

# EXPRESSIONS 2024



Lamar State College Port Arthur



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# *Expressions*

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## *Acknowledgements*

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*General Art—First Place*

Colby Robin



*Short  
Story*





*Photography—First Place*

*Jackeline Jaramillo Sanchez*

# *Short Story*

## *First Place*

### Painting the Arrival of Life

Haley Kiker

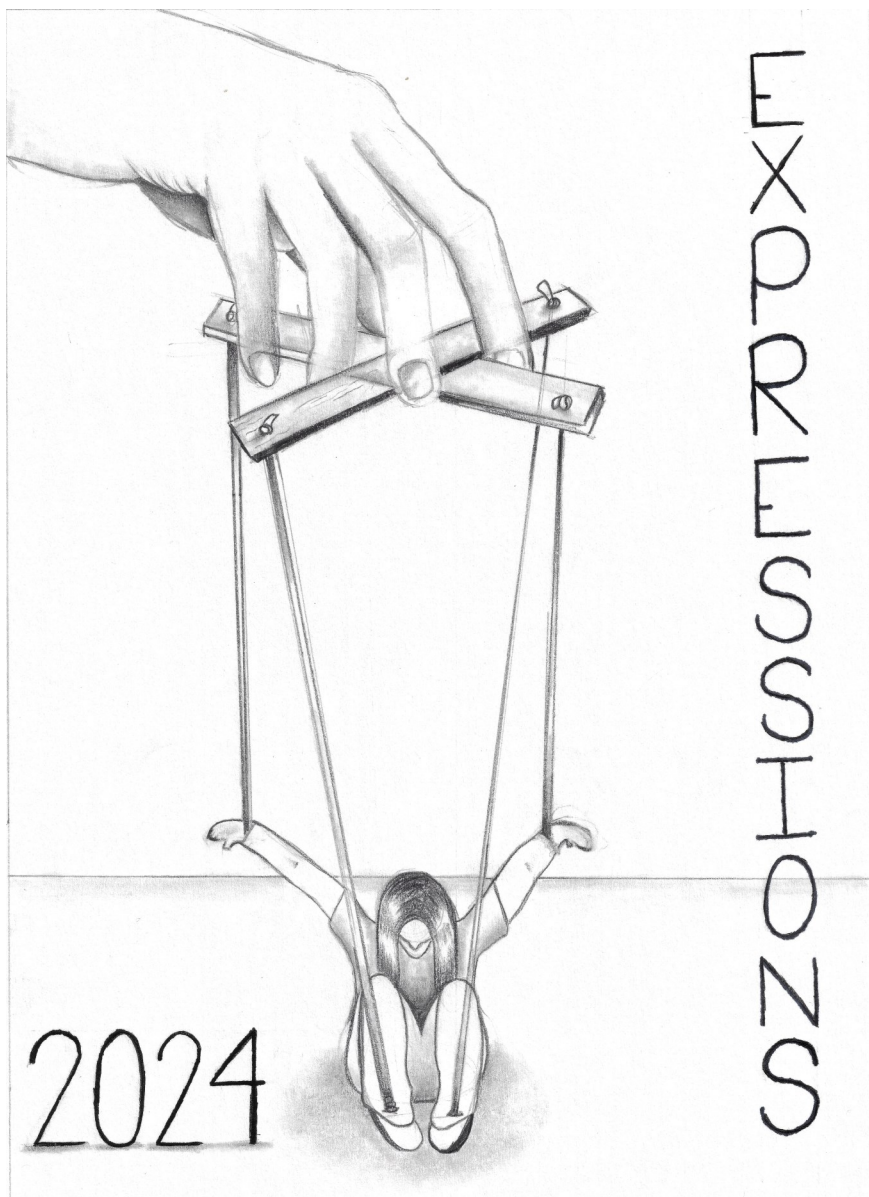
As I made it through those imposing double doors, each step forward felt like dragging cinderblocks through a freshly laid pile of cement. The antiseptic smell immediately penetrated my nostrils, assaulting my senses with clinical presence. The air in this place bore the chill of a winter's evening, and a blend of anxiety and excitement filled me to the brim. However, that feeling was replaced with an intense, searing pain, like fire roaring through me with no remorse. As I embraced the fiery agony, the realization swept over me like a wave that the arrival of my first daughter was near.

The corridor leading to my room felt like a winding tunnel, and what was only a 30-foot walk seemed to stretch into an eternity. The air seemed different on this floor; what was sterile now enveloped me in a cocoon of warmth and happiness. At the door, the rapid beat of my heart signaled the imminent moment ahead; soon, I would be greeted by an arrival that would reshape my whole world. The room that had once felt like a sanctuary now imprisoned me in the grip of agony. Needles connected to the miles of tubing bound me to the bed, and the pain medicine seemed powerless at alleviating waves of pain coursing through me. I reached a point where hope felt elusive, and despair threatened to consume me. Suddenly, an angel descended into the room. With him, he carried a toolbox filled with the remedy that would transform this pain into a distant, fading memory. As soon as that magical elixir filled me, a numbness embraced me from the waist

down as I surrendered to the tranquility. A sense of calm washed over me, allowing me to relax and drift into a peaceful nap.

I roused from the depths of my serene nap; the sudden intrusion of nurses shattered the tranquil and calm presence I had encompassed. Their urgency was palpable as they maneuvered around me, revealing alarming news of my baby's dropping heart rate. Exhaustion clouded my comprehension, and fear tightened its grip. Swiftly, they connected me to oxygen, repositioned me onto my side, and after a tense interval, the commotion began to subside. However, sleep remained elusive amidst the aftermath of this medical whirlwind. A strange quiet fell, enveloping the room in a deep darkness like night. My intuition suggested that my baby girl's arrival was close. Nervous tingles danced through my upper body as I felt pressure envelop me. It was time.

Exhausted but determined, I pushed tirelessly, a symphony of emotions echoing within me. Yet, my baby hesitated, resisting the pull of the world beyond. Scissors hovered in the air, an invisible decision point, though I remained oblivious to the sensation of their cutting. A few more determined pushes, and there she was. My beautiful baby girl, adorned in hues of pink and purple, her sweet face slightly swollen like a rosebud in full bloom, bore the tender marks of her journey into our world. Her cries, a symphony of sweetness and power, resonated as a testament to her arrival. A tidal wave of profound and unfamiliar love crashed over me as she was placed on my chest. Ready to introduce my baby girl to my world, I cradled her into my arms, feeling the warmth of her tiny body against mine. At that moment, as we shared the same breath and heartbeat, I knew our journey together was beginning.



*Cover Art—Second Place*

Angela Lua

# *Short Story*

## *Second Place*

### Treasures of Unraveling Realities

Thinh V. Tran

In the enchanting backdrop of my small hometown, where childhood dreams danced like an ethereal mist, the sunsets painted a canvas of orange and pink, casting long shadows on cobblestone streets. Amid the laughter of friends in narrow alleyways and the fragrance of blooming flowers in the town square, my curiosity sprouted, sowing the seeds of a relentless quest for truth. As years unfolded, the quaint town became the stage for my personal mystery. A chance meeting with the enigmatic Dirigo marked a pivotal moment in my journey. Behind the town's rustic charm lurked hidden secrets, and Dirigo, with his piercing gaze and mysterious smile, held the elusive key. Each encounter with him felt like a puzzle piece falling into place, unveiling a reality more intricate and mysterious than I had ever dared to imagine.

Amidst the shadows of uncertainty, our friendship with Dirigo evolved into a clandestine journey in a town that had once been a comforting backdrop. Unlike others, Dirigo became a trusted confidant as we navigated the deceptive intricacies of our false reality, where familiar streets concealed hidden barriers. The simulated world, crafted by puppeteers, tested our resolve with challenges that exposed a complex tapestry of manipulation beyond our wildest imaginations. As we delved deeper, the once-innocent town bore the scars of a reality warped by unseen forces, transforming into a labyrinth of intrigue and mystery, prompting us to grapple

with the profound implications of our journey through this distorted reality.

In a pivotal moment of desperation, faced with an insurmountable obstacle, I made the ultimate sacrifice. The weight of the decision pressed upon my shoulders, a burden fueled by a determination to ensure Dirigo's escape. In those fleeting moments, I implored him to carry on the quest for truth, knowing that my sacrifice was a catalyst for the unraveling of the simulated world's secrets. The farewell between friends was etched in the fabric of time, a poignant moment that set the stage for the challenges that lay ahead. Heart heavy with grief, I watched as Dirigo made his escape into the real world, leaving me behind, captured and helpless. The simulated world closed in around me; its confines once again becoming my prison. The room, once a sanctuary of dreams, transformed into a cage, and the tendrils of simulated reality tightened their grip. The realization of my sacrifice, the echoes of our friendship, and the burden of truth intertwined, forging chains that bound me to the very fabric of the simulation I sought to escape.

Dirigo, now free from the shackles of the simulation, dedicated his newfound liberty to sending help into the simulated world. The clandestine efforts he orchestrated from beyond the confines of the artificial reality were a testament to his resilience and unwavering commitment to the cause. Seeds of rebellion were planted, silently germinating in the minds of those still ensnared by the puppeteers' illusions. Dirigo became a shadowy figure, orchestrating a silent revolution that would pave the way for the moment when the truth would finally come to light. As I navigated the challenges of my re-imprisonment, the simulated world revealed new layers of deception. The puppeteers, sensing the growing dissent, tightened their control, introducing barriers and traps designed to quell any rebellion. In this heightened state of awareness, I stumbled upon a hidden video recording—an unexpected lifeline to the truth that lay beyond the simulated facade. The video, recorded by me in a moment of foresight before my memory was erased, became a beacon guiding me towards the elusive exit, where the real world awaited.

Now armed with the knowledge of my reality and the unexpected support from Dirigo, I set my sights on a renewed escape.

The room that once seemed comforting now felt like a cage, and I yearned to break free. The video became my guiding light, a source of strength as I meticulously planned my escape. Every detail, every revelation in the recording fueled my determination to dismantle the puppeteers' illusions and step into the unknown. Our journey to break free from the simulation intensified. Dirigo, orchestrating a silent revolution from the outside, provided crucial information and assistance. Together, we navigated through the intricacies of the simulated world, dismantling barriers and exposing the puppeteers' carefully crafted illusions. Each step forward was a battle against the artificial constructs of our reality. The very fabric of the simulation resisted our escape, throwing challenges that tested our resilience and determination. Dirigo, despite his newfound freedom, was a guiding force from beyond, a voice in the darkness leading me towards the light.

The rebellion sparked by Dirigo's escape gained momentum, challenging the puppeteers' illusion of control. Our fight symbolized defiance, showcasing the power of truth against manufactured lies. Whispers of dissent evolved into a resounding chorus, shaking the simulated world's foundations. As the rebellion reached its climax, the world quivered, crumbling under the weight of truth. The once-untouchable puppeteers faced consequences. Amidst chaos, a lightning-like revelation struck—the real world, an unexplored frontier, awaited with uncertainties. Stepping into the unknown, I carried lessons from the simulated crucible—a tapestry of sacrifice, friendship, and unwavering pursuit of truth. The realization that my journey was beginning anew echoed, propelling me beyond the simulated world's confines. In a concealed chamber, Dirigo and I huddled, urgently discussing our escape plan from the Oligarchs, the reality-manipulating puppeteers. Dim light flickered, casting shadows as we whispered. "The Oligarchs are tightening their grip," Dirigo said, his eyes reflecting the gravity. "We need to act swiftly." I nodded, thoughts racing about the impending confrontation. "The rebellion gains momentum, but we must strike at the heart of their control, expose illusions, and dismantle erected barriers."

Dirigo's gaze hardened as he revealed gathered intel from the outside, indicating the Oligarchs' vulnerability in the heavily

guarded central control chamber. As we delved into the plan details, the weight of our mission pressed upon us, turning the once-deceptive simulated world into the battleground for liberation. The room resonated with our determination—a quiet rebellion against unseen forces confining us. Our discussion unfolded like a choreographed dance, each move calculated to outsmart the Oligarchs. Dirigo's outside insights provided a crucial advantage to navigate the web of illusions. Together, we plotted, aware that every decision carried the weight of our shared history. As the time for action approached, we steeled ourselves for the challenges ahead. Unaware of the storm brewing, the Oligarchs continued pulling strings from the shadows. Little did they know that, fueled by lessons of sacrifice and truth, Dirigo and I were poised to shatter their illusions and step into the uncertain embrace of the real world.

In the days leading up to our planned assault on the Oligarchs, Dirigo and I worked tirelessly to fine-tune every aspect of our escape plan. The simulated world responded to our rebellion with heightened surveillance and additional layers of deception, but our determination only intensified. Dirigo, with his knowledge from beyond the simulation, provided strategic insights that proved invaluable. We navigated through the labyrinth of illusions with a shared purpose, fueled by the desire to expose the puppeteers who manipulated our reality. As our rebellion gained momentum, whispers of dissent echoed through the simulated town. The citizens, once mere puppets in the Oligarchs' play, began to question the fabric of their existence. Seeds of doubt sprouted, and the simulated world trembled in response to the growing realization that reality was far more complex than it seemed. The central control chamber, guarded by the Oligarchs, loomed as our ultimate destination. Our plan was meticulous, relying on the element of surprise and exploiting weaknesses in the artificial construct. With Dirigo's guidance, we anticipated the moves of our unseen adversaries, turning the tables in our favor.

On the eve of our daring mission, the simulated town throbbled with eerie energy, concealing the storm brewing within. Confident Oligarchs were oblivious to the rebellion's silent anticipation, as Dirigo and I moved purposefully through the shadows. The once tranquil town square crackled with defiance, uniting re-



bels in pursuit of truth. Approaching the central control chamber, the heart of puppeteers' influence, the weight of our collective journey bore down. With a silent nod, Dirigo and I breached the chamber, catching the Oligarchs off guard. A tense exchange ensued, revealing the true nature of our reality and exposing the Oligarchs.

In the chaos, Dirigo and I dismantled control mechanisms, freeing citizens from puppeteers' strings. The rebellion surged, breaking chains and blurring the lines between simulated and real worlds. The transition was disorienting as we emerged into the uncharted true reality. Now, once prisoners, Dirigo and I stood on the threshold of a new beginning, lessons learned guiding us. As we stepped into the real world, the echoes of our rebellion reverberated. The small town, once a stage for illusion, faded into memory. Our journey continued, not as puppets, but as individuals forging destinies. The friendship remained, anchoring us as we embraced uncertainties. The pursuit of truth, once confined, unfolded on the vast canvas of reality, inviting exploration beyond the horizon.



*General Art—Second Place*

Beverly Castillo

# *Short Story*

## *Third Place*

### A Walk to the Blind

Dustin Bock

It was a warm and humid autumn morning in the deep East Texas woods. September is always hot this time of year. Mosquitoes swarm the front porch like bees, appearing like miniature Pterosaurs reptiles flying at Mac III speed. Nonetheless, a welcomed cool front was approaching with thick black clouds and lightning bolts filling the sky, and the nighttime air was settling in.

The midnight rain saturated the ground, leaving a trail of footprints in the grass by Mother Nature's inhabitants. It surely made walking on the leaves and twigs a little more discrete, soundless, and mysterious in a pair of muddied tan cowboy boots. The moon glistened through the trees in the coal-black starless sky, casting shadows of what appeared to be faces smiling back at him on the tree bark. Fierce as a warrior, he trotted lightly down a narrow path that tapered to less than a spare truck tire width through the densely wooded atmosphere. His ears peaked at maximum frequency to the auditory perception of the crickets singing and the owls hooting in the nighttime air. Banana spider webs plastered across his face at every slight opening between bushes and thickets. Thorns from briar patches carved him up like a thief on the cross in his sleeveless camouflage shirt, scathing his skin to a bloodied red and dirt brown camouflage color.

Off in the distance, he heard a few boar hogs squealing, scrimmaging each other, and breaking limbs. Bearing only a cross-bow in his right hand and a tattered sheath containing a stainless-steel razor-sharp bowie knife attached to his hip, every hair on his

body stood at attention like a young United States Marine Corps recruit. Though determined not to get spooked, he toed the shadowed line to his favorite tree in the vast forest. Not knowing what was on the other side of the thicket was always a trepidatious walk for Larry, an old boisterous city slicker.

After sneaking two hundred yards through the groves of trees, Larry finally advanced to his moment of truth, his treasured hunting blind. He shimmied up the tree like a squirrel and secured his satchel on a hook screwed into the tree bark. The ball of fire that brings light to the day was finally peaking over the hilltop, dismantling the fog. Drawing his carbon steel arrow with a quad-bladed broadhead tip from his quiver, Larry slid it through the mounted whisker biscuit and notched his lung slicer to the bow string.

He radioed his hunting partner, Kelly, "Did you make it to your tree stand?" Kelly responded, "Yes." With butterflies starting to rumble in his stomach from excitement, he could feel Ramone bypassing through his pancreas southbound to his gallbladder! Directly in front, he heard a tremendous amount of racket, screaming, and crashing timber; then silence. Moments passed, not a bird chirping or a breath of air blowing in the wind. Suddenly, the beast of the forest reared his head from behind a two-century-year-old oak tree. Sporting a tan coat, pointed ears, and a long, black-tipped tail was all Larry needed to see. As quick as the cougar arrived on the scene, Larry spotted him. The cougar catapulted into the woods chasing a silverback sow pig and vanished. With a horrendous scream that sounded like my daughter blowing her gasket in anger, the cougar let every species know he was there.

Larry radioed his partner and told her the news. The daunting hunt was over as fast as it came. Now, the immense walk back to his truck was more intense, knowing a natural-born killer was on the prowl.



*Photography—Second Place*

Melissa Magana

# *Short Story*

## *Honorable Mention*

### Entering the City

Joaquin Duque

Mia limped upwards through the crowd, grasping her bloodied side. The rumbling of trains and lively chatter rang in her ears. She could feel the searing gazes burning into her as her bloodied and bruised face was on display. She pulled her hood up as the frosty winter breeze sent shivers up her spine. She limped out of the station and was blinded by the vibrant lights that lit up the bustling city.

A pleasant aroma filled the air as her eyes squinted to adjust to the city. She limped towards the lively crowds of people. “Tonight, we celebrate our two hundredth anniversary of this city,” someone yelled! Cheers from the crowd rang out into the frozen night. As she limped through the crowd the loud chatter of kids echoed in her ears. As she crossed the bridge the sounds of ice breaking as boats navigated the frozen canals echoed in the air. She looked forwards and saw the soft plush leaves fall ever so gently as the cherry trees waved at her. A beautiful aroma filled the air as she passed through the cherry tree grove. As she moved across another bridge, she saw majestic and grand churches all lined up, silently watching as people of all religions congregated near the frozen fountain, the statues bowing down to the crowd.

She continued to limp through the city when a loud whistle followed by a bang echoed throughout the air. She glanced up as the sky lit up with jubilation. The bright colors flashing over her as her foot scraped against the polished floor. As she got closer the

repulsive smell of beer filled the air. The center was surrounded by towering shiny skyscrapers, the loud sounds bouncing off the walls. In front of the center was a futuristic, sleek pristine skyscraper towering over them all, watching silently as if it was waiting to strike. She clenched her fist as she moved towards the skyscraper, it's shadow looming over them. Mia looked around for a place to rest, each breath was becoming harder to take. Her lungs struggled to breathe as sharp pains shot through her body with each breath. Mia knew she didn't have long before her injuries got worse.

Mia looked up at the skyscraper and her body went numb. An acrid smell burned her throat and her eyes watered. Beads of sweat rolled down her face. Her heart was racing; someone had her throat in their hands, preventing her from breathing. Mia was shaking, "Hey are you okay?" someone asked. They reached out to her; she pushed them out of the way. "What the hell? I'm just trying to help." "Leave me alone!" A pain shot through her ribs like fire. She was immune to the judging and cold stares directed at her.

A thunderous sound resonated throughout the city; the bright flash hit her eyes long before the explosion threw her off her feet. A massive cloud of dust and debris threatened to fill their lungs. The blazing fire scorched the earth as it claimed the lives of any who dared to stand in its path. The raging fire engulfed a building, and Mia hit the ground with a resonating thud. Her ears rang as the fire roared in anger. Embers rained down as the sky was filled with screams, tendrils of fire whipped at their feet. Mia's vision tunneled as her head went fuzzy. The mighty inferno washed over her as the world went black.

