Reflections



Inaugural Student Anthology English 1023, Composition II

Department of English NorthWest Arkansas Community College

Forward

For several years, Composition I classes have benefited from local student models found in *Expressions*, which has provided much guidance and exposure to different types of writing. Composition II classes have relied on models provided by the instructor or ones found in their textbooks, yet many of these professional models feel somewhat distant to our students. The purpose of this anthology is to not only provide peer models which our students can better connect with but also showcase how well our students can compose analysis, synthesis, evaluation, response, and research papers.

The ten winning essays were chosen from over one hundred submitted to the *Reflections* contest over the course of the 2010-2011 academic year. The authors of our anthology come from diverse backgrounds; and in reading about their process, one will notice that many of them go through the writing process in different ways.

NWACC's Composition II classes focus on writing using literature as the discipline. *Reflections* provides a variety of different types of writing assigned by NWACC faculty.

Congratulations to the students who have made the inaugural edition of *Reflections*, and I am pleased to say that we will continue to collect essays and publish this anthology each year. To the current students in Composition II classes, my judges and I look forward to reading your submissions to the contest next year.

Jacqueline Jones NWACC English Faculty June 2010

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When the Far East Meets the West

By Eun Kim

Amy Tan's "Two Kinds" is a tale of a young Chinese girl's life as an adolescent and the influence that her mother has on her growing up. Coming from a first-generation immigrant Korean family, I can't help but completely relate to growing up around that type of "support." Although my parents were fairly westernized in their way of thinking, we had an aunt living with us whom we affectionately called the Tiger Aunt growing up. Having no natural children of her own, she treated my siblings and me as if we were her own children and pretty much had free rein to direct us and help to raise us in any way that she wanted, which was with a very traditional and old fashioned perspective. Tan's use of dialogue, symbolism, and the description of the mother's thoughts and behaviors all take me back many years ago to when I was an adolescent growing up around my aunt and the way that I'm able to completely relate to the narrator's point of view. I find these similarities to be amazing.

In "Two Kinds," the dialogue that is used by the narrator's mother is one of the biggest things that remind me of my Tiger Aunt. Aside from the broken English that is used, one similarity between my aunt and the narrator's mother is the tough love approach that they take to parenting. Just as the narrator's mother says "Not the best. Because you not trying" (Tan 28), my aunt had a way of emphasizing my weaknesses in an effort to bring out my strengths. This made me turn spiteful towards my aunt, and I paid no regard to any suggestions that she made or things that she was genuinely trying to teach me. The narrator's mother sums up my aunt's attitude towards how I was acting during my many moments of rebellion in two words: "So ungrateful" (Tan 34). My aunt also had a way of comparing my siblings and me with her friends' kids, and it was as if an unspoken competition was taking place to see whose children would come out on top with their accolades and accomplishments. This was a part of life that the narrator had to deal with as well as her mother constantly made declarations about her daughter that weren't necessarily true, like when she proclaims that "If we ask Jing-mei to wash dish, she hear nothing but music. It's like you can't stop this natural talent" (Tan 48). This is an example of the same kind of pride that my aunt had; she could not lose when it came to me or my siblings.

Another tool that Tan uses in "Two Kinds" is symbolism, and there were certainly things in my life growing up that I could attribute to having more meaning than what it actually was. The piano in particular I think represented much of the strife between mother and daughter. For the mother, it represents all of the hopes and dreams she has for her daughter, but for her daughter, it is just another attempt to get conformed to this mold of a daughter that her mother is trying to create. "Why don't you like me the way I am?" (Tan 32) was the narrator's reaction when her mother insists for her "to practice every day, two hours a day, from four to six" (Tan 30). The "piano" in my life was ballet. My aunt got the idea from one of the ladies in our church, and it was all downhill from there. Although we were already active in taekwondo and enjoying that very much, we were subjected to arguments daily about practicing and how we could be in a big performance one day. Just as the narrator, I felt as if I was being forced to change into this person that I clearly wasn't (Tan 73). In the story, when the mother finally relinquishes control over her daughter and the piano by insisting that it was "always your piano...you're the only one that can play," (Tan 86) it feels as a small victory to the narrator because it stood for her freedom to live her life. My day of reckoning came when my ballet teacher talked to my aunt about my sister and me having absolutely no interest in ballet. I

watched as my aunt's face turned white and that drive home was silent and tense. She told us to change out of our ballet clothes and later told us that we are capable of doing whatever we wanted to if we put our minds to it, which is what the narrator's mother had tried to say to her daughter the whole time.

