

Fresh Thoughts

Essays from Writing I
Fall 2022



Introduction

First-Year Writing is a pivotal experience for Lasell students. Throughout Writing I and Writing II, students learn to assess their skills, face new challenges, and expand their abilities. By writing in a variety of genres, students come to understand how to best shape their writing for different audiences and different purposes.

All students enrolled in Writing I in the fall of 2022 were invited to submit their favorite works to be considered for publication in this issue of *Fresh Thoughts*. We were overwhelmed by the quality and quantity of submissions and had to make challenging decisions about which essays to publish. We strived to include essays representing a variety of topics written in a variety of genres, and we present these pieces as a representation of the work done in our classes.

While this is first and foremost a celebration of students and their writing, we would also like to thank our faculty who worked closely with student writers throughout the semester. Faculty teaching First-Year Writing this year included Greg Cass, Sara Bartlett Large, Deborah Mael, Michelle Niestepski, Annie Ou, and Alexander Saint-Widow.

In addition, this volume would not be possible without the art direction and production design of Professor Stephen Fischer. A special thanks to Abigail Damke, who provided our cover graphics. We thank you for your contributions to this collection.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Professor Diane M. Donatio who passed away unexpectedly during the summer of 2005. Professor Donatio, Diane to all who knew her, taught Writing and Communication courses at Lasell College for eleven years. She was an exceptionally talented teacher who dedicated herself to student success. Students loved her classes and were constantly trying to get into them even when they were full.

Although Diane loved teaching all her courses, she particularly enjoyed Writing I and Writing II. She relished working with first-year students and constantly pushed her students to do their best. Because of Diane's belief and support, her students worked hard and felt proud of the essays they wrote and how their writing improved over the course of a semester.

Because of the generosity of Diane's family and friends, we are able to give awards to outstanding essays from Writing I. Selecting the award winners is always a difficult task. As one faculty member said, "If Diane were here, she would have wanted to give every student an award because she would have found something great in every essay." We certainly know that Diane would have loved to read every essay in this book, and we hope that you enjoy it as much as she would have.

Table of Contents

<i>First Place</i>	Esme Rivera	6
<i>Second Place</i>	Grace Holden	9
<i>Third Place</i>	Carson Kingsbury	12
<i>Honorable Mention</i>	Lindsey Hewitt	15
Mylena Bovo		18
Cameron Burke		21
Kaleigh Conners		24
Audrey Cowan		27
Kaylene Ellis		30
Jack Fitz		33
Nathan Gardner		36
Alyssa Guglielmo		39
Jessica McNamara		42
Jamie Quinn		45
Joanna Silipigno		47
Jason Stanley		51
Gabriella Tozaj		54
Jaquelin Zuniga		57

An Ode to a Conversation Stuck in Your Throat

By Esme Rivera

Our headlights were the only thing lighting up the empty highway at 5 am. As I nestled into the passenger seat and strap myself in, I heard the voice of my favorite band on the radio. My tiredness magically evaporated from my body and my face lit up with excitement. The beat drops matched the potholes we kept hitting, but I was yet to be hit with the best realization of my life.

During middle school, I hardly ever paid attention in class. It wasn't even that I had no clue on how to do the work, I was just simply too busy burying my head into my notebook, writing with my headphones in. Physically, I was in the classroom, but my mind was closing the blinds and transporting me somewhere else. I would envision myself writing at the top of a Sherman Tree, hearing the wind gush through my hair and flipping the pages from my notebook while my legs wrapped around a branch, so I didn't fall. My teachers never found me a distraction, and I surprisingly still ended up getting on Honor Roll and becoming a member of the National Junior Honor Society....hard to believe right? I'm honestly not sure how I still managed to do that.

One day without warning, I walked into my English Class and looked over at Ms. Rockiki's empty rolling chair.

"Maybe I'm just early," I told myself.

An older woman with round glasses and black hair tied up walked in. The classroom was filled with windows but the second she walked in, it seemed duller. I felt a subtle chill go up my spine.

And then I heard the words I dreaded the most.

"My name is Ms. Stayton. I will be your substitute teacher today."



As soon as I heard those words, I put my headphones on and began writing on the farthest desk in the corner, isolated from the rest of my classmates. The substitute crouched down against me and knocked on my table to get my attention. I ignored her first knock. Until she did it again.

We both locked eyes and I could feel the tension between us already.

"No wearing headphones in class, Miss," she said.

"Actually, my name is Esme," I said as I put my headphones back on.

I could see the smoke and fumes coming from her nose.

"If anything, your knocking on the table is more distracting than me writing with my headphones on," I said.

As soon as those words left my mouth, I took a breath to see if I could take them back. I was never the type to argue, to talk back with a teacher, and all I could see from the corner of my eye were my classmates. Before I could attempt to cast a spell to vanish at that very moment, they had already witnessed everything. My friends looked at me as if their eyes were going to fall from their faces. I couldn't bear to look at them.

The next day, the substitute wasn't there. Instead, there just was a sticky note she left saying, "*Class was respectful. Not Esme.*" I began apologizing to Ms. Rockiki for my behavior toward the substitute.

She just nodded and said, "I know how you can make up for your behavior."

"Anything! Just not detention... Please," I said.

Little did I know her idea of "making up for my be-

havior” was something I never would have imagined.

“I’m going to sign you up for two poem competitions.”

“What, no! I can do extra work, I’ll even come for Saturday school!”

She knows my biggest fear is public speaking, so this was already punishment. I’ve always been an introvert since I was little. Being in front of an audience gives my body the same sensation as going down a steep roller coaster.

Even though I was constantly burying my notebook in my face during class, I still would not show a single soul what was in it. For all I know people just thought I carried a blank notebook around with me everywhere.

“You know I can’t speak in big crowds,” I spoke.

“That’s why we will practice. We still have a couple of months until the competition,” she said.

“Great, so I have no choice?” I murmured under my breath.

On the first Tuesday of every month, my school would have a huge assembly in the auditorium. It would mostly be the principal giving a long speech while the kids in the back fell asleep during most of it. Except for this day, something in my gut was telling me this assembly was going to be different. I dozed off but then heard Ms. Rokicki’s heels clatter as she walked up on stage.

She grabbed the microphone from the principal and made direct eye contact with me. “Oh no, what’s going on?” I mouthed to her from the first row. Before I knew it, she was already giving a speech.

“Hello everyone, you guys know me, Ms. Rokicki. In this assembly, I want to bring recognition to somebody’s writing. Esmeralda drafted a poem for one of my class assignments and I enjoyed it so much that I would like her to come up here and read it for you all.”

My body felt so tense. I felt as if I was fighting with someone for the last bit of oxygen on earth. I was glued down to the chair and my legs became weak. Have you ever heard your breath project from a microphone with a room entirely filled with people staring at you? As I gulped, I could hear each sound projected onto the speakers. Ms. Rokicki delicately placed her hand on the back of my shoulder, and she held the mi-

crophone up to me once more. With both my hands on the paper, I breathed in and began reading. I honestly could not tell you whether it was good or bad because I blacked it out, but I do remember everyone applauding once I finished.

“See I told you, you can do it,” she said.

“I’m not doing that again,” I said with a smirk on my face.

To even get accepted to compete in the Massachusetts Statewide Poem Contest, I first had to win first place in my school district. Seventh-grade me saw that as impossible, but not Ms. Rokicki. She believed in me and would not let me second guess myself. The day they were announcing the winners, I sat far in the back of the auditorium.

I zoned out for the first half of their speeches but was revived back to life when I heard “Esmeralda come up on stage,” was I dreaming?

“Pinch me,” I said to my friend sitting next to me.

“GET UP ON STAGE!” she said with the biggest smile on her face.

As I walked up to the stage, my hands kept fidgeting with my hoodie string. I was still sure I was going to wake up from this dream, but I did not.

One kid was picked from each town in Massachusetts, and I was going to be representing Provincetown. As the day of the real competition was getting closer, I started growing a knot in my stomach bigger than me. I remember running to Ms. Rokicki’s class during lunch and flooding her room with my tears.

“I can’t do this; I need to drop out of the competition.”

“I am not letting you do that; you need to let people witness your talent. You truly are gifted, and I am not letting you give up like that.”

She then reached for my notebook with her eyes and my eyes followed in the same direction.

“Read me something from your notebook,” she said.

“But...” I said before she interrupted me.

“Read me something from your notebook, flip to a random page,” she said.

Flipping to a random page, I began to clear my throat.

I scanned the classroom to make sure she and I were

the only people around before I began reading.

I believe that there are things words can't describe.

It's not enough to fully soak and rinse out on paper.

Eyes hold a language.

A language I'm not yet fluent in,

As I look into your golden crystalized pools

An invisible thread seems to draw me in

But tell me

When is it considered too much?

She's the type to overwater her plants because she is unaware of when to stop giving.

Would you make sure she had enough sunlight in the morning?

Or would it be too much?

I looked up at her, and she gave me a delicate smile and said, "I believe in you, Esme."

Now it is 5 am and I'm in the passenger seat of Ms. Rokicki's car. We were going 45 down the highway but my heart was going 100 beats per second. It felt like the car was closing in on us and I had limited time left to breathe. I had my hands crossed on my lap and tried to regroup myself during our 2-hour ride there. Before I knew it, I was in a room filled with older women and men in black and white suits, and kids who are sweating profusely and reciting their poems repeatedly in line. It was time for my name to be called, and I looked over for Ms. Rokicki. She just held my hand so tight she squeezed away all my worries.

"Next up, Esmeralda Rivera from Provincetown."

I walked up on stage and tried not to make direct eye contact with any audience other than the judges. The words graciously began pouring out and before I

knew it, I was looking back at everyone as they were applauding. I went back offstage and gave Ms. Rokicki the tightest hug, not leaving any room for new oxygen. But that was not the end. We still needed to wait for all the kids to recite their poems and then hear the final winners. There were several kids, who recited their poems so confidently and their words touched the audience more delicately than mine. I felt blown away by their poems and I knew there was no way I could measure up to theirs.

"It's time for announcing this year's Massachusetts State Poem Winners"

They announced the first place and my heart immediately dropped when my name wasn't called.

I grabbed Ms. Rokicki's arm and said "Let's start heading back home before it gets too late"

"Our Second Place Winner, Esmeralda Rivera," projects from the speakers.

I froze. My soul left my body in that instant and I did not believe what I had just heard. I thought I was becoming delusional. But I was not dreaming, so I got my certificate and looked back into the audience and gave the biggest smile to Ms. Rokicki.

We drove back home and that was the drive to the beginning of my journey. Looking back, I cannot find the words to express my gratitude for her. She believed in me when I had no ounce of self-belief in myself. Ever since then I have never put down my pen and paper. She gave me the realization that writing is what makes me, *me*. I no longer am ashamed, but I embrace the things I write. And even though most of my writing is kept private, I am sure that one day, I will have another audience to read it to.

Esmeralda Rivera is a Sociology Major. She is from Provincetown, MA and they love stargazing.

A Thoughtful Gesture

By Grace Holden

A pair of squirrels maniacally chasing each other around the pavement had captivated my attention. I loved my new teacher's classroom; in the very back seat, I had a perfect view through the window into the courtyard. My attempt at drowning out the nasally voice of my teacher and chemical smell from the Expo markers was cut short when I heard the heavy door swing open. Piercing blue bug-eyes were peering out from behind an older blonde woman who greeted Ms. Mellyn. The girl looked my age, although she seemed way too shy for 5th grade. After all, we were the big kids now! Ms. Beal had introduced herself and Symone to the class, while gesturing and moving her hands in a way that made Symone study the movements and return the confusing gestures. The whispers bouncing around the classroom had become entirely overwhelming. Sign Language, I immediately recognized. I gave Symone a welcoming smile and half-wave as she came to fill the seat right next to mine.

The entirety of my school day was filled with brainstorming ideas on how to become friends with her. It was true that I had yet to learn about her hobbies, personality, family, and more, but I had been completely enthralled with the fact that we had something in common. This being that we both had hearing problems. At this point in my life, I had never met anyone else that had the same difficulties as me, aside from my Mom. Symone's hearing was significantly worse than mine. I could recognize that she had hearing aids in both ears. I had also observed that they not only had pink housing (the part of a hearing aid that hooks behind your ear), but they also had a sparkly purple ear



mold and flower stickers on them. They were such a unique tell of personality that I wanted to compliment her on. However, if I wanted to tell her this, I had to go about it in a way that was new for me. I had to learn Sign Language.

Ever since my hearing test at the very end of 4th grade—which I had failed with flying colors—it was suggested that I receive a pair of hearing aids to assist me. As an 11-12 year old, it was an intimidating process for me. I did not want to be set apart from the people around me in any way. I did not want my friends to see that I was struggling with something that they thought only “old people” did. That afternoon when I brought home the paper explaining the state of my hearing, I found myself becoming less embarrassed and defensive about the topic of getting hearing aids. My mom was initially skeptical about my sudden change in feeling. As it turned out, Symone had a larger impact on me than I initially perceived. The conversation seemed all the more fitting when I realized that the normal speaking volume in my house was yelling; because my mom could not hear. I was suddenly faced with this compelling opportunity to learn a new skill. And at the same time make it easier for the individuals around me to do something that so many take for granted, having a conversation. I was ultimately determined to go back to school the next day and ask Symone how to start.

It was simply a matter of days before I became very close with Symone. Ms. Mellyn was giving every effort into including Symone in lessons, as well as teaching the class as a whole how to sign the alphabet. I would stare at my fingers creating different shapes

to communicate what I wanted to say. The biggest feeling of relief and pride came over me when Symone understood what I was saying. To say that I was eager to learn is an understatement. We formed a group at lunch rightfully called “The Lunch Bunch.” Which included Ms. Beal, Symone, another classmate named Ada, and me. We would meet every day after going through the lengthy lunch line and walk to a classroom next to the main office. It was a more quiet space for us to learn Sign Language in depth and have Symone express herself in a less intimidating environment. Back in the regular classroom, we would start with signing our names, which was a fun activity because Symone told us that we could make the sign for our name be whatever we wanted it to be! Mine was the letter “G” (hold up a fist facing outwards and then stick your pointer and thumb out, as if gesturing that something is tiny) held over my head, moving in a circle. The significance of this was creating the shape of a halo over my head, correlating the meaning of “grace” (Pretty deep for a 5th grader, right?). Although I was thrilled to learn some basic signs and phrases in class, I was wanting to learn more than the baseline.

I was and still am lucky enough to have a teacher as my Mom. Her main student population is special needs adults and toddlers. With this being true at the time when I was first learning Sign Language, she already had books of Sign at home because a main form of communication for people that are non-verbal is Sign. I flipped through the very first book titled “Baby Sign Language” and I figured that I would start there and be able to work my way up to more complicated words. With each day passing, Ms. Beal and Symone would become more impressed with my ability to pick up this new skill. The alphabet, numbers, and basic phrases became muscle memory for me, and I could not have felt more proud of myself. The biggest form of gratitude that I experienced was being there emotionally and supportively for Symone. She had already been so self sufficient in the way that she read lips and felt for vibrations, etc. But when her interpreter was not there during recess, I was helping her communicate with other people. When she went to the nurse, I helped her explain what she was feeling. When she just needed a friend to talk to and gossip, she didn’t have to talk to her 30-year old interpreter; she had a friend that understood.

At such a young age, I was gaining this valuable

experience that few people had the opportunity to. It was incredible to me that I could now communicate with a broad range of people without using verbal words. I found myself practicing by signing everything I said. If I did not know a word, I could look it up and remember it for next time. In addition to it being an amazingly gratifying feeling to sign with people, it was at times frustrating. It took some adjustment to transition from talking verbally with one classmate, then having to talk verbally *and* use Sign when talking to Symone. In addition, there were also days when I was upset or mad and I did not want to talk to anyone. Normally, if you are someone who can hear, you will see someone, or rather “hear,” that they are not talking. You have the ability to observe their facial expressions as well in order to assume that they do not want to engage that day. When you take away the hearing sense, the only thing that they have to rely on is your facial expressions. You could imagine that the situation becomes even more frustrating when they ask what is wrong or attempt to sign, and I did not respond. Perhaps a more imaginable scenario would be to place yourself in an environment where everyone speaks a different language than you. Suddenly, you have people all around you that are telling you what is making them sad, excited, and angry; you want so badly to share those experiences with them and help but all you can do is say that you can’t understand them. This is the world that not only deaf/hard of hearing (HOH) people live in, but also the majority of individuals with a mental difference.

My experience as someone who is HOH has been, and always will be one that is ever changing. I am grateful to be able to communicate almost regularly in every situation with others. This in turn allows me to have the privilege to teach others about communicating with the deaf/HOH community. Nevertheless, I continue to experience hardships in unpredictable environments. For example, a restaurant or loud event, in which I often am ignored or excluded from the conversation entirely because I cannot hear or have asked someone to repeat themselves too many times. Apart from my own experiences, I regularly observe people being rude to my Mom, who is almost completely deaf and has hearing aids. I often have to talk for her in louder environments or when someone is being too soft spoken. When someone does not consider that people have different struggles than them, their imme-

diate response is to assume that my Mom is being rude or ignoring them. It is no one's responsibility to automatically know others' hardships or experiences, but it should be everyone's responsibility to treat people with kindness and grace. Everything can be a learning opportunity.

Throughout all of the different experiences in my short lifetime, I believe that we do not have to identify with the identities we have if we do not choose to, but they do contribute to how we interact with people and view the world as a whole. To elaborate, I realize that being HOH is something that I will always struggle with and carry close to me, but it is not who I am entirely. Symone's interactions are formed around being deaf. With every new person she meets, she is often obligated to say that she is deaf in order to communicate. But she is so much more than someone who is deaf; she is funny, sarcastic, and loving. Likewise, the fact that I am HOH is something that could set me apart, but it is not what completes my identity as a valuable person. Learning Sign Language has been one of the many journeys that has helped me become a more patient and kind human. Symone had gone to a school for the deaf and blind in high school. After she left our school, I of course had no consistent practice with Sign, but I still maintain well beyond the basics. Most of my experience comes from teaching others basic signs; my friends enjoy learning. I also taught

toddlers at my previous job signs that they could use to communicate the things they did not have words for yet. My current job includes having to occasionally speak with a customer in Sign. It feels so amazing to see a deaf or special needs customer feel welcomed and be relieved when they do not have to type out everything that they want; or when a coworker introduces me to a customer to help them communicate.

Interacting with people is something that is so easily taken for granted because most of us do it every day. In this way, it is easy for us to become impatient with people that do things differently. Learning an entire language is daunting in any form and is a skill that should have purpose and drive behind it. I have always reiterated my opinion that learning the Sign Language alphabet is easy. If you learn the alphabet and possibly some numbers, you can communicate with someone who is deaf/HOH and uses Sign. This is entirely worth the amount of time spent learning it, and can open up so many opportunities in the world. Any chance to impact someone's life with a kind gesture is worth going out of your way for.

Grace Holden is a Global Studies major with a minor in Studio Art. She is from Hull, Massachusetts and was born on Leap Year.