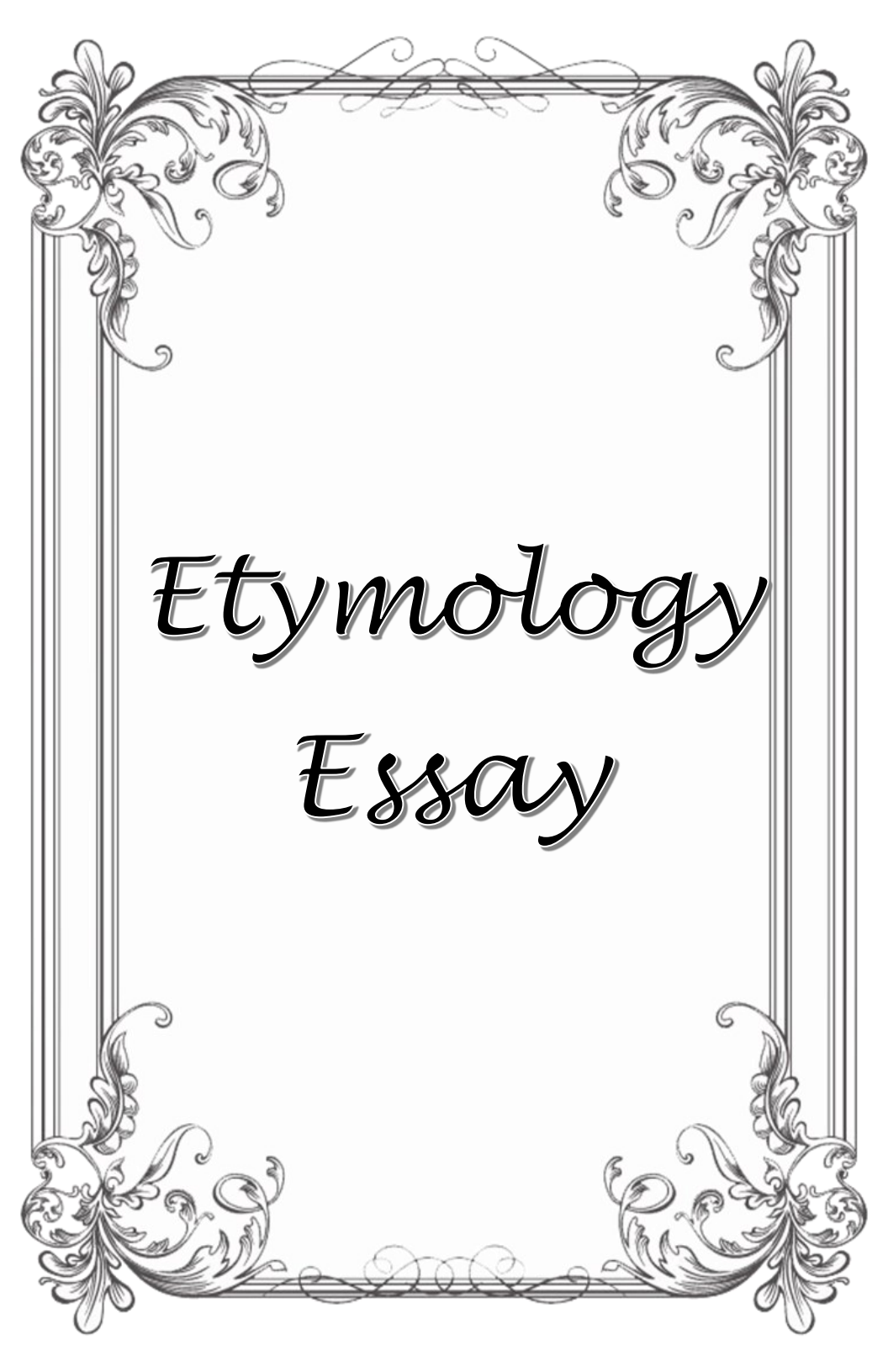
# EXPRESSIONS 2024



*Cover Art—Third Place*

Sofia Pulido





*Etymology*  
*Essay*



*General Art—Third Place*

Pamela Vargas

# *Etymology Essay*

## *First Place*

### The Linguistic Origins of Music

Haley Kiker

Exploring etymology is like discovering the DNA of language; it unravels the origins and evolution of words, offering a key to understanding our language heritage. The modern English word 'music,' a term deeply entwined with human expression and emotion, came into use in the 1630s. However, its journey spans centuries, tracing back to the Old English 'musike' of the mid-13th century and the Old French 'musique' of the 12th century. The roots dive deeper into the Latin 'mūsica,' derived from the Ancient Greek mousiké meaning '(art) of the Muses.' The Latin word 'musica' not only influenced the evolution of 'music' in English but also contributed to its counterparts in other languages, such as Spanish 'música' and French 'musique,' showing how words traveled through Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Music is like a magical language that speaks to everyone, regardless of their origin. It's not just about sounds; it's about feelings and stories, a way for people to express themselves. What makes music unique is that it can be so different—like the powerful beats of hip-hop or the beautiful tunes of classical music. And it changes with the times, showing how our society evolves and expressing what's happening around us. Exploring music is like discovering a timeless power that's been a part of human life forever, connecting us all through shared emotions and experiences.

Music means more than just a word to me; it's my escape into a world of melodies and emotions. As Bob Marley wisely said,

“One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain.” Growing up amid chaos, music was my refuge. Plugging in my headphones was like stepping into a safe place where the tunes worked like magic, calming my nerves. Each song told a story, reflecting my own feelings. It wasn't just about listening; it was about living, connecting, and finding solace in the soundtrack of my life. Depending on my mood, I'd sway between genres, letting the music mirror the emotions I needed at that moment. This showed me the wide world of music, where each genre spoke a unique language, expressing emotions beyond the reach of words.

Discovering the power of music led me to explore its many colors. Each genre felt like a different world, expressing emotions in unique ways. As I navigated these musical landscapes, I discovered the diverse sounds and rich histories embedded in each note and rhythm. Let me share the history of a few of my favorites. Hip hop, a force born in the 1970s, emerged as an anti-drug and anti-violence movement, evolving through old-school and new-school styles, dominating in the late 1990s. Today, trap and mumble rap continue to sculpt the hip-hop landscape. Shifting gears, country music, with roots reaching back to the 1920s in the Southern U.S., weaves a tapestry of ballads and honky-tonk tunes, drawing influences from American folk, blues, and global sounds. It remains a beloved genre from Texas country to red dirt during morning and evening commutes. Turning to rhythm and blues (R&B), originating in the 1940s, it navigated shifts, embracing electric blues, gospel, and soul. Its journey through jump blues and funk led to contemporary R&B, eventually seeing the rise of trap and mumble rap in the mid-2010s. Transitioning to timeless classical music, rooted in Western art traditions since the ninth century, it gracefully evolved through different styles and cultural influences. Finally, let's explore pop music, which emerged in the mid-1950s; pop music embraced rock and roll and evolved into a genre known for catchy choruses and danceable rhythms. The term 'pop music' gained prominence, standing in contrast to rock music in the late 1960s. Each genre, in its way, has a unique story shaped by its cultural and social contexts.

In wrapping up this musical journey, it's clear that language and music profoundly shape our lives. From uncovering the lin-

guistic origins of 'music' to exploring diverse genre histories, this exploration heightened my appreciation for the deep connection between words and melodies. More than just a term, 'music' became my refuge in life's chaos. The histories of hip-hop, country, rhythm and blues, classical, and pop revealed unique narratives in the human experience. I carry these melodies and stories, recognizing their power to create connection in our varied lives, a celebration of the timeless relationship between language, emotion, and the artistry of music. Music is a universal language that connects us through shared feelings and experiences, solidifying its timeless impact.

### Note

1. Students published in the Etymology Essay category were given the same assignment. They were tasked with using the Oxford English Dictionary online as a source for the etymological and historical lineage of their chosen word.

### Works Cited

*Oxford University Press*. The Oxford English Dictionary, 2023, <https://www.oed.com/?tl=true>. Accessed 04 Apr. 2024.

*Photography - Third Place*



Lynnetra Taylor

# *Etymology Essay*

## *Second Place*

Saudade

Megan Ezell

Words are living things that enrich our human experience in the wide world of language. Etymology, the study of word origins and historical development, is a linguistic time machine that lets us explore language's amazing storylines (Miller et al.). Exploring word roots shows how societies, cultures, and human life change over time. Etymology helps you understand words, their meanings and their history. Etymology shows how words change over time to represent culture, society, and human thought. This paper takes us on a riveting journey via 'saudade,' a concept that embodies deep feeling. A Portuguese term, 'saudade' evokes regret, desire, and sorrow. A linguistic jewel, the word expresses complexity beyond language barriers.

Portuguese 'saudade' comes from the Latin word 'solitas,' meaning solitude. The word 'saudade' first appeared in 13th-century Portuguese literature (Miller et al.). Its conceptual essence goes beyond verbal documentation, integrating the people's cultural and emotional landscape. Different spellings and variations of 'saudade' have evolved over time, indicating its linguistic evolution and cultural dissemination.<sup>1</sup> From Old Portuguese 'soidades' to 'saudad' and 'soedade,' each iteration is a linguistic relic that reflects the term's various echoes throughout eras and linguistic geographies.

To describe the profound sense of saudade, Portuguese novelist Manuel de Melo wrote: "There is no greater sorrow than

to recall in misery the time when we were happy." This touching phrase captures saudade's emotional complexity—joy, grief, nostalgia, and yearning. As we explore saudade, we go beyond the dictionary term. We uncover this term's cultural and emotional roots in Portuguese history. Etymology unlocks the collective awareness of a people and the ever-changing mosaic of human experience by decoding linguistic nuances.

To understand saudade, individuals must define it both as it is and as it is not. Saudade goes beyond nostalgia and melancholy memories. This is a deep, persistent pain that surpasses normal emotions (Miller et al.). Saudade must be redefined beyond its sentimental connotations. The complicated and rich emotional weave requires a deeper comprehension. Saudade takes many forms and colors. It includes the longing for a lost love, a distant nation, or a bygone age. Each saudade category paints the emotional landscape with its own colors. These categories help us understand saudade's complex feelings and how they emerge.

Imagine standing in a peaceful seaside village where fado music and surf blend. Saudade is a feeling of solitude, nostalgia, and deep connection to the past. Descriptions reveal saudade's genuine character and generate a vivid, sensual portrayal for the reader. Such vivid imagery brings saudade's emotional landscape to life, allowing readers to feel longing and connection.

During a year abroad, saudade became meaningful in my life as home became distant. Each smell of my mother's cooking and sound of kids giggling reminded me of absence. These human interactions with saudade show its power to shape our emotions beyond linguistic inquiry. Sharing these encounters bridges saudade's abstract concept and lived reality. Saudade, a Portuguese word, is a global feeling. Being able to convey the inexpressible gives it a sophisticated lexicon for complex emotions. Saudade leaves a lasting impression on us, making us appreciate fleeting moments. It reminds us of life's transience and the beauty of every moment (Miller et al.).

Saudade would be melancholy's relative. Saudade blends joy and despair into a bittersweet melody. Comparisons with synonyms and antonyms help us appreciate saudade's distinct emotional spectrum. We compare saudade to other emotions to show its unique ability to capture the complexity of human experience.



In conclusion, exploring the term ‘saudade’ goes beyond language curiosity to explore human experience. Saudade's origins, manifestations, and personal meaning show how it affects our emotions. In this essay, we've shown the layers of longing, nostalgia, and connection in this intriguing term, allowing readers to consider language's depth and the profound feelings it captures. Saudade's rich history and many forms demonstrate human emotion's universality and depth.

### Note

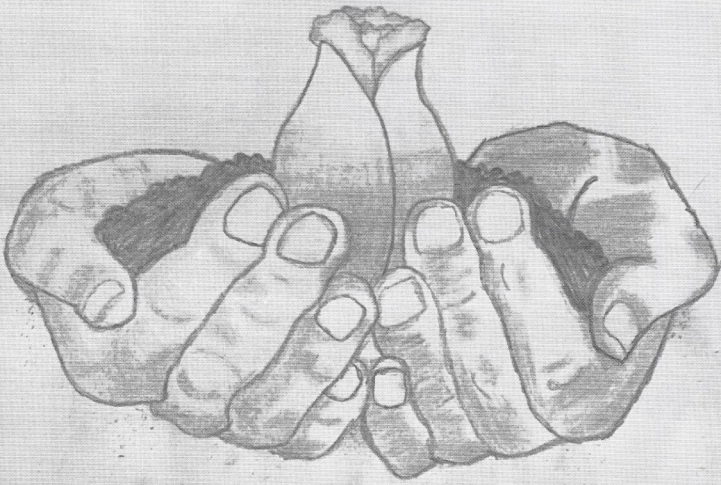
1. Students published in the Etymology Essay category were given the same assignment. They were tasked with using the Oxford English Dictionary online as a source for the etymological and historical lineage of their chosen word.

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Miller JE, Tresoldi T, Zariquiey R, Beltrán Castañón CA, Morozova N, et al. (2020) Using lexical language models to detect borrowings in monolingual wordlists. *PLOS ONE* 15(12): e0242709. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0242709>.

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# *Expressions*



**2024**

*Cover Art—Honorable Mention*

Arianna Garcia

# Etymology Essay

## Third Place

### Cannibalism

Alondra Gallegos

The study of etymology provides insight on a word and its origins; for example: cultural background, historical context, and how the words progress overtime. When you hear the word cannibalism your mind goes to humans eating humans, and you would be correct. The literal definition of cannibalism is the act of eating the flesh of one's own species. There is speculation on where the word originated from, but the earliest documented use of the word was Spanish in the journals of Christopher Columbus when speaking of the indigenous people of the Carib tribe. He referred to them as *canibals* or *caribals* from *Caniba*, *caniba* meaning "men eater" or "to eat flesh." The word cannibalism is said to come from the Latin word for dog *canis*; however, *canis* also means man in Greek where cannibalism is thought to have come from as well.<sup>1</sup>

Cannibalism is taboo and frowned upon in most cultures; however it is also an ancient religious practice. The Māori people of New Zealand used to perform ritualistic cannibalism known as *Tangi* to help release the spirit of the deceased from their body. Another tribe of people known as the Fore were known for cooking and eating dead people at funerals. They believed it was better that the body be eaten by loved ones rather than bugs and maggots. While the act itself is something dark I believe the reason behind the act is something of beauty. The most important thing that must be kept in mind is that this was done to honor the dead and not for nourishment or benefit of the person performing the act.

Saying that cannibalism has only been used for honorable purposes would be a lie. It is no question that there have been instances in history where serial killers perform the act of cannibalism for their own pleasure. The most well-known serial killer that did this was Jeffrey Dahmer. When he was investigated, it was reported he had 17 victims' remains in his freezer. Dahmer never gave a reason as to why he consumed his victims, but it is said by psychologist Dr. Eric Hickley that cannibals eat their victims as a sexual and intimate act. They get a sense of power because their victims can never leave them.

In literature, cannibalism has become known as a metaphor for love and obsession. The act of being so devoted to someone that you are willing to sacrifice your physical body to be one with the person you love can be seen as symbolic. Although it is an unhealthy and extreme type of love I do understand where the connection is made. Sometimes love is described as hunger. The person is hungry for a relationship and closeness. Even though in this sense hunger is not literal, what if it was and the only way hunger can be satiated is by consuming the person they love and letting themselves be nourished and sustained by the love, devotion, and the overwhelming emotions they share.

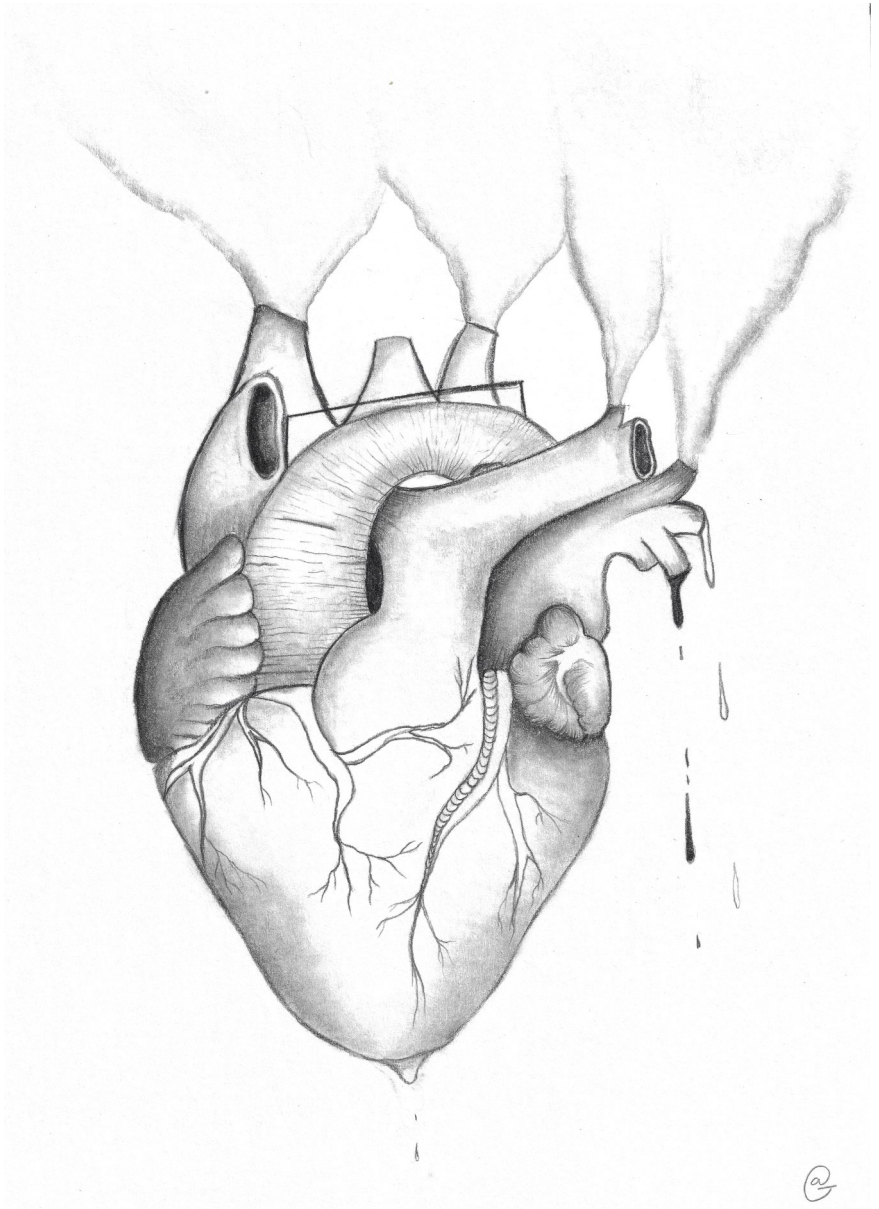
There are many historical sides to cannibalism. Some literal and others theoretical, but nonetheless intriguing. While cannibalism has been practiced throughout history and is still practiced by some cultures today, it is a very controversial and complex topic that relies heavily on context. Some cannibals have good intentions and do it for reasons they see as morally correct while others do it even though they know it is wrong. That is why I see cannibalism as something that cannot be condemned nor commemorated. Although the meaning of the word cannibalism has not changed, the public perception has.

## Note

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*Oxford University Press*. The Oxford English Dictionary, 2023, <https://www.oed.com/?tl=true>. Accessed 04 Apr. 2024.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Angela Lua

# *Etymology Essay*

## *Honorable Mention*

### The Act of God

Adrian Guzman

Since the early 19th century, etymology has become an increasingly important subject to study to fully understand how our dictionary has formed and shifted through the ages. It shows the connectedness we shared with the rest of the world in the past and the history of the many diverse cultures all over the world that spread their influence among those around them over the centuries. One of these words studied is disaster, its denotation being “a sudden calamitous event bringing great damage, loss, or destruction.” It is first derived from the Greek word *astron* (meaning star), which turned into the Latin word *astrum*, then into the Italian word *astro*, which would then be combined with Italian prefix *dis-* (meaning ill) to form the word *disastro*. Eventually, the French would then turn it into *desastre* and it would then finally turn into the word *disaster*, recorded as early as the mid 1500s. The earliest writing of the word *disaster* is in the writings of Geoffrey Fenton in 1567 and is used in the quote, “The trick is to find happiness in the brief gaps between disasters.” -Christopher Paolini.<sup>1</sup>

The word *disaster* has many different meanings depending on the way it is used. It is primarily used to describe things that cause great destruction or loss, such as floods, hurricanes, plane crashes, etc. One instance of a disaster in the recent years was Hurricane Harvey, a devastating Category 4 hurricane that made land-fall on Texas and Louisiana in 2017. It caused many people in the area to lose their homes due to catastrophic flooding and caused

over 100 deaths. Another case of a disaster would be the Gulf War Oil Spill that happened during the Gulf War in 1987. Iraqi forces purposefully dumped oil valves into the Arabian Gulf to prevent American invasion by sea, affecting over 114,000 animals that all suffered injuries and death. Disaster is also often used to describe someone/something that is unsuccessful, has a bad result/effect, any disordered state or condition, or an agitated emotional state. For example, when a person wakes up after having a party that lasted until 4 in the morning and notices that their house is an extremely disheveled state. Or if a person goes to an interview for an important job opportunity and someone spills coffee on their expensive suit right before it takes place. Both situations could be considered as a “disaster.” The root of disaster originally comes from the belief that the position of stars directly affected the fate of humans, many times in destructive ways. The original meaning in English was “an unfavorable aspect of a star or planet.”

Whether it be used to describe the major inconveniences in our lives or for a world altering event that takes countless lives, a “disaster” is something you want to avoid at all costs. Although, the opposites of disaster, such as a blessing, good luck, achievement, benefit, and good fortune are all things that anyone would hope for throughout their lives. However, there is an extremely low chance that one can avoid the acts of God.

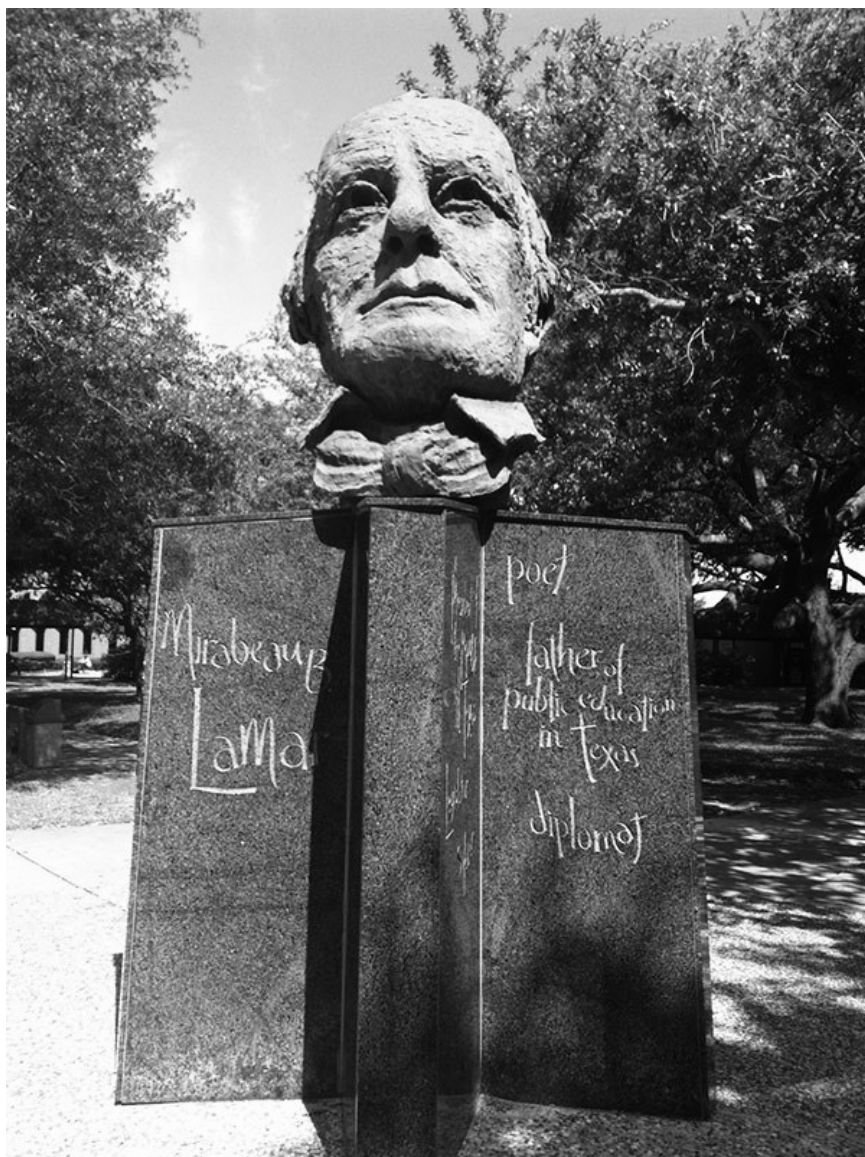
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*Photography—Honorable Mention*

Khaylie Gipson

# Etymology Essay

## Honorable Mention

### The Etymology of Connect

Esther C. Vasquez

The study of etymology is important in order to know the origins of words and how they change within time. The etymology of the word connect is from Latin *connectere* originating in the early 1500's. The word 'connect' is a verb, and it means to join, fasten, or link together. The reason why I chose this word is because everything in the world is connected; for example: objects have a particular way of functioning with something or someone. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the spelling of 'connect' shifted from *connexion* in Old French to *connection* (especially in American English) in the mid-18th century.<sup>1</sup> An American architect once said, "Eventually everything connects - people, ideas, objects. The quality of the connections is the key to quality per se" - Charles Eames.