Finally, the dreams and ideals held by our narrator's mother are also very similar to my aunt's way of thinking on a day-to-day basis. "My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America" (Tan 1) was hammered into my mind every day. I believe that this belief of both my aunt and the narrator's mother comes from the experience that they had in the country that they lived in. For example, the biggest source of income for the tiny town that my aunt grew up in was potatoes. She saw her location in the world as restrictive and so viewed the United States as an opportunity to be whatever you wanted to. The test that the narrator was given to "look at a page from the Bible for three minutes and then report everything I could remember" (Tan 17) also reminds me of a school teacher's book that my aunt purchased with the hopes of making us that much smarter. She was very consistent and insistent that this was the best thing that had ever happened to us. She also held on to very strong work ethics and believed that you had to work hard to get the things that you wanted. When the narrator talks about how she knew they could not afford a piano and her "mother had traded housecleaning services for weekly lessons and a piano for me to practice on every day" (Tan 30), I got flashbacks of my aunt taking on an extra position in clothes production to help pay for a violin that I wanted.

Although somewhat rough around the edges, the narrator's mother and my aunt are similar in many ways, as are the narrator and I. The underlying message in both of their parenting techniques were definitely of love, but I think their imposing ways of doing so conflicted greatly with the younger generation's very western way of thinking. Today, my aunt actively supports me in any endeavor that I sign up for and continues to give me "constructive criticism"; I can't help but appreciate that in my life. Just as the narrator realized towards the end what her mother's intentions were towards her, I realized several years after the fact that my aunt wanted nothing but for me to have all the opportunities that everybody else had. As I read over Amy Tan's "Two Kinds," I am taken back by the eerie similarities with my own life in the dialogue used for this piece, the many symbols, and especially the way life was viewed upon by both the narrator and her mother.

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The Poem

By Jason Nida

I was in seventh grade when I first saw the film *The Outsiders*. This is when I was first introduced to poetry in a way that stuck with me for the rest of my life. In the film, one of the characters quotes the Robert Frost poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay." I didn't really understand the meaning of the poem at the time, but for some reason the poem stayed with me. I had only just heard it and already almost had it memorized. It is a beautiful poem that has a meaning within a meaning and one that seems to make more sense with every new stage of my life.

When I first heard the poem, it didn't make a lot of sense to me, even though Johnny explains it at the end of the film. Being thirteen years old, I didn't really put a lot of stock into what he was saying. To me it explained nature in a way that I had never really thought about before. It made me look closer at nature even though I spent most of my time in it. I began to notice the colors more, which in turn made me pay closer attention to the sounds. I was somewhat a hunter at the time, but to me that just meant being quiet and listening for a squirrel to bark so that I could get a bead on it with my twenty-two rifle. I started to notice the sound of the wind blowing through the trees and the water as it gently rolled over the rocks in the creek next to me. The line "Leaf subsides to leaf" (Frost 5) came to mind as I started to see the leaves falling from the trees as the wind blew through them. This was a whole new experience, one that none of my friends would fully understand. My cousin, Steve, and I were the same age and more like brothers than cousins, but I knew he wouldn't understand either. A few weeks later, he proved me right.

Steve and I stayed up until dawn one night, and I remember saying "Look out the window! Everything looks like it's in black and white!" This was just before the sun arose, and shortly thereafter he was asleep. I managed to stay up a little longer and got to see the sunrise for probably the first time. It was just like the poem! Everything had a golden tint to it. I was truly amazed by this and decided that I should memorize the poem--not for anyone else, but just for me. I thought that if I could memorize it then maybe I could always remember that time I watched the sunrise. Looking back now, it's as if I watched the black and white world turn to gold.

