent part of American culture, it provides a place with a basis of trust that binds people together. Another way that King identified with his audience was by acknowledging other races that were struggling. By doing so, King was able to appeal to a larger

audience and have a more effective argument.

*Now, I said poor people, too, and by that I mean all poor people. When we go to Washington, we're going to have black people because black people are poor, but we're going to also have Puerto Ricans because Puerto Ricans are poor in the United States of America. We're going to have Mexican Americans because they are mistreated. We're going to have Indian Americans because they are mistreated. And for those who will not allow their prejudice to cause them to blindly support their oppressor, we're going to have Appalachian whites with us in Washington (The Other America 12).*

King didn't just focus on the struggle his race was faced with. He advocated for the struggles of other people of color and even his oppressors, white people. Unlike other civil rights leaders, King wholeheartedly believed that while the blame was in the hands of white people, it was mostly placed on the shoulders of the government. Bethany Keeley argues that "Other leaders of the black community were advocating for different tactics—separatism and violence among them—to respond to the ongoing problems of racism and injustice; King's vision of equality, harmony, and nonviolence was looking increasingly idealistic as change continued to be slow and difficult," (281). King was a speaker for all, promoting equal rights for all. He could have focused solely on people of color, I certainly wouldn't have blamed him if he did. But instead,

King brought white people into his argument as well. This further promoted his movement for equality and peace.

Imagery:

King's use of imagery is so striking that one can picture clearly what he depicts in his speeches. In the less widely known speeches by Martin Luther King, I find his imagery to be starker. He is unconcerned with whom he offends in these speeches, oftentimes flagrantly speaking out against the people prohibiting equal rights. I imagine that his words were captivating and moving, especially in the speeches that people don't know as well. Somehow, in these lesser-known speeches, King's voice stands out more. For example, King speaks to the inequality black people are forced to deal with in his speech "The Other America." He compares the phrases used to describe the same concept when in reference to black people versus white people.

*When there is a massive unemployment in the black community, it's called a social problem. But when there is a massive unemployment in the white community, it's called a depression. With a black man, it's 'welfare' with the whites it's 'subsidies.' This country has socialism for the rich, rugged individualism for the poor (5).*

King wastes no time being gentle, his way of fighting

back against social construct was through nonviolent means and because of that, his words were his power. He exemplified what it means to protest nonviolently so that his followers could understand how to protest without violence as well.

During the time of the civil rights movement and in the time leading up to the peak of the civil rights movement, Jim Crow laws were laws in effect that enforced segregation. Jim Crow was a character in folklore that was made to mock slaves, he reflected a dimwitted black slave and further dehumanized slaves. Martin Luther King used Jim Crow law's as yet another example of discrimination and inequality. His use of imagery in "Our God is Marching On," is particularly moving.

*The southern aristocracy took the world and gave the poor white man Jim Crow. He gave him Jim Crow. And when his wrinkled stomach cried out for the food that his empty pockets could not provide, (Yes, sir) he ate Jim Crow, a psychological bird that told him that no matter how bad off he was, at least he was a white man, better than the black man. (Right sir) And he ate Jim Crow. And when his undernourished children cried out for the necessities that his low wages could not provide, he showed them the Jim Crow signs on the buses and in the stores, on the streets and in the public buildings. (Yes, sir) And his children, too, learned to feed upon Jim Crow, their last outpost of psychological oblivion (12).*

African American people were consistently used as an example of how much worse life could be to white people. By bringing up Jim Crow, King makes a powerful argument. King's use of imagery in his speeches stirred emotion in his audience. Whether that was good or bad emotions were dependant on who was listening and even if the emotions stirred were ill emotions, people still listened. A talented rhetorician can get even the most resistant audiences to lend an ear every once in a while.

Conclusion:

Oftentimes, King's lesser-known work is overshadowed by his more promoted speeches. Through studying Martin Luther King's less popular work, one can recognize the patterns of his rhetorical strategies. Analyzing these speeches allows further understanding of Martin Luther King and his rhetorical strategies. Martin Luther King was a talented rhetorician and writer. The words of his speeches echo down through the years, even to today.



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# ENGL 2010 EXPRESSIVE

# “The Life of a Forest”

1st Place: Abby Clark  
Professor James Aton

A banana slug crawls on the old-growth forest floor in Washington. Its stomach foot uses a series of muscular waves, allowing it to creep along the leaf-covered ground. The yellow slimy laggard inches its way towards a patch of fungi, which will be its next meal. As the slug slowly nibbles on the deer truffle fungus, it spreads seeds and spores onto the forest floor and also excretes a nitrogen rich fertilizer. The coloring of the bright greenish yellow slowpoke allows it to camouflage itself with the western red cedar tree leaves on the ground, making it hard for predators to spot the slippery creature. Trails of slime follow the banana slug, attracting others of its species for mating. In the distance, another banana slug has detected the stream of mucus. Slithering across the giant forest floor, the attracted soft-bodied hermaphrodite makes its way toward its soon-to-be mate in the fungi patch. As soon as the two banana slugs meet, a pair of hands snatch the mates up and begins to roll them around in the dirt ground.