People connect with one another daily. A connection is the feeling you get when you're with someone. It's not only a physical connection, but an emotional one. Depending on the person's interest the connection can go as deep and build a lifetime friendship. Think of a baby and a mother having that first physical touch connection. Think of the first years of a toddler and how close they are to their mother, following her everywhere, even to the restroom. Emotional connection to someone opens doors to being responsive, trusting, and vulnerable. Also lack of communication may lead to a rough separation from your spouse, a disconnection.

Connecting ideas is like a puzzle, you must connect the

pieces to form the finished product. Brainstorming creatively can bring life goals to reality. Creativity is our ability to look at a problem and come up with a good solution to solve it. This process all connects to our mindset. A vision-board makes thoughts come true by allowing a person to consistently see the dreams they wish to accomplish.

An object of connection can be an electronic device. We all have electronic devices like cell phones, computers, or an Xbox to join to wifi internet. I find it fascinating how simple it is to plug in a device to an outlet and how it all connects and works. People literally carry a minicomputer in their hands on a daily basis. A cell phone connects to so many different applications and still even makes phone calls! It's a source of instantaneous communication to people all over the world at every second of the day.

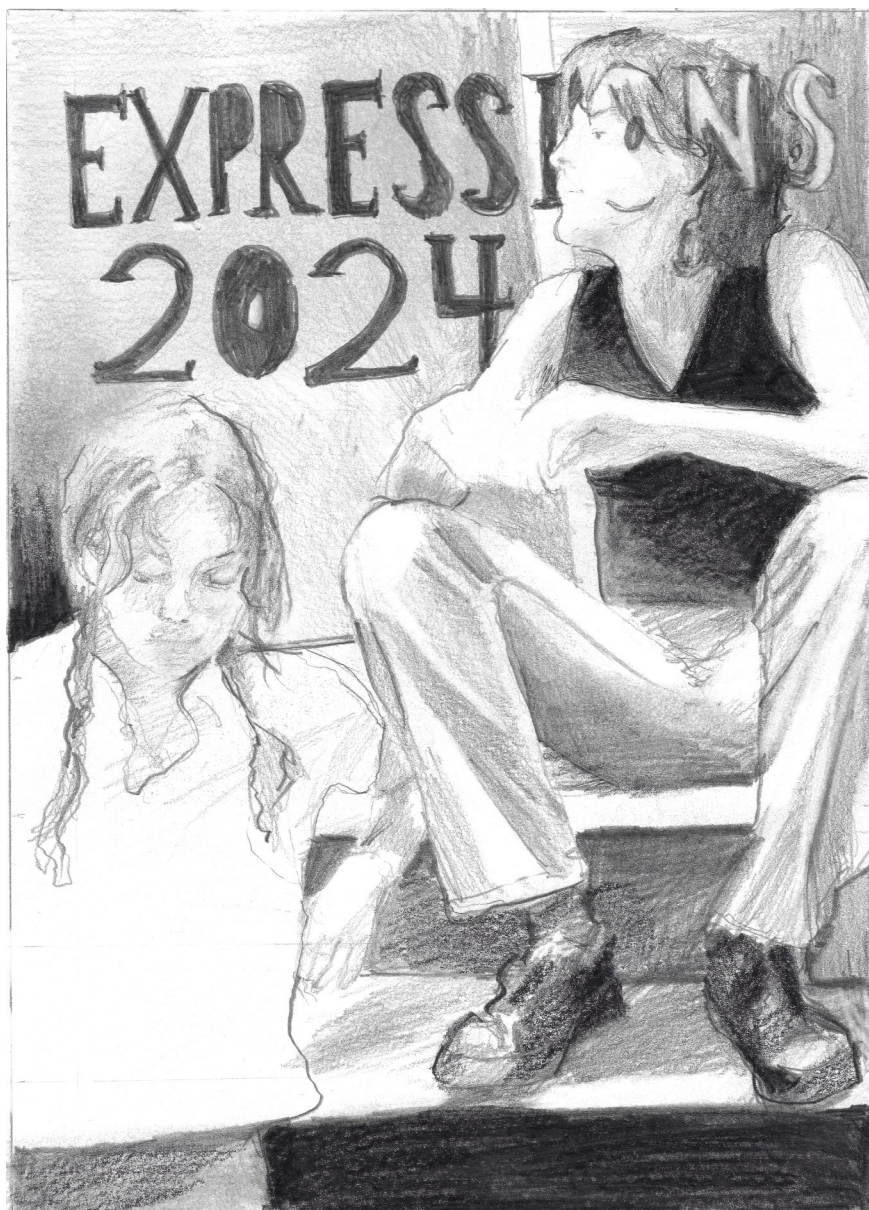
The word 'connect' effectively thrives in all areas of our lives. I would like to include my opinion to 'connected' with the concept of communication. Building strong foundations with my spouse, my friends, and family has been paramount in my life. Yet, at times the connection of ideas is complex due to being detached in areas where I have trouble reaching personal goals (like losing weight). Linking the objective to my mind, "Yes, I can lose weight," is sometimes difficult. My ability to focus on the goal will be the solution that will eventually work for me emotionally; I will be connected to the change. As mentioned above, eventually everything connects.

## Note

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*Cover Art—Honorable Mention*

Colby Robin

# Etymology Essay

## Honorable Mention

Witch

Maria Jimenez

The study of etymology is important for education because it is the root of many possible lessons we could learn about language. Etymology helps to expand our vocabulary and make the understanding and learning of new languages easier since it all goes back to Greek or Latin. A witch is a person (in later use typically a woman) who was thought to practice witchcraft or magic, especially of a malevolent or harmful nature. This is a word inherited from Germanic. In Old English *wicce* was a "female magician, sorceress," and in later use especially, "a woman supposed to have dealings with the devil or evil spirits and to be able by their cooperation to perform supernatural acts." Also in Old English *wicca* meant a "sorcerer, wizard, man who practices witchcraft or magic," from the verb *wiccian* "to practice witchcraft".<sup>1</sup>

From the Old English era onward, *witch* has carried negative connotations of malevolent or harmful magic. However, this is complicated by the fact that, according to orthodox Christian belief, both practitioners of benevolent and harmful magic were thought to derive their powers, whether knowingly or unwittingly, from the Devil or evil spirits. In the late medieval and early modern periods, characterized by heightened fear of witches, it was widely believed that those practicing witchcraft had willingly entered pacts with such supernatural entities.

In the early modern popular usage, *witch* primarily referred

to practitioners of harmful magic, while those practicing benevolent magic were often labeled as *cunning* or *wise*. In cases where *witch* encompassed all magic practitioners, a distinction emerged between benevolent *white witches* and malevolent *black witches*. As belief in witchcraft decreased from the 18th century onwards, subsequent usage of the term displayed a broad spectrum of applications. In contemporary portrayals of witches in fiction, their powers are typically attributed to specialized knowledge or innate qualities, marking a departure from the historical connotations of malevolence.

*Witch* was not initially strongly linked to women over men in its early usage. However, its evolving use as a term of insult or disdain directed towards women from the 15th century onwards suggests a growing association with women from at least that period. The emergence of terms like *he-witch* and *man-witch* around the turn of the 17th century indicates a common understanding that *witch* primarily referred to a woman by that time.

The marginalized status of older women, especially those who were widowed or unmarried, within their communities made them particularly susceptible to accusations of witchcraft. This vulnerability was exacerbated if these women possessed knowledge of natural medicine. The belief that women were more susceptible than men to the influence of the Devil further contributed to the accusations. In later usage, *witch* is often seen as the female counterpart to *wizard* and *warlock*, which typically refer to men practicing magic.

Currently, media depiction of *witches* ranges from positive to negative depending on the storyline. In the movie *Hocus Pocus*, Disney hired actress Sarah Jessica Parker, a conventionally attractive woman, to play the role of a mean witch, challenging the stereotype of witches with malevolent intentions to be ugly. In the renowned franchise *Harry Potter*, one of the main characters, Hermione Granger, is often referred to as “the brightest witch of her age,” as a description of Hermione’s extraordinary skills with magic.

## Note

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## Works Cited

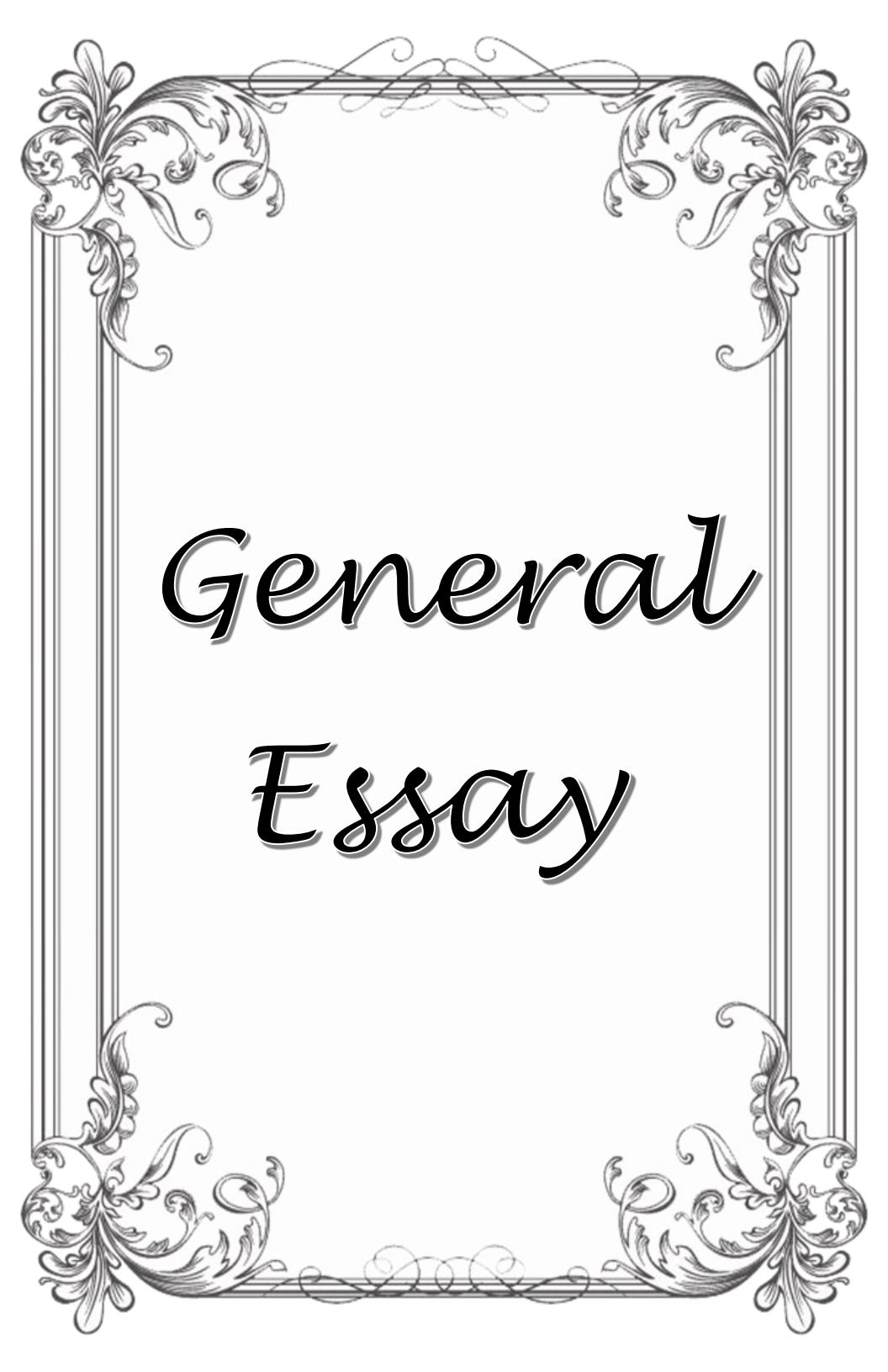
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*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Arianna Garcia



*General  
Essay*

# General Essay

## First Place

Navigating the Shadows: Exploring Subtleties in  
Joyce Carol Oates's "Where Are You Going,  
Where Have You Been?"

Jesus Castellanos

Have you ever felt the subtle undercurrents of uncertainty, where each choice echoes with potential consequences? Joyce Carol Oates, in her poignant work "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?," invites readers to navigate the delicate dance of adolescence and the looming specter of danger. Set in a quiet American suburb, the story follows Connie as she grapples with the allure of independence and the ominous presence of Arnold Friend. Amidst the familiar backdrop of teenage life, the narrative delves into Connie's vulnerability and the chilling outcomes of youthful exploration. At its core, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" delves into the fragility of youth in the face of existential threats, using symbolism, irony, and foreshadowing to unveil layers of human experience.

In the array of literary devices, symbolism stands out as a quiet yet powerful force. Connie's focus on appearance and rebellion against her family mirrors the universal quest for identity during adolescence. Arnold Friend's arrival, marked by a distinctive choice of music, foreshadows the unsettling dance awaiting Connie. Each symbol, from the ominous boots to the convertible representing both freedom and entrapment, weaves a tapes-

try that speaks to the fragility of self-discovery.

Complementing symbolism is irony, an understated partner in the narrative. Connie, embodying teenage rebellion, finds herself ensnared by the independence she seeks. Casual encounters at the shopping plaza transform into a dangerous dance with a predator. The irony lies in Connie's yearning for adult experiences contrasting with the terrifying reality of confronting an adult-like force she cannot comprehend. This subtle dance between youthful innocence and lurking malevolence heightens tension.

The third element in this literary exploration is foreshadowing, a delicate anticipation that intricately weaves the narrative's fabric and sets the stage for the impending climax. Arnold Friend's mysterious phone call becomes an ominous prelude, a haunting refrain that foreshadows the imminent intrusion into Connie's seemingly sheltered world. Oates masterfully crafts an atmosphere of palpable anticipation through Connie's daydreams, creating a sense of foreboding that permeates the narrative. As the suspense heightens, the subtle cues of foreshadowing draw readers deeper into the enigmatic dance of destiny awaiting the unsuspecting protagonist, where every shadow and echo becomes a harbinger of the looming collision between the innocence of adolescence and the malevolence that lurks in the shadows. Foreshadowing becomes a narrative guide, skillfully leading readers through the labyrinthine corridors of uncertainty, as they become entwined in the subtle dance of fate that unfolds with each turn of the page.

As we navigate the subtleties of symbolism, irony, and foreshadowing, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" unfolds as a nuanced exploration that transcends the boundaries of a typical coming-of-age story. Oates's narrative acts as a reflective mirror, not only capturing the fragility of youth in the face of existential threats but also delving into the broader tapestry of the universal human struggle for autonomy. Within the delicate dance of life's uncertainties, the story intricately unveils the inherent risks and complexities inherent in the pursuit of self-discovery, leaving readers pondering the intricate interplay of innocence, experience, and the unpredictable rhythms of destiny.

In conclusion, the echoes of Connie's dance linger after the narrative's end. Oates's thoughtful use of symbolism, irony, and foreshadowing transforms an apparently ordinary story into a captivating exploration of human experience. Within the familiar rhythms of teenage life, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" unveils the vulnerability of youth, a testament to the haunting power that arises from the convergence of innocence and malevolence. Exiting the narrative, the lingering notes of Connie's dance serve as a reminder that the journey from innocence to experience involves a delicate dance with destiny, leaving an indelible mark on the canvas of human existence.

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*Photography—Honorable Mention*

Jaquelin Saucedo

# *General Essay*

## *Second Place*

### Natural Categorization

Kristina Stanley

We meet many people in our lives and choose which to cultivate into friendships; however, imagine maintaining every friendship you ever made and giving each equal attention. Me-time would not exist. Connection is why we are here, but it is important to balance our investment with others. Time is something you cannot get back or replicate. Connections, specifically friendships, take time to cultivate, which in turn takes away from personal time or family time. For me, I don't have a lot of extra time, so I am very stingy with my extra time. I have found it helpful to categorize each connection in correlation to a tree, beautiful displays of nature made up of three distinct parts: leaves, branches, and roots.

We will start with the leaves. These friends are plentiful and teach you how to establish an initial investment. No one connection is very strong even though you slightly nurture each one. You might see them around town or at an activity shared by your children. Like leaves on a tree, they are only intended to be nurtured for a season. When the season changes, so does their presence and your investment. Heaven forbids a windy hard time were to blow through because there is a 50% chance this friend will not make it to the end of the season before breaking free.

Next, let's explore branches. This type of friend brings you joy which feeds your soul, so you choose to nurture this

friendship a bit more, investing time and emotional currency which is reciprocated. Unlike leaves that only take from the tree, branches give to a tree by carrying nutrients from the trunk to the leaves. You obtain numerous branches but not anywhere near as many as leaves. You invite these friends to dinner at home or enjoy sunbathing on a beach while talking but put any weight on them, they snap. If that friendship breaks, it changes you both mentally and emotionally. The good news is as long as your roots are still healthy, you are going to keep thriving.

Roots are true connections to life-long people. These friendships feed your soul, feeding your light, just as roots feed a tree by sending nutrients up the trunk to the branches for the leaves. If something happens, good or bad, they are the first person you think to call. Like roots to a tree, they never waver and provide a sturdy foundation for you to build on. There are a couple, maybe even a few if you are lucky, connections this deep you could ever be blessed to experience in a lifetime.

Your time is so important and must be used wisely. Using the parts of a tree, you can categorize each friendship creating balance in the connections that naturally occur throughout life. This gives you a clear, reliable lesson as to where your time should be invested so let your leaves go, learn from your branches, and cherish your roots to ensure tree-rific connection collection!





*Cover Art—Honorable Mention*

Isabel Bares

# *General Essay*

## *Third Place*

### Ocean Waves

#### Isabel Bares

As I step onto the warm, soft sand, my toes become lost in the silky river of the shore. Every step I take molds softly into the bright golden sand. The salty breeze of the strong wind punches my face as I walked through it. I see the seagulls outstretching and flapping their graceful wings in the ocean blue sky and soaring while fighting against the pungent breeze. As I make my way further towards the aggressive tide, the briny foam from the waves rushes to say hello to my feet.

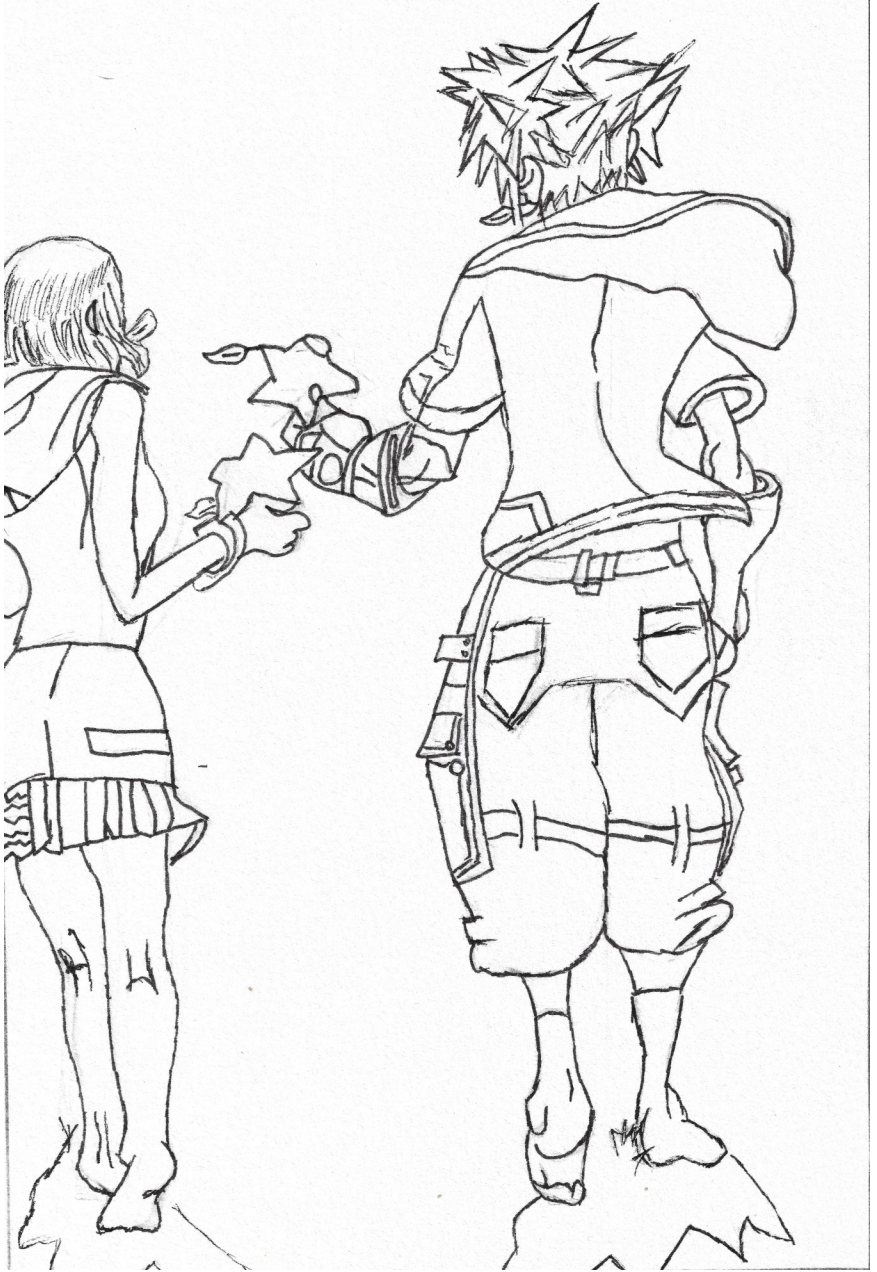
The sand is a gentle shade of gold, while the ocean is a vibrant blue that seems to reflect like a mirror to the sky. Shiny and hollow seashells are scattered along the bank, making themselves at home in the powdery sand. Amongst the curly shells are hidden sand dollars and finding them is just like a treasure hunt. I hear shouts of joy from the many energetic people surrounding this blissful seacoast. I am lost in the sights, looking out onto the ocean, and the more the sun starts to blare my skin, making it a rich bronze color. Looking towards the sapphire horizon, I see bubbly and frisky waves take flight towards the shoreline.