Rhetorical Analysis of Syringe Exchange Program Debate

By Carson Kingsbury

AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, is a deadly disease spread through bodily fluids infected by the HIV retrovirus. During the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s to early 2010s, HIV spread rapidly among intravenous drug users because many shared used needles that had become infected. In the mid to late 2000s, AIDS was at an all-time high worldwide, and some proposed syringe exchange programs (SEPs) that would provide IV drug users with sterile needles with the hope it would curb the rapid spread of HIV. The proposal and potential implementation of SEPs became a popular and divisive talking point. “The Needle Nexus” by Tina Rosenberg was published in 2009 by the *New York Times Magazine* to argue in support of the U.S. adopting SEPs. Father Robert Araujo published a similar article in 2010 titled “Thoughts on the Needle Exchange Program Adopted by the Diocese of Albany” on the *Mirror of Justice* blog to push back on an SEP adopted by a New York Church. The *New York Times* is a left-aligned news outlet, and Rosenberg’s article aimed to push the Times’ audience to advocate for laws and reform to support syringe exchanges in the U.S. and abroad. The *Mirror of Justice* publishes editorials and reviews on U.S. policy through a Catholic and generally right-aligned lens. Araujo wanted the blog’s audience to view the New York church’s SEP through a more critical lens and to not support syringe exchanges. The political and religious alignment of their audiences heavily influences the rhetoric they use throughout.

To establish credibility among her audience, Rosenberg (2009) uses scientific articles and her experience as a journalist to position herself as an expert on SEPs. After introducing an “academic review” she sources, she argues that the “solid evidence in support of needle exchange [sic] is trumped by its risky politics.” By introducing her source in this way, she can both reaffirm



the source’s validity and legitimize her own argument. It is also used to distance herself from her own biases, as she claims she is just supporting the evidence rather than being swayed by the politics of syringe exchanges. Despite aligning politically with her audience, she is able to seem more trustworthy and fair by appearing nonpartisan. She also talks extensively about her direct involvement in the syringe exchanges she saw in Russia. By talking about when she “joined” these syringe exchange efforts, she appears more credible and presents as an expert on the programs. Rosenberg lets readers know that many journalists talk about SEPs without actually knowing how they operate. She has seen the successes and failures herself, and her later appeals to emotion appear to be based more in reality through her established credibility and experience. When she discusses people needing to take action to prevent the suffering of addicts, she doesn’t appear hypocritical as she established that she had the goodwill to actually do something to help already. Her direct experience lets her play the part of an expert when speaking about SEPs and the effects of addiction, regardless of if she truly is.

Araujo (2010) establishes his credibility by using his religious background and by presenting himself as the voice of logic within this debate. Araujo criticizes a *New York Post* article that supported the adoption of SEPs to reduce the spread of HIV, claiming “[the] ‘public health authorities’ referred to by [the article, made] no appeal based on logic”. He tries to chip away at the credibility of the opposition while bolstering his own. He presents himself as rational and logical while the other side seems rash and naive. By dismantling the “authorities” on a subject, he can take their place as the expert. In contrast, Araujo is not as hyper-critical of the Albany church that adopted the SEP he is arguing against. While the public health authorities and

the *New York Post* were framed as actively wrong, the goals of the other church were described as “wishful thinking but little else.” Araujo is much more empathetic and respectful to the other church, not wanting to seem unnecessarily hostile to a member of his own group. He directly reaffirms this by saying his “comments in no way reflect a lack of fraternal concern of [sic] or respect for them.” He is able to be aggressive to the faceless “authorities,” but will not disrespect people within his own community. Although this shows Araujo’s respect is selective, it will likely align with the morals and values of his audience. He does not need to shed his religious ties, as it is part of his authority on the subject.

Both authors establish ethos very differently, but they position their methods in line with their audience. Rosenberg utilizes more empirical methods to seem trustworthy. Scientific evidence and personal experience may seem like the highest standard of proof to a more secular audience, and citing statistics and observation can obscure bias for some readers. These techniques are not used to the same extent in Araujo’s paper. A Catholic audience may be more prone to believe that not all facts can be presented empirically, and morals and intuitive understanding can be an equal or greater source of knowledge. Araujo’s audience might also be less trusting of unknown academics making decisions on how they should live and understand the world. He does not need to obscure his bias, as it fundamentally informs his credibility within his audience. His ethos is embedded in his role as a priest, and as long as he upholds the expected appearance and behavior of a priest, he will seem trustworthy.

Rosenberg uses emotional appeals to urge her audience to care about the plight of drug users to explain the importance of adopting SEPs. She argues that society has mistreated the groups most suffering from the HIV epidemic due to their social status, as hospitals and governments “[turn] away people who come in with the afflictions of a violent life on the streets”. While their institutional supports fail them, a “guerilla effort” from those running SEPs has kept them safe, and these patients would be “nowhere” without their work. By using this charged language, Rosenberg draws a sharp divide between the motives and actions of the government and the SEPs. The government is in charge of helping its citizens and emphasizing its callous inaction in the face of pain and death villainizes

them. Clinics have to carry the burden of the epidemic without resources or support, but they are still able to be the hero in the face of barriers. Rosenberg’s narrative makes you root for the underdog SEPs and pity the defenseless addicts. It frames the opposition as morally wrong to do anything but support them.

Araujo stokes fear of drug dealers to frame the support of needle exchanges as enabling addiction. He argues that supporting exchange programs but not meaningful counseling reform will only benefit “drug lords who have little interest in anything but profit”. He still presents addicts as the victim, but the villains are those who may fuel that addiction and anyone that may support them. He thinks these programs offer “no charity or solidarity or mercy” to addicts, and they are “enslaved” to an addiction that “robs [them] of human dignity and life”. This use of charged language makes the support of SEPs seem callous and dangerous, as maintaining addiction will keep the population suffering. While this fails to address the spread of HIV among drug users, it causes an emotional reaction that ignores this risk and focuses on the suffering caused by addiction.

Rosenberg uses emotion to intertwine herself in the narrative of addiction and AIDS that she presents, while Araujo acknowledges and reframes the emotional reaction of wanting to support addicts by any means necessary by deepening the dilemma associated with SEPs. Both articles frame addicts as the victim but utilize pathos to villainize different groups. Araujo pulls apart the category of addict and dealer to create a victim and villain that are somewhat intertwined, making it easier to argue that supporting SEPs is anti-addict. The reader is able to pity and sympathize with an addict and still feel justified in their fears and concerns around drug use and addiction. Both are able to build goodwill by expressing sympathy for a struggling population, but they distribute that sympathy and the blame for their suffering very differently.

Rosenberg uses empirical data and intentional word choice to present syringe exchanges as an already-solved problem. She says that needle exchanges are the “cornerstone of an approach known as harm reduction”. She discusses a review of the impact of syringe exchanges on AIDS cases, and uses it to argue that countries that have not fully adopted these programs are “casting aside the single most effective AIDS prevention strategy we know”. By defining both

the results of the data presented and SEPs themselves in this way it seems logical to adopt the programs. It presents the dichotomy of being correct and adopting SEPs or being wrong and refusing to adopt them. This simplifies the arguments and draws a clear line between the data presented and the desired takeaway of the reader. If the premise of her argument feels inarguable, regardless of if that is true, it is easier for the audience to reach the outlined conclusion. The use of a study and other data to establish this premise makes it feel more truthful, even though the research or the results discussed by its author are not included or made available in the article.

Araujo relies on a conclusion drawn through deductive reasoning to frame his concerns regarding needle exchanges. He reasons that because IV drug users are addicts, and needles are required to inject IV drugs, providing users with needles would further addiction and enable them. He believes that “the destructive habit is being sustained” by SEPs and that this systemic flaw “ought to be inescapable” to the people that support the programs. This also defines the ideal goal for any proposal to combat AIDS among drug users: to have them stop doing drugs. Araujo believes SEPs do not do enough, and that any option that is only “trying to reduce infections from blood-borne diseases” is insufficient in addressing and mitigating the suffering of addicts. By presenting SEPs as inherently flawed, the audience doesn’t need to look into the data on their effects against AIDS because it is not relevant to the argument anymore. This reduces the argument he is trying to make and protects against any gaps or flaws he may have presented because SEPs will never be a sufficient solution.

Araujo and Rosenberg both carefully define the problem at hand to flatten the arguments they will have to make. Rosenberg simplifies the results of academic studies to present an inherent and inarguable value to SEPs, and Araujo presents any method without the express goal of getting addicts sober as both insufficient and cruel. Both use their framing of the problem at hand to create a moral dichotomy between doing what will help addicts and making a choice to hurt them. Rosenberg wants her audience to pressure the government to change, so she frames inaction as a morally wrong choice that will prolong needless suffering among an already helpless group. Araujo wants to maintain the Church’s current stance on SEPs, so

he frames the proposed changes as a thoughtless and heartless choice that will only keep people addicted and suffering for longer. If you only present one correct conclusion, the argument is easier to win. Under those rules, anyone who disagrees with you has immediately lost.

Both articles use rhetorical techniques to frame their argument for the reader. Rosenberg may be more persuasive for the general reader, but Araujo may do better at cementing beliefs among his target audience. Araujo anticipates a non-secular audience that sought out an opinion on syringe exchanges from a Catholic perspective. The techniques used to develop his credibility may not work for a reader who thinks religion is unimportant or irrelevant to the discussion. Without established credibility, he is put at a disadvantage as readers will interact with his rhetoric hyper-critically. However, this wouldn’t apply to his expected audience, and his arguments fit neatly into the preexisting bias of a conservative Catholic audience. The *New York Times*’ audience is larger and broader, so Rosenberg’s techniques need to be more general. She repeatedly attempts to divorce herself from the appearance of bias so readers who do not align with her personal identities or beliefs don’t immediately disregard her opinion. She also establishes and validates the premise of her argument within the article so she can influence people that may have not already agreed with or considered it. Although she attempts to broaden the effectiveness of her rhetoric, it still is packaged specifically for a left-leaning audience. Her push for increased government oversight and funding of SEPs through vast systemic reform may be harder to present to a more conservative audience. The rhetorical devices used to frame each article are dictated by the authors’ understanding of their intended audience, especially along political and religious lines.

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Chin Up, Heels Down

By Lindsey Hewitt

Ever since I was a kid I have never been scared of animals. I would always be the one to stop someone from squishing a spider and instead take a piece of paper and a cup to put it outside. During my freshman year of high school, I moved to a new school district, which would mean I wouldn't know anyone. I was nervous and thought that something that would help me is having a hobby. My sister was into softball at the time and seemed to enjoy it. I thought back to my summer vacation and remembered something I enjoyed was when I went to a summer camp and rode a horse. I remember feeling my stress fade away, the summer air on my face, and the feeling of a warm soft nose on my hands. I went to my mom and mentioned the idea. At the time, I struggled with panic attacks and an anxiety disorder. I had been told that riding can calm stress and anxiety so I said maybe I should try it. She told me that she saw a farm super close to our house and said she would look into it.

She found a barn called Quarter Ridge Farm and I was looking forward to starting this new journey. The drive towards the farm was only five minutes, but it felt like an eternity. We walked onto the property and my head was racing with a million different emotions. Excitement, nervousness, wonder. When I first arrived, I met my instructor. The lesson instructor and owner of the farm was named Charlene. She was an older woman with a stern look on her face. She smelled of cigarettes and always wore a baseball hat. We had started by meeting her horses and at the time she had three lesson horses. They were older and knew exactly what their job was. She told me that every one of her students started on Blaze. He was a red horse with a big white stripe down the center of his face. He



**HONORABLE
MENTION**

had some gray spots from old age and a single white sock on his back leg. "He is very slow and knows when the rider is scared," she explained. She tied him up in his stall and taught me about what kinds of brushes there are, how to use them, and how to put on a saddle. The saddle she grabbed was heavier than the one I had used at camp, Charlene said she starts her students out with western riding and then lets them choose if they want to do English instead. I didn't know

what this meant yet, but I soon would. Then it was finally time to get on. Charlene mentioned that being scared is normal, but I was not scared, I was excited about this new adventure that was about to begin. When I got on and started to walk around, Charlene said something that would resonate with me for the rest of my life, "Chin up, heels down."

Over the next three years, I was taking lessons once a week. I had chosen to stick with western riding because it was slower-paced and more relaxing. I felt that even after a tough day I had something to look forward to. However, something was missing. As much as I loved riding, I wanted to do it more. I talked a lot about this to my parents, but their answers were always the same: "It's Super expensive" or "You're going to college next year, you won't have time." I went to Charlene and told her my problem and her response was, "Well I'm looking for a new horse, why don't you lease the new horse?" I looked at her confused, "YOU CAN DO THAT!?!?" After hearing this I told my parents and they agreed. After a few weeks of looking, I got a text from my mom about a horse that Charlene had found. Her name was Cierra and she was located in Arizona so it would take a few days for her to reach Massachusetts. Each day that passed my mind drifted

further away from the real world, I could not focus on anything but the day Cierra was to arrive. Unfortunately, the day that Cierra arrived at Quarter Ridge farm, I was on vacation in Florida. So I did not get to meet her for another week, and although I would get pictures of her enjoying going outside and of her sleeping in her stall, I could not wait to meet her in person.

The day finally arrived when I would meet Cierra. It was late February, so the barn was cold. As I entered the barn, I saw a big gray horse on the crossties. She had light freckles all over her body. Her nose and around her eyes were dark, and her eyes made my heart melt. I shuffled over, not wanting to run and startle her; she was so much taller than the lesson horses. Charlene had already tacked her up for me, so it was time to ride. As I grabbed my helmet, I realized that I had not stopped smiling since. My mind didn't stop. I felt like I was about to pass out from excitement. I grabbed the reins and walked to the arena. Once walking around, I noticed how different Cierra was. She was a very forward horse, wanting to carry me forward. I saw Charlene in the middle of the ring, and I thought to myself, *chin up, heels down*.

As the summer came to an end, I felt that I had made a massive breakthrough with Cierra. Although I noticed that Charlene was not around as much anymore. I went up to Haily, who at the time owned a horse named Henry, and boarded him at Quarter Ridge. "Do you know where Charlene is? I wanted to tell her about my progress," I asked. Haily looked at me confused. "She's at chemo." This made me stop dead in my tracks. "I didn't know she had cancer..." I said with a sigh of sadness. She continued to tell me that she has had bone cancer for the past three years and to not make a big deal about it because the topic made her upset.

In February Charlene passed away after a four-year battle with bone cancer. Everything had changed for the worse as all of her horses moved away, and the lesson program shut down. My mind began to spiral as I watched the world around me crumble, I felt like I was falling but no one was reaching to help me up. It was during this period of time I went into a depressed state of mind, even though I was looking for a new barn to call home. I had looked for what felt like forever, then I spent some time at a show jumping barn called Hillside Meadows. I looked around and noticed how big this barn was. Lessons would come and go

constantly. Charlene once told me that places like this are known as "lesson factories." This type of riding was a whole different world than I was used to. Each rider looked the same, they all wanted the adrenaline rush that came out of jumping horses. I didn't want that rush though, I wanted a place to relax. And this place... was not it. At this point, I felt like I was never going to find the perfect fit. With this in my mind, I had given up.

After I had left Hillside, my mom came to me with one last farm to tour. The morning fog covered the ground, the air felt damp on my face. I got into the car and thought *What was the point? It was going to be just like all the rest*. However, as soon as I stepped out of the car something felt different. The sound of horses and the small environment made me feel good about this place. I walked towards a big white building with two big barn doors. There was a sign with a red horse on it that said, "Red Rock Stables." I saw a person peek around the corner. She was a shorter woman, maybe in her fifties. She had a perky personality and introduced herself as Maggie. She talked about what she does with her horse and asked me what I was looking to do. "I'm just looking for a chill barn that feels like home," I told her. She smiled at me and then walked to a stall. When she opened it up a small chestnut pinto horse walked to the front. She had a large stripe down the middle of her face and light gray patches on both eyes. Her ears moved back and forth, listening to all of the sounds around her. "This is Autumn," Maggie said while the horse stood at the door of her stall. I felt Autumn's nose which was velvet soft. Her eyes had a dark and curious look to them, as though we were both inspecting to see if it was a good fit. "How old is she?" I asked. "She's about five." *I've never worked with such a young horse; I hope she isn't crazy*. We walked to the arena, and I hopped on Autumn. She was so much smaller than the other horses I have ridden. I asked for a trot and immediately noticed how different Autumn was. She didn't try to rush or behave badly. She was not sensitive or upset when you rode her. She reminded me of when I was happy at Quarter Ridge, after a sigh of relief, I finally felt this weight lifted from my shoulders. It was at this moment that I knew this barn was for me, and all I could think was *Chin Up Heels Down*.

Over the past few years, I have learned to manage my anxiety in many different ways, like going for

walks or coloring in a book. Now that I'm in college, I can't ride as much as I used to, I still get calls from Maggie on how Autumn is doing and when I'll be riding next. I have even started to look at horses for myself after college. I can't wait to have a horse to call

my own, but until then, I'll keep my chin up and my heels down.

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Should Standardized be the Standard?

By Mylena Bovo

Standardized testing has been around for over ten years. Some believe that they are outdated and should be abolished, while others argue that they are essential and crucial in order to assess student achievement in the American public school system. Haley Edwards in “Leaving Standardized Testing Behind,” argues that there are other ways to measure student progress and achievement rather than state and government-mandated standard tests. Edwards is an accredited journalist who previously worked for the Seattle Times. Edwards currently works as nation editor at *TIME Magazine*. She attended Columbia University where she gained her MA in journalism and politics. Marc Morial and Janet Murguía in “Schools Need Standardized Testing Now More Than Ever,” argue that standardized testing benefits students and creates a benchmark for learning and progress. Morial is president and chief executive of the National Urban League, which is an organization that serves over 300 Black communities and advocates for minorities. Murguía is president and chief executive of Unidos US which is a non-profit advocacy organization for the Latino community. Each writer expresses their opinions on how mandated standardized testing affects children, teachers, and families through the use of ethos, pathos and logos in their articles.

Edwards speaks about the issues with standardized testing and how it negatively affects not only students but also teachers and families. Edwards touches upon other ways student achievement can be measured and how lawmakers are attempting to bring change into the American public school system by fighting the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Students have become over-tested since the government-mandated standardized tests have put pressure on states that are trying to reach the benchmark in order not to be sanctioned by the federal government. Edwards believes that it

is time to think outside the box and measure student achievement through other outlets rather than gruesome tests that have put stress on the education system. Edwards expects the audience to have a grasp on the concept of how the American public school system mandates standardized testing and how these tests are administered to students. She also expects readers to know how the legislative system works on a fundamental level to understand how lawmakers are attempting to change the requirement for standardized testing.