The young raccoon covers the slippery slugs in the dry soil of the forest floor to help the meal go down the hatch. This nocturnal female then makes a whistle,

sounding almost like the screech of an owl, to let her relative females know that she just ate. With a giant western red cedar tree in view, the raccoon begins to waddle towards it, expecting to live in an abandoned hole, which was left behind by an unknown animal in the trunk of the tree. The crater of the tree is only a temporary den for the mischievous raccoon; tomorrow she will find a home somewhere else. In the meantime, she decides to take a nap in her new den. Upon awakening, the critter deserts the short-term lair to hunt for something to eat once again. After a while, the raccoon discovers a western gray squirrel who died from the gravity of falling off of one of the cedar trees. Being ferocious, the hungry animal begins to tear apart the carcass as another western gray squirrel scurries its way up the nearest tree.

The salt-and-pepper colored squirrel makes its way to the top third of the tree where its nest is located. Before reaching the drey, or the nest, the small rodent stops at a nearby branch to bathe itself, spending most of its bathing time cleaning its head. A few tall trees away, another western gray squirrel sounds an alarm to the rest of its nearby spe-

cies: an aerial predator is lurking. Although the small furry creature heard the alarm, it seems to be unfazed. Instead, it spots a cluster of cones in an adjacent tree and strolls onto the edge of its branch and leaps onto the adjoining tree. After reaching the clump of cones, the jittery squirrel picks up a cone and begins to pick at it scale by scale. Each scale that is chewed off exposes a pair of seeds, which are consumed shortly after it is revealed. Twirling the cone to get all of the seeds, the squirrel drops each scale onto the woodland floor to become a part of the forest debris. After the little mammal's hunger is satisfied, it begins the short journey back to its den. As it prepares to jump onto its home tree, a pair of five-inch talons fatally snatches the squirrel, taking the dead small animal far away from its homeland.

The talons belong to a great horned owl. Its dinner was instantly killed by the impact of its large, curved nails, but if the squirrel somehow did survive the impact, it would still require a force of twenty-eight pounds to open the owl's clenched fists. Either way, the poor rodent stood no chance against its aerial predator. After gliding softly to the ground, the great horned owl plops the corpse into its mouth and swallows it whole. Then, the winged animal launches its body into the air and soars in the direction of its nest--an eagle nest that was taken over by the owl. Because the big-eyed bird is covered in extremely soft feathers, flying is very quiet and will allow the great horned owl to sneak up and attack its prey without being detected.

On the open ground of the forest, a northern pygmy owl is spotted mantling over its prey on a fallen dead tree. It is hunching over the body of a songbird, attempting to hide the prey from other birds and predators by spreading its wings wide open. The great horned owl is smart, and instinctively begins to descend in the direction of the small pygmy owl. As the clever horned owl gets close to the pygmy owl, it begins to point its mighty sharp talons at its target. Like the larger owl, the pygmy owl is also smart and notices the attacker coming in for the kill. It quickly darts out of the way, right before the sharp claws make contact with its frail body. The two then begin to fight, with wings flapping at each other and many attempts of puncturing their opponent. At the moment, both wide-eyed birds forget about the meal on the ground. This is a fight to the death. After a few rounds of fighting, the pygmy owl flutters onto the branch of a nearby tree to rest. The great horned owl doesn't waste any time and flies behind the pygmy owl and pierces the spine of its foe, immediately killing it. Its lifeless body plummets to the forest floor. Ignoring the dead pygmy owl, the great horned owl returns to the limp songbird, swallows it, and takes off into the sky. On the forest floor, creeping onto the stiff body of the pygmy owl, a banana slug begins to eat away.

# “Blackness”

## 2nd Place: Sage Howard Professor James Aton

A large wedge-tail shearwater drifts upon the crisp ocean air, moisture clinging to the underside of his wings as he caws at his fellow scavengers. He can see for hundreds of miles ahead, but his eyes are on the water below. A small goatfish flops above the water, and the bird dives. The fish's burnt orange scales quickly disappear down the shearwater's gullet.

Hundreds of flagtail fish swim in massive schools, turning and wriggling together to an unseen rhythm. Their icy blue bodies reflect with light as the motes of sun break through the sea foam above. The school splits as a Pacific green turtle doddles his way towards the shallow ocean floor. Yellow striped manini fish nip at his shell, casually cleaning away the long-accumulated algae.

This is Nanawale Bay. Located on the easternmost corner of the large island, the cliff faces and salt water are relatively untouched by the outside world. Black sharp basalt cliffs shoot out from the water, creating the land formation called Hawaii. Slick black rock crabs cling to the lava rock, enduring the crashing waves that try to sweep them away to the ocean's depths. Nestled between the cliffs is a black sand beach

filled with tide pools in rings of black rock. Lava, closely sequestered just beneath the surface, warms the natural pools.