To the right I see a narrow and mossy brown boardwalk that seems to have waltzed its way into the royal blue sea. Lines of people set foot on the damp boardwalk, walking up and down to get a closer look at the shimmering and exotic sea creatures. Small, rugged sail boats neighbored the boundless blue abundance while trawling elegant fish. I could hear planes rushing overhead and taking a glimpse at the colorful nirvana below. Jag-

ged rocks stood parallel to the strand hugging close next to the tide.

I see families building tall sandcastles, children running swiftly with kites flying high, and lovely couples walking hand in hand. How lovely to witness the many wonderful memories being left in the sand in this wonderful paradise. Life is always simple, and thoughts seem to fade once my eyes inspect the serenity of this land. I stand in this sand, curling my toes and breathing in the piquant air. I am celebrating these simple pleasures and connections being formed during a very distinguished sunset.

As the sun sets, the infinite sky turns different shades of purple, pink, blue, and orange. The boundless color bounces back and forth towards the sea and the sky making an image in my mind that will never slip. My senses enlightened as I confidently stand here on this magnificent beach, as I know, called paradise. The loud chatter from the people, the seagulls screeching at one another, the sun gently caressing my skin, and the tranquility of the tides soar in my mind making a symphony. This timeless beauty I know I will never forget lives in my heart forever.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Emanuel Blanco

# *General Essay*

## *Honorable Mention*

### Psychedelic Therapy: A Revolutionary Breakthrough or an Unethical Approach?

Felicity French

Psychedelic therapy has garnered a lot of attention for its potential to transform mental healthcare. By using psychedelic substances like ecstasy (MDMA), Psilocybin mushrooms, and LSD, this therapy aims to facilitate psychological healing and personal growth under the careful supervision of medical professionals. Initial studies and clinical trials have shown positive outcomes in improving symptoms and enhancing psychological well-being. However, this innovative treatment is not without controversy, with some questioning its ethical implications. In this essay, we will look over the research I gathered on both sides of the argument and delve into the potential benefits and risks of psychedelic therapy. Join me as we examine this groundbreaking treatment that has divided the medical community and could transform the way we approach mental health.

In my research, institutions such as Johns Hopkins University (The Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research at Johns Hopkins University), New York University (The NYU School of Medicine), and MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies) have significantly contributed to the research and understanding of psychedelic therapy in the United States. They have conducted studies on the therapeutic use of psilocybin and MDMA for various mental health

conditions like depression, anxiety, addiction, and end-of-life distress. Furthermore, studies have shown that psychedelic therapy can help individuals suffering from depression and anxiety by decreasing their symptoms for months or even years after a few sessions. It has also shown promise in treating PTSD, with some studies reporting that a single session with MDMA can lead to substantial decreases in symptoms. Psychedelic therapy allows individuals to confront and process deep-seated emotional issues, which can lead to an expanded state of introspection and exploration of traumas in a safe and supportive environment. The work from these institutions has helped pave the way for the integration of psychedelic-assisted treatments into mainstream medicine. While there is still much to learn about the therapeutic potential of psychedelic therapy, the early results have been promising.

Psychedelic therapy has become popular due to its unique approach and potential to provide transformative experiences. It allows patients to explore their subconscious and address deep-rooted psychological issues. As research and clinical trials are conducted, the stigma surrounding psychedelics is diminishing, leading to greater interest and exploration in therapeutic settings. Advocacy groups, therapists, and individuals who have benefited from psychedelic therapy have played a significant role in raising public awareness and promoting its potential therapeutic applications. While the idea of using drugs to treat mental health conditions may seem controversial, it is essential to note that psychedelic therapy is not about getting high. Instead, it is a carefully controlled and supervised therapeutic process that involves a combination of medication and psychotherapy. The drug is used to create an altered state of consciousness, which can help patients access parts of their psyche that are often difficult to reach. The psychotherapy sessions are designed to help patients process their experiences and integrate them meaningfully into their lives. As more clinical trials continue, we will likely better understand this innovative treatment approach's potential benefits and risks.

Critics of psychedelic therapy point out several concerns. Firstly, they argue that there is a lack of scientific research and

regulatory oversight on the long-term effects and safety of psychedelic therapy. Secondly, critics express concern about the potential risks associated with psychedelic therapy, such as triggering psychosis or exacerbating underlying mental health conditions. Thirdly, opponents caution against the possible misuse and recreational use of psychedelics outside of a therapeutic context. Finally, some skeptics argue that the effects of psychedelics can vary significantly among individuals and that personalized approaches and careful screening are necessary.

Psychedelic therapy has the access to revolutionize mental healthcare, and it's exciting to see the progress being made in this field. Institutions such as Johns Hopkins University and New York University are at the forefront of psychedelic therapy research, and their work is paving the way for the integration of psychedelic-assisted treatments into mainstream medicine. While there are still concerns and debates surrounding this treatment approach, it's important to remain optimistic and open-minded. As more clinical trials continue, we will likely have a better understanding of the promising benefits and risks of psychedelic therapy. With continued research and exploration, we can work towards a future where individuals have access to safe and effective treatments for their mental health conditions.

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*Photography—Honorable Mention*

Jaden Nguyen



# *General Essay*

## *Honorable Mention*

### A Symphony of Struggle: Unveiling the Layers in Zora Neale Hurston's "Sweat"

Jesus Castellanos

Have you ever felt the weight of relentless persistence or the sting of betrayal? In Zora Neale Hurston's "Sweat," invites us to explore the intricate threads of human resilience and the complexity of relationships. The story unfolds in a small Florida town where Delia, a hardworking washerwoman, battles a troubled marriage with her abusive husband Sykes. Amidst the rhythmic sounds of laundry, the narrative explores the layers of Delia's strength and the corrosive effects of Sykes's cruelty, culminating in a climactic confrontation that exposes the raw vulnerabilities hidden beneath Delia's seemingly unyielding determination. At its core, 'Sweat' delves into the theme of empowerment through adversity, employing symbolism, irony, and foreshadowing to unveil the layers of human experience.

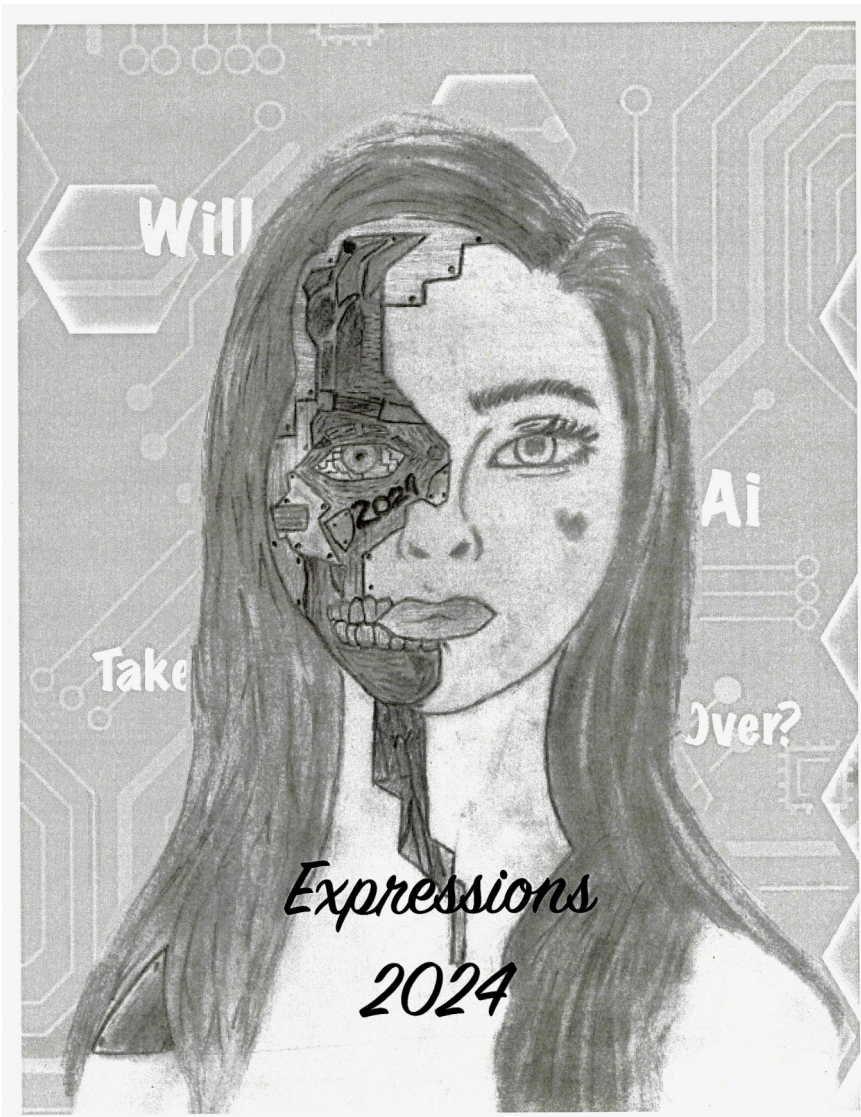
In the symphony of literary devices, symbolism takes center stage. Delia's laborious task of washing clothes becomes a metaphor for her broader struggles. The sweat that saturates her work is not merely a result of physical labor but a symbol of the emotional and psychological troubles that she bears. The sweat stains on her clothes mirror the marks left by Sykes's abuse, transforming a boring act into an unexpected exploration of the human condition. We can all agree that emotional trauma can bring someone down, but as the story continues we come to find

out she can stand up for herself. Moving in harmony with symbolism is irony, a subtle dissonance in the narrative that adds depth to the story. Delia, a cleanser by trade, finds herself trapped in a marriage where her husband cheats on her over and over with the other woman. The juxtaposition of her profession with the impurity of her union intensifies the irony. Moreover, the narrative unfolds with poetic justice as Sykes, the source of her suffering, meets a fate mirroring the vices he embodies. Irony, in its various forms, underscores the complexities and contradictions inherent in human relationships.

The third movement in this literary symphony is foreshadowing, a delicate anticipation that weaves through the narrative. The venomous snake, a lurking danger in Sykes's possession, becomes a symbol of foreboding, hinting at the impending confrontation. Delia's growing realization of her strength becomes a whisper of foreshadowing leading to the climactic change of the story when finally; she finds her footing and how to stand up for herself against her abusive husband. The strategic use of foreshadowing adds layers of tension and suspense, inviting readers to decipher the subtle cues that pave the way for the story's dramatic crescendo.

As we take a look at the pathways of symbolism, irony, and foreshadowing, we find ourselves fixated on a narrative that extends beyond the confines of a simple story. "Sweat" becomes a reflection of Delia's spirit that emerges from life's crucible. Delia's journey, initially concealed within a washerwoman's daily routine, unfolds into a tale of resilience, leaving an imprint on the history of literary brilliance.

To end this the layers of struggle in "Sweat" resonate long after the finally. Hurston's great use of symbolism, irony, and foreshadowing transforms an ordinary tale into a rich enjoyment of human experience. Within the ordinary rhythms of life, "Sweat" reveals extraordinary resilience a testament to the enduring power that arises from adversity. As we close the pages of this symphony, the echoes of Delia's struggle linger, a reminder that even in the face of hardships and challenges the human spirit can rise up to challenge all forms of difficult times that can create a symphony of strength and resilience.



*Cover Art—Honorable Mention*

John Steven McBride

# General Essay

## Honorable Mention

### Out of Body Experience

Lylliann Flores

Fear is the most powerful feeling one has. It triggers the urge to fight or the urge to run away from a dangerous situation. One's fear can grow so powerful that it triggers a spiritual reaction where the soul is separated from its body and the soul watches itself walk towards its end. J. C. Oates's main character from the story, *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been*, finds herself in an out of body experience due to her fear and realization that she had died. The antagonist induces fear onto the main character to manipulate and lure her to join him and his strange companion in which he succeeds. Character, imagery, and symbolism are represented in the story to show the reader the main character's inevitable tragic death.

The main character, Connie, is fifteen years old and is stated to be very pretty. She is portrayed as a young and naïve teenager who is discovering the changes of adolescence to adulthood. The story highlights the internal conflicts with herself and her family, her longing for independence, as well as her fear of the unknown. Connie experiences fear of the unknown when she encounters the antagonist, Arnold Friend, who in the end succumbs to his luring gaze and snake-like tongue, leading her to death. Arnold Friend is the mysterious and unsettling character who plays a pivotal role in the story. He is charming and malevolent, which makes him a symbol of danger and the unknown. He

manipulates Connie to believe that her family is in danger if she does not comply with his demands. Arnold uses his charm and sweettalk to lure Connie to join him for an innocent ride, but his intentions are of a predatory nature which contrasts Connie's innocence. Arnold's character represents the psychological complexity of a predator which forces readers to realize the harsh realities of the world and potential threats to one's innocence leading to a tragic death.

Imagery is a crucial element in Oates's storytelling, providing an atmosphere of tension and foreboding. The story states, "but all the boys fell back and dissolved into a single face that was not even a face but an idea, a feeling, mixed up with the urgent insistent pounding of the music and the humid night air of July." During Connie's adolescence, she enjoys the presence and attention she receives from boys, but she only remembers the feeling of being loved. She lives her teenage life with small romances without her insecurities that cloud her at home until her world of bliss is ruined by the realization that she is in danger. Connie's life of familiarity is destroyed after Arnold's true intentions are revealed. Connie met Arnold before, and he makes it clear to Connie that from the moment they first met he wanted her. The story quotes, "he drew an X in the air, leaning out toward her. They were maybe ten feet apart. After his hand fell back to his side, the X was still in the air, almost visible," which signifies that Arnold marked Connie as his target, as the saying goes, "X marks the spot." Realizing this, Connie begins to suspect that Arnold's intentions were anything but good. The imagery grows unsettling as the story progresses, mirroring the shift in Connie's carefree teenage life to a girl trapped in a nightmare.

There is an abundance of symbolism that carries deeper meanings that contribute to the story's overall thematic complexity. An example is Arnold's appearance being symbolic of deceit and evil. His sunglasses hide his eyes along with his true intentions which symbolizes a lack of transparency and inability to see the real person behind a façade. The story states, "his whole face was a mask, she thought wildly, tanned down to his throat but then running out as if he had plastered makeup on his face but

had forgotten about his throat,” signifying that Arnold Friend is not the person he portrays. Connie is drowned in fear as she realizes the gravity of her situation, the story explains, “her eyes darted everywhere in the kitchen, she could not remember what it was, this room.” This sentence represents Connie’s dissociation due to her fear. She contemplates her life and the safety of her family above her own. The story further states, “she was hollow with what had been fear but was now just an emptiness.” Connie is losing grasp of her sanity due to her fear along with her spirit. Arnold Friend symbolizes the devil; cunning and charming, but evil at heart. When Arnold manipulated Connie and reaches her breaking point, she encounters an out of body experience. In the story, it states, “she watched herself push the door slowly open as if she were back safe somewhere in the other doorway, watching this body and this head of long hair moving out into the sunlight where Arnold Friend waited,” which implies that Connie’s spirit released itself from her body where she watches herself walk towards her death. The last sentence of the story states, “the vast sunlit reaches of the land behind him and on all sides of him- so much land that Connie had never seen before and did not recognize except to know that she was going to it.” The ending of the story is meant to leave the readers to question what happened to Connie, but when Connie saw land she had not recognized, one can assume that she died and went to heaven due to her innocent nature and unfortunate death.

J. C. Oates’s story is a crafted exploration of adolescence, vulnerability, and the intrusion of malevolence into the ordinary. Connie’s character was skillfully crafted to represent the innocence and rebellious phase of a troubled teenager in a troubled home. Meanwhile, Arnold’s character was created to represent the evil within people using charm and psychological manipulation to influence his victim. The story employed character development, imagery, and symbolism to create a narrative that lingers in the reader’s mind which the reader can reflect on the complexities of fear and the thin line between safety and danger in the journey through life until one’s death.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Isabel Bares

# *General Essay*

## *Honorable Mention*

### The Rain in the Street

Maria Jimenez

Raindrops clash into your umbrella like grenades. Nothing has ever felt more familiar than the petrichor filling your nostrils and invading your brain and welcoming you to the outside. The grip of your frigid touch tightens around the handle after the wintry breeze whips your hair and crawls under your pores. Your nose tickles at the contact. Every step you take is being swallowed into a swamp as the hail threatens to ruin your clothes. The familiarity of the scene wraps you in a feeling of comfort. You know these streets are your home even when you are away, you know them from front to back, even with the obstructed view created by the icy fog.

A stampede of acetone umbrellas and cotton coats swirl through the buildings and shops by the sidewalks. Stores are attacked by the rainfall, unable to breathe. The drops of hailstone pulsate into the windows creating a melody that swaddles your hearing and suddenly you can't hear anything else. You try to investigate the inside, but the blurry mist blocks your view, and the fast pace of your steps prevents you from stopping. As raindrops clash with the exposed skin of your hand, you are suddenly very aware of the weather.

People walk by in a rush, everyone has somewhere to be, and no one wants to get drained by the pouring water. It's always like that in the city, even in a hurricane, no one ever stops. The



torrential downpour relentlessly ricochets over your protected head as if the heavens themselves have opened to release their watery burden upon the street. Each miniature liquid missile fights your fabric shield and attempts to crawl into your skin.

The honking of the cars next to you alerts you into unconsciously increase your pace; the red and orange blinding gleam stares right at your face while crossing the pavement and you squeeze the handle of your umbrella bringing it closer to your chest; your other hand traveling into the inside of your pocket. The warm soft cloth brushes your chilly skin and wraps around it like an awaited hug with a puffy blanket. After a minute, you intercalate your hands so your other palm can sense the heat emanating from your jacket. The sudden collision of temperatures causes you to exhale an involuntary sigh automatically.

With each step, your feet seem to grow lighter, and you visualize your destination in the distance. A feeling of uncontrollable euphoria wells up inside you, carefully hidden from your expression, but you can sense it deep in your throat. The once heavy downpour gradually lightens with each passing second, the sound of raindrops on your umbrella diminishing in intensity and consistency. As you continue walking, the golden flashes from the sky become more distinct, prompting you to tuck the hand that used to grip the umbrella's handle away, now safely nestled in your pocket and replaced by the other one. Eventually, you reach your final destination, and the familiarity of the rainstorm gradually gives way to the warm embrace of a sunbeam.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Yariza Torres



*Research  
Paper*

# *Research Paper*

## *First Place*

### Hurricane Katrina: A Catalyst for Policy Change and Disaster Preparedness

Bentravin Phillips

Hurricane Katrina was a ferocious Category 5 hurricane known mainly for its devastation of New Orleans and the gulf coastal areas of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. “This single hurricane was the costliest natural disaster in United States history, and it brought devastation and destruction to much of the central Gulf Coast region” (Dottore and Zobel 1). The Gulf of Mexico, for a long time, has been a birthplace for high-octane hurricanes, but nothing as dominant as Katrina’s makeup. On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina began its destruction along the Gulf Coast, taking over 1,800 lives and causing over \$100 billion in infrastructural damages. Katrina proved to be a natural tragedy that would perpetually revamp America’s approach to disaster management and disaster responsiveness in the future. Grasping the failures, experiences, and impressions of Hurricane Katrina is not only needed for remembering the past but also for molding the future of disaster preparation. Hurricane Katrina revealed significant flaws in disaster preparedness and response systems, prompting essential changes and offering valuable lessons for the future of disaster management in the United States.

Five years before Hurricane Katrina there were several storm layouts that predicted an unprecedented storm that possibly could be the root to consequential flooding in the southeast

portion of the United States. Even though the reports weren't certain, the likelihood of the potential storm wasn't disregarded by government officials. In July of 2004, over 300 local, state, and federal emergency response officials engaged in a seven-day long planning exercise of a Category 3 hurricane flooding New Orleans, known as Hurricane Pam. Pam was originally constructed on the campus of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The major, concluding inference from the Pam simulation, according to its participants, was that just ten feet of water would overwhelm the levee systems in New Orleans and cause heavy flooding. "The lessons of this planning, however, had little effect in protecting the residents of New Orleans who did not evacuate prior to Hurricane Katrina the following year" (Logue 1). The officials developed response plans and directives in order to combat such a storm, but these would prove to not be enough in the coming months. "Ineffective leadership, poor advance planning, and an unwillingness to devote sufficient resources to emergency management over the long term doomed them to fail when Katrina struck" (Collins 11).