As I grew older, I would occasionally think of the poem and finally thought "Maybe I could write something like that." I wanted to write something that moved someone else like Frost's poem had moved me. I tried and tried, but, in my opinion, nothing I ever wrote seemed worthy enough to share with anyone. Eventually I realized that one of the qualities of the poem that had drawn me to it was its rhythm. Being a drummer, this made perfect sense to me and justified my conclusion as to one of the reasons why I liked Frost's poem so much.

After graduating high school, I was approached by some friends that had started a rock band, and they asked me to play the drums for them. I had been playing since the age of about twelve. After practice one night, we were all sitting around talking about how we needed more original songs when I had what I thought was an epiphany: "Song lyrics are just poems put to music!" I went home that night to write a poem and took it to practice the next night. I was nervous about showing the guys my poem and to save face I called it a "song," but I thought, "What the hell? All they can do is shoot it down and maybe give me grief over it for the rest of my life, but I've got enough dirt on them now that I can probably shut them up pretty quick." They read it one by one, and finally gave it their stamp of approval by saying "It's good, man." We put my poem to music, and a "song" was born.

I started writing more and more. Some of my poems were good, and some were not. Nonetheless, I was writing and starting to read more poems. I also discovered that the poems that were not that good were the ones I had tried too hard to write. The poems that seemed to be good were the ones I had written when I was feeling extremely emotional about something. This was the time that I started realizing that Frost's poem had a deeper meaning to it, one that seemed to be on a more personal level to him. It also became more personal to me.

Now that I am a father of two girls, the poem comes to mind again. I see my daughters grow up more and more every day and change not only physically but mentally as well. The world and the decisions I made growing up seemed to rob me of my innocence just as they steal from my daughters today. "Nature's first green is gold/ Her hardest hue to hold" (Frost 1-2). When we are born, we have an innocence that can only be God given. We are bombarded by the world around us with all sorts of factors that impact us no matter how hard we fight to keep them away. "Her early leaf's a flower/But only so an hour" (Frost 3-4). It seems as though my children remain young until I look at old pictures of them. That's when their true age really hits home. Time goes by so fast that our innocence really has no chance to endure: "Then leaf subsides to leaf/So Eden sank to grief" (Frost 5-6). My girls aren't old enough to realize it, but I see them lose a little bit more of their innocence every day whether it comes out in attitude or shows in their growing independence. Even though our innocence is unfortunately lost, which brings sadness to God, there will always be innocence in the world as long as there are children. "So dawn goes down today/Nothing gold can stay" (Frost 7-8). No matter how unfortunate, the fountain of youth has yet to be found. We all grow older every day and with age come the loss of innocence. We can't keep our own innocence just as we can't stop the sun from setting. This may seem sad, but at the same time the poem does offer hope: the children. They will eventually lose their innocence as well, but as long as we teach them from our experience and they do the same with their children, the Kool-aid mustaches and sticky popsicle hands will always be around, at least for awhile.

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Tradition

By Valery Sanchez

Leslie Marmon Silko's short story "The Man to Send Rain Clouds" is an elegantly written story that brings into focus the ever increasing reality that many people today have to face, "old" vs. "new" and how to integrate them evenly in our lives. With more and more children being born of two or more cultures, the balance between what is upheld and what is left behind becomes very tricky. Silko's story, while it may lack power of voice, does create images that contrast to shine the light on this ongoing conflict.

"The Man to Send Rain Clouds" begins in the desert with two men, Leon and his brother-in-law Ken, finding Leon's grandfather, Teofilo, dead under a cottonwood tree. There is no undue sadness in the discovery but just an acceptance of the way life is. Leon paints Teofilo's face and tells him: "Send us rain clouds, Grandfather" (Silko 403). They wrap Teofilo in a blanket and place him in the back of their pick up; they then head back to the pueblo. On their way back into town with Teofilo's body they pass the town's Catholic priest. The priest inquires about how their search for Teofilo went and Leon tells him they found him but does not elaborate on the conditions.