Rock between tide pools becomes a highway for the skittering crabs, a paradise compared to the crashing walls of water on the cliffs just beyond. Below, the water vibrates with activity.

Hundreds of colorful fish weave their way through small crevices that connect the pools. Clown fish, trigger fish, achilles tang, and bluestripe snappers all mix together in a flash of flurried array. Bubbles sneak between loose rocks and a yellow tang chases them down.

In the distance, large mammal bodies rise above the surface of the deep ocean currents, tails breaching into the sky, reflecting the setting sun. Blue humpback whales frequent the island, especially during the winter months. They spout water high above before descending back to the mysterious depths.

Spotting the beach are hundreds of tiny palms breaking through old coconut husks, an extension of the green forest on the cliffs behind. Banyan trees

dominate the forest floor, with roots and branches like tendrils reaching deep into the earth below, and Kao trees take up whatever space they can find in between. Branches hang far off the cliff's edge, and the smell of fallen guavas permeates it all.

The song of a cardinal bird pierces the sky, its song mixed with the sound of brushing leaves. The bird's red body perches on a tall green tree. He jumps, rushing skyward toward the glowing sun.

As the orange hues of sunset start to fade and the cirrus clouds grow from pink to gray, Nanawale Bay awakens with an abundance of life.

Fat cane toads the size of small cats speckle the rainforest, croaking a lively chorus, and burrowing cockroaches come out to creep, some especially large. Giant black witch moths flutter in the moonlight, ominous and bat-like against the dim rays. Feral pink boars squeal as they hunt coqui frogs, tusks raging in the air before smashing them into slippery flesh. The forest is cacophonous with life.

Above the ruckus and the noise is another world, with enough twinkling starlight to see by, until the sky begins to grey, and the chorus begins to calm. Long sharp stratus clouds grow from grey to pink, becoming brighter and more vibrant with each passing moment until the entire sky is a saturated hue of orange and purple. The waves crash against the basalt cliffs as they catch the orange glow of happy hour on their crests.

A crackling sound, thunderous and profound,

shatters the morning calm, a stray dog whimpering as he paws the cliff's edge. Black plumes of smoke rise a few miles inland, a noxious putrid smell rushing to replace the salty breeze. Suddenly, quickly, and without warning or preparation, a shower of orange lava fills the sky, breaking free from the confined abyss. Shooting into the air, it breaks free for the first time and begins its journey towards the island's edge.

Slowly it creeps, fraying the grass and singeing the bugs that could not escape. Another crash shakes the ground and cracking fills the air as a second fissure opens nearby.

The lava begins to flow faster.

Banyan trees, with deep roots and hundreds of tendrils are gone in a moment, completely covered by a sheet of boiling, molten rock. Tall albizia trees fall as their trunks burn, bringing even more crashes as they die in the pools of orange. Fires begin but are overrun by lava, leaving nothing behind but a smooth river of death that will harden into a blacktop.

Wild boars scream and squeal as their panicked legs carry them faster than they ever have before. Their cries are cut short.

Faster now, and deeper in hue, the lava forms rivers. Wide and deep, it forms fissures far into the earth, spilling over and creating an even bigger flowing mass.

Putrid smoke fills the entire sky, wedge-tail shearwaters fleeing in chaotic disarray, blind to the once brilliant sun. Reaching the top of the highest

peak, the rising ash covers the island in a blanket of black.

The lava does not stop. It consumes an entire forest. Thousands upon thousands of trees are gone in a span of moments, and the whole forest flattens, becoming one with the fiery rock.

Flowing lava reaches the island's edge, flowing onto the beach and beyond. The tide pools fill quickly, water evaporating as fish dissipate. Crabs are burned to a cinder and rolled into a black grave. Cliffs on either side form waterfalls of orange, lava pouring into the ocean. The deep blue waves hiss and steam as the molten rock rushes to grow the island in the only way it can.

A layer of mist rises, mixed with black ash and smoke. Schools of fish are met with black flaming rocks, and sea turtles frantically swim before cooking in the mixture of saltwater and molten stone.

The rock fills the ocean floor, layer after layer, building a palace beneath the sea. New land begins to rise, covering what once was a salt water bay and creating new land for nothing to see.

The lava slows, finally, after hours and days of flowing. Ash hangs in the air before finally settling on the black ground.

Everything is gone. Where there once was a vast lush forest, there is only razor sharp black. Tide pools once filled with life now lay beneath a thick black concrete. Bodies of creatures large and small rest 30 feet below the new surface in their own mausoleum.

Where birds and trees once sang, there is only silence. Where life once lived, there is only blackness, a void of cooling lava rock. Its domineering bleakness fills the nothingness, life replaced by powerful intensity.

No wind can be heard tousling the leaves of the ancient trees. No birds sing. Nothing remains except blackness, and the orange hues of a setting sun.