To back up their argument, Edwards brings up a variety of facts and data to support their beliefs. When discussing the views of the American Federation of Teachers, which is the second largest teacher’s labor union in America, Edwards states that the AFT believes “To maintain annual exams as a source of information on student progress but limit the ways in which those scores are used to judge how schools are doing” (Edwards, 2015). They continue to support their argument by bringing up how gruesome standardized testing has become in recent years. Data from a school located in Gadsden County, Florida states that “Students were required to take a total of 242 standardized exams between kindergarten and their high school graduation day” (Edwards, 2015). In an attempt to shed light on how changing the system has benefited students, teachers, and parents, Edwards states “At Abingdon Elementary, just outside of Washington, D.C, the transition has been gradual. Only three standardized tests were eliminated from school this year, and the decision was met with enthusiasm” (Edwards, 2015). All of the evidence that is mentioned further supports Edwards’ argument of how standardized testing impacts students negatively and other ways of measuring student achievement should be implemented. Edwards structures their argument well

and follows an outline in order to prove their point. They begin their argument with a story about a teacher that uses formative assessments to gain knowledge of student achievement, grasping the reader. They then continue their argument by bringing up statistics from the state of Virginia that has lowered the requirement for standardized testing. When referring to the No Child Left Behind Act, they counter their argument by stating that “The law is currently the primary tool available for tracking the scores of students across races and income levels” (Edwards, 2015). However, the rebuttal is that schools serving students that live in poverty have the lowest scores, and there’s no need for more data on that. Edwards concludes their article by bringing the reader back to the classroom in which the formative assessment was being done claiming that formative assessments offer all the insight needed.

Edwards uses pathos to appeal to her audience’s emotions. They do this by using a tone that influences the reader to plead for change in the education system. When speaking about how lawmakers are attempting to bring change to standardized testing laws they state, “At stake in this decision is not only the future of standardized testing and federal accountability measures in the country but also how American classrooms will look and feel in the next decade” (Edwards, 2015). They refer to the No Child Left Behind Act and how the tests mandated by the government caused school districts to panic, “Their students would not perform well on all-important end-of-year exams, [and they] naturally responded by ordering up all kinds of new tests to track student progress” (Edwards, 2015). Edwards ends their argument with a strong quote reminding the audience that at the end of the day the children should be put first stating that “When things change, the kids decide, you have to adapt” (Edwards, 2015). This has been a topic within many government and non-government affiliated facilities over the years, and as it continues to be argued, Edwards hopes to connect with their audience to act and bring change to the issue.

Morial and Murguía argue that, following the pandemic, there has been little to no measurement of how students have been doing academically and how they have progressed. They also mention how minority students are at the front of this and are the most affected by this issue. In order to close achievement gaps in education the data from standardized testing has

become imperative. They argue that statewide assessments are the only reliable and consistent. Morial and Murguía expect the audience to know about the effects of Covid-19 on students specifically on minorities and how many of those students did not have access to education during the pandemic. They also expect the audience to know how student achievement is measured through standardized testing.

To support the argument that standardized testing is a necessary part of the education system, Morial and Murguía argue that “A year into the Covid-19 pandemic, we are still only guessing about the true magnitude of the impact on our community” (Morial & Murguía, 2021). They proceed with their argument about the effects of the pandemic on student achievement by presenting data that states, “As many as 3 million children were missing from schools in October” (Morial & Murguía, 2021). They believe that formative assessment cannot be the only way to measure student performance, Morial and Murguía state “Policymakers cannot use them to create systematic comparisons of student and school performance within states, as they can with standardized statewide assessments” (Morial & Murguía, 2021). Lastly, they maintain their stance on the benefits of standardized testing by stating “Statewide assessments are the only objective, consistent and comparable measure of student progress we have” (Morial & Murguía, 2021). Morial and Murguía bring statistics and facts that further support their argument that standardized testing is beneficial and necessary to gain knowledge of student progress, specifically after the pandemic.

Morial and Murguía structured their writing well by following an outline which further supported their argument. They begin their opinion piece by captivating the reader by mentioning that the pandemic has been difficult for students in different ways. They then mention how difficult it has been to collect data from students over the pandemic and how standardized testing would benefit that, but that gaps in the education system have always been there. They counter their argument by saying “There are other ways to evaluate the academic status of each student.” (Morial & Murguía, 2021). However, that is backed up by saying that standardized testing is the only consistent way to measure student achievement through the years. They conclude their argument by stating that there is work left to do to close the education gaps left by the pan-

demic.

The authors of the article use pathos as a way to remind their audience of the importance of standardized testing. They do this by bringing up issues such as racism and equality which shows strong emotions of anger and the hope for empathy from the readers. Morial and Murguía state that the issue goes deeper than just the need for standardized testing by saying, “We also know that disparities in educational opportunity are not unique to the pandemic” (Morial & Murguía, 2021). They hope to bring the audience closer by stating the importance of government-mandated testing they state that “Continuing to measure student learning during the pandemic and providing resources to schools and communities so they can act manfully on the data to address inequities”. (Morial and Murguía, 2021). They end their argument by bringing up minorities that benefit from such tests and how they can benefit specific communities. They state that “But it’s precisely because of the disruption to learning that we need a practical way to measure its impact on students — especially students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, students with disabilities and students learning English”. (Morial and Murguía, 2021) The writers’ use of pathos shows how strongly they feel about their opinion.

All authors, Edwards, Murguía, and Morial had strong opinions on their issues and carried their arguments differently. Edwards had a data and statistical approach to their argument and strongly believed that standardized testing has caused more harm than good since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has been put into place. They had a broad point of view gathering evidence from organizations, teachers, and politicians. Murguía and Morial looked at the perspective of how the education system has been impacted by the pandemic, specifically students that are part of minority groups. Both articles collected data which showed the benefits of each opinion and how this has affected students. All articles showed that there’s a need for change in the American public school system, regardless of what side of the issue they stood on.

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Rhetorical Analysis: Alex Jones Trial

By Cameron Burke

“Alex Jones defiant over \$965m damages to Sandy Hook families: ‘Ain’t no money’,” (Gloria Oladipo 2022) and “The Alex Jones verdict won’t help America’s fake news problem” (Emily Tamkin 2022) are two opinion articles about the trial of Alex Jones. Jones is called a ‘conspiracy theorist’ and he spoke out about the Sandy Hook school shooting that took place on December 14, 2012, calling it “all made up”(Oladipo 2022). Oladipo wrote her article for *The Guardian* and believes that Jones’ case will hopefully end the conspiracy and lies that are spread by him and his listeners. The nearly one billion dollars should warn anyone else who wants to spread lies that can hurt people will be held accountable for their actions. Tamkin’s article for *The New Statesman* argues that while she agrees with the court’s decision of making Jones pay for the emotional damage that he has caused, this case will not end the fake news and conspiracies that Jones has brought to life and spread his audience. Both authors used ethos, pathos, and logos in their articles to convince the reader of their arguments towards Jones’ actions, and whether or not the trial verdict will be able to stop people like Alex Jones from being able to hurt these families and victims in the future.

Oladipo used ethos to establish her credibility on this case and the media coverage surrounding it. She showed professionalism by using evidence from one man’s testimony in court and wrote, “Mark Barden testified how conspiracy theorists urinated on the grave of his seven-year old son, Daniel, and threatened to dig up the child’s coffin” (Oladipo, 2022). Taking a piece from the actual court case shows that Oladipo is using real evidence and is giving it to her audience. Therefore, it shows she is dedicated to giving her readers real information that will help convince them while establishing her credibility. In addition to this, Oladipo uses another quote from a parent whose kid passed during the shooting: “I wish that after today, I can

just be a daughter grieving my mother and stop worrying about the conspiracy theorists,” said Lafferty, adding that “[the] hate, lies and conspiracy theories will follow both me and my family through the rest of our days” (Oladipo, 2022). Another use of courtroom testimony which again solidifies the audience’s understanding of the author’s seriousness and credibility when talking about this issue. Lastly, Oladipo uses another quote from Lafferty who claims “There will be more Alex Joneses in this world, but what they learned here today is that they absolutely will be held accountable” (Oladipo 2022). This was said after the verdict was given and it reinforces the author’s claims and shows her views on this case, which again are that Jones and those that spread lies and views just to make money will be stopped.

In the article by Tamkin, she uses the same strategies with ethos to establish credibility to the reader. In her article she states, “A jury in Connecticut ruled this week that the notorious conspiracy theorist Alex Jones should pay eight families of victims of the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting...”(Tamkin 2022). Tamkin’s use of the verdict shows that she has done her research on the trial and the jury’s decision and she presents it to the reader. She also quoted tweets, the first being said by “Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Republican member of Congress, tweeted, “political persecution must end” (Tamkin 2022). The second being from “Charlie Kirk, another right-wing talk show host, tweeted to his 1.7 million followers that the jury’s decision was “about sending a message: if you upset the Regime, they will destroy you” (Tamkin 2022). She uses tweets as a way to show her interest in the case and looking at the response from the other side of the political aisle. This tells the reader that she has done her research and is credible on the subject. Finally, Tamkin states, “I am glad that the victims’ families won” (Tamkin 2022), which is the last reinforcement for the author’s views

on what is going on in the case. Tamkin wants to see the families find some peace with this new money they would get from the verdict. Using these tweets gives the audience real things that other people had to say, and it also gives her the chance to respond to them with her own words and values in hopes that the reader agrees with her.

In both of these articles, the authors used ethos to establish credibility and their expertise on the topic. Although, Oladipo used direct quotes from the families that went through the trial which allowed the reader to understand more of what they had to go through because of Jones. Tamkin used multiple tweets from Republicans to show how their tweets continue to be dangerous for the country and those affected by the comments Jones made. She explained that the trial did not stop people from defending Jones for what he said, rather it brought more people behind him. In this case, both writers succeeded in establishing credibility, but Tamkin reinforces her claims more by showing how some radical republicans reacted to the verdict and allows the reader to keep thinking about where these kinds of opinions can lead in the future. She believes these are dangerous and hopes that the reader joins her in this belief.

In order to persuade her audience, Oladipo uses pathos to develop emotions in the reader through her writing. She states “Erica Lafferty, the daughter of slain Sandy hook principal Dawn Hochsprung, said that individuals have mailed rape threats to her home” (Oladipo 2022). The reader is given this horrible information about what happened to these families again and it forces the reader to feel bad and a strong sense of pity for them. She then writes, “Jones laughed and mocked the amounts that were awarded to the various individuals” (Oladipo 2022), which then invokes anger in the reader. Jones clearly does not feel remorse for what he did and Oladipo tells this to the reader to allow them to make the assumption that Jones is doing everything just to cause chaos and get views to make money for his company InfoWars. The mix of both pity and anger makes the audience want to see Jones get punished for what he did.

Tamkin also uses pathos to convey certain emotions to the reader. She gives the reader feelings of hopelessness through her writing. She states “we have reached a point in American politics in which even a billion-dollar reprimand cannot save us” (Tamkin

2022). By explaining her thoughts on the case after the verdict, she is telling the reader that even with all of her experience on this case and the controversy surrounding it, she feels a strong sense of hopelessness on what our government can do to fight against people like Alex Jones. Tamkin continues this and claims “I do not have hope that Jones, or those defending him, will change their behavior. There’s little hope that the extremist media ecosystem and echo chamber will change” (Tamkin 2022). The author calls out the media that take things to an extreme and says to the reader that they have gone too far, and there she has no more hope that it will ever get better. The words in both claims like “cannot save us” and “there’s little hope” are used to break down the reader emotionally, and to let them know that what is taking place will continue on. Therefore, it incites hopelessness and anger into the audience as well.

Although both authors used pathos very effectively and to their advantage, Tamkin again pulls the reader in emotionally with the use of stronger and bolder language. Oladipo does not convey the same feelings to the reader, although she did still give negative emotions to them by making them feel bad for the victims. But overall, by scaring the reader and giving them feelings of hopelessness and anger, Tamkin’s argument that Jones and people like him will continue to take place in society and our media systems, is much more clear to the reader.

The final tactic that Oladipo used to convey her argument was logos. She first uses statistics to give the audience a sense of scale on what is going on. She states “the damages will be divided among 15 plaintiffs who sued Jones for defamation as a part of a Connecticut lawsuit, with amounts ranging from \$28m to \$120m” (Oladipo 2022). Which makes Jones’ case a massive settlement and economic burden for him, and by telling the audience the amount that Jones must pay gives them the sense that this issue is even bigger than they may have thought. Oladipo later says “In August, an economist estimated that Jones was worth \$270m, reported the New York Times”(Oladipo 2022). At that time in the case Jones could afford to pay for the damages according to the reports. She then claims “Jones has also made \$50m annually in revenue from his Infowars empire” (Oladipo 2022), and his profits with the new spike in media attention have been on the rise as well. Oladipo used these statistics to show

that Jones has the money to pay off these settlements and that if his show keeps making money then he will surely have the funds over the years to come.

In Tamkin's article, she also uses logos with signs and definitions to further show Alex Jones' character and what he's like. She calls Jones "a prominent extremist pundit" (Tamkin 2022). This defines Jones as a man that tells his listeners that he is an expert on something, and he does so to an extent that goes too far, leading to him being a liar and dangerous. Tamkin then writes, "He did not show remorse. He says he plans to appeal and has called the jury a "kangaroo court" and the judge a "tyrant" (Tamkin 2022). A "kangaroo court" is a biased courtroom that makes decisions based on little evidence of the defendant being guilty. She wants her readers to understand that Jones is an evil man with evil intentions, and he wants to convince everyone that he is being done wrong by these people, rather than just taking accountability for his actions and how much damage he caused for the families that experienced the Sandy Hook shooting.

While doing further research, in a *USA Today* article titled - "Alex Jones now owes \$1.5B to Sandy Hook families – and he faces another trial. What's next?," by Terry Collins, I found that as of November 11, 2022, Jones' settlement has now reached up to 1.44 billion dollars in damages. This is nowhere near the amount of money Jones has, and so Oladipo's argument now faces no meaning in her writing, if the reader does more research on this case. Therefore, her article is not as logically sound as Tamkin's, whose arguments still stand. Even Oladipo's argument of Jones being able to pay off the settlements because of his massive yearly income does not hold up. This is because he would have to keep running his live show in order to

make that money, and this would further the spread of lies and deception to the American people as well as people from around the globe that tune into his show. As a result, once again Tamkin's arguments bring the reader a more balanced argument based on logic using signs and definitions to portray Jones as a man that has no regrets for his actions.

After reading and analyzing both articles, each author makes good arguments by using ethos, pathos and logos to convince the reader of their opinions toward Jones and his comments. While Oladipo and Tamkin both wrote compelling arguments, Tamkin wrote the stronger arguments. Tamkin developed her opinions which are based on her values and beliefs, and then showed her credibility in this case. As well as this she uses emotions to give the reader the feelings of anger and hopelessness throughout the article. Finally, the use of logic through signs and definitions with Jones' words while in court gave the reader logical arguments while providing the evidence that Jones and people like him will continue to spread lies and fear to people. Despite the massive settlement bankrupting Jones, and the same message being sent to anyone who cares to act like that, this case is not the end of the fake news and the lies.

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Match Made in Panera

By Kaleigh Conners

“Why does he always schedule me to open?” I pause waiting for my mother to agree with me. She only sighs but I know my mother, she’s thinking *It’s too early for this* and *Why did I make her get a job?* “Seriously mom, I’m sick of Marc and this job. He schedules me out of my availability every single weekend and calls me during school to work.” I’m so angry all I can do is watch the other cars whiz by awaiting my arrival into hell. I’m terminally grumpy in the mornings, especially when the sun has barely even touched the horizon and I have to go to my part time job. Every Sunday morning my manager Ben would schedule me to be there at six to open and I despised him over it.

I am a high school junior varsity athlete. I’m just trying to have a restful Sunday morning, when a forty year old man has the audacity to schedule me at the crack of dawn. I sat in the car with my mom waiting for the clock to read 6:00. I was stalling as long as possible before I had to enter the Panera Bread on the Washington Ave extension. I hated everything about this place from the lighting down to the musty smell of the kitchen.

The building was over twenty five years old, so the walls were chipped and peeling in corners. The floor tile was discolored with grime seeped into cracks so deep a mop could never get it out. Our bread steamer was in constant disrepair, which meant water was always flooding our floors. This also meant there would be three huge fans blowing at high speed all hours of the day. This place was loud, gloomy, and I could not stand it here any longer.

I bid my farewells to my mother, dragging my feet as I entered the building. I walked through the back hall. “Good Morning,” I mustered with a small smile to the girl who never said it back wondering why I try every time. I head to the back and hang my bag on the hook next to the freezer. I hold my breath as we all do when

going into the filthy abyss that is the back room. I push the heavy red door open to quickly grab an apron from the bag where it always sits right next to the trash bins. I try paying no mind to the flies buzzing around them because I know what that means, there will be maggots in those bins by next weekend when I’m the one who has to do the trash run. I sigh and roll my eyes into the back of my head, utterly disgusted as I frequently am while in this building.

I walk into the kitchen to start opening the lines, taking the covers off all the food bins and putting them in their assigned spots. I was making lists of what needed to be prepped and what we are out of when I hear it. “Hey Kaleigh good morning!” *Such a cheery voice for the person it’s coming out of*, I thought, but decided to keep it to myself. Marc was always happy to see his employees and was majorly nice; I just didn’t particularly like the way he worked. Marc was a strange man, he was short and very muscular with big gelled blonde hair, he looked like the human version of SpongeBob. He always gave me a list of tasks the closers didn’t finish with a big smile. He would then pester me if he saw me standing still for just a moment. He cared a lot about his job which I could respect but he made my blood boil at times.

He handed me that dreaded list of tasks on receipt paper in his scratchy handwriting. This was on top of my own work that I had to complete with the girl that wouldn’t even look at me. All I could think was *I’m writing my two week notice on my break*. I was done working there, I always smelled of trash and god knows what else every time I came home. I had to wash my hair twice just to get the smell out. Tears always come to the edges of my eyes every shift because of the flooding orders, while customers couldn’t help but yell at me. I did the mind-numbing tasks Marc had given me like opening the lines, and filling up all

thirty five sauce bottles. Oh and don't forget to vacuum the dining room because the closers had a "rough night" like they do every Saturday night.

When I had finished all of those things, Marc asked me to help the bakery cut bread because they were behind. I didn't mind because I actually liked the bakery. But lo and behold, I cut my pointer finger on my left hand clean open while slicing focaccia bread. I looked up to the ceiling holding my finger tightly trying not to scream in aggravation. *I don't need any extra encouragement to quit today.* All I can think about is how lovely it would be to hand Marc a letter of resignation, to spare my finger of gashes and my soul the stress. I rushed to the first aid kit by the red back door. I rinsed my finger under the cold water in the sink next to it, wincing as I felt the water rushing through the cut pushing it farther open. I popped open the box wrapping the cut in a cheap Band Aid and grabbed a blue finger cot, or as I call them, finger condoms. I giggle childishly at the title as I put it on finding enjoyment in one small part of my day. We use those blue finger condoms over bandages to protect cuts from getting water and dirt in them throughout our shifts.

At 8:00, two other employees joined us and then at 10:00, two more. We had just hired a lot of new people, so I didn't recognize anyone that day. I thought it was good timing because I was certainly not going to be an employee there any longer, no need for any goodbyes. How convenient for me. No one really talked, we all just minded our own business. Every once and awhile, over the light sounds of the ovens and customers talking in the dining room. I would hear a "excuse me" or "oops I'm sorry" break the uncomfortable quiet but it was always in such a hushed tone. Almost as if they were afraid to speak. However, 11:00 rolled around when the remaining people came in for their shift right before rush hour started.