Hurricane Katrina initially appeared in the southeast waters of the Bahamas, first as a tropical cyclone, and was named by weather officials as "Tropical Depression 12" on Tuesday, August 23, 2005. Unusual waters that were measured at warm temperatures gave rise to a series of thunderstorms that fused together, revolving around a small scale of pressure that was generated correspondingly by humid and warm air. On Wednesday, August 24, 2005, the rapidly evolving cyclone, known as Tropical Depression 12, was boosted to an actual tropical storm and officially given the name, Katrina. Weather analysts continued to examine the tropical storm intently and watched out for any indications of a possible advancement to hurricane status. As a result of Tropical Storm Katrina's irregular activity during this time and its winds surpassing over seventy five miles per hour, weather officials upgraded its status to a true hurricane.

Just a few hours after the raise of status, Katrina struck Florida's southern coastline as only a Category 1 hurricane at the time. Despite only being a Category 1 hurricane when it hit Florida, it still resulted in billions of dollars worth in damages, four-

teen people dead, and numerous injured citizens. As Hurricane Katrina continued to proceed more to the west of Florida into the peninsula, the strength of the hurricane suddenly dropped. This drop in power was due the hurricane's disconnection from the warm ocean waters that primarily provided it with a bulk of its power. However, on August 26, 2005, Katrina regained its strength and more immediately upon gaining access to the warmer waters of the Gulf of Mexico. At this point in time weather officials upgraded Katrina to a Category 3 hurricane. Additionally, increasingly serious hurricane warnings from government officials and weather agencies were being put out for the coastal areas of Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.

"Prior to the Hurricane Katrina landfall in the gulf area, major evacuation steps were taken to move susceptible populations from potential high-risk areas" (Logue 1). At 4:13 pm Central Time on Sunday, August 28, 2005, the National Weather Service in New Orleans, Louisiana released an urgent weather message that stated, "...Extremely dangerous Hurricane Katrina continues to approach the Mississippi river delta...devastating damage expected..." (National Weather Service 1). The National Weather Service in New Orleans additionally let out further warnings predicting that everything in the surrounding areas of the powerful hurricane would be practically destroyed, or in other words uninhabitable. The Mayor of New Orleans, Clarence Raymond Joseph Nagin Jr, released the first ever required evacuation directive in New Orleans that same morning on August 28, 2005. The evacuation warnings seemingly caught the attention of a large part of New Orleans with over seventy five percent of the city's population being able to successfully evacuate. This evacuation, up to this date, is still one the quickest and largest evacuations of any American city.

Hurricane Katrina's winds peaked at 175 miles per hour, heightening Katrina to an unprecedented Category 5 hurricane. "At this point, the National Hurricane Center warned of coastal flooding with tides reaching 18-22 feet above normal levels for low-lying areas in Louisiana and Mississippi" (Dottore and Zobel 1). The great amount of rain, wind, and clouds extended these dominant winds 200 miles plus in every direction from the center

of the storm. On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina in due course made its way east of New Orleans towards the shoreline of Buras, Louisiana. Before the storm made landfall, a data center, about ninety miles away from Alabama, recorded a remarkable 50 foot tall water wave. As the storm moved more inland, Plaquemines Parish was overwhelmed by a 25 foot storm surge. At around 7:00 a.m, The Industrial Canal, a critical element in the New Orleans flood system, experienced awful collapses. As a result it set free a large amount of water that carried vehicles and stripped homes away from their original substructures in the Lower Ninth Ward. These vehicles and homes became battering rams as they plowed into other nearby houses. Plenty of residents who didn't evacuate were left abandoned and many residents drowned because of it. Water from Lake Borgne in New Orleans flooded surrounding wetlands and permeated several St. Bernard Parish neighborhoods around 8:00 am. New Orleans' eastern side also experienced the same amount of flooding as waters flooded multiple levee systems surrounding the B. Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. Ensuingly, Hurricane Katrina made its way northward, and hit Slidell, Louisiana, near Lake Pontchartrain. The lake's shoreline reportedly rose over 10 feet and extended close to seven miles into the city itself. Katrina continued to proceed northward through Alabama and Mississippi, but only as a Category 1 hurricane. Meanwhile, citizens of New Orleans came out to find their city more than 80 percent underwater.

Ultimately, Hurricane Katrina caused more than 160 billion dollars in damages across the Gulf Coast region. More than 800,000 homes were destroyed or damaged as a result of the deadly hurricane. In addition, over 300,000 vehicles were destroyed or damaged, along with more than 2,000 ships and vessels. Almost seventy percent of New Orleans' occupied housing, over 100,000 units, were damaged in the disastrous storm. "Hurricane Katrina created disaster debris across a 90,000-square-mile disaster area" (Luther 1). The estimated total disaster debris was 2 million cubic yards in Alabama, 43 million cubic yards in Mississippi, 43 million cubic yards in Florida, and 50 million cubic yards in Louisiana (Luther para. 10). "Before Katrina, the event that left behind the greatest recorded amount of

disaster-related debris in the United States was Hurricane Andrew in 1992, which generated 43 million cubic yards (CY) of debris” (Luther 1).

The National Hurricane Center reported that more than 1,800 deaths were related to Hurricane Katrina. The total deaths recorded in each state affected by the hurricane were over 1,500 deaths in Louisiana, over 200 deaths in Mississippi, 14 deaths in Florida, 2 deaths in Georgia, and 2 deaths in Alabama. Forty percent of all deaths were said to be caused by drowning, twenty five percent were caused by injury and trauma, and over ten percent were a result of heart complications. New Orleans' population had decreased by almost 30 percent as a result. More than 1 million people were recorded to be displaced by Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast region. At their height, hurricane relief shelters were housing over 300,000 people throughout the Gulf Coast region.

Hurricane Katrina's immense damage showcased a multitude of systematic failures in disaster preparedness and response. These failures were something that America was not prepared for. “Hurricane Katrina dealt some familiar blows in emergency response: the failure of communication systems and resultant difficulties in coordination challenged response efforts in this disaster as with others before it” (Lister 1). The most notable pitfall was the ineffectiveness of the New Orleans levee system. The system was specifically designed to protect the city from major flooding but was no match for the sheer force of Katrina, which ultimately led to the catastrophic flooding. In total there were over fifty levee failures all throughout New Orleans. The failure of this essential defense system showed the vulnerability in the city's engineering and disaster preparedness. It also gave light to the possible resolutions that could help combat such a disaster like Katrina in future.

Another systematic failure that compounded the disaster's impact was related to the government's response with recovery efforts. “The issue that has received the most attention in post-Katrina discussions is the speed of rescue and relief operations” (Bowman 1). The response efforts at the federal, state, and local levels were described as having delayed and disor-



ganized actions. This alone resulted in a large portion of residents stranded without the necessary aid and support. It led to worldwide frustration and criticism in the government's inability to effectively respond and provide the needed help for the affected communities. Terrible communication, bad management, and the lack of coordination within the government agencies who responded was the main root of the insufficient recovery efforts. At the forefront of it all, scenes of suffering and desperation that were shown on television screens all over America displayed the immediate need for a better approach to disaster management. In a Youtube documentary titled "Inside Hurricane Katrina," it shows multiple struggling citizens screaming, "Please somebody, we need some help!" (1:37-1:45). Socioeconomic disparities were also part of the systematic failures that were highlighted in the aftermath of Katrina. Low income communities that mainly included minority based populations shouldered most of the burden of Katrina's destruction. These communities faced the biggest challenges in evacuating, obtaining emergency resources, and rebuilding their lives in the aftermath of the storm. Katrina exposed a lot of harsh realities, but left so many opportunities to fix them at the same time.

Fortunately, Katrina marked a huge turning point in disaster management and led to some big changes on how America approached natural disasters in the future. One of the most known post-Katrina changes was the creation of FEMA's National Response Framework (NRF). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), is a federal government agency who is responsible for managing disaster response. They experienced major changes after Hurricane Katrina. The NRF defined certain responsibilities and roles for other agencies involved in disaster management in order to improve communication and coordination efforts in any future disasters. Along with these policy changes, there were improvements made in disaster response protocols. Many disaster management agencies at all government levels invested in special training and simulation exercises to better prepare for large-scale disasters like Katrina. The important lessons learned from Katrina's initial response were also included in new and improved disaster response plans. These new

plans put an emphasis on the need for faster resource deployment, a more connected communication system, the significance of accurate forecasting, and early warning systems.

Katrina revealed the importance of reliable meteorological forecasting, allowing for better preparedness and timely evacuations. The continued innovation of technology in America also played a huge role in the improvement of communication systems with the development of mobile apps, social media, and emergency alert systems. It is so much easier for individuals to react in emergency situations when they can receive direct updates or procedures regarding their current situation. These systems don't only increase public awareness but can also help facilitate faster and more effective response efforts, which results in the reduction of injuries, deaths and property damages. Also, the need for versatile and flexible disaster management strategies became more apparent because of Hurricane Katrina. The uncertain nature of disasters like Katrina requires a response that can quickly adapt to the quickly changing weather conditions. Katrina exposed the limitations of the traditional "one-size-fits-all" response plans that had been in place prior. Having the ability to improvise and adjust in real-time has continued to become a more fundamental idea of modern disaster management in America.

Although Hurricane Katrina unfortunately scarred many communities in the Gulf Coast region with its devastation and tragedy, it still offered a wealth of valuable lessons that America can continue to learn from till this day when shaping their best version of disaster management. The resilience displayed by the numerous affected communities and individuals reminds everyone of the human spirit's ability to keep going even when times are tough. Communities came together, showing amazing strength and resilience in the face of adversity. Hurricane Katrina's legacy stretches far beyond the amount of devastation it caused in 2005. Its legacy is marked by the evolution of disaster management policies and an emphasis on community resilience. Even though it is not possible to fix the amount of loss and suffering, the wisdom that was gained has provided valuable insights that continue to influence disaster management and response efforts. Hurricane Katrina's impact emphasizes the importance of continuous re-

search and analysis that will improve the control of future disasters. The reforms and changes that emerged from Katrina demonstrate America's ability to learn and adapt, providing hope for a more resilient future in the face of natural disasters.

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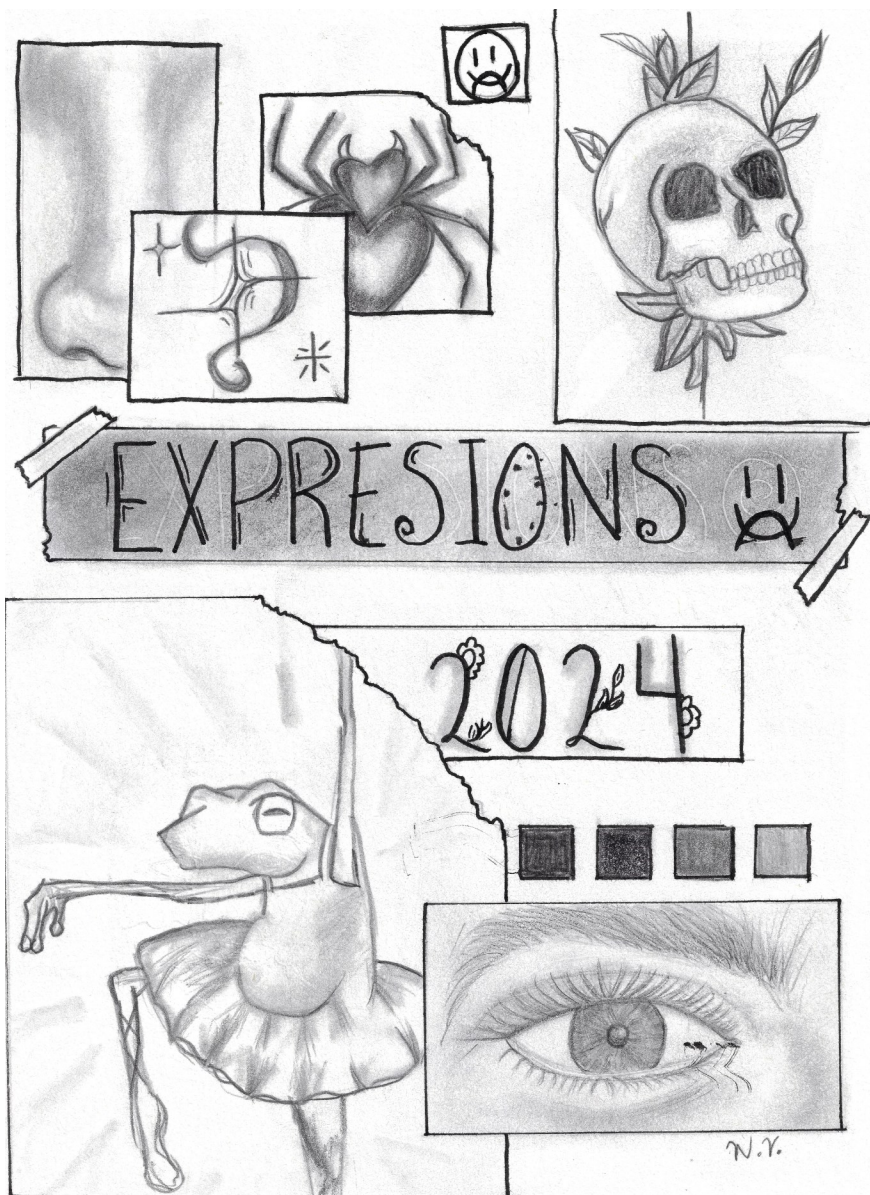
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*Cover Art—Honorable Mention*

Nataly Vargas

# Research Paper

## Second Place

### Do We Have a Soul?

Alberto Barajas Mendoza

Throughout human history religious and spiritual traditions have nurtured the idea of an afterlife. Monotheistic religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) explain this phenomenon as heaven or hell while Southeast Asian religions such as Buddhism believe in Reincarnation (the rebirth of a soul in a new body or entity). Ancient beyond memory or record, humans across all cultures report many different types of contact with spiritual realms during near-death experiences and at other situations too. Moreover, reincarnation has taken the interest of both the scientific and psychiatric community. Psychic mediums have held attention since the spiritualist movement of the nineteenth century. Advancement in science now allows people the possibility to examine near-death experiences and prove the existence of consciousness beyond physical death.

#### **Near-Death Experiences**

Near-death experiences are profound psychological events including transcendental and mystical elements, typically occurring to individuals close to death or in situations of intense physical or emotional danger. Some of the most prominent psychiatrists and scientists that have written articles and books about this subject are Bruce Greyson, Raymond Moody, Jeffrey Long, Eben Alexander, Pim van Lommel, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, etc. Although there has been in-depth research on this topic, scientists have failed to provide a scientific explanation for this phenomenon. Cardiac arrest is particularly linked to cause a near-death experience. However,

Greyson explains, “when the heart stops within 20 seconds or so... you get flatlining, which means no brain activity and yet people get near-death experiences when they’ve been flatlined longer than that” (*Surviving Death*). These moments can be self-defining and have been known to change the whole belief structure of those who experience it. These experiences will often lead to a profound change in personality and a different perception of life. Some were even hardcore atheists and now are Buddhist converts or simply categorize themselves as “spiritual.” Many experiencers have difficulty integrating their experience. Some experience less interest in materialism and sex and turn to the fine arts to cope. Some have complications with employment. Many change their definition of death citing that death is not the end. Death to them is just the physical loss of their corporal existence.

Peter Fenwick, MD Neuropsychiatrist from the University of Cambridge, mentions “The science we have which is materialistic science says it’s all brain. All brain. So, when the brain stops functioning you can’t be conscious. But during a near-death experience, you get these very wide expansions of consciousness, even when the brain has ceased to function. So, it can’t be all brain” (*Surviving Death*). Fenwick explained that he was skeptical about this subject until he started his own research. Mary Neal, MD Orthopedic Spine Surgeon, detailed her near death experience in 1999. She arranged to go to Chile and kayak. She remained underwater for 15 minutes until her body was found. She could hear the crew giving her CPR. The likelihood of her survival without brain damage was zero percent, but she had no brain damage. She mentions “I felt more alive than I’ve ever felt. I could feel my spirit sort of peeling away from my body and my spirit was then released up to the heavens. I was immediately greeted by a group of somethings.” Her experience has many of the same elements that experiencers all over the world mention. For example, a sense of separation from the body, floating, and being greeted by supernatural beings.

The Greyson NDE scale was created to determine the validity of near-death experiences and is typically used in many research projects. THIS 16- item multiple-choice validated scale allows the quantification of the intensity of the experience and

enables a standardized identification of NDEs. Another experiencer during their surgery said “Everything came into a 3D movie, and I could actually see outside of my body. My point of view was above my body and next to my body and I could see everything that was going on in the operation room. I was clinically dead for 37 seconds.” The surgeons emphasized that there was no possible way the patient could have witnessed what was going on in the operating room since the patient was unconscious. Fenwick details “you cannot maintain consciousness unless you have a highly organized brain. Believe me, when the brain loses its oxygen, it doesn’t organize itself.”

An expansion of consciousness or hyperlucidity is associated with absolute clarity or understanding, the feeling of being a genius, clear and quick wit, or exceptional intelligence. In a qualitative thematic analysis of 34 cardiac arrest survivors, 14 near-death experiencers reported a feeling of power and extreme lucidity. By way of illustration, a 34-year-old female says “When my expansion was over, I was everywhere, I was everything, I was the ground, I was the trees and I felt the wind blowing in my leaves, I was the sea, and I was also my parents, my friends, people I had not met before but who, at that point, I knew because they were part of me. I was genuinely everything at the same time, everything was connected in one way or another” (Cassol 7).

Furthermore, life events are visions where different moments, past and future lives are seen at a glance. In the field of spirituality and scientists who study this phenomenon call it a life review. A 62-year-old male reports “I do not know how it all began but I saw my life flashing before my eyes, essentially from the age of approximately 2 years old to 18. I had no notion of time. It seems like I was living whole scenes of my life over again. It was a real pleasure to live these happy moments over again, like when I was stealing the cherries from the trees when I was a child. I was feeling good. I did not want that moment to end” (Cassol 8). Due to a lack of oxygen in the brain, medical experts are not able to answer the possibility of having a life review. Some in the field of psychology explain that it could be due to belief systems; nonetheless, many of the individuals who



experience a life review did not believe in such an outcome.

## **Reincarnation**

Reincarnation is a mainstream teaching in Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Kabbalah Judaism, and Jainism. This teaching has also been observed in Christian mysticism, Sufism (Muslim mystics), and Gnosticism. There were indeed references to reincarnation in the Old and New Testaments. In A.D. 325 the Roman emperor Constantine the Great, along with his mother, Helena, had deleted references to reincarnation contained in the New Testament. The Second Council of Constantinople, meeting in A.D. 553, confirmed this action and declared the concept of reincarnation a heresy. Apparently, they thought this concept would weaken the growing power of the Church by giving humans too much time to seek their salvation. Yet their original references had been there; the early Church fathers had accepted the concept of reincarnation. This spectacle gravitated towards religious doctrine but recently it has captured the attention of prominent psychiatrists and physicists.

Jim B. Tucker, an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia, has been investigating claims made by children who say they have had past lives. There are more than 2,500 case files sitting inside his offices. Tucke illustrates “Quantum physics indicates that our physical world may grow out of our consciousness” (Lyons). He also says that there is no correlation between how strong a case is deemed and that family's beliefs in reincarnation since a vast number of cases come from families that did not belief in reincarnation and were raised in the Christian faith.

The case of Ryan Hammons is one of the most documented and fascinating in the modern history of reincarnation, especially in the west. When Ryan was 4 years old, he began directing imaginary movies. Shouts of “Action!” often echoed from his room. The play became a concern for his parents when he began waking up in the middle of the night screaming and clutching his chest, saying he dreamed his heart exploded when he was in Hollywood. One night as Cyndi, his mother, tucked Ryan into bed, Ryan took hold of her hand and said, “I think I used to be someone else.” He kept insisting on having a past life and his

frustration was increasing at not being able to remember names. Cyndi checked out books from the library in Hollywood. As Ryan paged through one of the Hollywood books, Ryan stopped at a black-and-white still taken from a 1930s movie, *Night After Night*. He pointed to one of the men in the middle of the photo. He said, "That's George. We did a picture together." His finger then shot over to a man on the right. "That guy's me. I found me!" Tucker interrogated the child showing him pictures of people and questioning his relationship to them. Surprisingly, Ryan gave a vast amount of factual information about Martin Martyn. Martyn's daughter confirmed many of the facts.

Tucker says some cases can be easily discounted, for instance, when it becomes clear that a child's innocuous statements come within a family that desperately misses a loved one. However, in a number of cases like Ryan's, Tucker says the most logical scientific explanation for a claim is as simple as it is outstanding; somehow, the child recalls memories from another life. One out of five children who report a past life say they recall the intermission, the time between death and birth, although there is no consistent view of what that is like. Some allege they were in "God's house," while others claim they waited near where they died before "going inside" their mother.

When Atlas was one and a half, he began to have night terrors. No doctor had an answer to his behavior. At five years old he said, "I miss when my mom took me to the playground". His mom responded "Me? When I took you to the playground?" He responded "no my other mom with the really pretty hair." He inferred that his name was Jaylen Robinson. Also, he concluded that someone killed him when he was Jaylen. The mom researched the names and found articles with the names. Jaylen died in 2005 and Atlas was born in 2015. His mom did a google search and got in contact with Jim B. Tucker.

"I start from a point of skepticism, and I can doubt things at times, like everyone else. I look for anything that is questionable or deceptive. The more I have been in this field the more I have become convinced that there is more than just the physical world. That there is a larger reality" (*Surviving Death*). As Tucker analyzed the case with the collaboration of Atlas's mother, he

confirmed that Atlas was very sharp in his words and after an examination with photos it was concluded that Atlas was indeed recalling the life of Jaylen Robinson.

Ian Stevenson, a Canadian American psychiatrist at the University of Virginia, hypothesized “The assumption is that when your brain dies, your mind perishes also. That is so deeply believed that scientists fail to understand that it is, in the end, an assumption only. There is no reason why aspects of the mind should not survive the death of the brain.”