GENERAL EDUCATION 1000  
ARGUMENTATIVE



# “Three Strategies to Make People Spend More Money”

1st Place: Peng Zhong  
Professor Mark Makino

I read two books last week, I think they are very interesting. One book called *The power of habit*. The writer is Duhigg. Another book is called *The science of shopping*. The writer of this book is very famous, he is Gladwell. Both of these books talk about shopping strategies. When people are shopping, what behavior they have and how to make them spend more money? Supermarkets effectively sales their goods well and make customers feel very comfortable, because they used Decompression Zone, Invariant Right and Guest ID to sell their goods. This was because customers don't know their strategy and when they are shopping, they feel comfortable, then they will spend more money.

First, I think Decompression Zone is a good strategy, because most people will not notice the goods behind the doors when they walk into the supermarkets. As Gladwell writes, “Paco calls that area inside the door the Decompression Zone, and something he tells clients over and over again is never, ever put anything of value in that zone...because no one is going to see it”(Gladwell 66). In other words, due to the fact that most people will not see the goods behind doors,

so supermarkets put nothing behind doors. I think Lins' uses this strategy very well. For example, when I went to Lins' with my friends last week, I can't see any goods behind the doors. Of course, if they put goods, I am sure I will not notice them. That is why Lin's put shopping carts behind the doors. In fact, when I went into Lin's I didn't even notice the shopping carts. My friends reminded me of shopping carts. So I think Decompression Zone is very useful to the supermarkets. If supermarkets put expensive things behind doors, people will not notice them. They put shopping carts, people may spend more money, because this gives them time to think about what they will buy and makes them feel comfortable.

Second, Invariant Right is very useful to supermarkets, because most people are right-handed. When people walk into the supermarket, most of them will turn right. As Gladwell describes, “Human beings walk the way they drive, which is to say that Americans tend to keep to the right when they stroll down shopping-mall concourses or city sidewalks”(Gladwell 66). That is, people tend to keep to the right when they are shopping. Because of people being right-handed,

they like to turn right. This phenomenon leads that supermarkets always put expensive things on the right side, this is the reason why people will always spend lots of money when they are shopping. Lins' uses this strategy. When I went to Lins', I didn't notice the things behind the door and I went straight and turned right. All my friends also turned right, nobody turned left. Then I saw lots of people walked into Lins and turned right. So I know, that is why Lin's put goods on the right sides. This will make customers see the goods and spend lots of money to buy them. Also, I found there was Starbucks opened on left side. It is a very good strategy. I think lots of people will turn right, so supermarkets put expensive things on right side, shoppers will be easy to see expensive things. This makes them spend lots of money.

Finally, Guest ID is really a good way to make people spend lots of money, because supermarkets can know what customers buy. As Duhigg writes, "With the Guest ID, we have your name, address and tender, we know you've got a Target Visa, a debit card, and we can tie that to your store purchases"(Duhigg 189). That is why stores advise shoppers have Guest ID. Supermarkets have kinds of Guest ID, like Smiths'. Smiths' gives coupons to customers and they also can use card and phone number to know what customers always buy and if customers have them, they may think I have the card, I can save money, so I can spend more money. For example, last week my friends and me went to Smiths' to buy food for having hot pots. At

first, we thought we should save money and we didn't need to buy lots of things. One of my friends said her host mother gave her card, so we could save money. Then we took lots of food and spent lots of money. In conclusion, I think Guest ID is a very useful way to make people spend more money. The supermarkets can know what customers buy and they can put lots of goods people want to buy. They also can send email to customers that the goods they want to buy become cheaper.

From before three strategies I mentioned, I can safely draw a conclusion that if supermarkets use them, it will be very useful to make customers spend more money and make them feel comfortable. Decompression Zone can give customers time to make them think about what they want to buy and make them notice goods supermarkets want to sell. Invariant Right can make customers spend more money on expensive things. Guest ID is a really good way. It makes customers think they have coupons and they can buy lots of goods. If customers know these strategies, they may not always spend a lot of money in supermarkets.

GENERAL EDUCATION 2000  
ARGUMENTATIVE

# “Confronting Trauma in the Trenches”

1st Place: Abigail Emesha Rosengren  
Professor Jessica Tvordi

In the trenches of WWI, amid artillery shells and gas, the British soldier Siegfried Sassoon sat and wrote “To Any Dead Officer.” The speaker of the poem, a soldier, addresses an unnamed dead officer in an apostrophe, thinking aloud to the dismal black of night. The soldier speaks in a somewhat muted conversational tone, as if he were writing a letter. Beginning with plaintive and pensive questions about what life is like after death, the soldier continues to ponder the officer’s attitude of cheer in the trenches, and ultimately his death. While the reflection continues, the speculations construed from such thoughts give way to a range of emotions. On the surface, this poem is a sad and thoughtful apostrophe to the dead officer, but at a deeper level it is the embodiment of the fierce internal battle between holding onto hope and remaining vulnerable versus protecting oneself through apathy. In the poem, this relentless dispute is found in the spoken words of the soldier as he both admires and denigrates his deceased officer.