Ben put me on the salad line that day even though I told him I had never been trained. He had confidence I could do it for whatever reason. So at the salad line, I stood spacing out waiting for my break to come so I could write my letter of resignation and never return to this place. I stared at those maroon floor tiles every food establishment has in their kitchen for some reason, lost in thought just waiting for time to pass when a pair of bright pink crocs appeared in my vision.

I looked up to see this person was short, I'd guess

5'5 at the most; she had long twisted locks and bright brown eyes, wearing the all-black uniform with a green apron making her blend in with every other employee here. However, there was an energy to this person that was different, a little like sunshine after a storm. "What happened to your finger?" She asked looking down at my left hand "I cut it while slicing bread this morning," I said in an annoyed tone showing my disapproval of the cut. "What the hell is that blue thing?" the girl screeched in confusion. I didn't know why she had to be so shocked by it but it made me laugh so while giggling I presented my finger proudly in front of her while exclaiming "It's a finger condom!" This strange girl practically threw herself on the floor laughing at what I had just said. I was expecting no more than a small laugh. I had no idea what to do with this reaction.

She did not stop laughing but got up and grabbed my wrist dragging me back to the dish sink a foot away from where we had previously stood. "KORY," she exclaimed breathlessly, as a guy not much taller than me with buzzed curly hair turned from the sink with big brown concerned eyes. "What is wrong with you Mickayla?" Kory said in a shy tone lightly laughing at her.

The girl who I now know as Mickayla is still gripping my wrist, holding my hand up in the air like a prize she won while turning to me and saying "Tell him what you just told me." While still confused but amused by her reaction I looked at Kory, allowed my face to fall straight, and repeated "It's a finger condom." They both let out sharp loud laughs that I can still hear in my head today. It's not that funny but I find myself laughing along with them.

During this small moment, I forgot about the smell, the gross floor I was standing on and even Marc. Mickayla and I moved back to our positions across from each other and began to introduce ourselves properly asking where the other went to school and our grades and so on. We eventually found out that we were the same age and lived not so far away from each other. All this time, a friend was right around the corner. I thought of all the times we probably passed each other at the mall and in grocery stores.

During our conversation, Mickayla had asked if I knew a girl named Keara. I replied with a shy smile and shifting eyes "No, I'm not really friends with

anyone here.” “Oh well you’ll meet her, she’s working Sundays too, starting next weekend!” Mickayla said. *This girl is strange but I like her.* Moments after meeting both Mickayla and Kory, I decided I would have to stay a little longer, because how could I give up these possible new friends?

The weekend after that, I met Keara. She was incredibly sweet and kindness seeped out of her deep blue eyes. Keara was joyful and as friendly as Mickayla and Kory. That was the best shift I had thus far. These people made a long day feel like only minutes of laughter and enjoyment.

Later I found out Keara lived in a house in my town that I had driven by all the time. She was right there that whole time.

I had struggled so much my whole young life to make friends. I had been bullied all through elementary school, and middle school wasn’t much better. I had lost all but one friend during the pandemic for many reasons. I lost some simply because online learning and quarantine put wedges between us. Others I chose to distance myself from because I learned things about them that I couldn’t respect. I wouldn’t stay around these people just because it meant I’d be alone. I felt sick everyday, that tenseness in my chest reminding me that I felt just alone as I actually was. *I really am alone.*

The people within the walls of Panera on Washington Ave Extension were not safe from ignorance or pandemics but there was the chance they’d be better than my previous friends. I couldn’t give up on them just yet. I stayed at Panera for two years after this encounter. Two years of good memories, sneaking around corners to scare each other, and inappropriate jokes that we got warnings from Marc for because “The customers can hear you guys”. It was here I made lifelong friendships.

Mickayla, Kory, and Keara are three of my best friends to this day. I’m convinced there is a red thread of fate tying us all together. We could not say a word to each other for a month and come back together like no time has passed at all. They are the kind of friends

everyone wishes they had, the kind I had hoped for my entire life up to this point. They are the type of friends that you always know are there for you. I always know they are with me no matter how far I travel and I know they feel the same.

I wish I had a more romantic story about how I met these wonderful people. We certainly deserved better than that Panera, but I suppose the best things come most unexpectedly.

I’m not religious or even spiritual, but moments and people like these make me believe that there’s some higher power. Someone somewhere saw me that day and just hoped I was strong enough to hold out for one more shift. If Mickayla hadn’t spoken to me, I would have never known her, Kory, or Keara at all. I would have walked out of Panera that day and never looked back. I don’t know why this higher power or god or whatever it may be chose to bring me these people in Panera bread. Out of all the places but looking back it makes sense in an incalculable way. It’s almost like it was a game of “Can Kaleigh wait long enough to realize her soulmates are right in front of her?” If I’ve learned anything from these memories, it’s that sometimes you just have to look up.

I feel proud to say I waited for the right people and did not keep old friends because I was afraid of being alone. I feel lightness in my chest when I think about how I was strong enough to wait and I feel like I earned these friends. I didn’t just stumble upon them or have to get along because we were in the same small school where choices were limited. I chose these people, and I will choose them again in every single lifetime. Now every time I see someone in food service or anywhere at all visibly having a hard time, I keep a little thought on the edge of my sleeve for them saying *Just wait. You’ll see.* Who knows maybe it wasn’t a higher power that day, just another person who could see my own future right in front of them because they were me at some point.

Kaleigh Conners is a Fashion Design major. She is from Albany, NY and has never written a narrative essay before this.

A “Revaluation” of Giving Credit Where Credit is Due

By Audrey Cowan

My father always remarked that I was too smart for my own good.

This was fairly rich coming from him, the often-unemployed high school dropout who was recently divorced from my Mom. He loathed the fact that we now lived an hour’s drive away from the home where my brother and I would’ve been destined to graduate from a high school class of 31 students and eventually become either the Assistant Manager at our town’s Brookshire Brother’s or a teen parent junkie hooked on horse. However, his destiny for us never came to be, and he seemed to subconsciously resent us for our mom’s decisions.

“So, what’re you learning in school, girl?” His hoarse voice barked out of him as he took a deep drag of his lit Malboro. Catching me off guard like this was a special gift of his and my seven year old wit still had a lot of practice to endure to truly navigate his tests.

“In Ms. Stanfield’s class, we’re starting to learn about the American Revolution and I already aced the vocabulary test,” I responded eagerly with my head snapping over towards him. His car was filled with garbage that caused me to curl up my short legs onto the passenger seat, but the destination of the Liberty Municipal’s public basketball court erased all of the potential health hazards from my mind.

“Spell revolution,” He quipped as he tightened his thin lips around his cigarette.

My father’s validation of me was the highest prize I could ever achieve, better than any honor roll certificate could ever treat me. I thought as I articulated slowly, “R-e-v-a-l-u-t-i-o-n.”

A cloud of smoke and the sound of his fingers snapping in disappointment filled the 2000 Toyota Camry’s cabin as he grumbled, “Wrong. Name one battle from the Revolutionary War?”

I scrunch my face up in disgust at the ever-familiar stench of burnt tobacco and as I struggled to recall a single proper noun, let alone name a battle, “The Boston Massacre?”

All of my juvenile confidence had drained from my body as I watched my father’s jaw begin to grind and his calloused hands recklessly switched road lanes. My heart fell to my gut as he drove past the faded sign that I had adored for years.

“We’re not going to play basketball?” I protested with a furrowed brow as I anxiously picked at my nail beds.

My father rubbed his wrinkled forehead and asserted, “Not until you start retaining some information in that smart-ass head.”

His words echoed in my chest and my ears burned scarlet in humiliation. I gazed at the forsaken basketball rolling among the trash beneath my feet, fearful of where my manic father was taking us.

A seat-gripping hour drive later, I glanced up and vaguely recognized the grand emerald-and-beige building in front of the parking lot. The Barnes and Noble in Beaumont, TX was known for its size and it did not disappoint on that September morning. Large forest green pillars welcomed my clueless baby brother and I as we mindlessly trailed after our father through the meticulously organized aisles of various genres. We hesitantly turned the corner into the informational books section and I approached the figure of him squatting down to the lowest shelf, significantly creasing his beat-up work boots.

The row was full of “Smithsonian-this,” “Merriam-that,” and other bewildering words that weren’t yet in my precocious vocabulary. My face was formed into a sour expression as my view scanned over large books I would typically find on my Grandpa’s bedside

table to reference for crossword puzzles. These were “old people” books that didn’t compare to my beloved copies of the Percy Jackson series at home, and I surely didn’t want a book to bond over with my 85-year-old grandfather.

“You see this?” My father’s demand snapped me out of my now-ageist thoughts, and I quickly turned to him with improved posture. He was holding an object I can only describe as a paper brick that had miscellaneous images printed on the cover. There was a detailed photo of a wild tiger, a portion of the periodic table of elements, and the map of the United States. The most crucial detail to my father though was the large price tag at the bottom corner that carried a number that I had only solved for in math class a handful of times. “This is an almanac. This shit costs money, girl,” He exclaimed, ignoring the odd glares from an elderly couple on the same aisle.

“Is it like a dictionary?” I questioned with an uneasy scowl tugging at my face.

“Almost. Except this one’s got information you’ll actually need in life. Mathematical factors, different weather conditions, y’know, no synonyms,” My father explained as he flipped through the thick pages quickly, then continuing, “Now, this is gonna be expensive, so I need your smartass to actually absorb some facts before next Sunday.”

I obediently nodded, but my insides recoiled at the narcissism of this grown man mocking his own daughter for her gifted intelligence. While I knew I had to learn a certain topic for the sanity of my own father, I had to find a way to also add myself to the equation.

I had to prove that I was more than this “smartass child” persona that he had crafted for me.

The next week featured many instances where I snuck my beloved 2012 National Geographic Almanac under my desk during Ms. Kargel’s lessons about long division and then later getting silent lunch for my actions. Begging my mom to let me read the book at the dinner table as I twirled Maruchan Creamy Chicken ramen onto my fork away from the delicate pages, but to no avail in my journey. Despite my dedication to this study, I still could not soak up any of the numbers in the various sections of the almanac.

I had already attempted to memorize the periodic table of elements, astrology dates, and other numerical

values as I sat at my desk in my room before going to bed on that Wednesday night. My mind was stressed beyond belief as I fretted that my father would be disappointed in my failure, but now more vitally that I’d fail in my task at proving him wrong. I let my fingers graze over the Pig’s Chinese Zodiac dates unsuccessfully one last time as I turned the page hopefully.

Fortunately, I found myself in the “gallery” of the Presidents of the United States. All 44 portraits stared back at me with their hilarious facial hair/powdered wig combos and odd hairlines and my mind began to ease. I scanned through all 44 names, technically 43 considering Cleveland, and linked their antique names with their dated portraits. Soon, when I read the last name, “James,” I’d have five different faces glancing at me in my mind to pick from. This photographic talent started to feel like a sixth sense as I then learned their birthdays, First Ladies, political parties, and other trivial aspects of their life.

Once Sunday morning came, I relished in my father’s red face breaking out into a weak grin as he “dabbed me up” in the front seat of his car. To celebrate, he said we’d go to the town’s local bar, the Lazy H, for a round or two at 8-Ball.

To clarify, the Lazy H was practically the coffee shop for the blue-collar white trash of Moss Hill, TX. No fancy cocktails were being prepared by the middle-aged bartender, Bobbie-Lynn, as she would simply greet people with the question, “Budweiser or Bud Light, baby?” The antiquated box television sets that sat in the corners of the shack would always blast the Fox Sports channel, no matter what time of the year and Travis, one of my father’s friends, was bound to bitch at how “this game doesn’t truly show the talent that the Texans got this year.” This place was the perfect place to bring your young children for them to learn how to cook frog legs in the Spring and which cigarette brands not to smoke based on the aging process everyone was at.

“Man, check out how smart my girl is, Travis. She can name every president there is,” My father boasted as I placed the dingy quarters into the pool table.

“Bull shit, Redd!” Travis countered my father’s nickname as he glared my way.

“Believe me. I can’t even name all 41 of them sons of bitches!” He cackled with his friend before continuing, “Give her a number from 1 to 44, then.” Travis turned

to me with his pool stick in hand and challenged, "21."

The number gave me no hope as I racked through the sequential order from the beginning, until I remembered. *Most of the ones in the 20s had facial hair...number 20 was Garfield who was assassinated... and after him was the one with sideburns and fat eyes like a chipmunk...* "Chester A. Arthur," I confidently stated with a smile growing on my face.

Bobbie-Lynn from behind the bar looked up from her Cricket-paid phone and checked, "She's right." The rowdy men of the bar cheered and continued to test me with their own guesses. In the moment, it felt like I was teaching them about the men who led our country.

"33?"

Weird circle glasses, "Harry S. Truman."

"10?"

Big nose, "John Tyler."

"Well damn!" Travis exclaimed, "You got some

smarts in you, girl. Must've got it from you momma." He nudged my father's shoulder and I caught the bitter expression of his face.

"Doesn't matter who she got it from, I bought her the damn book: I get credit," He scoffed from beside me.

These men have the decency to congratulate me more than my own damn father?! His credit? He spent \$25 on a book, I'm the one who read it tirelessly for hours on end!

I subtly kicked the man's foot with my hand-me-down Twinkle Toes and turned away swiftly. My father gruffly questioned, "Hey girl! You think kicking an old man is respectful?"

My stern face formed a false expression of confusion and I quipped back, "I'd learn that there have been 44 presidents, not 41, before you start preaching to me about respect, sir."

Personal Narrative

By Kaylene Ellis

I remember it being one of those fall New England days, where it is too cold for you to not wear a jacket, but too hot in the afternoon to continue wearing the jacket. Those used to be my favorite types of day. I stepped out of my car, looking down at my red swollen knee, hoping I'd receive the best of the alternative outcomes. I met up with my dad who had just pulled into the doctor's office parking lot. He stepped out of his car still in his work uniform, me still in my clothes from school. My dad looked at me and said, "You ready?" I nodded my head with a very hesitant but clear, yes, and then we started to walk into the red brick building. I looked up to the top of the building and read New England Orthopedic Doctors, and the reality started to sink in, "This is it. This could tell me if I'll have to have surgery or can return to play."

I stepped into the doors of the unknown, telling myself the next time I walked through them I would know my fate. Walking into the doctor's office was difficult for me, because of the feeling of the unknown. I'm a control freak, not knowing was the hardest thing for me, not knowing what my future held made walking through that badge door feel like I was pushing open an iron slate door. Everything was going through my head "What's gonna happen?" "Will I ever be able to play again?" The doctor's office had Halloween decorations up, trying to help take people's minds off what horrible news they may receive in just a few minutes, but they didn't take my mind off of it, instead it left me more concerned, more aware of what the doctors halls actually contained about my own body. I sat down in one of those standard medical offices waiting room chairs and just started wondering if the person that sat here before me was having the same concerns. Were they the patient or the loved one more worried than me? When I get nervous or have problems with something out of my control I ramble. The victim of

this rambling was my poor father. At this point he was sitting to my left listening to me going on and on about stuff that he generally didn't care about. At these points I always feel like I'm being the people he complains about, talking about things no one quite cares about. However, my dad being my dad he listens and nods as I just ramble on and on to him.

Then for the first time in my life the one time I didn't want someone to say my name correctly the nurse comes out and says "Kaylene Ellis?" I jumped at my name. My body reacts to the fact that this is truly it. I stood up with my dad and for the first time ever I walked first while he walked behind me. At this point in my life, I realize I'm no longer his little daughter and whatever is said in the doctor's room is my problem and I will have to cope with it. I'm no longer a child, I am an adult. This will be a major challenge in my life and ultimately change me for the better.

I followed the nurse and walked into the cold narrow walkway that reminds me of how it must've felt for the kids in Narnia when they walked through the closet into the freezing cold unknown. I walked forward, counting every step, "One, am I gonna be okay? Two, will I get to play again? Three, will it hurt? Four, how will I get through this?" Finally making it to the hollow door I've been dreading for the past two weeks, we walked in and the nurse in her calm childish pitched voice said, "the doctor will be in soon." I sat down on the medical bed, hearing the crackling of the white sheet, reminding me of the sound I heard my knee make when I went down on the field hockey field. Then the door swung open and behind it was my fate. The doctor looked down at the white paper that held my diagnosis, he looked up at me and my whole senior season went down the drain with what he said "you fully tore your ACL." The news sent a full shock through my body unaware of what was going to hap-

pen, more unknown, and more confusion. The most challenging moment in my life just began. All the years since 6th grade I had worked exceptionally hard to make my senior season my best season yet. This season was the most important one out of all of them. I needed this season to prove to colleges I'm good and hopefully get recruited, but now that's a lot harder and almost impossible. After I heard the shocking news, just like my knee, my "best season yet" was now in shambles.

I stood still in shock. Unaware of what was happening right now, I looked over to my father. He gave me the concerned dad face, then proceeded to talk to the doctor. They started conversing back and forth. I heard none of it. My body was numb. I was at a loss for words and a loss for movement. I didn't know how to move on from there. How does a senior in high school just about to start their new life and head out to do great things; to now having restrictions and almost having to start fully over. The doctor then went into grave detail about the next steps. Surgery, physical therapy and return to play, in that order that's how the next 6-9 months of my life would go. I hate it, my life being dictated by my knee, unable to control anything within my life. I would have to learn how to allow myself to let go of some control in order to heal. This is how it had to go if I ever wanted to be out on the field again.

December 22, 2021 was the big day of my surgery. I remembered waking up thinking here we go, this is the starting line with a finish line somewhere, nowhere in sight. This was it, the gun went off for the longest marathon I will ever run in my life, the fight to get back on top starts now. Physical therapy after physical therapy learning how to redo everything that once was easy and came to me naturally. Walking again was the hardest, it made me feel like a vulnerable six-month-old baby wobbling and unable to stand and trust my own legs. When I first started redoing everything, I looked weak. I looked like a scared puppy with greasy unwashed hair, on day three of wearing the same clothes and sores under my arms from crutching every day. For the next four weeks crutches were my new legs. I crutched everywhere, almost dying a couple of times due to black ice, relying on parents and friends to drive me anywhere I needed to go, bed bound for my whole Christmas vacation. Being bed bound, and dependent on others for weeks of my life took a toll on

me. I felt hopeless and living life dictated by others, having no control. This is where I first had to teach myself losing control needs to happen sometimes in order to regain your self again. Realizing this is one of the hardest moments of my life for me. This is not how I wanted to ring in the new year of 2022, but it was. I watched the ball drop from my room and as I watched that glass ball fall from high in the air and shatter, it showed me I can do this, 2022 is my year. By the end of this new bright and shiny year I will be a new Kaylene and be back on the field by the fall.

After 8 months of long intense physical therapy sessions, fall came around and I DID IT. Months of physical therapy, months of learning to run the right way, months of learning to trust my own legs again. I had been cleared to play in our next game. That game had finally come. I remember it being the longest bus ride ever, knowing this was it I will be stepping back out on the field sometime in the game today. Sitting in that small coach bus for two and a half hours only forced me to be in my head, while all my other teammates slept I was running through every play in my head, every skill I know and everything the coach had taught us during practices. I reran every thing I know about field hockey, until we reach the college, Albertus Magnus, the first time I will play in a collegiate level field hockey game. This was a very important game, college field hockey, nothing like high school and if I ever wanted to see any more playing time this season I needed to prove myself in this game. I step off the bus with my lucky game day hair, (two dutch braids pulled back into a high bun), my white game jersey with my lucky number 8 written right on the center, my lucky white under armor socks, and my lucky turf shoes and shin guards, I've had since the sixth grade.