Teofilo's body is prepared in a traditional Native American way and the people of the community, "neighbors and clanspeople" (Silko 404), come to visit the family and drop off food that is to be given to the gravediggers. When it comes time to bury Teofilo, they go to the priest to ask if he will sprinkle holy water on the grave, "So he won't be thirsty" (Silko 405). The priest at first refuses saying that he should have administered Last Rites for him to be involved in the burial. Instead of letting their differences push them apart, the priest changes his mind and chooses to help, letting his humanity outweigh his feelings of duty to his church.

"The Man to Send Rain Clouds" is filled with beautiful, colorful descriptions of the desert and its people. Leslie Marmon Silko's grasp of subtle, elegant imagery is wonderfully apparent in this short story. "The priest approached the grave slowly, wondering how they had managed to dig into the frozen ground; and then he remembered that this is New Mexico, and saw the pile of cold loose sand beside the hole" (Silko 405). Her descriptions give a detailed painted picture without overwhelming the reader with too much information. Without describing in intricate detail the fact that it is winter and cold, she drops bread crumbs that lead the reader to actually feel the cold.

The way she uses her imagery and symbolism also leads into her underlying theme, the differences of the "new" ways with those of the "old." Silko's subtle way of showing these differences is quite beautiful, "Leon stared at the new moccasins that Teofilo had made for the ceremonial dances in the summer. They were nearly hidden by the red blanket" (Silko 405). These two sentences describe a lot of the story. Silko talks about the moccasins being made for ceremonial dancing and conjures images of tradition, heritage and life. This is followed by them being nearly hidden by the red blanket, the way the "new" ways are covering the traditional ones, dying off as Teofilo has.

Where the imagery and symbolism are exceptional with the contrast between the "new" and "old," the voice could be stronger. Told in the third person, "The Man to Send Rain Clouds" gives very little information and the distinct feeling of being only an observer not part of the story. It often leaves unanswered questions: "Leon took a piece of string out of his pocket and tied a small gray feather in the man's long white hair" (Silko 403). This provokes an image of love and compassion, the grandson treating his grandfather's body with care but why is the

feather placed in his hair? If more information were given regarding Leon's state of mind, what he was feeling, what traditions he was upholding, the voice would have been much stronger. Instead the feeling of being an outsider is pervasive throughout the work. Just some motive behind the actions would have given the reader more of an emotional attachment to the story.

In the end, Silko's message seems to be acceptance and understanding. The priest accepts that he does not need to change the people, but he does need to be there for them. Through his comfort, he can thus integrate himself into their culture so both sides flourish and learn from each other. Where "The Man to Send Rain Clouds" does lack that powerful voice that would have changed it from a great story to exceptional one, Silko's voice of hope, a hope for the "old" and the "new" ways to both shine brightly for the future resonates subtly and is memorable.

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Marmon Silko, Leslie. "The Man to Send Rain Clouds." *Literature: Craft and Voice*. Eds. Nicholas Delblanco and Alan Cheuse. Vol. 1.New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009. 403. Print.

Death of the Living

By Jacqueline Serrano

Death is a topic that is often not discussed in the western culture. When the topic of death is brought up, the conversation is quick and not many questions are asked. Authors, though, open the minds of their readers to see the topic of death in a new light. Some authors use humor, others drama and some even leave the audience with many unanswered questions. The point is that authors write about death in their own ways, and this does not exclude the authors of "The Story of an Hour," "What the Living Do," and *Trifles*. But the authors of these three works write not only about the physical death of the characters but also the death of the character's soul.

The three pieces of literature all start off with the physical and obvious death of one of the characters. In "The Story of an Hour," the husband is the one who is dead, or so the readers think. The story revolves around the death of the husband and the misery that the wife should be feeling. Then there is the poem "What the Living Do," which also revolves around the death a loved one. In the poem, the main character seems to truly have sadness towards the death of the loved one, in this way the two works differ. The last piece of literature is *Trifles*, which like the first two works deals with the death of a loved one, but in this piece of literature the audience gets insight into the main character's past. With this knowledge, the audience is more likely to relate with Mrs. Wright from *Trifles*, even though she did murder her husband.