At first, there is no evidence of the conflict between emotion and apathy within the speaker as he makes no attempt to suppress his vulnerability. The

tone of the speaker is wistfully conversational and in his plaintive questions are evidence of sadness and the fear of dying and the future:

*Well, how are things in Heaven? I wish you'd say,  
Because I'd like to know that you're all right. Tell me,  
have you found everlasting day, Or been sucked in by  
everlasting night? (1-4)*

The soldier’s sadness at his officer’s death is permeated with the uncertainty he feels regarding what follows death. Despite this, he as of yet makes no attempt to restrain his concern because vulnerability and emotional connection temporarily postpone the inevitable loneliness and despair of loss, even though the person whom the soldier is addressing lies dead elsewhere.

The speaker continues on to describe the officer’s unwavering zeal for life, and considering this reminds him of the ability to hope, even while enduring the torturous conditions of the trenches. When he remembers how his officer was atypically vocal (at least for an officer) about how he “hated tours of trenches; /. . . [and] Longed to join the careless crowd” (9,11), he is

recalling with some slight esteem how the officer did not submit his humanity to the desolation of war. To remain cheery is a significant contrast to what is generally expected of officers; he is supposed to be the quintessential leader, encouraging his men to sacrifice themselves for the good of their country. As the soldier in the poem examines this “ideal” officer, it occurs to him that his own officer did not embody this, having refused to buy into the myth of glory in war. Instead, the dead man retained a zeal and hope for life until the end, and in doing so retained his authenticity, rendering him heroic in the eyes of the soldier. Thinking of the enduring cheerfulness of the officer reminds the soldier of how it is somehow possible to retain hope, despite the brutality of the trenches of war. It becomes more preferable to the speaker to preserve his own humanity and emotional connection through hope, regardless of the vulnerability that inescapably follows.

The soldier’s resolve to allow hope collapses swiftly under the crushing reality of death, and the struggle between vulnerability and cynicism develops. This occurs in two parts, as he is reminded of the officer’s death, then later of the image of men “left in shell-holes dying slow” (29). The officer – the man who “joked at shells” (21) and never stopped “long[ing] to get home and join the careless crowd” (11) – was ultimately “finished with machine-gun fire – / Knocked over in a hopeless dud-attack” (15-16). As the soldier reflects on this, the reality comes crashing back that it does not matter how much hope you have or how

much you try to avoid death – it can and will inevitably come. This is when the cynicism begins to creep into the soldier’s mind as a shield against the intensifying fear of dying. With an edge of bitterness, he describes how he always thought the officer would “get done in, / Because you were so desperate keen to live” (17-18). The speaker disparagingly reflects on how the officer’s death reveals that when you remain hopeful and strive to live, death will take you. The fear reignites within the soldier, and the battle against vulnerability awakens.

After cynically mocking the officer and describing how he was destined to die because he had wanted to live so desperately, the soldier is distracted from his disdain by the thought of the “bloody Roll of Honour” (27) on which the dead’s name was listed as “Wounded and missing” (28). The scorn ebbs away little by little with the images of lads left “With nothing but blank sky and wounds that ache” (30). Then flows back the suppressed reality of dying all the more freely, for it hangs over the trenches like a shadow. The only way the soldier knows to escape the ever-present specter of death is to stop caring; yet somehow, the officer did not need to turn to apathy to survive. Thus the internal struggle within the speaker intensifies between the hope, cynicism and apathy that come from contemplating the life and death of his officer.

The poem’s conclusion epitomizes the intensity of the conflict, when the soldier desperately holds onto hope before completely casting it away in cynicism and

apathy because the vulnerability is too great a threat to survival. The soldier cries out to the officer, “They [our politicians] won’t give in till Prussian Rule’s been trod” (35). Here he is desperately tapping into the idea that there is some hope, and consciously attempting to adopt the cheerfulness that his honorable officer exhibited to the end. It is a final desperate effort on his part to leave his emotions unrestrained. However, when the tears begin flowing, the soldier realizes that vulnerability is more unbearable than the oppressive threat of suffering death. To admit that he still wants to live becomes cowardly to the speaker because it renders him too weak to handle the horrors and too fragile to fight. The soldier, as he stares into the dark, recognizes that the trenches of WWI are soul-sucking, and the only way for him to survive the overwhelming oppression is to shield himself with apathy. Doing so will allow him to set aside his thoughts of home and survival, enabling him to robotically follow orders and engage in manic suicide missions. Having finally reached this conclusion, the soldier swallows his tears and cries out, “Cheero! / I wish they’d killed you in a decent show” (39-40). With these final words, the fear and ability to hope, even perhaps the instinct to survive, are consumed by apathy.