I remember stepping off the bus and the cold autumn brisk air hitting me in the face. Reminding me of the day I stepped out of my car before hearing about what was wrong with my knee. I started walking, counting my steps again "one, this is it I'm back. Two, what if I get hurt again? Three, what if I choke under the pressure of the game? Four, I've got this. Five, here we go game time. Six, time to shine and prove myself."

We made it to the field, and the game started. The crowd was cheering, I saw my mom in the far right corner. It was almost the end of the game and officially my time to shine. Hearing my name called on the sideline to go in made up for the past hatred for the nurse

saying my name correctly, I ran up to my coach who had called my name, and said “you ready, this is your time to shine.” I shook my head with no hesitation and proceeded to step on the field. My teammates cheered, knowing how hard I worked for this, my mom on the side lines being so proud of me for overcoming something she knew was the most difficult thing I’ve ever had to do. I thrived on the field, I showed my teammates, my coach, my family and even myself, how all the hard work paid off and my knee once holding me back finally allowed me to thrive and prove myself to everyone.

It was the fourth quarter in my first game back. I remember completely forgetting about my knee and playing as if nothing ever happened to me and there were no setbacks. I ran, something that was once a major challenge for me, turned back into second nature. I

pivot with my knee, something that used to worry me and something I thought could never happen again. I ran, I ran faster than I ever had in my life to the left side of our huge field hockey goal, I’m there I put my stick down and bam, I scored my first collegiate goal, made in my first collegiate game and first game back post injury. Making that goal was not only a big moment for my field hockey career but the biggest moment of my life. I proved to myself I now dictate my life, I now have the control again and it was the most freeing moment I had post injury. I ran off that field with the biggest smile on my face, I looked over to my mom in the corner and she was jumping in excitement. I could see how proud she was of me at that moment. At that point I knew I had just overcome one of the hardest points in my life. I now can live life outside of my own control, something I never once felt comfortable with before.

Tough Love

By Jack Fittz

I heard pounding on my door, and I knew what that meant. It was five-thirty in the morning, and I had to wake up and get ready for school. As I slowly opened my weary eyes, I glance over to see a shadow through the crack in my old wooden door. Just the sight of it filled me with embarrassment and guilt. It's never gotten physical before. No bed, just a mattress on the floor with an off-white comforter. It doesn't lead to a good night's sleep, but I make do. I gradually roll out of bed to stand up in a stupor. At that moment, my mom barges through the door; "Get out of bed! We can't do this every morning!" Just like clockwork, right on time. It's like I'm trapped in the movie *Groundhog's Day*.

My mom and I have a very unique relationship. We love each other unconditionally, a bond that can never be broken, but we never see eye to eye. My mother and I are both incredibly stubborn, opinionated, head-strong, and most of all, we hate admitting when we are wrong.

It was a perfect summer day. I was at the beach with my friends; we couldn't be happier. Powdered sugar covered my sleeves from the fried dough, and my friend hugged the giant stuffed teddy bear she won at the arcade. The boardwalk was a six-minute drive from my family's beach house. My mom warned, "Anytime you need a pick-up, give a fifteen-minute warning so I can come to get you." Knowing how my mom and I are, I made a quick note on my phone, just in case it became an issue later. The waves aggressively crashed down on the beach, but that's how I liked it. Ever since I was a kid, I've loved the ocean. The cold blue water glistening from the sun's warmth always made me feel at peace. The white cotton candy clouds started to roll in, so my friends and I moved toward the boardwalk to grab an early dinner. About 20

minutes into the evening, my pocket started buzzing. It was the emergency weather alarm. On my screen, in bold white letters, it read, "Flash Flood Warning, Seek Shelter Immediately." So I promptly called my mom to come to pick us up and gave her fifteen minutes of wiggle room. The storm was short, and everyone had abandoned the boardwalk. Nothing but debris and trash remained, whipped about by the squall. My mom called, wondering where we were. I told her that we were "on the boardwalk. We'll start walking to make it easier on you since it's a one-way street."

Despite my intention of making it easier for her to get to us, she wanted us to stay still so she could find us more easily. Lo and behold, this turned into an unnecessary argument between the two of us. It's always the minor things that set us off, but usually, it comes down to whose way makes the most sense.

Over the phone, fighting tooth and nail, I must have looked like a psycho walking down the wet, abandoned boardwalk screaming like that. Jabbing at anything we could to get the other person to give in. "Where are you?" she shouted. I could see my mom's car in the distance. "Nevermind, I see you," she blurted out as she slowly pulled over. The car screeched to a halt. My friends glanced at each other with uncertainty, wondering what would happen next. We all hopped in, and with a big welcoming smile, she asked how our day was and continued our day as if nothing happened. This was typical after a shouting match. Once it's over, we both move on.

Over the years, my dad learned it's best not to intervene when my mom and I are having one of our disagreements. No matter whose side he was on, he couldn't win, and it only made the other person angrier. It was five in the evening, and my dad was in

the kitchen making his famous dinner... hot dogs and beans. The smell of this boiled repugnant meat lingered in the air as the beans lay cold and soggy in the strainer. It was nothing less than nauseating. The day prior, my mom said we could get Chipotle, which is my favorite, so I didn't hesitate to remind her. She looked up from her watercolor painting with a confused look, "I never said we could get Chipotle tonight." My mom tends to make bold statements and say she's going to do something and later completely forget, but I don't. I reiterate, "Last night, when I asked, you said we could tomorrow. I'm tired of hot dogs and beans." Without hesitation, she completely denied what I said, "You must be mistaken." Absolutely not! This is a running argument we have on the constant. She's made hundreds of bold and promising statements before. I knew I wasn't "mistaken." This wasn't my first rodeo, and I've learned to write it down in my phone whenever my mom makes any of these declarations.

Whenever she "forgets" something, she immediately claims I'm in the wrong, and she's convinced I'm gaslighting her. Slightly disappointed, but not enough to care. I say, "If you don't want to get Chipotle tonight, that's fine, but don't say I'm mistaken because I'm not." Just like that, we were screaming at each other like we have so many times before. It's no longer about Chipotle; it's about each other's word, about whose truth is right. She'd scream, "I'm manipulative," and I clap back with, "you're a liar." Anytime there's a sign of tension between my mother and me, my father calmly stands up and walks downstairs to breed his fish, but that's a story for another time.

In high school, I was told my family and I needed to see a therapist, and the school administration wouldn't take no for an answer. We followed suit, despite our less-than-eager dispositions. Don't get me wrong, therapy is a fantastic thing, and I believe everyone should have someone to talk to unbiasedly, no matter how big or small the problem. Even so, It's incredibly impertinent and insolent to pry into another family's affairs without proper first-hand knowledge. Every family has a different dynamic, so what made ours lesser? Instead of helping, this "professional" would simply come into our home, and only stir the pot, making everybody feel bitter and defensive.

In an enthusiastic condescending tone, practically whispering, he said, "Carrie, what do you think you

did wrong? And Jack, how did that make you feel.?" He slowly raised his hands to his mouth, resting his thumbs on his chin while tapping his fingers, waiting ever so intently for a response that was never coming. My mom is a caring person and would never do anything to hurt someone's feelings, but when she's had enough, everyone could tell. She looked at my dad and then me; we briefly locked eyes. At that moment, we both knew exactly what we were thinking. "I'm sorry, this isn't going to work out. This isn't how we do things around here. You can't just come into our home, bring up difficult topics then leave 45 minutes later with everything unresolved. How is this beneficial?" she was an unmovable mountain, and no amount of persuasion was going to change her mind. "I understand where you're coming from, I've had many clients like you." His overly empathic way of speaking made me want to rip my hair out. Before he could even finish his thought, she snapped back more forcefully, "Well you obviously don't understand because we wouldn't somehow be having more issues after you leave each time." It's incredibly challenging to get the whole family down for a session, especially when none of us don't want to be there, and frankly, I think he knew that.

When it boils down to it, most of our confrontations come from some sort of disconnection in our communication. Whether that's one of us not letting the other finish their sentence, forgetting we made a commitment, or a simple misinterpretation. My mom and I are both guilty of doing this.

It was three days before my first day of college. My high school career had been nothing short of terrible, and my anxiety only worsened my worries about the unknown. I expressed this to my mother while driving to a doctor's appointment; she was empathetic and accommodating. She said with a genuine maternal smile, "Anytime you need Dad or me to pick you up, give us a call, and then we can drive you back in the morning; we'll figure it out." The uneasy feeling in my stomach about the unknown vanished just like that. I was so grateful and appreciative; getting into a university is a major accomplishment for anyone, but my parents and I struggled to get to this point, so having that safety net made the transition smooth with little concern.

It was my third day of classes, and I was incredibly stressed. My mind was racing through exaggerated thoughts and jumping to the worst conclusions, "I'm

going to fail. I'm not going to make any friends. College wasn't meant for someone like me." I picked up my phone, tears forming in my eyes and my lip starting to quiver. I called my mom. I begged her to pick me up so I could go home, sleep it off, then come back in the morning for class. As quick as that call started, it ended, "No, you didn't even give it a shot; we're not coming to get you." Her harsh tone echoed in my head, and my safety net burned before my eyes. I was left in disbelief, speechless. My parents didn't want me to come home. Why wouldn't they pick me up? That was the foundation I built my first month of college on. I called back and discussed the plan we made as a family, and she said, "We can't do that." After that, we didn't speak for a week.

On her birthday, she came to drop off some stuff I left behind, but she didn't want to come in. The marble cake I bought slowly melted in my cramped dorm room on a plastic plate next to the antique Native American turquoise earrings I picked out for her, unwanted and alone. This wasn't an argument; it was a betrayal.

Ultimately we worked it out, and we talk almost every day, but I'm still hurt. I now understand where she was coming from, after a lengthy conversation. She was worried I wouldn't live on campus and adjust if I relied on the ability to go home when needed. However, I still wish I'd known that beforehand.

To this day, I still have arguments with my mother. In fact, we went at it a little while ago when she drove up to drop off some college work I'd left at home. I'm not going to lie and say we've resolved our issues, and everything's all hunky dory, but each day we are working on ourselves, growing and learning alongside one another. None of us are perfect, showing that no fight, conflict, or argument can get in the way of genuine love for the other person.

It was a mid-winter night, the moon's radiant rays illuminated the frozen blades of grass below, leaving a murky fog gliding across the ground. My college application deadlines were coming up and I was incredibly stressed. A big part of the application process is writing a college essay. Pen to paper for nights on end, I couldn't think of anything to write about. All

this pressure and high expectations were crushing me. Then it hit me; words started to flow out of me as if I already knew what to write. The next day at school I shared my essay with my guidance counselor. It was so beautifully written I could see tears forming in her eyes. My college essay was a personal narrative of myself walking along an icy road and being physically attacked by my paranoia personified as a person, but it wasn't till the last line you understood it was paranoia.

It was my graduation day, and everyone was in their seats, students, and family alike. My principal was happy to see us move on, but you could tell it was bittersweet for her, leaving the kids she guided for years. "I had the honor of reading one of our students' college essays, so I would like to invite him up here so he can share it with you all." My heart was pounding, and my palms sweaty, I walk onto the stage, all eyes were on me. I pulled out my folded essay from my pocket, placed it on the pedestal, and started reading. My mom in the middle row, raising a napkin to her eye, thinking, with a whimpering smile, "You did it Jack." As I was nearing the end, I paused, took a deep breath, and read the last line, "Of course, I wanted to believe this meant goodbye, but we both knew that my paranoia and I would meet again, and just as quickly as he came, he left." There was a brief reaction from the crowd, an "awe," some sniffles, and then complete silence. I picked up my essay and walked across stage, but before I could make it off, people started clapping and gave me a standing ovation.

At the after-party, when people celebrated, sharing stories and eating cake, my mom came up to me and threw her arms around me. Her head over my shoulder, and I could hear crying. Trying to get her words out, she whispered, "It was beautiful, Jack. I couldn't be prouder. You can do anything you put your mind to. I love you so much."

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Genre Report on Coverage of High-Speed Rail in the United States

By Nathan Gardner

Public transportation has become a highly debated and politicized issue in the United States in recent times, causing the idea of the high-speed rail to become the subject of articles, journals, and many other forms of writing. Due to the topic's prominence, opinion pieces such as "Why the United States will never have high-speed rail" began to emerge, using a variety of politically charged explanations as a basis to take aim at the supposedly idealistic concept of a quality high-speed rail system being put into place in the United States. Of course, not all articles relating to the matter are incredibly slanted in nature, with articles like "U.S. Cities Play Catch-Up on High-Speed Rail" taking more of a bigger picture approach of the situation as it stands and identifying key moments in the development without any real semblance of a partisan tone. However, for true impartiality and objective content, we can refer to academic journals such as "The Political Economy of High Speed Rail in the United States," which present insightful peer-reviewed and research-based analysis on the topic from a detached perspective. The differences in approach from publication to publication are evident and exemplify how politicization of a topic can shift rhetorical techniques from informative to partisan in certain situations, which makes understanding the genre and sourcing of writing pieces very important when building perspective on such a topic.

There is a laundry list of topics that have become highly politicized, and these topics often attract news articles that present a partisan opinion on the issue based on the author's politics. The article, "Why the United States will never have high-speed rail" from *The Washington Post* is no exception. *The Washington Post* was originally a print newspaper founded in 1877 on the values of independence and truth (Cabe & Lundberg, 2014). Now, the post publishes articles

online, including opinion pieces such as "Why the United States will never have high-speed rail". The author, Megan McArdle, has identified herself as a person with conservative beliefs, which helps to explain the scathing thesis of the article ("Megan McArdle", 2022). Ideologically speaking, conservative people are less likely to support government projects such as a high-speed rail system that would be funded in part by taxpayers. The thesis is obviously meant to grab attention simply because of how borderline-hyperbolic it is, and the author proceeds to structure the article in an argumentative manner with what can be boiled down to a list of factors that are expanded upon in a corresponding paragraph. Each of these paragraphs identify obstacles that would likely impede the progress of the construction of the high-speed rail, but the negative thesis remains at the forefront, as no solutions are offered so that these difficulties appear insurmountable (McArdle, 2019).

This thesis helps to propel an overall negative tone held by the author when referencing the potential of high-speed rail projects in the United States. A great example of this tone is in the line, "But voters elsewhere should pay close attention, because what happened in California illustrates the perils that face any U.S. rail project, or for that matter, any project at all that tries to meaningfully reshape U.S. infrastructure." (McArdle, 2019), where the author uses pessimistic word choices to make a high-speed rail system appear to be an impossibility based solely on how California's government has had a difficult time constructing one. This tone aids the thesis in portraying the idea that there should be no hope or optimism about the future of the high-speed rail in the United States. The author seems almost forlorn when bemoaning the severity of obstacles in quotations such as, "Sadly, there is no one reason; rather, there are many reasons, all of

them hard-to-impossible to fix, all of them conspiring to deprive us of the (gee-whiz!) trains that many of us would like to ride.” (McArdle, 2019). This tone is comically negative and persists throughout the article to create an overall negative theme.

Additionally, several design choices and article features make it clear that this article is intended to spark debate between political ideologies and not simply just inform or analyze in an independent matter. The most obvious of these is the large ‘Opinion’ denotation that is aligned at the top of the webpage next to the article title, which helps to inform the audience that the article’s purpose is to target an audience that either agrees or disagrees with the overall sentiment (McArdle, 2019). It’s also worth noting that this article is accompanied by a comments section to facilitate this debate, which received about 3100 comments before the section was closed (McArdle, 2019). Furthermore, there is also an option included in the middle of the article where readers can choose to follow the author’s opinions and other articles, which further illustrates how the author and probably even the publication anticipate a division and an agree/disagree response from the audience of their opinion pieces (McArdle, 2019).

A much less opinionated approach to the subject matter of the high-speed rail can be observed in *US News*’ “U.S. Cities Play Catch-Up on High-Speed Rail” magazine article. The main purpose of this magazine article is one that is more fact-based and objective, likely because of how news magazine articles are often written for either a broader audience or the public in general (“Scholarly vs popular articles”, n.d.). The article is notably free of speculation or much analysis like that of the previous *Washington Post* article but aligns with *The Post*’s original goal of independence (Cabe & Lundberg, 2014). The article’s informative purpose is furthered by the article’s components, which are mostly details about the progress of high-speed rail in the United States over the years, and quotes from relevant people having to do with high-speed rail development. The informational purpose of this article can be seen clearly when the author, Trevor Bach (2019), writes,

In February, incoming Gov. Gavin Newsom admitted the state’s highly ambitious, \$100 billion Los Angeles-San Francisco bullet train network remained a pipe dream: After countless delays, cost increases, and municipal battles, only a small amount of track

has been built, in the state’s Central Valley, and the project’s future remains uncertain. “It is a catastrophe,” says Jim Patterson, a Republican state assemblyman and prominent project critic. “This is a multibillion-dollar collapse.”

Though the article details a negative perspective regarding the development of high-speed rail in the United States, the quotation is not followed by any additional analysis or speculation, which shows how this piece is intended to be objective and informative in nature unlike the negative and opinion-driven *Washington Post* article.

In addition, style is also valuable in maintaining the informational purpose of this article. Each individual quote and example are provided in their own paragraph, which allows the reader to fragment the information and consider each different item individually so that they can make an overall judgement of the topic on their own (Bach, 2019). It is also obvious how this fragmented structure of short paragraphs aid in making the article less complex and more information based. This is in stark contrast to the *Washington Post* article, which ties information together in longer paragraphs in support of an overall thesis about the subject matter.

It’s clear that this article by *US News* falls into an interesting genre category by today’s news standards. This sort of objective and information-based writing has somewhat fallen by the wayside in favor of opinion pieces especially in major publications like *The Washington Post*, which produced an opinionated article having to do with essentially the same subject matter. While this genre provides no real analysis or conclusions on the topic, it is valuable in how it informs the reader with legitimate information and contains no artificial slant or portrayal of the matter, leaving the reader to develop their own perspective on the subject.

Another genre that presents a less opinionated approach to the topic of high-speed rail development in the United States are academic journals. Academic journals are widely considered to be more credible than most magazine and news articles because of their quantity of references and meticulous review process (“Source evaluation”, n.d.). Like the majority of journals, “The Political Economy of High Speed Rail in the United States” attempts analyze the topic at hand and identify complex nuances within the subject mat-

ter such as cause and effect relationships. The purpose of this source is similar to that of the *US News* source, but it goes further in offering explanations to the observed information about high-speed rail development in the United States. This complex analysis can be seen when the author, Michael Minn (2013), goes in depth with the topic, such as the lines,

HSR could be as influential in ushering in a new era of American respect for each other and the commons as HSR's historical forebears were in leading to the unsustainable present. But more likely it would simply further geographic class stratification in the same way that late nineteenth century railroads fostered the development of railroad suburbs and allowed the wealthy to glide away from the fetid working-class urban environments of industrialized America. (Class section, para. 10)

As you can see from this extended quotation, much of this journal's analysis comes from comparisons to previous situations and uses relevant justifications in creating explanations for the potential of the high-speed rail in the United States.