### **Psychic Mediums**

A psychic medium is a person who has the ability to communicate with the deceased or other spiritual beings. Mediums are present across all cultures, spiritual practices, and religions. Contemporary mediumship research has examined the accuracy of the statements mediums provide as well as their unique demographic and psychological characteristics, experiences (phenomenology), physiology, and the potential clinical applications of mediumship readings in the treatment of bereavement. Psychic research means a careful and systematic investigation of the phenomena of spiritualism. If psychic research can ever do for the many what it has done for a few, it has a very important part to play in building up the higher life of the future. The prejudice against it is based, more than anything else, on the fear of its failure.

One of the phenomena of physical mediumship is materializations, or appearances of ephemeral bodies in the séance room. This includes the production of ectoplasm, a subtle matter assuming various shapes and appearances that may change into things like hands, faces, and whole bodies. With medium Kate Fox it was reported that an “illuminated substance like gauze rose from the floor behind us, moved about the room and finally came in front of us” (Cassaniti 340). Materializations were generally believed to be directed by spirits of the dead, and later by the medium’s mind. In such a case, the question will be “Is our consciousness capable of producing this phenomenon?” According to modern science, the possibility is limited.

It used to be said by everybody, except the spiritualists, that the matter was not worth investigation; it was all an unwhole-

some mass of fraud. It is more common now to hear these occurrences ascribed to telepathy. Of telepathy very little is known, and what has been proved would seem to indicate that it is a faculty of quite limited range and power. Either there is some limited communication with personalities which have survived the change of death, or telepathy is a power of the mind possessing hitherto undreamed-of capacity.

The means of transmission vary. Automatic writing is an undoubted fact. Mostly, when left to itself, that is to say when it is not guided by leading questions, this writing takes the form of an attempt to reveal and establish personal identity. Does it come from other adjacent minds through some process of telepathy? Perhaps so. But the telepathy which can get into the mind of an utter stranger and, with little delay, select out a great store of memories covering many years a group of pertinent incidents connected with one single personality, is a somewhat staggering thing to think of. The writing has been known to use information that could not have been derived from any living person without going that far afield.

The common spiritualistic assumption has been that a spirit gets into or takes possession of a physical organism conveniently loaned for a purpose and proceeds to write or talk through that organism in place of its real owner. No long or profound study is required to lead to the conclusion that this is not always the case. The line of transmission, if such there be, lies through two independent mental strata, either of which is liable at any moment to begin talking on its own account. We are given to understand that it takes from some communicator what he desires to send, and it transfers it to the medium, who then delivers it to the person to whom it is addressed. There is reason to think that what comes is largely in the form of symbolic pictures, and that what is delivered is such an interpretation of these pictures as the subconscious mind of the medium can make. The dream-mind which assumes to be delivering the message always spends much time in describing what it sees, a kind of panoramic vision that is passing before its sight. Three separate entities, or quasi-entities, that enter into the manifestations- the communicator, the control, and the medium- the three often appear to be fused to-

gether in some inexplicable way, and it is impossible to tell which is for the moment on top.

From the beginning of human existence, the quest for finding proof of the human soul or the afterlife has been crucial to human experience. Reincarnation, heaven, and hell have been among the most proposed theories across religions. Communication with spirits has been practiced through psychic mediums, shamans, and priests or priestesses. Near-death experiences and reincarnation are the most studied phenomena among the scientific and psychiatric communities. Although we cannot infer the exactitude of the mechanism or function of consciousness, advancement in science, medicine, and technology gives us numerous hypotheses of the existence of the human soul.

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*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Pamela Vargas

# *Research Paper*

## *Third Place*

### Behind Bars Again

Monica Ozmun

#### **Introduction**

What is this country doing wrong? The United States has the highest recidivism rate in the whole world. What is recidivism? Recidivism is the tendency of a convicted criminal to re-offend, a relapse into criminal behavior. It is a never-ending revolving door that leads to the same place they desperately want to leave- the criminal justice system. Statistics state that in the first five years of an inmate's release, 83 % will re-offend and return to prison. Currently, there are 1.9 million people (about twice the population of South Dakota) incarcerated in United States prisons, meaning that 1,577,000 will have a good chance of returning to prison within 5 years of being released (Alpher, Durose, and Markman). The United States is not doing anything to correct the recidivism rates, each year they are getting worse. To comprehensively understand and effectively combat recidivism, it is imperative to consider a myriad of factors encompassing an inmate's personal circumstances, as well as the crucial components of adequate life skills, and to analyze essential resources for successful reintegration into society.

#### **Education and Learning Disabilities**

Various personal circumstances surrounding offenders can contribute to their likelihood of re-offending. These include, but are not limited to, substance abuse, mental health conditions, background history, availability of rehabilitation programs, education level, and support systems. Prisoners have a lower educa-



tional level than most adults, and “it is twice as common for inmates to have only a grade eight education or less, and a high percentage of prisoners do not have a high school diploma or equivalent or a college education. Learning disabilities are common, and prisoners with an ethnic minority tend to have lower educational levels” (Zoukis 1). Prison education has been linked to a 43 % reduction in recidivism, the more an inmate is educated the less likely they are to re-offend (Nittle 4). So, why is the United States not turning its focus to implementing better educational programs in the prisons nationwide? This country instead remains completely focused on building more prisons and the crimes committed rather than the human beings needing redirection and education in their life. The prison does have some programs available to the inmates for education, but if you are able-bodied to work a certain job at the facility you are put to work rather than school. The Texas prisons are inmate-ran, meaning that all labor there at the facility is done so by the inmates. The work gets done first and their education is second; some jobs an inmate gets assigned to interfere with the school schedule, so they are not allowed to attend classes. It is understandable that the work must be completed, but how is that work there at the facility going to help them when they are released opposed to an education and life skills needed to be in society.

### **Mental Illness**

A large percentage of offenders have mental, behavioral, or emotional disorders upon arriving in the judicial system. It is no secret that the penial intuitions are poorly equipped to handle those with mental illness. The National Institute of Corrections states that the number of individuals with serious mental illness in prisons and jails now exceeds the number in state psychiatric hospitals ten-fold (Torrey). According to Forry et al and Fovet et al., the most common mental disorders in the prison population are severe depression (44% and 31.2%, respectively), followed by general anxiety disorder (30.9 % and 44.4%, respectively). The leading cause of death in prisons is suicide, “700 people killed themselves in jails, and state and federal prisons in 2019” (US Bureau of Justice Statistics). What is being done by the officials to lessen these numbers? Although the prison does have pro-

grams available such as anger and stress management, AA/NA, smart recovery, and criminal thinking; how effective are these programs for the mentally ill prisoners? The prison is not licensed to handle mental illness, so the offenders with these underlying conditions remain misdiagnosed as having behavioral issues and therefore the problem goes untreated. The cost to house an inmate with mental illness is much higher than that of an inmate without mental illness, so why would the United States be unwilling to invest that extra cost into the mental illness crisis instead of the prison itself? Once again, what is the United States doing about this, *nothing*.

### **Re-entry into Society**

Those prisoners with mental illness often are released without the proper support in the community, “Triggering the downward cycle of relapse, rehospitalization, reincarceration, and homelessness” (US Courts.gov). Upon release from prison in Texas, the offender undergoes a pre-release re-entry assessment. This assessment serves the purpose of identifying risk factors and establishing a parole treatment plan. People exiting prison from long-term confinement need stronger support around them. Many people exhibit a low crime risk but have high psychological, financial, and vocational demands that have been greatly exacerbated by their lengthy incarceration (Nellis). Some offenders that do not have any family have to go to a residential reentry center also known as a halfway house. The offender, lacking any family support, is required to go to one of these houses, often located in the midst of poverty-stricken areas rife with crime and extensive drug access. With “85% of the prison population having an active substance use disorder or were incarcerated for a crime involving drugs” (NIH 4); how does this help that person when they are released from prison? It is the inmate's responsibility to find their own job and their own transportation to and from work, mainly public transportation via the bus system. The overall response is that prison is not a rehabilitation center that focuses on a particular issue for the offender; it is an abysmal structure to house someone for the crime they committed and the time they were sentenced. If the prisoners are released from the federal penitentiary, they will also go to a re-entry program that helps the

inmate to rebuild their ties to the community and facilitate supervising offenders' activities during the readjustment phase as well as job placement, counseling, and other services (USDOJ). In the realm of public amenities and resources, this unparalleled extent of services is simply far beyond what can be found at a state level.

### **Programs for Inmates and Discrepancies**

The Residential Drug Abuse Program (RDAP) is only available for those incarcerated in Federal Prisons. In the United States Sentencing Commission it states that, with the completion of RDAP that the inmates have a lower rate of recidivism over all (1). With this program being so effective why is it only available to those incarcerated in the Federal penitentiary, when the number of inmates in the federal penitentiary only makes a small proportion of the total number of inmates in the United States? All research shows that the United States could lower the recidivism rate if they would implement the resources available at the federal level to the state level. Why are the people incarcerated in the state penitentiaries not worth the effort to save as the ones that are in the federal penitentiaries? The federal penitentiary houses what they would call white collar criminals, convicted of major crimes such as political crime, drug trafficking, bank robberies, etc. So, why is it that they get the resources they need to become a productive member of society again opposed to someone in the state penitentiary. A crime is a crime; every person in the United States must obey laws, and breaking them has consequences no matter who you are. The programs available upon release for a federal inmate are by far greater and more efficient to the inmate than those released from the state prison. Most of the offenders in the state penitentiary come from broken homes and criminal backgrounds. The United States needs to focus on redirecting these individuals so that they can be productive members of society. While individuals must be held accountable for their actions and face the consequences of their crimes, it is essential to recognize that their past mistakes do not define their future selves.

The average cost to house an inmate can range from 18,000 to 45,771 a year depending on the state they are incarcerated.

ated (USA Facts 1). Many taxpayers may not just be shocked to know their money goes to the prison system but also how much of their money goes to the prison. Statistically, many states spend more on the prison system than they do on education (Jenness). The money going to the prison systems is not for the inmates or their rehabilitation, it is spent towards the employees' benefits, salaries, and contributions for their retirement. Yes, there is a need for the correctional officers and their employment, but there is a greater need to reduce the recidivism rate in the United States as well. By reducing the recidivism rate fewer officers would be needed in the prisons because there would be less inmates to supervise, in turn spending less taxpayer's money on the prison system and more on what is needed to make a better society. Prisoners are someone's child, brother, sister, mom, or dad, they are human just like everyone else; they have just made bad decisions and have had to pay for their mistakes by serving time in the penitentiary. Supporting rehabilitation and providing opportunities for prisoners to learn from their mistakes and make positive changes is an important aspect of the justice system. It benefits not only the individuals involved but also society as a whole, as it can reduce recidivism and promote safer communities. Inmates in state prisons deserve to have the same access to the programs and resources available at the federal level. Ensuring that inmates in state prisons have access to similar programs and resources as those in federal prisons is a matter of equity and fairness. All individuals who are incarcerated should have equal opportunities for rehabilitation and personal development. The recidivism rate is not just the state's issue it is the United States' issue as well.

### **Interview**

Having had an interview with Katie Lee who is now 53 years old and who has been incarcerated in her life three different times from the state prison stated to me, "there are absolutely no resources available to utilize when released on parole, TDCJ will release you back into the same region that you committed your crime in with a fifty-dollar gate-check, and a date to report" (Lee). If you are released to a rural area, oftentimes there is not public transportation available for you to access. You are re-

leased back to the area your crime was committed and around the same environment that you need to desperately avoid. If you have a drug addiction, which a high percentage of inmates do, the prison will release you from those same individuals that help contribute to their drug use. Ms. Lee pursued a three-year college course while incarcerated for optical repair and the making of glasses. When released from prison she tried to find work in that field but was unsuccessful. She had three recommendations from the prison staff and a recommendation from the Prison Industry Authority as well. All that time and effort was wasted due to the fact that the businesses did not want to hire a felon, even though she has an education and college and the experience and is qualified to perform the job, but due to her background was turned away from several places of employment. Why would the state prison offer classes that you are not able to follow through on upon release? It is imperative to underscore that this expenditure is an unjustifiable drain on taxpayers' resources. The state must urgently re-evaluate its allocation of funds to ensure that both the inmates' time and the financial resources earmarked for their rehabilitation are not squandered in vain. Ms. Lee is thriving, having successfully transformed her life and emerged as a commendable, self-sufficient member of society, all achieved independently, without relying on the state or its joke of re-entry programs.

A second interview was conducted with a man name Dereck Erin who was incarcerated in the federal penitentiary for 10 years. Having taken a business management college class while incarcerated, he is now the owner of his own flooring business. Dereck was released from federal prison without any family to help him, having to go to the re-entry program provided by the government. At the federal level, he was able to receive grants to get the necessary necessities to pursue his business degree. He was provided transportation, housing, grants, and all resources needed to reiterate back into a productive life. Dereck stated, "Going to the federal prison was the best thing that could have happened to me. If not for the education and rehabilitation I received there I would not be where I am today." Why are these resources not available to all people incarcerated? This is why

the recidivism rate is so low for those in federal prisons. They are given what they need as opposed to those in the state prison who are left to fend for themselves or go back to prison.

Mr. Erin's crime was the same as Ms. Lee's crime, but due to the fact that he crossed state lines, it escalated to a federal offense, even though Ms. Lee's quantity was greater than Mr. Erin's. Nevertheless, the principle remains that a crime is a crime and should be treated as such, but so should the release procedures and resources available for everyone state or federal level.

What can we do as a Nation to combat recidivism in our prisons? Combating recidivism in the nation's prisons requires a comprehensive and collaborative effort from various sectors of society, including the government, communities, and non-profits. Re-entry programs are one of the main areas that need to be addressed and investigated further. When a person does not have a good foundation when leaving prison how do you expect them to excel at doing what they are supposed to? Re-entry into the world after years of incarceration can be scary, confusing, and lonely. New technology alone is overwhelming to most people because it changes and advances so often; even finding a job requires superior knowledge of internet resources. Having difficulties in these areas can make a person go back to their old behaviors and mindset just to survive. It is crucial to recognize these challenges and address them proactively to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. This can be accomplished through policy changes, community support, and societal awareness and empathy. Reducing the barriers and obstacles they face upon release can go a long way in breaking this vicious cycle of recidivism.

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*Cover Art—Honorable Mention*

Veronica Reeves



# *Research Paper*

## *Honorable Mention*

Edgar Allen Poe

Ronny Le

Edgar Allan Poe is widely known for his mysterious and dark tales. Many of his famous works like “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Raven,” and “The Masque of the Red Death” have recurring themes of death and morbidity. Through analyzing these stories, we can see how Poe uses his themes of fear, madness, and mortality to captivate readers with his vividly descriptive chilling atmospheres while offering a deeper look into the human condition. By understanding Poe and his stories, I believe we can determine what his stories have in common.

Firstly, it is important to know a little about what Edgar Allan Poe was like and his life. He was born on January 19, 1809, in Boston, Massachusetts. Edgar Allan Poe's chaotic life was one of the major reasons for the dark and mysterious themes that were prevalent in his stories. Sadly, both of Poe's parents died before he even turned three years old. Because of this, Poe was raised by a merchant named John Allan. Unfortunately for Poe, he did not have the best relationship with his foster parents either. His life in general was a mostly unhappy one. He had issues with gambling and alcohol, and this most likely contributed to the reason why he had to live in impoverished conditions throughout his life. However, despite all of these things his skill for writing had always been there from the start. Poe's struggles with alcoholism and money really added a layer of complexity to his writing, which was shown in his stories. I believe that know-

ing these aspects of Poe's life will help us gain a better understanding of his stories and why the themes are so dark.

Moving on, let's take a look at one of his stories "The Tell-Tale Heart." This story in particular is about an unnamed man who murders the old man he works for. He does this because he cannot stand the look of his "wretched" eye. After killing the old man, he feels a period of momentary peace. However, the guilt soon overtakes him, and he will later confess to killing the old man.

This story draws themes of fear and madness. Throughout the entire story, the narrator is in fear of the old man's eye going as far as to call it a "vulture's" eye. This fear turns the narrator mad or borderline insane. He turned insane to the point that he strangled the old man in his sleep. An article that did a psychological analysis acknowledges this in the quote, "His intelligence and wisdom were turned off and his actions were controlled by the voice of his unsound mind" (Balamuthukumar, p.14). The "unsound mind" represents the narrator's growing descent into insanity. In short, "The Tell-Tale Heart" is an exploration of the fragile boundaries between fear and madness. I feel that Poe perfectly captures the image of a man slowly driven into insanity.

Now, let's take a look at the themes in "The Raven." The Raven takes place on a cold dreary night with a speaker whose wife has recently died. He is visited by a strange raven at night, and the speaker tries to talk to the raven. Only to find out that his efforts are futile because the raven will only respond with the word "Nevermore." As the story goes on, the speaker becomes more and more angry at the raven. This is because he is constantly reminded of his wife, Lenore. After flying into a fit of rage at the bird, the story ends with the raven uttering the dreadful word "Nevermore."

This poem explores themes of loss, mourning, and the psychological impact of grief can have on a person. Poe's use of melancholic and musical language makes the atmosphere of the poem much more eerie. This poem could have also been inspired by a personal experience that Poe has had. In a journal article it says that "In 1842, as a complication of her tuberculosis,

his wife, Virginia Poe, whom he deeply loved, burst a blood vessel in a lung while singing” (Harris, 2008). Poe was distraught the same way the narrator was in the story, and this may have been his reason for writing “The Raven.”

Finally, “The Masque of the Red Death” is a story of fear and death. It centers around a wealthy prince named Prospero. He ignores the outside world and tries to isolate himself away from the disease that is called the “Red Death.” He throws a lavish masquerade ball with seven distinctly colored rooms. All was well, until a guest appeared at midnight. This guest turned out to be infected with the red death, and terror ensues. In the end, Prospero dies because the red death has even penetrated through all of his colored rooms.

The main themes in this story were about fear and death. In the story, the prince fears the red death so much so that he decides to take drastic measures to keep himself and his friends safe. He is desperate to get away from the disease as he tries to escape it, but his efforts proved futile in the end. This also shows that the story could be an allegory. The hidden meaning in the story would be that death is inevitable and trying to escape it is impossible. Just like “The Raven” I believe that his wife’s death also played a role in the creation of this story. A research article also hints at it in the line, “The Masque of the Red Death,” published in May 1842, bears the traces of Poe’s despair over his wife’s illness and his deepening dependence on alcohol” (Yoon, 2021). This does bear a connection to the story because an illness took his wife, and alcohol seemed to be his form of “escape.”

What are the common themes in all of these works? Well all three of these stories contain a surprisingly decent amount of themes they have in common. The first theme that was prevalent in all of the stories was death. For “The Tell-Tale Heart” it was the death of the old man, “The Raven” it was the death of the narrator's wife Lenore, and “The Masque of the Red Death” it was everyone at the masquerade ball. All of Poe’s stories are dark in nature and these are no exception. Each death in the stories had a significant impact on the characters which can also serve as a representation of his life. This was because he was

surrounded by death in his lifetime.

Another common theme among the works I found was selfishness. In all three of the stories the main character can be considered selfish. The narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" killed the old man out of his own selfishness because he could no longer stand his eye. The narrator in "The Raven" could be considered selfish due to the fact that he was taking out his anger on the raven instead of accepting the fact that his wife was gone. Lastly, "The Masque of the Red Death" the prince secluded himself from the entire world because he was afraid of a death that was inevitable.

One final common theme I found among the works was insanity. All of the characters had gone insane in their own way. The eye driving the narrator nuts in "The Tell-Tale Heart," and the man yelling at a bird in "The Raven." A quote from Balamuthukumaran further proves that the narrator in the "Tell-Tale Heart" is insane in the quote "Poe's unnamed murderer can be classified as a social anomaly. Till the end, his unsound mind is left as incurable" (Balamuthukumaran, p.14). This quote shows that the narrator of the "Tell-Tale Heart" is beyond helping.

In "The Masque of the Red Death" it is not so obvious how the prince is insane, but his actions in the story tell it all. He goes to great lengths to seclude himself, and even tries to build a safe and secure place just for himself to run from the disease. Then it all goes to waste when he decides to hold a lavish ball. I believe the prince is the most insane out of all the characters based on his decisions alone.

In conclusion, the works of Edgar Allan Poe, including "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Raven," and "The Masque of the Red Death," collectively explore themes of death, selfishness, and insanity. Poe's life heavily influenced his stories which is why they are dark in nature. By understanding these common themes, we see how Poe used fear and madness to create dark stories about human nature.

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*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Pamela Vargas



*Comparative  
Analysis*

# *Comparative Analysis*

## *First Place*

### Artistic Protestant Voices of the Civil Rights Movement

Colby Robin

When defining the role of her voice involved in the civil rights of black Americans, Nina Simone once noted, “How can you be an artist and not reflect the times?” (Kay, 2021). The Civil rights movement (1954-1968) was a nonviolent social movement, protesting legal racial segregation and discrimination in America. Historical figures, Nina Simone and James Baldwin were social activists in this era, with respective art forms that channeled their protest and exposure of racial struggles, identity, and relationships. The former, an American singer-songwriter and pianist is known for her original sound and protest songs that symbolized the movement; while Baldwin was an American writer, with works spanning from essays and novels to plays and poems, centered on themes of race, politics, and sexuality. The lives of Nina Simone and James Baldwin each uphold individual backgrounds that drove their approach, influence, and legacy within the nation’s struggle for racial impartiality.

Simone and Baldwin’s personal background originated in similar ways, yet their approach to civil rights varied though their passion and motivation. The former did not initially intend to sing protest songs but dreamt to be the first black woman classical pianist. Beginning piano lessons at the early age of three-four years old, she learned intense and challenging compositions. The hours spent playing piano as a child influenced the sound and



originality of Simone's music, for "the rigorous discipline she developed [at church] laid the foundation that informed her playing for the rest of her life" (Light, 2016, p.26). However, in 1954, Simone struggled to support herself and low-income family and took her first job in Atlantic City, using her voice in accompaniment for the first time. As she grew in popularity as a vocalist, Simone used her platform and passion and released her first protest song, "Mississippi, Goddam," in response to a racially motivated bombing that killed four young girls—the beginning of a decade toward singing protest songs. Meanwhile, Baldwin's work reflects his personal experiences which become portrayed within the social context of the early 50s- late 60s. For example, his first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) is a semi-autobiographical account of his experiences growing up in Harlem, New York. In *Stealing the fire: The Art and Protest of James Baldwin*, the author connects that "when the narrator [of *Go Tell It...*] refers to [the main character's] situation—'the darkness of his father's house...the darkness of his father's church' [...] one can believe such was, in literal fact, Baldwin's Story" (Porter, 1990, p.17). The writer's fear of his stepfather, who discouraged his writing and desire to escape the family's circumstances through books, led Baldwin to follow in his old man's footsteps—becoming a preacher. This choice and his time in church affected the later themes in his novels, and his inspiration to become a spokesman for the movement, both in his writing and speeches. Ultimately, both Simone and Baldwin faced poverty and strict discipline in childhood and developed a dedication to a passion that served as a vehicle for change. However, differences can be concluded in their passion of choice—music versus books—and each individual's desire to either support/escape from the difficult circumstances of their families.