Through the experience of the soldier, Sassoon exposes and confronts the internal battle that every man faces, especially in war: how do you protect against yourself against the likelihood of an abhorrent death and still function as a human? The soldier’s nar-

rative reveals that there is no correct way to do so. Of all the deplorably pointless things in war, the trenches had to be the most senseless activity and irrational loss of life. To the soldier in the poem, the trenches all but promised a slow, torturous death and not even necessarily by the hand of enemies. He is trapped in a chronic state of waiting and suffering, with no control over his external circumstances. The distressing inaction leaves ample room for an internal battle to rage. The speaker desperately grapples with the futility of death and war, and how to process through it. The contrast of the officer’s unwavering cheer versus the soldier’s descent into apathy reveals that there is no specific way to handle the mourning, emotional turmoil, and trauma that come from the insanity of death and war.

Sassoon, Siegfried. “To Any Dead Officer.” Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57218/to-any-dead-officer>.

# “Fictional Characters, Real Impact”

2nd Place: Elise Thayn  
Professor Joy Sterrantino

Video games have greatly increased in popularity over the last few decades. They have become a major part of popular culture in our society. With so many different genres and subcultures within the video game community, it's easy to find a place to fit in. Everyone can find something they enjoy about video games, whether it's the stories, the combat, or the puzzles. There are some aspects of video games, however, that can make them difficult to enjoy for certain cultures or individuals. One issue in particular is the representation of women in video games. In many games, female characters are portrayed in a way that reinforces sexist stereotypes and oversexualizes certain physical attributes. Though not all games are guilty of this, it is a rather prominent problem in the community.

When examining female characters in popular video games, there seems to be little variance between them. Low cut tops, thin waistlines, skin-tight outfits, and of course, extremely overexaggerated breasts are just a few of the features that are fairly constant in a number of contrasting games. Characters like Samus Aran from *Metroid* and Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider*

are all strong protagonists in their respective games, but despite their wildly different origins, timelines, and universes, they all fit the typical standards for female characters.

While the appearance of these fictional avatars may not seem like a problem to some, the promotion of unrealistic body types can have a negative impact on players, regardless of gender. In a 2008 study conducted by Christopher P. Barlett and Richard J. Harris, players displayed lower self-esteem after just 15 minutes of gameplay featuring these supposedly ideal characters. This study goes to show how detrimental it can be to a player's body image when the games they enjoy and the characters they love represent an unachievable body type. Though it is unfortunate that so many people are influenced by mere computer generations, it is a simple truth of our time.

These characters aren't real. Their situations, personas, and relationships aren't real. These works of fiction shouldn't influence our expectations of reality, but they do. It's not wrong for someone to have high expectations for themselves and those around them, but these expectations can be damaging if they get out

of hand. For example, it is unfair and unrealistic for someone who plays a lot of video games to start basing their expectations of women's personalities and physical attributes on the female characters in games this person has played. This will only lead to their own disappointment and further the prejudice against women who don't fit the mold that has been created. The player may also start to lose their own sense of confidence as they develop an unreachable standard for themselves. This promotion of negative body image doesn't just happen in video games, either. Gender stereotyping, both physical and emotional, happens across all forms of media. The difference between reading a book about a highly stereotyped woman and playing as the same character in a video game is simple. In video games, the consumer adopts the persona of this character. They watch their every move and live as this character, which can be more detrimental to the player's body image. However, despite all the negative impact these characters can have on the real world, the video game community is moving in a promising direction.

Lara Croft is one of the most recognized video game characters of all time. Her intelligence, determination, and kick-ass attitude make her a very compelling and empowering character. Nevertheless, there has been a great deal of conflict surrounding her appearance since the first release of *Tomb Raider* in 1996. For the last 23 years, Croft has mostly been designed with tight, revealing clothes and breasts that were

grossly overemphasized. As far as character design goes, Samus Aran from the game *Metroid* faces similar issues. Her character is seen in the same skin-tight clothes and has the same chest as Croft. It's quite clear that Lara Croft was oversexualized from the beginning of the game series. Thankfully, as more *Tomb Raider* games are released, game designers continue to modify the character in order to make her less sexualized. While these redesigns are a huge step in minimizing the objectification of female characters, it brings up yet another point that should be considered.

It's not easy creating the worlds, stories, and characters featured in video games. There are some truly brilliant minds that come together in order to make a compelling game and intriguing individuals. One must truly consider if, in this creative process, the people who design these characters should feel restricted by surrounding social expectations. A creator should not feel pressured to alter their vision simply because the community feels they should, but the creator must also figure out where to draw the line between expressing themselves freely and creating something that is truly offensive and hurtful to a culture. One way to do this is for each individual creator to set certain parameters for what is considered "acceptable" and determine how much they want to challenge that standard. Throughout history, artists have challenged social norms with their works and been celebrated hundreds of years later for daring to do so. Video game designers are no different and should be encouraged by



the public and by the gaming industry to use their craft to provoke deep thought. They should not, however, use their creations in a way that will seed an unhealthy self-image in the consumer. Character designers that negatively impact the way women view themselves are not challenging social norms, they are damaging the community. The more game designers strive to break away from the stereotypical female character, the more the video game community as a whole will benefit from it.