Structure also plays a part in creating an academic and trustworthy appeal for this academic journal. The overall layout is logical, as a long collection of text is broken down into subsections (Minn, 2013). Within those subsections are smaller paragraphs that offer explanations and pose questions to the reader based on observed characteristics of the subject matter. These subsections are titled with a variety of factors that influence the titular 'political economy' surrounding the high-speed rail, and many historical allusions are made so as to explain what types of ideologies are responsible for creating the modern circumstances surrounding the development of the high-speed rail in the United States (Minn, 2013).

Lastly, the genre of this source heavily affects how it is constructed. Given the academic and the professional ramifications of this type of journal, it is no surprise that the contents of the text are polished and organized. This also impacts the writing style as one would expect. The text is full of long clarifications and explanations of how certain elements of discourse

about the subject matter developed, leaving nothing up to interpretation. In addition, the academic expectations of this genre are also present in just how many sources are referenced throughout the text as means to account for all other works that were used in the development of the author's analysis of the subject matter (Minn, 2013).

In conclusion, it's clear that coverage of the development of high-speed rail in the United States has become intensely politicized, causing rhetorical techniques to become slanted and biased in major news coverage of the topic. These rhetorical techniques and strategies are important to note when getting any information from any publication, and it make sure that the variety of factors that go into these writing pieces are considered when making a judgement of a topic. With debates about the validity of journalism and information in general at the forefront of U.S. politics, it's more important than ever to consider the rhetorical techniques present in all types of sources when generating your own educated perspective on politicized issues such as high-speed rail development.

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Competing Effectively

By Alyssa Guglielmo

From a young age, I struggled to approach competition in a positive way. I set unreachable expectations that damaged my self-esteem and complicated how I worked in a team. In organized athletics, teams are put together forming bonds and communities to compete against another group of people. In this circumstance, everyone pushes the importance of teamwork. Unfortunately, I was led astray by my own performance anxiety. Soccer was the sport I participated in for the longest amount of time. Uncoincidentally, this sport also made the largest difference in my life. It taught me many lessons as time progressed, bettering myself as a player and a human being. One experience I have of my soccer career rewired how I viewed being on a team and competing against others.

In the fall season of 2013, my soccer team had a game miles away from my suburban town. My dad drove me to the field, getting me a donut on our way, while he bought a much-needed coffee. The autumn air brushed against my face, leaving my nose and cheeks a pale pink. It was the type of air so crisp that it hurt to breathe. I ran out of the car with my cleats banging on the pavement as I gazed upon the wide field coated in white paint. Towering nets sat across from each other, making me shiver in fear to be the goaltender. Fear settled in, remembering there's trampling pressure on the goalie. *If I let a goal in, that is only on me...a major responsibility.* Though the air was so frigid, sweat formed on my forehead. Luckily, I would only be in front of the net during the second half, causing me to exhale with relief.

My team gathered on to the dewy blades of grass, dampening the socks around our ankles. Many smiles spread across my friend's and teammates' rosy faces, dissimilar to my determined, yet worried grimace. They casually dribbled into a huddle, without a worry. I wondered why I did not feel the same. Although I

share the same passion as my teammates, I lacked the understanding of friendly competition. But they did not possess the same anxiety of losing. I struggled to find a healthy view on competition in sports. While the other girls looked to win against the other team and have fun, I wished to be flawless in the way I played. If I made one wrong move, I would force my ego to plummet. I snapped out of my disturbed daze to meet the rest of the team in a circle.

We chatted and then started our warm-ups, running around the perimeter of the field. After a lap, we returned to the net practicing passes, moves, and scoring. My two coaches watched everyone vary in skill, proud of what we have learned throughout the season.

The game began and we all played moderately well, passing, communicating, and running up and down the field. The first half came to an end with a score of two on each team. But then, it was time for the second half.

My heartbeat echoed within my chest, pounding against my eardrums. *It is time.* I jogged into the rectangle drawn in white paint, standing in front of the goal posts. The rubbery gloves on my hands glowed bright against my white uniform, colored neon green and orange. They were mucky and stained a grass-colored green from the past wearers. Bright clouds saturated the entire sky above me, illuminating the field with a white reflection. I paced within the white lines, eyes glued on the ball. The moisture from the grass cascaded over the ball, spraying high enough to reach everyone's kneecaps. I was thankful my team had been performing well, keeping the action on the other team's side.

Just then, my pleased demeanor came to a halt, seeing a girl on the other team had a breakaway rushing directly towards the net that stood behind me. Her jersey glowed red, taunting me. I began to panic, bending my knees with my hands out, trying to create

an effective stance. My palms grew damp with nervous sweat. I felt the small hairs that framed my face brush against my forehead, curling due to the perspiration. *How is a scrawny nine-year-old girl expected to cover a four-meter-long space?* I put on a brave face, ready to catch wherever this ball was going. *The game is almost over. I need to block this.* I took a step forward as she approached the defensive players on my team. The girl in the red jersey skillfully dribbled the ball and maneuvered her way past my teammates. She was on fire. My eyes frantically darted around to monitor her body language, cleats, and the ball. This gave me potential intel of where her shot would go so I could catch or block it. She slowed her pace, sliding the ball to the right with her foot. In the corner of my eye, I saw my dad sitting on the edge of his chair on the sidelines. *This is the moment. You can't screw up. It's your chance to make everyone proud.* Her right leg swung back, readying to strike. Inhaling as hard as I could, I prepared for the blow. My arms moved upwards and I positioned my feet to be staggered, one in front of the other. She kicked the ball. It launched into the air along with a few sprinkles of dew. I could hear my whole team gasp, relying on me to block the shot. I shuffled my feet. The ball flew to my right, passing me as I jumped to block it. *It was too late.* I heard the chime of the ball hitting the back goalpost and the net whooshing backwards. That was followed by a loud cheer from the other team.

My teammates stood still looking down at the grass. I looked at my coaches, who had slightly disappointed expressions. They began clapping and yelling to my team, "It's ok. Let's bounce back!" It reminded me of when an actor is nominated for an award, but loses to another. The losing actor then has to put on a brave face and clap for their victor, unhappy about the situation, but unable to show their distress. I grew pessimistic. *We can't bounce back. There's barely any time left in the game and they are leading by one point. And it's all my fault.* My chest tightened and my eyes shut. As the whistle blew to continue the game, tears formed within my eyes, piling up above my bottom eyelashes. My nose burned from the extreme emotions I felt, telling me I was going to sob. I stood with blurred vision and a wet face because of the cascading tears. Time ran out and the score remained three points against two points, a loss for my team. Our competitors hollered at their victory and hugged each other in

the center of the field, jumping with glee.

I took my sweat covered gloves off, wiping my distraught face on my uniform. I ran from the net to the coaches and placed my gloves in a bag. They noticed my tear-stained cheeks flushed of all colors, except a bright red. I sniffled as they took me aside from the team. They questioned, "what's wrong Alyssa?"

"I messed up and lost the game for us," I responded. My dad saw us talking and jogged across the field to meet us. His expression fell when he saw my swollen, sorrowful face. He crouched down to my height.

My dad comforted me with words uttering, "Don't give up. It's not your fault. You tried your best. It was only one goal." I tried to steady my breath.

One of my coaches commented, "You're part of a team. It's not only up to you." They all sweetly reassured me as my skin tone returned to its original hue.

The coaches urged, "This is a team sport and a family that works together to compete against another team. We all make mistakes, but you can rely on your team to back you up. It's never you against everyone else." This statement truly struck something in me. The cool air dried my face and I only had a few sniffles left. I realized they were all right. I had been looking at competition so seriously that I lost what it was truly about. It is not about trying to be flawless; it is about community and working as one. My teammates walked over and gave me a group hug. Everyone had skills to improve on and I was never alone with my defeat.

Several weeks after that game, my team had another game out of town. The weather was sunny and cool without a cloud in the sky. The sun warmed the grass below our cleats. We were all excited to play and try our best. I began forming a healthy relationship with competition without anxiety of not performing perfectly. My dad and coaches erupted the concept of hope, teamwork, and community in my mind. We warmed up, running around the field and dribbling. I was goalkeeper again for this game. But this time it was different. I went through a transformation of mindset. Rather than having performance anxiety prior to playing, I only was experiencing excitement. I was so grateful to be on a team that made me feel like family.

The game began as I stood in front of the net with the same dirty, neon gloves I wore previously. A smile

spread across my face, satisfied with how far I have come. The piercing whistle blew to start the game. As time passed, I watched my teammates advance the ball to the other side and defend our half. While my friend was fighting for the ball with a player of the other team, the ball broke out and started coming my way. Another girl on the opposite team rushed to the ball, dribbling it even further towards the net I was protecting. The two defensemen on my team rushed to aid me, trying to mess up the girl kicking the ball. The girl was covered in an emerald green uniform. I got into my stance, widening my opportunity to catch the shot. The girl in the green uniform advanced past my teammates and got close to the net. I came closer to her, eyes shifting between her, the ball and the goal. My teammates shuffled back to assist me, stomping over the grass. The other player with the ball raised her right leg, bending her knee. Her left leg stood strong next to it. As her foot moved forwards, I put my hands out. *You've got this.* I heard the collision of her cleat and the ball, shooting it towards me. It felt like time sped up as I watched the ball graze my glove and move behind me. She scored. The whistle blew and the green team shouted a celebratory chant. I moved the netting and grabbed the ball to give it to the referee. My teammates ran to where I was and gave me a high five.

They whispered encouraging phrases such as, “don’t worry about it,” or “you did good- she was a strong player.” I smiled and nodded to agree with them. The game continued and my confidence stayed intact. Having a team that felt like family was all I could ever ask for.

Experiencing the defeat of letting a goal in, taught me that my mindset was not right for me or my team. It gave me unnecessary anxiety and had impossibly achievable standards. The conversation with my dad and coaches made me realize I had been approaching sports the wrong way. Rather than playing for the well being of my team, I was playing to prove to myself that I was meaningful and the best I could be. My mindset transformed, finding that being a part of a team meant so much more than attempting to flawlessly play. My team being there for me proved my meaningfulness, encouraging me to be the best I could be. This change squashed my performance anxiety and truly made me a team player, which is much more important.

Alyssa Guglielmo is a Fashion Design and Production major. She is from Westford, MA and organized her town's District-Wide Art Show last year.

Personal Narrative

By Jessica McNamara

At this time, I was two months into my second year of middle school. I was in 6th grade, and it was my favorite season, fall. It's a school morning like how many kids remember their school mornings: hoary skies and damp grass with slimy leaves sticking to the pavement. I slogged up the grassy hill beside my house carrying my surprisingly heavy for my light education level, backpack and lunchbox. Through the jejune atmosphere, I saw my best friend since kindergarten, Emily. She's nearly my neighbor, but her house is horizontally across the road from mine with the previously mentioned hill in between. We're both relatively shorter than other kids, so of course our similarities made us inseparable! At this time of year, her strawberry-blond hair fades back into a more pumpkin spice, very seasonally appropriate.

Something was strange though; she didn't look up at me when I made my final ascent up the hill. "Hi," I said a bit monotonously, it was still pre-sunrise after all. I was met with silence. I've always been one for blaming myself, so naturally I was sure I deserved this animosity; maybe I had done something wrong without knowing. I didn't find a drop of courage within myself to continue prodding for a response from her.

For the past month, I had felt displaced by my own friend group ever since a girl named Abigail got closer with Emily. It was typical middle school drama, but to my 12-year-old naivety, my world was crumbling. Two parallel beacons of light shot through the mist resting at the bottom of the street; it's the bus. The both of us looked down towards the school bus as a way of thanking it for dismantling the uncomfortable atmosphere. To be quite honest, I was already biting back tears. I was very sensitive at this age. Emily and I always sit on the bus together, it's been this way since we were five. Or at least since I was five, she's always been the older one. I sat down in our usual seat, but

I found myself sitting beside nobody. Although this treatment had been going on for a few days now, the little things were getting burdensome. My day was beginning on a defeated foot, and I was ready to go home.

The bus screeched into place outside of the middle school and everyone began to file out. A cornucopia of kids was scrambling into the same two doors despite there being a total of six, and as usual, I found myself lost. Emily had disappeared into the crowd so hastily; it must have been intentional. My mind was like a record player that kept skipping, questioning what I did wrong as I went through my motions: go to my locker, unlock the locker, don't mess up the combination, get into homeroom, go to class... I felt so lonesome without my favorite person. It's not that she wasn't there, she most definitely was, but it felt like I didn't exist to her anymore. Emily and I had assigned seats next to each other in every class. I thought maybe if I sat there long enough, I could re-enter her reality and she would see me again.

A lot of the time I never noticed that I was being so quiet externally because internally I was having a conversation about what I did, when I did it, and why she was mad at me. I imagined answers; I imagined it had been going on for years. Maybe my mom had been paying her to be my friend this whole time, but she forgot to give her the money this month. Metal legs tugged on the linoleum indicating to me that it was time for lunch. This was my chance to sit and talk with my friends; everything would be back to normal!

The cafeteria is split by what middle schoolers deem as cool and uncool. There's always a fundraising event table adjacent to the entryway, to the left is where a line of kids plunges out of a small hut. A waft emanating a strong odor of cheese, potatoes, bread, and any other edible beige object you can think of slammed

me as I walked in. The tables have small round seats and every once in a while, you so happen to get a seat that isn't quite screwed on. I spotted the pumpkin spice hair and began to walk towards her with the lunch my mom had packed. "Hi," I started, before Emily had turned to me with a soft smile. Not a smile in a "glad to see you" way, it was more of a customer service kind of smile. "Hey, could you sit somewhere else today? Me and Abigail need to talk about something secret," she uttered.

Now I know that this sounds like nothing, but to 6th grade me, this was my breaking point. The words convulsed and contorted; what did she say? "I don't wanna be friends anymore, I like Abigail." No, that's not really what she said, but it's how my cynical brain interpreted it. I couldn't say anything back because I was so diminished at this point. The cafeteria was tumultuous, and I was alone in a room filled with people. A pathetic isolated circle seat had my name written all over it and that is where I sat. It was attached to a table most kids didn't sit at because it was a little too dark and a little too smelly. Every couple of minutes I'd peek back over to Emily's table and to no one's surprise, it was obvious there were no secrets being shared.

An all too familiar As Seen On TV Packit lunch box plummeted next to me. Followed by a couple others and a lunch tray or two as well. It was about half way through lunch and for some reason, I was no longer alone. Shockingly, the girl who sat to the right of me was Allison, a tall dirty-blonde girl who loved Taylor Swift. She even had on a shirt to prove it. Her eyes were that uncomfortably bright blue color, the kind that you can't look at for too long. She asked me, "Why are you alone?" To which I replied, explaining what had happened between me, Emily, and Abigail. As to be expected from middle school girl banter, she spouted off a profound amount of swearing in support of me. She ended her tirade with a warm: "You can always sit with us." For those last few minutes of lunch, I didn't peek over to any other tables, I only exchanged conversation with the gaggle surrounding me.

Finally the day was ending, the classroom my day began in was now filled to the brim with backpacks and instruments. Me, my classmates, and Emily sat attentively for the speaker to crackle and call out what bus was ready to leave. As usual, my bus was about third down the list and I left the stuffy classroom. It's

always loud leaving a school of any kind, but middle school was a whole different ballpark. There were so many words being howled out- none sounded anywhere close to an understandable dialect.

The first step outside was refreshing, the fall morning gloom had torn away to reveal a beautiful Tuscan sun that warmed the air. In fact, despite knowing I would have to face Emily on the bus in a few minutes, I was being warmed too. The cool breeze and toasty temperature accompanied by my thought of how I still had friends made my confidence boost just a bit. What really made the difference though was that I was given reassurance that I wasn't the bad guy. I stepped onto the bus and said hi to the driver, she's a family friend and she always makes sure to give me a card for every holiday. It's easy to miss the love you're surrounded by when someone important makes you feel so unvalued.

I sat down in my single seat and Emily seated herself ahead diagonally. We were always nearly the last stop, so we sat in awkward tense silence for about 25 minutes. My childhood friend, on our usual bus since elementary school, driving through our hometown, but we don't know each other that well anymore. The bus climbed the final hill up to the driveway I got on at. We both plodded off the bus and as the air brakes released and the bus sped off, Emily turned to me. "Can I talk to you for a second?" she asked. "Yeah sure." I remember I tried to say it as nicely and as smiley as possible; I just wanted to be friends again. She led me to her front lawn and we stopped on a bed of clovers. "I don't want to be friends anymore," she told me. "Why?" I managed to ask without my voice slipping away. "Abigail told me you like girls and I shouldn't be friends with you."

I can't remember if I managed to say anything back other than an "okay," but I definitely know I had tears in my eyes and a quake in my voice box. I just ran, my backpack thumping up and down and up and down as I rushed home. Unlike a lot of kids, I wasn't allowed to have a phone, so the first thing I did when I got home that day was reach for the landline. I punched in a string of numbers I knew by heart: my mom's work number. The lady who picked up spoke, "Hello, who would you like to speak to?" I took a sharp breath in and tried to control my pitch, "Lisa McNamara please, thank you." A few rings went by until the phone was picked up. No introduction, I just started to cry into the phone and explained all that had occurred. I don't

think my mom could audibly understand a word that I was wailing but she listened anyway, that's what mattered. She offered little advice, mostly because she was confused, and then reassured she would be home in just two hours. I sat there on the carpet of the living room and cried until my head throbbed.

Although I guess this story is sad, it's from when I was a little kid. To me now, I find it pretty funny. I'm glad to say that Emily and I are no longer "enemies," but we never became as close as before. I made new friends and so did she; she realized Abigail is an awful person and hasn't associated with her since then. From this though, I have learned that I need self-love to be strong. I never wanted an apology when I was a kid, and I was more than ready to say sorry to Emily for whatever I had done. I just wanted to beg for forgiveness in the slim hopes she would be my friend again. That isn't how anyone should treat themselves; if I had

a little bit of self-reliance, the situation wouldn't have made me feel so isolated.

My favorite part of this story is that Emily has since come out as bisexual and in fact has dated a couple of girls—which I have not. An interesting twist, but I would like to emphasize that neither of us were the "bad guy" here, as always, me and Emily were similar. We both lacked a lot of self-respect and let people walk all over us. I'm glad we both came out fine and it's okay that we have diverged since then. Experiencing life with yourself as your main priority always makes for fulfilling days and healthy relationships, and I'm glad this experience confirmed this for me.

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Personal Narrative

By Jamie Quinn

I lay awake in my bed. I turn to the clock, reading 12:00 am. I was eight years old, and I couldn't sleep for the life of me. My dad's music was blasting in the basement. Our house is three stories tall, and I could still feel the slight rumbling of his music in the walls. I knew I had school the next day, but the urge to go listen with him overpowered my anxiety about not getting enough sleep. I quietly slid out of bed, careful not to wake up my sister and mom sleeping at the other end of the hallway. By the time I had crept my way to the basement door, the song was clear: "Another One Bites the Dust" by Queen. This was my favorite song. I creaked open the door and my dad ran to greet me, not questioning why his eight-year-old daughter is awake at this hour. He smelled strongly of sweat and Chinese food. Suddenly I was being picked up and he brought me over to the small red couch with the pink blanket on it, my official spot. We both laughed and he ran to the computer to pick the next song. These nights with my dad are some of my most important memories, even if they created a zombie out of me the next morning.