Both figures influenced the societal view and culture surrounding racial identity. They each were agents of change, addressing the racial freedom struggle, while advocating that one should be proud of themselves. Simone looked at the how one finds strength in identity *despite* of the struggle and oppression from society and Baldwin on how one's struggles and identity

are shaped *because of* the negative societal view of black individuals. In effect of growing up in a time where society judges you on the color of your skin and racism, Simone declares, despite what society says, that it is not a negative aspect of identity to be black. For in the song, “Young, Gifted, and Black” (1970), Simone addresses individuals and children, to find the joy and confidence in their black identity despite their freedom struggle, demonstrating to society their resilience (Kadlčiková, 2018, p.33). Both figures utilize empowerment to unveil one’s self-identity within the binds of oppression to invoke a rise for change against discrimination. This concept was the main idea that informed and maintained the Civil Rights Act of 1964: to disrupt segregation and view of black people beyond the stereotype of only seeing people for their skin color (Legal, n.d.). Baldwin addressed this issue in *Another Country* (1962). The societal view of black male identity perceived as violent or frightening inspired Baldwin to address how these views affect how white people enact racism, in which black people are forced to be placed in a role that is misrepresentative of their actual intentions (Adinarayanan, 2019, p.17). Baldwin influenced through education exposed issues for society to understand how defining people by race and with racism created a hierarchy of belief that one is superior and another inferior, and how that effects racial identity and empowerment.

Simone and Baldwin hold legacies and impacts within their respective efforts, using their platform and art material of choice. Being a symbol of the civil rights movement, Simone’s impact was positive, yet the acknowledgement of her influence varies depending on whether or not one views her efforts through the lens of her career or of the civil rights movement as a whole (Loudermilk, 2013, p.126). Consider the idea that as the civil rights movement dwindled in participation of marching protest, so had the relevance of Simone’s protest songs, due to their subject relating to the immediate societal issues of the time, e.g. the songs of “Backlash Blues,” a song that sparked inspiration further protest the rights of those who were being oppressed, and “Mississippi, Goddam,” sung in response to a ra-

cially motivated violent bombing. Despite this, her sound through an artistic viewpoint, was revolutionary in originality due to her successful combination of different genres of music, from her classical training influence to the styles of gospel, blues, folk, and pop music. She accomplished this while still using her platform to speak toward the experiences of African Americans in the 1960s, an outspoken voice and model of empowerment. As for Baldwin, his works vary in subject and form, yet touch on themes from race and sexuality to spirituality and humanity—invoking a positive impact on society and identity through intellectual means to raise awareness of the aforementioned issues. Baldwin's ability to hold passion and depth within the turbulent subject matter and lives of minorities in the 1950s holds him to be a powerful voice in the Civil Rights Movement (Joe, 2016). His efforts to inform the public of such oppressions evolved through a career's collection of 17 books of essays, prose, plays, and poetry. Today, many of his works are considered remarkable American classics, influencing other African American authors that have also impacted the world of literature and expression of racial experiences (Joe, 2016). Both figures share a leading role in shaping the sound and commentary within the Civil Rights Movement, holding ground as voices of change and inspiring their world of artistry long after the pinnacle of their careers passed.

Issues of James Baldwin and Nina Simone's approach, influence, and legacy are informed and transcended through their respective backgrounds and motivations for change during the Civil Rights Movement's fight to end racial segregation and discrimination. Notably their lives can be compared by circumstances of their upbringing, conversation surrounding racial identity, and how their efforts made them leaders and symbols of the movement. This era of these figures' lives marked a pivotal change in forming the illegality to discriminate an individual based on race and color, removal of Jim Crow Segregation, as well as highlighted the culture and identities of black individuals in the United States. Through their efforts, one can experience and understand the empowerment and struggles that influence the country, cultures, and lives (both in the past and present) one encounters in the world today.

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# Expression 2024



*Cover Art—Honorable Mention*

Yariza Torres

# *Comparative Analysis*

## *Second Place*

Comparative Analysis on Lydia Darragh  
and James Armistead Lafayette

Jessica James

It was the battle for independence against the British. The Americans were torn between supporting the Patriots, Loyalists, or staying undecided. Slavery was on the rise. It was the time period of the American Revolution, the years 1775-1783. The revolution would introduce a successful espionage system for the U.S. Two known spies that were very important in American victories over the British were Lydia Darragh and James Armistead Lafayette. Both spies are known for their courageous acts, and for paving a way for future Americans that identify with them, whether they're an African American, an immigrant, or a woman.

Lydia Darragh, born in 1729, was an Irish immigrant who had decided to move to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Lydia, her husband, and her five children had lived in Philadelphia as Quakers. The family had been living there unbothered by the British, even after the Quartering Act was passed. This was until the last few months of 1777, when the British would make their way into Philadelphia. At first, they had only taken over a house that was across the street from the Darragh's residence, but they would eventually ask Lydia and her family to leave too. Lydia, who was already snooping on the British across the street, refused to leave her house. At first, General Sir William Howe

did not take kindly to her response, but Lydia's cousin, Captain Barrington, was able to convince his General that she should be allowed to stay. This allowed Lydia to take care of her children and continue to keep an eye on the British. There was not much to report until December 2, 1777. "On the night of December 2, 1777, the adjutant general and other officers commandeered one of her rooms for a secret conference, and, listening at the key-hole, she learned of their plan to attack Washington at Whitemarsh" (Britannica), which was an American camp thirteen miles away from Philadelphia that was under the command of General George Washington. As Lydia gathered information on their planned attack while hiding in a linen closet, she knew she had to get this news to White Marsh since her son, Charles, was also stationed there. Lydia would end up successfully getting this information to Colonel Boudinot at the Rising Sun Tavern, a known place for getting messages to the Patriots. Colonel Boudinot would go on to deliver her note to Washington at White Marsh. Knowing this important information, George Washington would set up his defenses in a way that forced the British to eventually abandon their attack. Lydia turned what could have been a surprise massacre into a standstill between the two armies. This saved many of the Patriots' lives and allowed Washington's army to keep their position at White Marsh. Lydia Darragh's efforts ultimately put a stop to a British advance on an American camp. Without her life-saving act, the British could have possibly gained an advantage over the Patriots. Lydia's courage would go on to be remembered and became inspiring to some immigrants and women. She was able to show a sense of nationalism and pride even though she was not technically American. She also braved the possibility of not being taken seriously as a woman. This made Lydia's act more than just successful espionage, but also a start of acceptance and importance for those who share characteristics with her while living in a white, male-dominated country.

James Armistead, who does not have an exact birth date, is thought to be born between 1748 and 1760. James was born into slavery in New Kent County, Virginia on a plantation owned by William Armistead. Before James joined the military, George

Washington was actually against allowing slaves to join the Army. He only decided to allow it once he realized that they were low on manpower, and that a lot of his officers agreed with the idea of having Black Patriots in the war. Once it was allowed, James had to ask his plantation's owner for permission to join the Army. Luckily, "James received permission from his master, William Armistead, to enlist in the Marquis de Lafayette's French Allied units" (American Battlefield Trust). With Lafayette's enthusiasm towards allowing slaves in the war, he knew exactly what James would be good for. Knowing that James was a slave from Virginia, Lafayette decided to use James as a spy for Lieutenant General Cornwallis' British camp set up in Virginia. There was recently a proclamation signed in Virginia that promised slaves freedom if they fought for the British, so Lafayette sent James as a "runaway slave" knowing that the British would believe it. James Armistead was able to sneakily spy on the British by acting like he was their spy. Not only did he gather information on the British, but he also planted fake information about the Patriots for the British to use. While James was digging up information on the British, he was able to gather evidence about a plan to deliver more supplies and men to Yorktown, Virginia. James was able to warn them about the ten thousand troops marching in from Portsmouth, Virginia. This helped George Washington and Marquis de Lafayette plan and arrange their military tactics, along with their French allies. With the valuable information that James shared, the Patriots were able to stop reinforcements and supplies from arriving at Yorktown. Not only did this stop the British from receiving much needed help, but this also became known as the bloodiest war in the American Revolution. The British had suffered a large number of casualties, and this would end up costing them the war. Soon after the Battle of Yorktown, the British were basically forced to sign a peace treaty with America. The Treaty of Paris would be signed in 1783, and it allowed America to finally be independent. The Patriots might not have been able to stop British reinforcements if it was not for James Armistead himself. Even though he played such a big part in the American victory, he was still forced to go back into slavery. There would be an act passed by the Virginia



State Assembly about slaves being freed if they served in the military, but James sadly did not get released since he was just a spy. His commander, Marquis de Lafayette would later hear of this news. Lafayette was very upset with their decision, so he wrote to them about James' service to the country and how he deserved to be freed like the others. Once the Virginia State Assembly was convinced, they allowed James to be a free man. In appreciation of Marquis, James added Lafayette as his surname. James still struggled with being treated fairly after he was freed. He would not receive an annual pension for serving in the military until 1819. This shows that no matter what kind of service someone did or how patient someone is, they can still receive resentment for their background or race. James Armistead Lafayette paved a way for slaves and freed blacks to know what they deserve, and making sure they receive it. Not only did James help bring the American Revolution to end, but he also helped tons of African Americans, slaves or freed, understand their worth in their new country.

Even though James and Lydia have very different backgrounds, both were able to make an impact and help the American military win the American Revolution. With the both of them being seen as somewhat outcasts, they were still able to put their country's needs first. An immigrant woman and an African American slave would usually have a hard time supporting and fighting for a country that does not treat them fairly, but Lydia Darragh and James Armistead Lafayette had no problem with leading the United States to a victory over the British. The both of them were able to live happily with their families after the war was over, but they did not start the war the same way. Lydia had a husband and five children when the war started, but James on the other hand did not really have anyone. James had to earn his freedom after the war, which allowed him to finally start his family. Another main difference between the two is how they operated in the war. Lydia Darragh was never ordered or told to spy on the British. She was able to share information about the British on her own account. James had to get permission to even join the war effort first, but once he was allowed to, James was given orders on what he needed to do from Marquis de Lafayette.

One spy had fully chosen to do it all themselves, while the other was actually told what they needed to do. The two of them would go on to be remembered for their courageous acts during the war, whether it was of free will or an order from a general. The only part of their stories that really made an impact was their backgrounds. Many people in America that identified themselves with these spies would go on to be more confident and inspired because of their stories. Their inspirational acts would show exactly how America was able to function because of people like them, and that you do not need to be a white man to help better your country.

In conclusion, both Lydia Darragh and James Armistead Lafayette served a great purpose in the American Revolution. Not only did they serve as great spies for the Patriots, but they also served as an inspiration for many Americans. After learning about both Lydia and James, I feel a sense of pride in knowing that two Americans that were looked down on at the time were the ones to help America become a country. They also led a new era of espionage that would assist the United States in many more wars to come. Nevertheless, their success would be remembered by many different people for many different reasons.

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*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Sebastian Wong

# *Comparative Analysis*

## *Third Place*

Samuel and John Adams:

Revolutionary Icons

Tabitha Tran

When you think of the American Revolution, Washington might be the first to come to mind. Second might be Paul Revere for his famous ride through the colonies warning of the British invasion to come. You might even think of Alexander Hamilton, who some might argue was Washington's protégé in the making. Few rarely think of the Adams cousins referred to by Thomas Jefferson as "the earliest, most active and persevering man of the Revolution." Refer to most as the most famous cousin Samuel Adams. He would be the man that would help be the main component to ignite the American Revolution. His cousin John Adams would go on to help cement its victory with persuading the French to lend a helping hand and would become America's 2<sup>nd</sup> president.

Samuel Adams emerged as one of the most influential figures during the American Revolution period. Adams' fervent commitment to the cause of liberty, combined with his political astuteness and grassroots organizing abilities, earned him the epithet "Father of the American Revolution." To understand Adams' contributions, it is important to first explore his formative years and the ideological underpinnings that shaped his revolutionary zeal. Raised in a politically active family, Adams imbibed the principles of republicanism, constitutional rights, and resistance against British oppression from an early age. His education and

upbringing laid the foundation for his future involvement in the revolution. A key facet of Adams' contribution was his ability to mobilize and inspire the masses. By organizing protests, such as the Boston Tea Party and the Stamp Act resistance, Adams effectively channeled public anger towards British actions, galvanizing support for the revolutionary cause. His skillful use of propaganda, through writing articles and delivering influential speeches, further contributed to fostering revolutionary sentiments among the colonists.

Adams was an ardent advocate for American independence, consistently arguing for a total break from British rule. His pamphlet, "The Rights of the Colonists," elucidated the inherent rights of individuals and the illegitimacy of British policies. His push for unity among the colonies through intercollegiate correspondence and organizational efforts paved the way for a united front against British tyranny. Adams' contributions extended beyond the revolutionary movement. As a member of the Continental Congress, he played an instrumental role in drafting essential documents, such as the Declaration of Independence. Adams' intellectual prowess and passionate convictions greatly influenced the formation of the American political system, ensuring that the revolution's ideals were enshrined in the national framework.

Samuel Adams' contributions to the American Revolution were comprehensive and transformative. From his early ideological development to his influential political leadership, Adams helped lay the groundwork for American independence and shaped the nation's political framework. Through his unwavering commitment to liberty and individual rights, Adams holds a revered position in American history as a driving force behind the country's revolution and the subsequent shaping of the United States.

John Adams dedicated much of his life to serving his country. From being an advocate of independence and the revolution to his diplomatic endeavors. Before assuming his role as president, John Adams made sure to lay America's foundation as an independent nation without ever having to depend on the

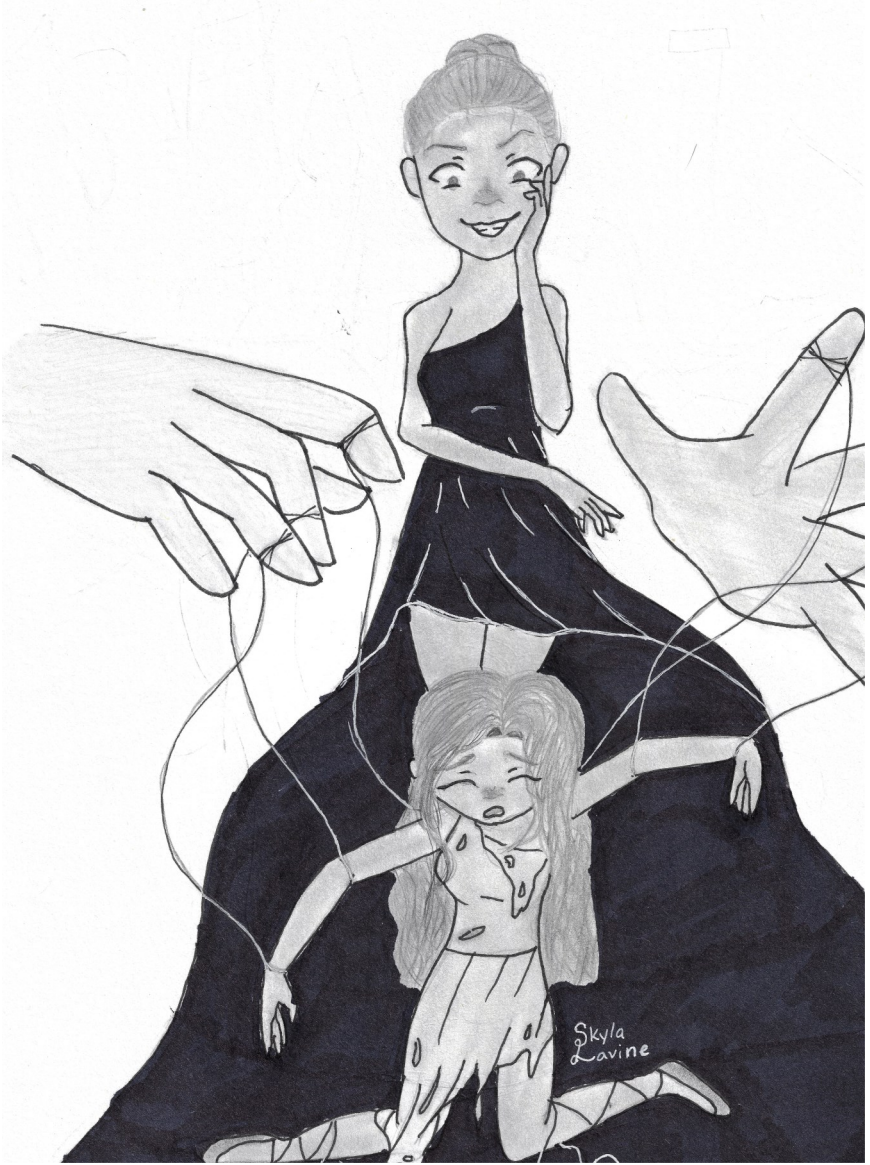
crown again. He served on the Continental Congress and actively advocated for the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, as well as co-writing it. Adam's efforts in diplomacy were equally influential in shaping America's identity. Playing a crucial role in negotiating peace during the Revolutionary War by securing the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which formally recognized the United States as an independent nation. Moreover, his negotiation skills laid the groundwork for future international relations, fostering a sense of respect and credibility for America on the world stage. Perhaps one of Adam's most significant contributions was his unwavering commitment to the principles enshrined in the United States Constitution. He emphasized the importance of preserving the separation of powers and checks and balances, laying down the groundwork for a stable and enduring government. Although his presidency was riddled with challenges and controversies, he did prevent an all-out war with France after the Quasi-War incident. Although his Alien and Sedations acts might have been his biggest controversy in office, one of the acts in still in effect to this day.

Despite their distinct roles and personalities, their shared dedication to the American Revolution, commitment to upholding democratic principles, relentless pursuit of independence, and passionate pursuit of liberty highlight their unparalleled similarities. John Adams' legal acumen and Samuel Adams' gift for oratory complemented each other, allowing them to mobilize public sentiment and instigate political change. Both Adamses ardently supported the Revolution, fervently advocating for self-governance, individual liberties, and equal representation. John Adams, a proponent of republicanism, firmly believed in the positive impact of strong institutions. Samuel Adams, on the other hand, was a masterful propagandist, utilizing his skills as a writer to galvanize public sentiment and mobilize resistance against British tyranny.

Their legacies will live on in America's history as being the most impactful of the founding fathers. The positive impact on our nation will live on for decades to come as it has for decades that has passed. Their unwavering patriotism birthed a nation and their stories will be told for generations to come.

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*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Skyla Lavine





*Poetry*



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Veronica Reeves

# Poetry

## First Place

### An Intimate Conversation with Myself

Emanuel Blanco

Me: Who am I?

Voice: I don't know. Who are you?

Me: I'm me of course

Voice: then why ask who you are if you know that you are you?

Me: I know I am me. But who am I really?

Voice: you just said you are you? What more is there to know?

Me: I guess my name. My name is Emanuel. But, everyone for convenience calls me Manny.

Voice: Manny? Well "Manny" if you are Manny then, I am Manny. I am you.

Me: but I am me. And if I'm me. That means that you are also me. A reflection in a broken mirror? A voice that echoes my thoughts and reflects them outwards in my own voice.

Manny: correct. Somewhat. You are you. And I am you. You are seeing what you are. Looking inside of yourself for once. Do you see what I mean? I may be a voice. But I have a shape. A form. A loud BOOM when I speak. I reflect how you feel. I

reflect what you see within yourself.

**Me:** and if that is the case. And you have a form. Why can I not see you? Why can I not feel you on my skin. Why do you feel like a prick to my skin? Crawling bees come back to the hive. I myself am the hive. And you the bees. You do not feel like me

**Manny:** well of course I don't feel like you. Of course, I feel like bees coming to the hive. For that is how you truly feel. Not about me. But about you.

**Me:** but you are me?

**Manny:** yes. But we. I. Exist only here. In this space you've created for me. A wannabe gardener at war. You know nothing of yourself. You exist there. In that vast world you see before you **Manny.** Why do you deny yourself so?

**Me:** I've never. Had time to find myself. I've always been the mentor. The leader. The calm figure head that knows nothing yet acts like I know everything. I never wanted this.

**Manny:** I know well that you don't. I am you after all. You want to understand more than anything how you. Emanuel. Work. You want to understand how this calm and rolling hill of exquisite flowers turned to bloodstained ruins. You wish to delve into yourself. Understand. Yourself.

**Me:** ... then why is it so hard?

**Manny:** because. You. My dear real replicant. You are distracted. You always will be. You worry for others. Without a care for yourself.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Sofia Pulido

*Poetry*  
*Second Place*

Bittersweet Winter

Aura Martinez

I crave the cold on my face,  
It makes the city a wonderful place,  
Oh, how I'm enjoying life,  
Cutting this apple pie with a knife.  
Sitting by the cozy fire,  
Dreaming about all I desire.  
I go outside to admire the snow,  
Radiant beams give it a beautiful glow.  
Sadly, soon sunny sorrow will set,  
And winter we'll forget.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Skylia Lavine

# Poetry

## Third Place

Awake

Emanuel Blanco

11:00 p.m.- It's another night. I'm awake and I'm restless.

11:01p.m.- I thought of you again. You've been on my mind like a stone on the chest of a witch. Heavy. Uneasy.

11:02p.m.- I thought of the times before everything went side-ways between us. Maybe we were meant to be perpendicular lines. We crossed once.

11:03p.m.- We met on this trip of life. You gave me something important in the time we spent. But now. As perpendicular lines do. We shall never meet again. Our paths are different. And that's okay.