One stereotype in the video game community is that these games are only for guys. For the most part, the women who have been gaming for years were far less recognized and accepted within the community. As time goes on and this stereotype begins to disintegrate, more females are beginning to discover a love for video games. The rapidly increasing number of young girls who are openly interested in video games means there is also an increased need for strong female characters. Young female gamers need good characters to relate to and love just like the young men do. A study conducted by Electronic Entertainment Design and Research (EEDAR) in 2010 showed that at the time of the study, 90% of games across all genres featured playable male characters while only 51% of the same games offered playable female characters. That margin is slowly becoming smaller, but the difference in gender representation in video games is still quite shocking. Keeping in mind some games are based on historical events in which few women were present, the

gap between the two statistics is still far too large. People shouldn't have to hunt for games that feature strong female protagonists and they shouldn't only be able to find games in which those females are oversexualized.

Accurate female representation within video games is crucial for the future of the gaming community. We shouldn't be afraid of normalizing women in positions of power or showing that not all women look a certain way. It's impossible to achieve the physical standards that have been set by so many female characters. Women shouldn't be shamed for being fit or for dressing in fitted or revealing clothes, but they also shouldn't be expected to. In short, the more we are able to get away from these unhealthy and inaccurate female representations and show women of all body types and personalities, the less these characters will negatively impact the future of how society views women and how women view themselves.

Barlett, Christopher P, and Richard J. Harris. "The Impact of Body Emphasizing Video Games on Body Image Concerns in Men and Women." SpringerLink, Springer US, 15 May 2008, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11199-008-9457-8>.

"EEDAR Says the Chicks Are Alright." *The Escapist*, 26 Aug. 2010, [www.escapistmagazine.com/news/view/103045-EEDAR-Says-the-Chicks-Are-Alright](http://www.escapistmagazine.com/news/view/103045-EEDAR-Says-the-Chicks-Are-Alright).

GENERAL EDUCATION 2000  
EXPRESSIVE

# “November 21st”

1st Place: Abigail Leona Nielsen  
Professor Jennifer Sorensen

The knock was piercing. I shot up instinctively, knowing something was wrong. Clearly, so did my dad as he immediately sprung out of his crisp leather chair. He told us all to stay put as he ran to the door. Nervously, I stretched across the textured living room couch in an attempt to catch a glimpse of the visitor. A broad police officer stared back at me. I heard my dad call for my mom, guide the visitor into the office, and shut the door. Whenever the office door closes, that's when serious things are wrong. I had no idea what was happening, so I panically tried to turn back to the football game my unphased brothers and cousins were captivated by. Just when I thought I couldn't handle the suspense for one more second, my father quietly slid the office door open and entered into the kitchen. He grabbed my white phone off the dark countertop, sadly looked up with tear filled eyes, and asked me to come with him.

I gulped, hesitantly following my dad across the playful kitchen into our stern office. Immediately I locked eyes with my mother and saw the tears streaming down her face. To my right, I saw the same officer from earlier seated next to a middle aged woman. She

had eyes so deep and mysterious that they appeared a majestic black. The woman had tightly pulled back her dark hair, and wore a solemn face. She welcomed me into the room, introduced herself as a detective, and asked me to take a seat. I cautiously sat on our faded maroon loveseat as she attentively watched me. Something was indescribably wrong. After an eternity of silence, she glanced at my mom and then up at my dad. The woman took a deep breath, looked me in the eyes, and told me that Caden had committed suicide.

I met him at the pool. Emma, my good friend and fellow lifeguard, joyfully introduced him to me as a new coworker and swore he was going to change my life. Caden, his name was, was quirky and incredibly awkward. He was tall, broad, and tough, but he wore untamed strawberry blonde curls. Caden was a jokester, and I hung around him because he never failed to make me laugh. He was a sophomore at the time, one year younger than I was, but we were similar and became good friends through lifeguarding. As autumn crept in, we attended the same school and always seemed to be hanging out together. I went to his football games, and he came to my races. Everything

seemed normal, until I began to discover it was not.

He desperately began telling me he loved me and that I was the only happiness and light in his life. With no personal interest in a romantic relationship with Caden, I was scared and confused. Because of the severe clinical depression and anxiety I knew he had, I stayed part of his life because I knew his happiness was hard to come by. I let him walk all over me and allowed him to hand over a large chunk of his depression. My family knew of Caden, but not to the extent of what was really going on. I knew this situation was completely and utterly toxic, but I was too worried about his mental illnesses. I was blindly willing to do anything to make sure he was stable.

During this frightful time, my best friend Hannah approached me one evening after our school's volleyball game. Huddled on the floor by those cold gray bleachers, she told me that Caden was changing me for the worse. Hannah pleaded that I permanently cut ties with him because she had never seen me so sad. She told me she wanted her best friend back. After a night overflowing with debate and tears, I finally agreed. I gathered my scattered courage up off the gymnasium floor and used it to call Caden. Luckily it went straight to voicemail, so I poured out my heart as I told him I didn't want to carry his burdens anymore.