My dad loved the band Queen throughout his life, and he wanted to pass on that love to me. Our almost nightly dance parties proved he was successful. He taught me all about the members of Queen, how they paved the way for future artists, how they could never be replicated. He taught me about his other favorite bands as well, King's X and CAKE being the most memorable. I grew away from the pop music most girls my age loved, and that I had loved previously. Taylor Swift turned into blink-182, Katy Perry into My Chemical Romance. I spent almost every night in the basement with him and started to enjoy rock music more and more. As my music taste evolved; I started to share my own songs with him. He encouraged me to find my own music taste, while also guiding me in the

direction of rock. Maybe my songs weren't good, but he never told me this. I was a kid learning that I could have my own taste in music, not just what was played on the radio. I presented bands to my dad that he had never even heard of. He told me this is why listening to music with me is so special to him.

Once I turned 15, I got a job as a hostess at my local Chinese food restaurant. I was working on the weekends, and between that and schoolwork, I found it hard to continue listening to music with my dad. So, we made a plan to listen to music together every Friday after work. Coming home at ten, I honestly didn't want to do anything but sleep. Despite that, I went down every Friday and always had a good time. Some nights I didn't get off the couch I was so exhausted, while others I initiated a dance party between the two of us. No matter how we both felt, Friday nights were our time to unwind and talk to each other. We would talk about school, politics, his past, our problems, how hungry we were - nothing was off the table. I knew no matter how hard my week was, there would always be a place to talk about my life without shame.

After countless nights sharing songs and talking with each other, my dad had an idea to start voting on the songs we played. We would have elimination rounds, top 3 songs, and our own point system we used to vote. As a competitive person, I thought this sounded amazing. We had some kinks to work out at first. We landed on the simple name "Music Share" for what we were doing. After a few practice rounds, we eventually started to post the results on Facebook. I don't really know why we posted them; I think we just hoped it would get someone interested in what we were doing. After his first few posts, multiple people reached out to him asking what we were doing and how it worked. People actually listened to the songs we shared and gave their own input, mostly telling us

that we voted completely wrong. They started to do the same thing with their own kids, posting it for us to see and respond to. My mom even made us t-shirts that we wore on Music Share nights. My dad wore it more than I did, but the thought was still there. Music Share became our weekly tradition, people begging us to upload if we missed a week.

Living an hour away from home now, my dad and I plan to never stop Music Share. At the beginning of each week, we text each other our three songs. We have the whole week to listen to and analyze each song. On Sunday night, I send him my votes and he counts them up in the basement. He still listens to “I Don’t Feel No Ways Tired” by James Cleveland while

he does the official voting, just like we used to when I was home. I love that we continue our traditions, but it doesn’t feel the same as before. I miss the talks we would have before I came to college and the comfort, he gave me by just being there to listen to me. Hearing “Another One Bites the Dust” will always trigger positive memories with my dad. It makes me feel like that 8-year-old girl again, sitting in the basement learning about myself and my dad through music.

Jamie Quinn is a Graphic Design major from Rutland, MA. She made it to the district level for the Lions Club International Speech Contest in 2019

I am Worthy of Love

By Joanna Silipigno

SLAM!! The car door shuts, and suddenly, I am alone. In a car. Alone in a car, with a boy. I have never been alone in a car with any of my friends, let alone a boy.

It was September 11th, 2020, the first day of my junior year and my first time back at Holbrook Middle High School since the Corona Virus sent us home last year. Decked out in my favorite mask, yellow and covered in bees, I was ready to take on the year.

The last time I was in the Holbrook High building, I had a panic attack. Like the rest of the world, I was uneasy about entering such an unprecedented time. The situation moved very quickly, and it sent me into a spiral. I could not breathe, I was crying, my hands and body were shaking, and it felt like there was someone sitting on my chest. I felt trapped, alone, and scared. I have always struggled with anxiety but was at an all-time high when I started my junior year.

Going back to school for the first time was weighing on me. Unfortunately, Covid only heightened my anxiety. Especially because my dad took the pandemic extremely seriously; a lot of his reactions only added to my own anxieties. Like many, he had a fear of getting sick and consistently talked about how it would affect our house, so I was always extremely cautious.

During the summer before my junior year, I had set myself up to take AP Biology. As appealing as being a woman in STEM was, the summer work ended my career as a high school biology teacher before it started.

AP Biology was a hellscape. I blamed my inability to grasp the subject on things like our Covid-cation and the fact we were doing hybrid schooling that year. Considering that the summer work was the bane of my existence, I should have dropped the class but at sixteen, I was, and still am too proud to admit defeat.

Alas, there was one specific thing, a person rather,

that kept me coming back to AP Biology. Henry was loud, and attention seeking and honestly, I found him kind of irritating at first. He was a senior and at that time, a rising star in our student-run news show, Code Blue News. I found him horrifying; his extroverted personality was the opposite of everything in my comfort zone. I have always been quiet and especially because I was extremely anxious about the pandemic, I really kept to myself. So, when I realized this outgoing standup comedian was in my AP class, I knew to stay away.

Ms. Adams' AP Biology room was a lot different than the year prior. Everything was sterile and made to be Covid-safe. In the room twelve lab tables, at which used to sit two spinney chairs but now only had one. The teacher's desk was moved to the back of the room, away from the students and the room smelled like hand sanitizer. When the year began, I sat in the back left corner of the room, conveniently a safe two-lab table distance from Henry and on the opposite side of the room from the teacher's desk.

"Ms. Adams, have you ever been in a fistfight?" My head whips up from my worksheet to find Henry grinning from ear to ear awaiting her response. When he receives a blatant "No, Henry" and he moves on. He works his way around the room until he singles me out and asks me the same question. I did not want to talk to him, nevertheless, for the next month or two he continued to single me out as he went around the room, asking people questions or discussing topics he found amusing or thought would elicit a reaction from our peers.

One day I was sitting, quietly taking notes during AP Bio, when my focus was broken.

"Joanna, can you see? Maybe you should come and sit at the table next to Henry," Ms. Adams offered. "Yeah, come sit by me." He was mocking me; he knew I

was annoyed by him, and he thought it was funny.

Nevertheless, Ms. Adams was right, I could not see, so I reluctantly moved to the lab table to the right of Henrys.’

Moving my seat marked the end of my fear of Henry. Shockingly, I found myself taking a liking to him. He made me feel comfortable in an odd way. His personality was not as abrasive as I initially thought. He was friendly and with every conversation we had I became more comfortable with Henry. Nevertheless, from where I stood, he either just wanted to be friends or wanted to add another friend to the list of people he could convince to be interviewed on his weekly Code Blue segment, of course, I would not dream of agreeing, so I kept my eager new acquaintance on a tight leash.

“I call Joanna.”

We were directed to complete a worksheet with partners and since the class was a mix of juniors and seniors, and my only friend recently switched to fully remote schooling, I was the odd man out, so I did not object to Henrys’ claim of me. As weeks went by, and more partner assignments were completed, Henry and I got to know each other, and I realized his loud extroverted personality hid his quieter, kinder nature. I was no longer nervous about him, to my surprise, we were starting to become friends.

Introverts and extroverts, they make the world go ‘round. Although we were on different sides of the spectrum, I felt like Henry understood me, he met me where I was and did not question the things that made me uncomfortable.

By December of 2020, I had been completely worn down. Henry and I were friends. We talked daily, in person and through various social media platforms, and I realized that I was beginning to look forward to seeing and talking to him every day.

For Christmas that year, my parents were surprising my brother with a Nintendo Switch, so in partnership with that, I secretly asked my mom for Animal Crossing so that I could play on the Switch. I had seen people enjoy it during quarantine, so I really wanted to try it.

By this time, Henry had made it to my close friends’ private story on Snapchat. So, when I posted a photo of my little Animal Crossing character, he immediately

messed me and asked to play together.

We spent hours on the phone that night, mostly because when we logged on to play Animal Crossing Henry realized he needed to update the game, which took over an hour. We ended up discussing everything we could think of. We talked about our families, school, friends, crushes we used to have, and movies. When the game loaded, he taught me how to play and showed me his world. Henry was slowly becoming my closest friend.

The first picture of me and Henry together came in January 2021. During the height of school during the pandemic, we were not allowed to sit at normal cafeteria tables so, to provide some comradery and entertainment, we played games or watched movies during lunch. Henry played every day, I of course, only played to prove my superiority over him. We played three rounds of Kahoot that day, so the three winners sat on the counter in the cafeteria. Henry, in the middle, holds up a version of the shirt we all won, and I sit to right, smirking behind my mask.

Spring break arrives before I know it and oddly enough, I find myself missing Henry. I looked forward to seeing him every day. During the time outside of school we kept talking, in fact, I do not think we were ever not in a conversation about something, even if we were just sending Instagram posts back and forth. I was starting to like him more than just my friend, my feelings for him were growing and I had no idea what to do, so I ignored them, I did not want to ruin the friendship we had.

May 2021 came along, and Henry and I had only grown closer. He was nearing the end of his senior year. Naturally, I was beginning to grow weary of his impending departure for college in Fitchburg, MA. So, I did what any sane person would do and did not admit to him how I felt because I thought that could only complicate our friendship.

Before the pandemic, I was always a homebody. I never went out with friends, I never had sleepovers, it made me too nervous. By May, Henry had been asking to hang out for months, and the only response that seemed appropriate was “I am not fully vaccinated yet. My dad would be really upset if I took that risk.” which was not necessarily a lie but a crutch, so I did not have to face what made me anxious. Of course, this only delayed the inevitable conversation when I

did become fully vaccinated.

On May 8th I was officially fully vaccinated, and Henry wasted no time showing me how fun it was to have friends, a friend with a license and his mom's black Toyota Camry. By 7pm that night, I was in his car.

I was alone. In a car. Alone in a car, with a boy. A boy I liked a lot.

Henry is in the driver's seat when I get in the car. "Are you okay if I take my mask off?" I say when I notice he is not wearing one. "Yeah, I was hoping you would take it off."

Okay, well that was weird right? The night just got weirder. Later, he took me to a state park a couple of towns over, he asked me to close my eyes, and I obliged. I acted like I was not peeking. "Promise you won't murder me?" I whispered behind the hands that covered not only my eyes but my entire face. "I promise." Henry assured me

When I opened my eyes, I was met with a view of the Boston skyline. From where I sat in the passenger seat of the car, I had the perfect perspective of the entire view. The sky was dark, as was the grassy area on the hill. In front of the car sat a rock wall flooded with light from the car's headlights. In the distance, the skyline view was framed by the tops of the large dark pine trees. Each building was illuminated by the moon and the lights of the buildings themselves. I had no idea this hidden gem was just a few towns over.

We got out of his car and sat on the rock wall that separated the paved road and parking spots from the hill. He was not far from me, and our hands were brushing against each other, this was terrifying to me as I could not differentiate if this were intentional or an accident. I took a deep breath and made a bold, ill-timed joke.

"If this was a rom-com, we'd kiss right now." We both laughed and moved on because he obviously did not like me, and this was not a date. I literally just gave him an opening and he made no use of it; I was disappointed, but it was not enough to change how I felt about him, maybe it was a misunderstanding, who knows.

On May 11th, late at night, I was feeling rather feisty. I wanted to stir the pot. I told Henry I thought I was going to miss him when he left, I knew it was true, but

I wanted to gauge his reaction. He immediately fought back defending that he knows he is going to feel worse when he leaves than I will. So, to be funny, I ask him "is there anything you need to tell me" And there was.

Promptly after Henry told me about his feelings for me and I realized our outing the weekend prior was a date, my first date ever in fact, during which I killed the moment, I was thrown into the drawls of a panic attack. Sweating, hands shaking, my entire body cold. My mind was racing, I did not want to put this on him, I did not want to burden him with everything I deal with every day, especially when I knew if whatever we were about to be lasted long enough, we would be separated in a few months when he left for school, and that would bring a new side to the burden I found myself to be.

I did not believe I was worthy of being loved, cared for, or taken seriously. Of course, I wanted to eventually find someone, but I did not think high school, pre-therapy Joanna could handle bringing another person into the mess that was her world. When I discussed this concern with Henry I was met simply with "I know what I got myself into." He knew what he was getting into? I did not know if I believed that, but I knew Henry enough to know he would try to the best of his ability to understand whatever I was going through.

Henry and I have been together for almost a year and a half now. In that year and a half, Henry has never once invalidated me or my feelings. Henry has seen me through some of the largest changes in my life as I transitioned into a new job, my senior year, college applications, graduation and moving away from home to begin college, and has never once made me feel alone. For every time I am being a burden, every "You don't deserve to have to deal with this," "I am having a bad anxiety day" and every "I am not worth the trouble," I have only been met with kindness and understanding. I have never once been accused of having anything more than a difficult day or being in a bad headspace, I have never once been called dramatic or sensitive.

When I lay down at night and suddenly my world comes crashing down, I am a little girl again, the girl that lingers deep down, the one who never healed, whose thoughts plagued her every second, who never felt safe enough to be emotional. I can always count on Henry to be right there, to listen to me, to sit with me,

to ask if iMessage games will help to distract me until I am ready to say good night.

For the first time, I felt safe, understood, and loved for the entirety of who I am.

Henry has helped me identify some of my own issues, issues that were not prominent until I had a partner, behaviors I have learned from unhealthy relationships I have witnessed. I used to yell when I got upset, not because I was angry but because, if I am yelling, I am assured that I am being heard. I still yell sometimes, but now, I know why, and I breathe, and I can calmly explain how I feel.

In May of 2021, right after Henry and I started dating, I gave a maid of honor speech at my sister's wedding, a speech, ironically, that Henry helped me edit. In the speech I used a quote I found on a Pinterest board, it read *"You always hand over the good things first; here is my laughter, here is my confidence, here is the part of me I think is cute and worth loving.*

Eventually, you close your eyes and hold out something heavy-here is something you might leave me for. If you are lucky, they pick it up easily. If you're lucky they will let you hold theirs too." Since the day we met, Henry and I have been handing over the good with the bad and I am happy to report nothing has been too heavy yet. Being Henry's partner has taught me that I am deserving of all the good things that have and will come into my life.

In September of 2022, Henry and I were both home in Holbrook from college for the weekend. It was getting late, the clock on the dashboard showed that it was getting close to ten. Two hours left and the pit was beginning to grow in my stomach. I always dreaded our goodbyes. He sat in the driver's seat, looking the same as he always did. His brown hair sat against his face, still held up by the gel from that morning; his vivid robin's egg blue eyes trained on the road ahead of us. I paid special attention to his eyes, he had asked

me one day, before we were together, what color they were. Since that day I have never forgotten. I took note of the sharp slope of his nose. I remember him saying he did not like it, which is why I loved it even more. I took comfort in his appearance; he was safer now than anyone else had ever been. The late September air seeped in through the window and we sat in silence. The Highway Playlist, as he dubbed it, played softly through the car speakers. This is when it donned on me, I have never had to dumb myself down or make myself any less Joanna for Henry to like me. I realized as we sat in the car that night that I was a lot different than when I first met Henry. Suddenly, I was not irrationally emotional anymore, I was worthy, and I was capable. These are not things Henry made me, these were things he taught me to recognize within myself.

Henry and I are young, eighteen and nineteen, and I started college like three minutes ago. We talk about a future where we have dogs and kids and he makes movies while I teach in a school, a future where we are happy, and our lives are stable and simple. We talk about this when Fitchburg to Newton feels too far or when the day has gotten hard enough that we just want to see each other for the first time in a few weeks. We find comfort in the safety of a future together.

People have asked me if I think Henry and I will have that future and if I think we really will end up together. I always respond the same way, "if that's the way my life goes, I'd be happy." For now, we are learning and growing together, a healthier relationship than we both thought we deserved.

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Personal Narrative

By Jason Stanley

Change is an essential part of life. It's normal for us to look back at our past and be embarrassed about who we were back then, but we cannot allow ourselves to put ourselves down for it. Instead, the takeaway from us reminiscing about our past selves should be recognizing how far we have come from then. When I look back, I see a thirteen-year-old me who was about five foot six, with short very light hair, and a baby face. This is a very different complexion from my eighteen-year-old self, with long wavy hair and facial hair, and standing at about five foot ten. I'm also much more confident, open-minded, and balanced than I used to be. My entire life took a complete one-eighty when I turned thirteen years old and this would drastically change who I am as a person today.

On a beautiful, cool, yet sunny fall Saturday, I remember playing street hockey while waiting for my oldest brother to come to visit us. It seemed like the perfect day until suddenly my mother had to be rushed to the hospital. It's important to note that she was not in very good health for years before this and suffered from severe alcoholism and depression. The rest of the day was spent at the hospital, and it was made very clear to us that things were not looking good for my mom. I remember when we got there she was sent to this dark room that I couldn't really see into but I remember when they were doing their procedures my mom was screaming in pain the entire time while this social worker was basically interrogating me.

Throughout my life, social workers would come to our house and ask me and my siblings questions about topics like whether or not we are happy or if we feel safe at home. They tried very hard to split my family up, and even tried to send me to a camp for kids they felt were at risk of becoming juvenile delinquents. The reason for all of this is that when I was very little my dad had a bad accident that left him permanently

brain damaged and this put us in an awful position where we lost the house, we were in debt, and my mom was stuck at the hospital trying to fight for dad. While this was happening my yaya (yaya is Greek for grandmother) was diagnosed with cancer which took an even bigger toll on my mom. I remember that we didn't live with my mom for a while because she was dealing with all these things at once and the social workers saw this as an opportunity to try to split us up. I will never respect any social worker for the pain they caused my mom while she was suffering from pains that no one could ever understand, and when they come to interrogate me about my living circumstances while my mom is screaming in pain in the room next to us resulted in me never being able to forgive social workers for the hell they put us through. Since that day I have had a hard time with forgiving people in general.

During the procedure, my mom had gone into cardiac arrest and had to be transported to a different room. After a few hours of waiting, we were finally allowed to see her again. This hospital room was much larger than the others and was filled with a lot of big machines that my mom was hooked onto. The lighting was almost like a light green color that gave off a very eerie feeling. My mom had a breathing mask on, had IV tubes running through her body, and was barely conscious. I recall trying to communicate with her and her just being completely unresponsive to any of it. After some time passes we are told by the doctors that we need to leave for a little so that they can give her more treatments, but they also said recovery was not looking very promising.

Everything was moving so fast I couldn't gather my thoughts with everything being thrown at me. I felt like I had mental whiplash, one second I was playing street hockey outside, the next moment we were at the

hospital, and hours later we were hit with the news she was not likely to recover. I didn't feel anything really at the moment. We ended up being sent to this room in the top story of the hospital while the doctors operated on my mom again. This room was very large with very bright white lights and just seemed much more dressed up than most hospital rooms. This room was definitely made to comfort families that were grieving; however, I found more comfort in just staring out of the window at the pitch black nighttime darkness with sparse lighting from signs and lights. Gazing out of the window allowed me to think for the first time in what felt like an eternity and that's when I realized that my life after we leave here will be vastly different from the one I came into the hospital with.