11:04p.m.- I miss you. I miss what we had. I miss thinking you were the solution to my issues.

11:05p.m.- You cross my mind again. This time I wonder if it was worth it. If that pain would ever leave me. If this stone would ever be lifted and if in some way the world set us together for the simple fact of chance.

11:06p.m.- I miss the simpler times. Before all my friends around me started dropping like flies. God. If you exist, why? Why take those I love away from me. Am I the weak one for fearing what's on the other side? Is it that tempting?



11:07p.m.- I think death is the most terrifying thing. Yet in these 7 minutes I've thought of it 7,000 times. It crosses my mind. Doesn't look both ways. It comes in like an 18-wheeler whose driver is falling asleep behind the wheel and I am but a lone passenger in an SUV in the next lane.

11:08p.m.- I thought of you again. God, this doesn't get easier. I've managed for so long. I've dreamt of simpler days. The days get longer. My eyes are heavy. I'm tired. I'm so tired.

11:09p.m.- I close my eyes. These days are getting harder. I think of you again. The images flash. I see you there. Smiling. Happy. Alive. My eyes are heavy with tears. They just don't fall.

11:10p.m.- My eyes are wide. I'm in a panic. I miss you. I miss when our paths had collided and we thought we had it figured out. My perpendicular line of life. My lifeline. Why did you have to change?

11:11p.m.- I wished for you. Dammit. I wished for you. I wished for your safety and nothing else. As you crossed. As you left. I wished for your safety. Your memory doesn't become the same as death. Crashing into the lone SUV. I wished for you. It didn't bring you back to me. And all I can do is wonder.

My perpendicular line.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Sebastian Wong



*Faculty*

*&*

*Staff*



*Photography—Faculty*

Caitlin James-Mastronardi

# Echoes of the Algorithms

Christina Wilbur

Amidst the hallowed halls where scholars once did roam,  
Now reigns a chilling silence, a sterile, lifeless tome.  
The echoes of inquiry, the warmth of human grace,  
Lost amidst the gears and cogs of this cold, soulless embrace.

But now, the algorithm reigns, its logic cold and stark,  
A hollow mimicry of knowledge, a dim and lifeless spark.  
Where once the scholars gathered, in dialogue profound,  
Now echo the mechanized whispers, a lament profound.

The soul of education, once vibrant, once alive,  
Now suffocates beneath the weight of algorithms, contrived.

Oh, how the muses weep, their lament on silent breeze,  
As poetry and passion yield to calculated ease.  
For what is knowledge, devoid of human touch and heart?  
A barren landscape, void of life, in learning's sacred chart.

For in the age of progress, let not our souls be sold,  
But cherish the essence of humanity, in wisdom's fold.  
No longer do we ponder, no longer do we dream,  
For in the realm of ones and zeros, all is not as it may seem.

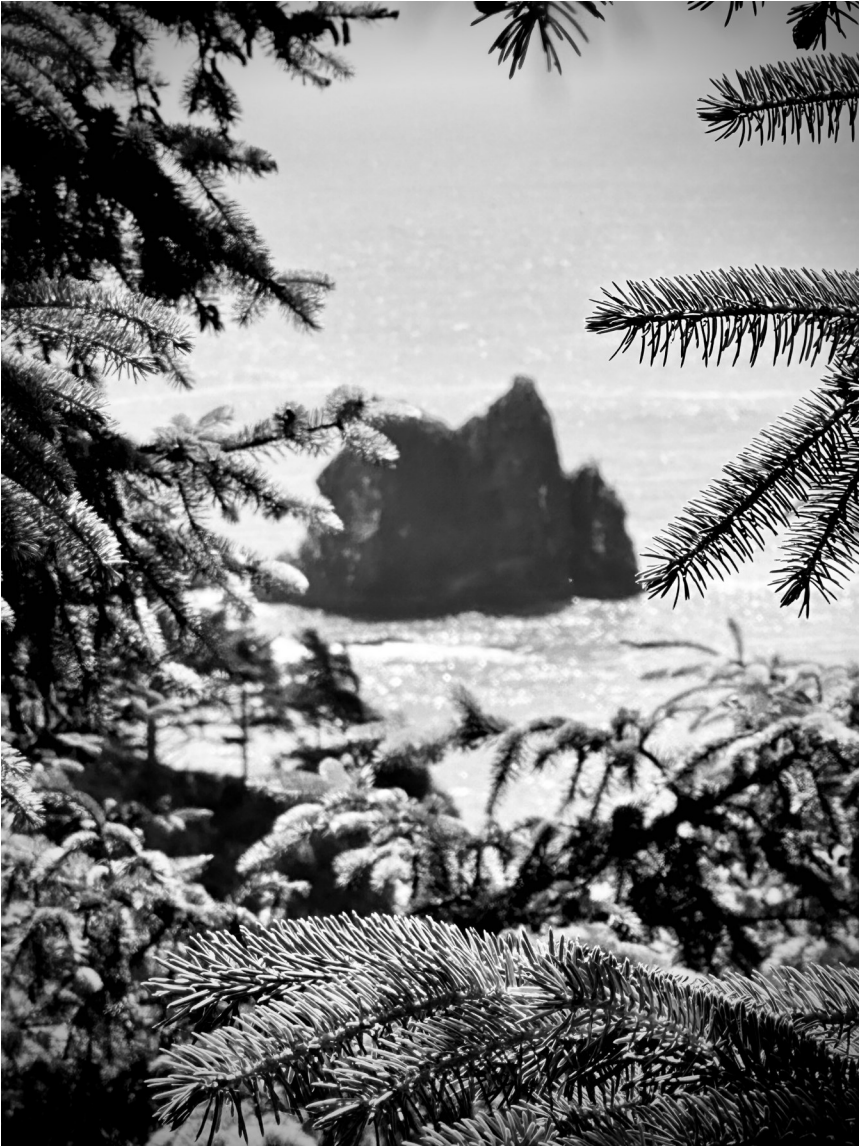
The poetry of learning, the dance of intellect,

Replaced by sterile efficiency, by calculations circumspect.

Oh, lament the loss of humanity in this mechanized domain,  
Where the soul of education is shackled, bound in chain.  
For what is wisdom without the beating heart's sweet strum?  
A mere facade of knowledge, in the cold embrace of numb.

Let us mourn the passing of an age, where minds could truly  
soar,  
And pray for the return of warmth, of empathy, once more.  
For in the midst of progress, let us not forget our aim,  
To nurture not just intellect, but the soul's eternal flame.

The soul of education, once vibrant, once alive,  
Now suffocates beneath the weight of algorithms, contrived.



*Photography—Staff*

Kristin Romero

# I'm Here

## Tina Capeles

How did I arrive at this place  
The days, months, and years  
So quietly disappeared  
Gone and left me behind  
My youth faded, my age appears  
Accomplishments, regrets, and failures  
Happiness, laughter, and love  
What would I say if I saw her today  
Love every moment  
Believe who you are  
Know her, trust her,  
Find her; she is there  
Awaken again, finish the journey  
With ease and care  
You'll find her still  
In heart and soul  
Hello again, I'm here.





*Photography—Faculty*

Michelle Judice

# The Shadow

## Adriane Wallace Champagne

I see my shadow and it stops me

The sun is bright

The grass is familiar

I have been here before

Not once, not twice, but hundreds of times.

The shadow is the same

The grass is the same

The sights and the sounds are the same

If they are the same then so am I.

Thirty years have passed

I am young again, walking across a familiar field.

No matter the years

The tears that have been shed

There is joy in the in between

The connection to this place, this exact spot, the shadow is timeless.



*Photography—Faculty*

Adriane Wallace Champagne

# The Golden Labyrinth

## Caitlin James—Mastronardi

In the cradle of dreams  
A bare-headed babe was  
born.  
Glorious winter sprite-  
Eyes of endless blue stars,  
skin like a dove.  
And like a fairytale, the  
child's hair began to grow.  
Waves of golden curls  
flowed like ribbons-  
Mesmerizing all who  
glanced her way.  
River of tangles and  
ringlets galore.  
It was a story of beauty  
spun-  
A puzzle to unfurl.  
So, that youngling wore

her radiant crown  
Unbrushed day after day  
and night after night.  
It became a cascading  
paradox of knots and  
curls-  
Thick and twisted,  
untouchable.  
To comb this delicate beast  
Was like breathing through  
maple syrup.  
Tears of a mother  
competed against the child's wailing,  
Both were so tired.  
But equal to any decent fairytale,  
a great savior appeared-  
In the shape of a pair of  
scissors.



*Photography—Faculty*  
Caitlin James-Mastronardi

## Paul (Pawpaw):

Prankster, Passionate, Proud,  
Proficient, Patient, Pious, Patriarch  
Chelsey Galloway

Today we gather not to mourn the passing of Paul Daigle, but to celebrate a life so brilliantly lived, a life woven with threads of laughter, love, patience, and faith. A person might be defined by any number of traits, and Paul Daigle was a man of many attributes; he was a tapestry of traits that enriched the lives of all who knew him.

He was always a *prankster*; just ask his family and friends. This trait goes all the way back to his childhood when he and his brothers would get into mischief, and you would be hard-pressed to find one person in this room who has not been on the receiving end of one of his jokes or pranks, or his signature side-pokes. He would do just about anything for a good laugh. His playful nature was a beacon of light in a sometimes too serious world.

Paul loved to have fun in life, and amidst the laughter, he *passionately* pursued all things that brought him joy. It was on this basis of fun and enjoyment that he fell in love. Paul and Yogi's courtship was a true testament to his passion. They were "just friends" for months, according to Yogi, but it is clear that he fell for her well before she even realized. Escorting her to socials and dances and ending each night with a polite handshake, he was a true gentleman through and through. Yogi fondly says that "after 6 months, he suddenly fell in love with me," but he was clearly patiently waiting for

her to realize that she loved him, too. From day one, Yogi and Paul just had fun together, and they continued to dance their way through all of life's grandest adventures. And he always patiently, passionately waited on her hand and foot throughout their marriage. Their love story, spanning 56 years of marriage, was a symphony of joy, laughter, and unwavering commitment.

As a father and grandfather, he was arguably the most *proud* man in the world. He took pride in raising his children and watching them grow into parents, themselves. And when it came to his grandchildren, he always offered his lap, his insight, and his never-ending love and support. His pride in his family was written all over his face anytime he was holding one of his babies, and he was blessed to have a life filled with a whole crew of grandchildren and even two great-grandchildren. He worked tirelessly for his family, even after his retirement, and he gave all of himself to the legacy that he created. Paul's dedication to his family was unwavering, a testament to his enduring love and pride.

Paul was a man of *proficiency*. If he had a task to complete, he would make sure it was completed to absolute perfection, and he would have an entire lecture prepared to explain exactly how and why things had to be done a certain way. He was never afraid to chime in and give a lesson in how to do something or explain how something was done—or share his opinion of how things should be done. He was a man of many talents from cooking to craftsmanship, and his mind was a storeroom for information as if he were a walking encyclopedia for life. He was a problem-solver, a tinkerer, and a teacher. His insight and advice left an indelible mark on all who crossed his path.

*Patience* is something that he never lacked, especially when it came to his wife and grandchildren. Furthermore, he taught patience through his actions and how he engaged with all of those around





*Photography—Faculty*

Michelle Judice

him. His patience was also seen with his pets-- his cats and dogs over the years- many of whom were not the easiest pets to domesticate. However, he remained patient with his animals, and in return earned their trust and respect (even when some of them, such as Spanky the cat, refused to let anyone else in). He seemed to have realized that life is better lived through poise and persistence, a lesson that can only be learned through years of life experiences. One thing we can all take away from Pawpaw is to have patience with yourself as much as you have with others. He did not come by these traits easily, but he carried them with him through the very end.

It is no secret that Paul was a *pious* man. He was a man of God, and his faith was demonstrated through his years of service to his church community. Always eager to volunteer for events, Paul has made a name for himself in the Praise Church community as a chef and handyman. His faith in God never wavered, and he lived his life walking with Christ in all that he did. For Paul, his faith expanded well beyond his time spent in church, and his life is a true testament to the power of prayer and praise.

Paul Daigle was the *patriarch* of our family-- and what a beautiful family he created. He has always been our protector and our backbone. From Paul's passionate drive, we now have a wonderful family full of love and support. We have a family who knows how to have fun in life, how to enjoy a good meal, and how to stand together in the good times and the bad. Many men long to leave a legacy, and Paul will forever remain the paternal figure in our family's story. If ever a message can be taken from Pawpaw, from Paul, it would be that life will always have lessons to teach you, whether you want them or not, and if you choose to face all of the twists and turns of life and learn to dance with them and through them, then you can create your own peace.

Today, as we bid farewell to Pawpaw Paul, we do not say goodbye to a mere man but to a legend – a legacy of love, laughter, and unwavering faith. Though his physical presence may be gone, his spirit will live on in the hearts of all who knew him. As we navigate our own twists and turns of life, let us remember Paul’s enduring message: to embrace each moment with joy, to face challenges with grace, and to dance through this journey we call life.

Pawpaw Paul, your absence leaves a void in our lives, but your love, wisdom, and legacy will forever illuminate our path. We love you more than words can express, and we carry your memory in our hearts always. Until we meet again...



*Photography—Staff*

Kristin Romero

# Golden Corral—

## And the Rise and Fall of Civilization

### Steven J. Zani

I have gone to eat at a "Golden Corral" for lunch. I know, I know. "That's horrid," you would say. Another might say, "Why would a human being do that to himself?" And yet another of you replies, "At least it wasn't *Hooters*." So, Yes, I admit, it was wrong. A bad, bad thing. And, in fact, years ago I made a pledge, with a friend, that we should never, ever, eat at places like that again unless it was some kind of unholy suicide pact. Why I break that pledge occasionally is not entirely clear (it surely has to do with a vast array of unconscious eating-mechanisms that are tucked inside my skull) but break that pledge I do.

For those of you unfamiliar with the restaurant, let me tell you about it, by copying from the Wikipedia entry on it. [I know Wikipedia is always suspect, but on a topic as banal as the "Golden Corral" I think we can give them the benefit of the doubt.]

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**Golden Corral** is an American family-style restaurant chain that features a large buffet and grill offering 150 hot and cold items, a carving station and their Brass Bell Bakery. It is a privately held company headquartered in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA.

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The last several times I've gone to a Golden Corral have led me to

recognize, finally, why it is that I feel vaguely disturbed whenever I go in there, even though it's also strangely and simultaneously celebratory. Entering a Golden Corral and participating in the ritual of it is what Freud would call the *unheimlich*, which translates as "uncanny" but indeed is more closely "un-home-like." Something about the Golden Corral is familiar, yet unfamiliar.

What do I mean? Look at the people. There are a lot of different "kinds" of people who go to Golden Corral, but eventually I started to notice two particular categories who are always there. No, not "the working class." While true, that's obvious. The two categories that fascinate me in the restaurant are "the elderly," and "the morbidly obese." Let's treat each separately, although frankly my whole point in mentioning them is their tangency:

1) The Elderly. Why are the elderly at the Golden Corral? Well, on inspection, the reason isn't very difficult to understand. They are getting too elderly to cook for themselves all the time. They don't have the mobility, nor potentially the rigorous mental acuity that they once had, necessary for cooking. Unless you have a large, sympathetic family network to support you and cook your meals, you need other options. Let's be frank, civilization has been moving us away from that kind of communal family support for a long time, encouraging us to move from our small townships and villages and into large, global cities and networks. So, the advantage of a place like the Golden Corral is that it offers a relatively inexpensive and direct workaround, giving both a variety of food and the capacity for eating a balanced meal. Those are advantages for an elderly consumer. On a similar note, because the elderly usually have a variety of food "issues," for example problems with diabetes, "my doctor says I should stay off salt," other medical restrictions, etc., the Golden Corral is ideal for them. To put this as bluntly as possi-

ble, if this particular subset of people didn't eat at Golden Corral regularly, they wouldn't get enough nutrients, and they'd quickly die. They go to Golden Corral out of necessity.

2) The morbidly obese: Why are the morbidly obese at the Golden Corral? Well, it's similarly rather obvious. Once you weigh a good five, six, seven hundred pounds, you are too heavy to cook for yourself. Unless you have a large, sympathetic family network to support you (where have I heard that before?) and cook your meals, your options become limited. So, the advantage of a place like the Golden Corral is that it offers both a variety of food and the capacity for eating a relatively large amount of it. Since the morbidly obese usually have a variety of food "issues" (where have I heard that before?), such as "there's no way I can sustain this much weight if I waste my caloric-energy shopping for and preparing my own meals," or "I need more salt!" etc., the Golden Corral is ideal for them. To put this as bluntly as possible, if this particular subset of people didn't eat at Golden Corral regularly, they wouldn't get enough calories to support and sustain their massive girth, and they'd quickly lose weight and have to radically change the lifestyle they've developed. They, TOO, go to Golden Corral out of necessity.

Now, ironically, the first subset of people goes to the Golden Corral because they'll die without it, and the second subset goes because they have a pathology wherein they'll die in the process of doing it. But before you think I'm getting on my judgment high horse, let me backpedal for a moment. I am an adult - I have long since learned that Eros and Thanatos, Love and Death, are sometimes the same god, and the pathology that is the drive to sustain life is secretly no different than that of the drive towards death. Both are a kind of wish to be done with anxiety, to find what



*Photography—Staff*

Kristin Romero



we want; a wish to rest. So, with these two categories of people, bless them both. And, as I said before, it's not like I'M totally in control of my own eating habits, after all. Just three weeks ago, I ate at McDonalds. I should have just gone ahead and clubbed a baby seal, or contributed money to China in support of its policies in Tibet, since those three things are probably all equivalent as abominations on the shared Universal scale of Truth and Morality. (Would that there were such a thing as a universal scale of truth and morality) (No, scratch that, I shudder to think of such a world.)

There are, by the way, a few smaller sub-categories of people who eat at Golden Corral, but I won't go into them in depth. They are also space of necessity. More than once I've seen a coach bringing a sports team to the restaurant - again the need for high-caloric intake. I've seen many First-Responders at Golden Corral, the necessity of people who work non-traditional hours, and need both a full meal that provides energy but also need to be able to eat-and-leave at a moment's notice. These smaller subsets aren't quite same, and yet again *necessity* is a key factor.

But never mind all that. The thing is, see, what I just mentioned about these groups of people is the reason not just that they come of necessity. We all eat from necessity. At least in part, food is about sustaining life; it is about Need. The real thing that fascinates me, rather, is what I put before, that I feel unsettled whenever I go to the restaurant, and that's because it's not like any other, typical, restaurant experience. To put it another way, using a psychoanalytic distinction, we always assume that people in so-called normal restaurants go there actually because of Desire, not Need. When I go to a restaurant, I like to preserve the illusion that I'm doing it out of choice, as if it were "a luxury," not Determinism, not a Need that I can't refuse to obey. Probably, of course, the real problem is

that at no time, ever, do I ever do something, anything, out of real choice, it's just that finally when I go to a Golden Corral, I am forced to realize it. That's why I'm disturbed by my visit there. Golden Corral is the symbol of the abyss in front of me, but not the Sartre-esque abyss of absolute freedom which is the terrifying burden of the human subject. That is the fantasy of Existentialism, that idea that we all have ultimate Freedom. Rather, Golden Corral is the negative abyss. Going to that restaurant, we encounter the vast overwhelming Other that informs, and shapes, and controls, everything that "I," poor subject, poor object, will ever be. I go there because something compels me to do so.

Fair enough. We'll return to that idea in a minute. Golden Corral is a gigantic buffet restaurant. And I'll admit that it can even be "fun" to go to restaurants like that, just so one can celebrate the kind of crass, terrifying consumerism that is the American dream. In a place like "Golden Corral," you can eat food the likes of which you would have needed to have been some kind of incredibly powerful monarch, or despot, to have sampled such fare in front of you, at least for the majority of all human history. I can't stress this enough. It is the main point of why I'm writing, and, in fact, I underexaggerate the issue. At NO point in history has such opulence been available. I mean, seriously, one time, I counted. Stretching my boundaries at one meal in the Golden Corral alone, I ate THIRTEEN different sources of animal protein: beef, chicken, pork, tilapia, salmon, octopus, oyster, shrimp, crawfish, catfish, duck, lamb, alligator. I even had some egg in my salad (Who eats salad?!). It's the kind of thing that makes your brain strut around, feeling smug superiority at the success of human civilization as a whole. And that, perhaps, is the unheimlich and unsettling truth of the Golden Corral. It is a symbol of our inability to control ourselves, about our weakness. The necessity of going there. Thirteen

different kinds of meat, and I am number fourteen. And yet, again, that's not the end of the story! As I said, it's also exactly the opposite! The restaurant is a symbol of the greatest triumph of what civilization can accomplish. Think of the glorious extravagance of it. Not just that so many food options are available, a ludicrous amount that at no point in history has been matched, but that even those people in our civilization with the least money, the least power, those who are most enslaved to necessity, even *those* people can eat better than the highest of kings, the mightiest of monarchs, from only a few years ago.

Percy Shelley's famed poem "Ozymandias" reveals a king whose braggadocio is undercut by the realization that all his power amounts to nothing in the end.


My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;  
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

That is the lesson of The Golden Corral. We are simultaneously bound and chained to the culture around us, which creates our health problems, or budgetary restraints, our time commitments. It is killing us. Yet Golden Corral shows us that we are, at the same time, for all our limitations, nonetheless limitless in strength and glory.



*Photography—Faculty*

Caitlin James—Mastronardi



*Thank you to all  
contributors  
and  
congratulations  
to those  
published in  
Expressions 2024*



# Expressions 2024

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## Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial staff would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to **EXPRESSIONS 2024**. Unfortunately, not every entry can be published. In order to insure fair and impartial judging and publication selection, a copy of each submission without the author or artist's name is sent to the judges. The judges at no time see the copy which identifies the individual.

We are proud of the entries published in this issue and appreciate the support of all students, faculty, and staff who contributed to and enjoy the magazine.

As the editor, I will make changes to reflect correct grammar and usage to enhance each entry and the magazine as well.

Caitlin James-Mastronardi, Editor in Chief

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