The next morning, I woke happily and filled with energy. It felt like a giant weight had been pulled off of my chest. I finally felt like myself again. It was the long awaited day of my cousin's wedding, and I enjoyed

celebrating the occasion with my massive extended family. After the lovely ceremony, my mom invited all of our cousins home with us for lunch. While eating a stale Costco turkey sandwich and watching some football game I didn't care about, I looked down at my phone for the first time in several hours. I saw two missed calls and a voicemail from Caden that were dated from several hours prior. Still feeling annoyed, I ignored them and put my phone down in the kitchen. I kept enjoying my phenomenal day, until I heard the pounding knock on the door.

I just stared into her black eyes. I thought she was kidding. As she told me I was the last one he tried to contact before taking his life, I couldn't move. She took my phone and listened to the voicemail he had left. Caden cried that what he was about to do wasn't my fault. Listening to the desperation and tears uttered by someone so weak left my heart literally on the floor. My body started shaking. I couldn't see. I couldn't talk. I couldn't breathe. I didn't believe the woman because I couldn't believe her. Because of me, he would never graduate high school or go to college. Because of me, he would never get married or have a family. This was my fault. I had tried to cut him out of my life, and now he was dead. The massive tears exploded like a dam breaking from too much pressure, and I collapsed on my mother. Reality was setting in; On November 21st, 2017, Caden had shot himself in the head. An instant death by suicide.

That next week was excruciating. I dreaded

looking at my phone because everyone was constantly asking me how I was doing. I dreaded going to school because every teacher held a discussion about preventing suicide. I dreaded going to his funeral because I didn't want to face his family. Life felt like a dream, but one I desperately wanted to wake up from.

As the week rolled on, the day of Caden's funeral arrived. Hannah picked me up in her faded pickup truck, and we slowly headed to the church. There are no words to describe what feelings were hanging over me. My stomach was tied in a colossal knot, and untying it was an impossible task. We anxiously entered the building as I clenched Hannah's arm until it turned ghostly white. We migrated towards the viewing room as we observed happy looking memories of Caden neatly packaged in picture frames. I turned into a musty room to see his mom, dad, and older sister wearing wild strawberry blonde curls. The poor family saw me and abruptly began crying as they ran to hug me. I was confused but relieved. Contrary to my fears, Caden's family was happy to see me. Perhaps because I was a piece of what was in that glossy white coffin.

The rest of the funeral was sad, as a normal funeral should be. Weeks passed, and the world seemed to forget about Caden's death. The weeks turned to months as weightless snow began powdering the rooftops. My mom put me in therapy. I finally figured out that Caden's death wasn't my fault. Still, emotions were everywhere, and I had to find a place to store them. I grabbed my warm, cinnamon guitar and sang. Freely,

openly, and oh how passionately I sung. I did this for a few days, and allowed myself to remember those suppressed feelings as they flowed out of my mouth in sculpted lyrics. This is what my healing heart created:

*"So much sadness and so much grief.*

*So much pain and so much agony that the world could never see.*

*And you had so much potential and so much love.*

*So much joy and so much happiness that your world was composed of.*

*But you couldn't see one day ahead of you.*

*No you couldn't find the way out of the darkness that enveloped you.*

*Should have recognized the warning signs you were quietly showing me.*

*Should have opened my heart to heal your aching parts, but I let them turn to permanent scars.*

*And now I spend my days drifting away, wondering if I could have done anything to make you stay.*

*Just one more day.*

*So much destruction and so many tears.*

*So many new and strange emotions all because you were not here.*

*And so much confusion, and so many darkened days.*

*So much shock and disbelief, it created a thick foggy*

*haze.*

*So you couldn't see one day ahead of you.*

*No you couldn't find a way out of the darkness that  
enveloped you.*

*Could have recognized the warning signs that you were  
desperately showing me.*

*Could have opened my heart to mend your aching  
parts, but now they've turned to beautiful scars.*

*And now I spend my days drifting away, wondering if I  
could have done anything to make you stay.*

*Just one more day.*

*Wish you could've been here just one more day.*

*I would wrap my arms around you, tell you every  
thing's OK.*

*But it's too late."*

One year later on November 21st, I attended a commemoration in Caden's honor. It was a surprisingly happy thing. I felt joy. Not selfish, inhumane joy because he was gone, but rather an appreciation for feeling happiness. I had learned a lot in the past year. Mental illness is real. Emotions are fragile. Human life is precious.

Everyone always said that everything happens for a reason. I never believed this until Caden came around. I've been molded into a completely different

person. A wiser person. I'm able to help people who are going through what I went through. I don't believe that happened by chance. He left me with an armful of regret and twisted memories, but through it all he's now a part of me.

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Regards,

Megan Warner

*Scriblerian Chair*