We did not see my mom again that night and we ended up heading to my oldest brother's apartment to sleep. The paramedics who came into my apartment deemed the house "unsuitable to live in" so we were not allowed to go back again. Although the paramedics were correct about the living conditions being awful, I would have felt much more comfortable sleeping in my own bed that night as opposed to sleeping on the cold floor of my brother's apartment. I couldn't sleep well that night but not in the way I normally have a hard time falling asleep. To this day I have a hard time falling asleep because my mind is just overly active with thoughts but that night my mind was just blank. My mind had a hard time comprehending everything and all I knew was that my life was going to change, but I had a hard time grasping exactly what was to come in my life. My mom was the only remaining parent, I have zero alive grandparents, my dad's side of the family hates us, and my only other family lived in Hawaii and has nothing to do with us at this point; without my mom, I had nothing except two older brothers and an older sister. I really had no idea where I would end up and I couldn't comprehend it fully and it made my mind just completely empty that night.

As soon as we showed up the next day, we were pulled aside into another room that was dimly lit with walls covered in paintings that had things like boats, wildlife, and landscapes. We sat on these big old, upholstered couches and chairs arranged in a circle around a large coffee table. This tall doctor in a white coat told us that we are going to have to make a choice on whether or not we pull the plug on my mother. There was a pause with an uneasy silence until we

went around the circle to get everyone's decisions. Everyone agreed to pull the plug and that mom wouldn't want to live off of a machine, and then it got to me. I had no idea they were going to ask me what I thought. I was only thirteen and I understood that if I told them the truth that I wanted to keep her alive they would have pulled the plug anyway. I have never had to make a choice that difficult because even though they had made up their mind I still felt I was right, and I felt like everyone had just given up on our mom. Lying to them and saying I agreed is something I still regret to this day because I can't help but think about what would happen if I had been strong enough to tell my family the truth and fought harder to keep her alive as mom did for my father all those years before.

My mother had been moved into a room that was similar to the ICU unit my yaya was put in when she had cancer treatments, and it was also set up almost exactly like the way the Hospice room my yaya passed away in. The bed was centered with a table on each side with chairs surrounding it; the only difference was the walls in my mom's were brown with patterns running up it and my yaya's were just plain white. They had us say our last words to my mom who lay there barely conscious and the doctor in the room told us to think of the happiest moments we shared with her.

I quickly realized that almost every memory of her involved suffering, survival, or sorrow. We were never able to just relax and have a good time we always had to focus on surviving. When we weren't homeless, we were broke in low-income apartments and when things looked good someone either died or my step-father would beat my mom again. Our family was in an endless state of suffering and falling apart, and my mom kept it together the best she could but even the strongest have a breaking point. My mom fell into alcoholism and lost herself completely until she passed away. Although we didn't have very many positive memories together she taught me extremely important lessons about life.

My mom's passing made me realize that I need to balance success and happiness.

All I ever wanted to be growing up was a successful business owner, but I didn't care about whether or not I was happy. After she died, I decided to balance my goals of being successful and fulfillment in life. I take

care of myself much more now and no matter what I stay positive even when things are grim. Focusing on what I can do rather than on what I can't do changed my outlook on life because when I was younger a lot of my anger came from being upset with what was out of my hands. Becoming a more positive person has led me to live a much more fulfilling life and has led me to be more free-willed. One thing I would like to improve on is forgiving others and having problems with distancing myself. I still don't forgive people very easily because most of the people who I thought wanted to help me have always had ill intent. I have a very bad problem with distancing myself when people want to get closer to me. Every time I have a meaning-

ful friendship or relationship, I always end up distancing myself or cutting myself off completely. I do this because I can't really relate to others very well, so I always feel different. I hope when twenty-three-year-old me looks back at eighteen-year-old me that I will be proud of myself for overcoming these problems I struggle with today.

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Genre Report on Conspiracy Theories

By Gabriella Tozaj

In recent years, there has been a rising public distrust in the credibility of sources. Whether it be from well-known news outlets or scientists themselves, a large chunk of the population remains doubtful if they can be trusted or not. Most of us know of conspiracy theories, in which people speculate about a situation without much substantial backing. These theories can become widespread but typically gain few genuine believers. This is the case because it is difficult to accept an idea someone conjured with weak to no support. This age of misinformation, however, has made people both more skeptical and gullible. Now doubting news sources while also believing in theories found on their social media feeds. These situations are fueling conspiracy theorists, so it is important to ask yourself if what you are reading is a reliable source or not. A simple way to do this is to identify what the literary genre is. Readers are capable of predicting why and for who an article was written after familiarizing themselves with the rhetorical choices of each genre. Genre can be used as a tool to deduce the credibility of a source.

This report will examine three articles of different literary genres, magazine, newspaper, and academic journal, all discussing the topic of conspiracy theories. The magazine which will be often referred to is by Matt Miller from *Esquire*, titled “The Greatest Celebrity Conspiracy Theories of All Time: Everything the Illuminati, the government, and our serpent overlords don’t want you to know” which compiles many internet-based conspiracies regarding celebrities. The newspaper article is written by Maya Yang of *The Guardian* and is titled “Conspiracy theorist Alex Jones seeks new trial after nearly \$1bn Sandy Hook verdict”. It provides readers with an overview of the recent situation and trial outcome concerning Alex Jones and the families of Sandy Hook victims. The academic journal is written by Md Saiful Islam and thirteen other au-

thors and published by *PLoS ONE*, titled “COVID-19 vaccine rumors and conspiracy theories: The need for cognitive inoculation against misinformation to improve vaccine adherence”. The article goes into detail about a study performed that provides a connection between misinformation and vaccine hesitancy.

“The Greatest Celebrity Conspiracy Theories of All Time: Everything the Illuminati, the government, and our serpent overlords don’t want you to know” by *Esquire* takes the most liberty with its language choices when compared to the other genres. The subtitle alone brings up “the Illuminati” and “serpent overlords” almost immediately, neither of which are proven to be real, but their mention gives way to the content contained within the article. Not meant to be fact-driven or formal, instead prioritizing that it will be an interesting read which takes note of popular theories in pop culture that the audience can recognize. This varies greatly when compared to a newspaper or academic journal entry which will rely on formal language to gain the trust of their audience. To cater to their demographic, they need unbiased information, so the quick-witted remarks found within a magazine are not welcomed within their genres of writing.

Despite both seeking sources of information, the audiences of those who read academic journals and newspapers do differ to some degree. Academic journals are generally targeted at fellow researchers or scholars looking to learn more about a certain field or topic. In the academic journal from *PLoS ONE*, a large section of the journal is dedicated to a study performed to find a correlation between conspiracies and rumors about vaccines and vaccine hesitancy (Islam et. al, 2021, paras. 9-26). This would be useful to someone writing a report on the topic but for a leisurely read, it is wordy and difficult to understand. A newspaper is much more suited for someone looking to learn about

an intriguing topic. Not written in jargon and all the information can be found at a base level with sources mentioned.

Newspapers typically discuss recent happenings in the world. Though it is common to find an article talking about a study or some scientific finding now and then, most newspapers are dedicated to discussing current events that the public should be aware of. The newspaper article from *The Guardian* reports on the aftermath of the ruling against Sandy Hook conspiracist Alex Jones. Jones's, on his show Infowars, claimed that the Sandy Hook school shooting was completely staged. This led his followers to harass the victim's families which was the cause of the trial and subsequently his verdict (Yang, 2022, para. 1). Wanting to keep up with this situation is why many people are drawn to reading the article. It is interesting to learn about and most people would like to hear about some form of justice taking place. The content typically found in an academic journal varies greatly from this. They are not fixated on reporting on current events and rather gathering up evidence to discuss in depth a thesis or phenomenon. In comparison to these two, the magazine by *Esquire* was written for entertainment purposes. Not used to report on current events or scientific findings, just meant to draw readers in and keep them interested enough to read the whole article.

Since the magazine prioritizes entertainment to such a degree, it is the only article between the three genres to develop a characterized persona. Taking a look at the academic journal and newspaper article provides you with clear-cut, unbiased information. Those require the audience to not learn about either the author or their opinions for the sources to be credible. The magazine, however, speaks to the audience like a close friend. It makes jokingly, judgmental remarks and expects readers to laugh and agree with the writer. This is best seen throughout the magazine in the sections titled "Who believes it" in which the writer will point out a certain demographic they believe would fall for the conspiracy theory (Miller, 2019). The section is not backed by any valid sources and is based on the writer's bias. A persona within writing is often a giveaway sign that the article is more focused on entertainment rather than providing readers with credible information.

To format an easy-to-read paper, the *Esquire* magazine consists of very short paragraphs, typically

ranging from one to three sentences. The article is very straightforward in terms of navigating it. Every conspiracy theory has its own section, and then that section is broken into three parts, "The theory," "The proof," and "Who believes it," (Miller, 2019). This is done so those who do not want to read the whole article can skip through it and find the part they are most interested in. On the other side of this spectrum is the newspaper article by *The Guardian*. Though it also has short paragraphs, nowhere within the article does it make use of headings or subheadings. This is because, unlike the magazine where most readers are expected to skip around to the parts that interest them, readers are meant to read the whole article to understand its context. The newspaper does not have to simplify itself to keep readers engaged and wanting to continue, the title alone is what drew in most of its audience. The news article is short overall so adding headings would be counterintuitive since it would encourage readers to skip over crucial background information. To be thoroughly informed, it is expected that the news article is read at length.

Between the three sources, the newspaper uses the least number of images throughout its article. It has only one photo of Alex Jones right below the title but that is where they end. Both the magazine by *Esquire* and the academic journal from *PLoS ONE* utilize visuals in their articles but they do so in different ways. The magazine throws in at least one photo or video per celebrity conspiracy theory. Most of the photos are added in just to have visuals but an interesting thing it does is include YouTube videos discussing the theories in the article. The videos where the theories are discussed serve as a makeshift cited sources list. It lets the audience know that the writer of the article did not come up with these ludicrous conspiracies themselves, someone else did, making them seem somewhat more credible. The contrast between this and the academic journal could not be any more different. The journal, which is comprised of many researchers, included charts and diagrams that visualize the data they have gathered throughout their study. All information relayed in these images are credible and the majority of the paper discusses the methods the scientists used to get those results. Surprisingly, both the magazine and academic journal included visual elements that served a greater purpose than just aesthetics, shocking more so because of the magazine. But it demonstrates how

the “sources” used by the magazine are inadequate when compared to those used by the academic journal.

While the magazine and newspaper article are written to more or less inform the reader of a subject, the academic journal has a thesis it is trying to prove. The case of the journal from *PLoS ONE*, it is proving that more documentation of the COVID-19 vaccine is required to prevent vaccine hesitancy (Islam et. al, 2021, para. 27). To get the readers to understand how that conclusion was drawn, the article informs the reader of the methods, the study, the data collection process, and anything else the researchers did to guide the audience through the same reasoning. The academic journal’s purpose is to form an airtight justification for their thesis, not just listing off information but instead molding it into an argument. To accomplish this without bias, their sources must be regarded as highly credible. The other two literary genres, magazine and newspaper, do not need to go as in-depth about their sources since they are not expected to attest to a formed claim or thesis. Though it is presumed that their sources are fairly reliable, academic journals typically go above and beyond to ensure that the information they provide is credible.

Similar to its persona, *Esquire* magazine has an informal tone present throughout the article. This tone affects how the reader interprets the content within the magazine. It is clear while reading through the article that not even the writer takes what they are writing seriously. Phrases like, “he’s just been pretending for the last six decades for some reason,” (Miller, 2019, para. 14) in regards to a conspiracy about Stevie Wonder, show the lighthearted skepticism of the writer. The purpose of the magazine is to entertain, not to push out an agenda, the tone demonstrates this. Just about all readers of *Esquire* magazine know that the article was written to not be taken seriously, but that would

change if the tone were different. If the writer of the article genuinely believed in the conspiracies they were writing about, then the tone would become much more formal. Such as the newspaper and academic journal. The frightening thing is, readers may believe the author if they were compelling enough.

As brought up as the central topic in the articles examined, conspiracy theories spread disregarding what is credible and what is not. These theories are harmful to engage with since giving them any publicity is good publicity. Despite this, both writers who support or dispute them can monetarily gain from the topic. To combat the rapid spread of misinformation and baseless conspiracies, readers should be skeptical when going through an article. Just because something is written with a formal tone does not mean it can be a trusted source of information. Do not keep an eye out for only one or two details to confirm what is credible and what is not. Look at articles through a broader lens, look at them through their genres. Simply categorizing which genres typically contain what rhetorical choices will allow readers to discern the purpose of an article just by seeing their publisher.

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Mosh in a College Basement

By Jaquelin Zuniga

In search of a music event to go to, my brother informed me that his college friends were having a concert for their little-known band. I was expecting their band to be performing at a small music hall like Brighton Music Hall, though it was not. I was conflicted when my brother and I drove up to the address where it was supposed to be, because it brought us to a house. It was at a house off the campus of UMASS Lowell where students lived. These students, though, named their basement (where they have the small bands perform) “Tangos.”

Walking into the house through the side door, we walked into a line of people, because apparently, this place is a hit for music. Someone drops their liquor as they are in line and yells, “Shit.” I am content that I didn’t get any of that on my outfit. Unfortunately, I was not outfit-ready for this unexpected house concert. Because again, I thought I was going to a music hall, not a party house. So, I was wearing my clothes from work, which includes a shirt, cardigan, jeans, and moccasins (I work at a daycare). As we walked past the door, there was a shirtless guy in a lederhosen outfit like five steps away from the door hosting a table. There was a sign above him that said *Tangos*, written in an orange Sharpie with a drawing of two glasses clinking. As we got to the table, he said to get admitted, it costs five dollars. As he counted the money, you could see his eyes were bloodshot red. Then he got a black sharpie and put three dots on my hand and two dots on my brother’s (assuming it had something to do with gender, not sure why it differed if we both were going to the basement to see the same band).

Mind you, it is a basement where we are in, and it is not a nice renovated, man cave basement that has a nice bar, an 8-ball table, lounge chairs, and huge flat-screen TV. It’s a basement that looks like it hasn’t been renovated since the nineties. What do those types of

basements look like? Low ceilings, dusty, water pipes, and cement floors. Walking down the creaky steps, my brother and I get crammed by people walking up the stairs. The stairway was so small that we were able to touch shoulders with other people. As they bumped into me, they all were sticky and sweaty with an odor of marijuana and alcohol in the mix. As we entered the area of the basement, I thought, *Oh my gosh. This is so tiny.* The basement was probably ten by thirteen square feet. No space to move any inch further or backward.

It was a dark room with rainbow Christmas lights hanging on the perimeter of the room. There were huge vintage rugs on the floor, the ones with brown and tan intricate designs. (You could barely see the designs because it was no longer tan, it was more of a dark gray most likely because of all the feet that have stepped on it). Though, as we kept pushing forward and forward, we went to where the band was going to play. It was a little platform in the corner of the room with a spotlight. I had no clue what the band’s music style was so I already pictured what I was going to hear when I saw a drum set and electric guitars, although there was a ukulele too. (That confused me). Being a small and short person was no help when being down here. I was buried in between all the tall people. I was stuck with the view of people’s backs. From what I could see, there were tons of black leather jackets with chains, black denim with Converse, and skirts with fishnets and Doc Martens. From this visual, I felt like I didn’t belong because it felt like it was a concert for people who consider themselves emo or alternative. (Take into consideration, I was wearing a cardigan and moccasins).

It was then getting really hot and sticky. I wore a winter jacket that day because it was cold outside. Maybe like forty degrees. Though inside felt like

ninety degrees. I took the jacket off and still felt super hot. The same guy that admitted us in, walked to the mic and said a bunch of rules before the band started. Some rules included no cocaine in the bathroom and don't loiter near the neighbor's houses. Not surprising those were rules on the list because this was a basement of college students. (Drunk and high college students).

The band started with an intro. "We are Paint By Numbers." They began by playing their first song which involved three electric guitars, drums, and vocalists. As the instruments began to play, my ears were stunned. It was so loud. The sound of the instruments was louder than the vocalists, I could barely hear what they were singing. The guitar had a high tune and the drums were loud. The sound of the drums was at a good momentum that held the song's flow. The vocalists were singing in a soft tone but it also contained some type of aggression. They were passionate about what they were singing. The song sounded like a rainy day with some slight thunder. The way the drummer hit the drum symbol was a nice touch to the passionate vocals and short strikes of the guitar. The audience was nodding their heads in slow motion and bobbed their heads to be in sync with the drums' beats. The song ended with a loud bang from the drums and then the audience "wooded." Since the crowd was mostly drunk, a loud woo was reasonable versus clapping hands.

In the next song, the main vocalist switched her guitar to a ukulele. The other instruments stayed the same, this includes the other two electric guitars and the drum set. The song began with the vocalist singing at a slow speed. Then with every few words she sang, she strung a string on the ukulele. After a few intervals of those short lyrics, she then began to sing more lyrics in a quick, you could say 0.5 speed. I couldn't decipher what she was saying because she was singing super fast. As her words got faster the other instruments started to play and joined at the same pace as her. Throughout the song, I feel that the drums clashed with the ukulele, and it didn't perform a nice tune. Sounded like a child trying to sing opera music, except they fail to hit the high notes. The audience wooed at the end, with minimal clapping of hands.

The last song they performed was something to remember. The instruments in the song included two

electric guitars, drums, and a ukulele. The second vocalist began the song by singing, "No more gifts, no more I love you's." I sensed that it would be a love song. I pictured a girl looking out the window staring at the moon with tears down her cheek, as the song played through my ears. The only instrument playing was the ukulele and it complimented the vocalist's a cappella. Soon after, her tone got a little louder; the other instruments came in. The instruments added were subtle beats in the background, they were not loud enough to cancel the ukulele, which seemed intentional so that the song was kept in a soft tone. Drastically, as the song was coming to an end, the electric guitars were getting louder and louder. Following behind the electric guitars came the drums. The second vocalist sang, "Monkey man came to me and said," I could not make sense of the following lyrics after that. So confused how it started with love lyrics to then "monkey" lyrics. As all the instruments played together and made some rock music, the crowd on my left started moshing. It got to the point where beer got spilled on my hair. I felt disgusted because it left my hair sticky. I was so conflicted. *Moshing to a song that talks about a monkey man?* Though it made some sense because they are drunk college students.

Randomly, a guy from the crowd went up to the mic and was amped to start singing the rest of the song. He had aviator glasses, with a hockey haircut that sits right above his shoulders, while holding a forty-ounce liquor bottle. This brought so much confusion to me. I was kind of startled because he looked like Jeffrey Dahmer. The most repetitive words in the song were, "Leave me alone!" I did not know how to react. I was just stunned at what I got myself into. More moshing as the song got louder and louder. I was trying so hard not to get in the middle of the mosh because if not I would be crushed.

After the last song, I had no words except, "Let's go." My brother listened and we continued up the small stairway, shoulder to shoulder with other people who were going down. We walked out the door and I could still hear the people yelling as we were walking away.

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