Though all three pieces of literature deal with death, *Trifles* and "The Story of an Hour" are the ones that deal with the perspective of the wives. Both the wives are similar in the way that they feel trapped by their husbands. In *Trifles*, Mrs. Wright's misery is obvious because of the way she had changed over the years. "I wish you'd seen Minnie Foster . . . stood up there in the choir and sang" (Glaspell 11). She did not enjoy her life anymore, which may have been one of the reasons that she killed her husband. In "The Story of an Hour," the character Mrs. Mallard is also miserable in her life, and this can be sensed throughout the whole story. The irony is that even though Mrs. Wright killed her husband, the audience seems to be more sympathetic towards her than Mrs. Mallard, because of the background the audience gets about Mrs. Wright. In "The Story of an Hour," Mrs. Mallard is made out to be a cold hearted character because of her reaction to her husband's death, but the audience does not get much background on the husband. The fact that in *Trifles* the audience gets to have background of Mr. Wright as being, "a hard man. . Like a raw wind that gets to the bone" (Glaspell 10) is what makes Mrs. Wright the victim instead of a cold-hearted woman like Mrs. Mallard.

But these works of literature have to do not only with the physical act of death, but also with the death of the soul. In this aspect, all the works compare. In the poem, "What the Living Do" the narrator is so focused on the death of her loved one that she forgets how to live her own life. She goes through her day-to-day duties, "driving, dropping a bag of groceries in the street, the bag breaking" (Howe 7-8), but not truly enjoying her life, just going through the motions. In "The Story of an Hour," the main character also seems to be lost in her life. Mrs. Mallard does not live her life to the fullest because of the marriage she is in. It seems that in Mrs. Mallard's time the role of a wife was just to be a companion, which is not the life she wanted to lead. Mrs. Mallard wants to "live for herself again" (Chopin 14), which is probably why she feels a glimmer of hope when she hears the news of her husband. When Mrs. Mallard hears the news, it is as if she would finally be free. Then there is Mrs. Wright in *Trifles* who is also unhappy with her life far before she murders Mr. Wright. In the story, Mrs. Wright's misery can be felt through the setting of her kitchen. Her kitchen is not maintained and is lonely, such as Mrs. Wright's life

is. The way the kitchen is personified through Mrs. Wright's life is what makes the audience realize that she was already a prisoner of her life long before she get arrested.

In all the pieces of literature, the main characters are prisoners to their emotions. The emotions they have are of being hopeless, lonely, and cold. In all these works, the irony is that they have the descriptions of being dead, but none of them are. But in all of these works, the characters also come to a realization that they have a choice of how they can live. The characters have the choice of living in misery, with a loss of who they are, or of doing something about it. In all the works, the characters do something about that misery they feel. Mrs. Wright kills her husband, Mrs. Mallard ends up dying, and the narrator of "What the Living Do" moves on. All of the characters realize that they cannot live this way and change their environment to better suit their needs, an instinct every human has.

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True Menagerie in "The Glass Menagerie"

By Sonya Knight

In Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie*, the audience believes that the menagerie simply refers to a glass collection owned by Laura Wingfield. Laura lives with her brother Tom and her mother Amanda. Due to her mother's desire for her to marry, Jim's introduction to the play is one as a gentleman caller. When Laura describes her glass animals to Jim, she uses her mother's term "glass menagerie" (Williams 414) for them. All of the figures are glass, but the animals in it vary, and thus fit, one definition of the word. However, there is another definition to consider: "an unusual and varied group of people" ("Menagerie"). This interpretation of the word seems to fit the entire play. Glass takes on many forms: clear, stained, tinted, broken, vitreous, plain, painted, fractured, faceted, and toughened are just a few. The title of the play now represents the way that the varied group of people in it portrays the definition.

Tom introduces the audience to the Wingfield family by means of his memories. Since the play is a memory, Tom's interpretation of his family stems from his point of view. He does not try to make himself out to be any better than the other members are. If anything, his character seems to have just as many, if not more, flaws as his sister's and mother's characters do. The inner conflict he suffers from makes him seem like a piece of stained glass, all separated, and unable to become one piece. His conflict stems from what he is, what he wants to be, and what he knows is right. Amanda drives home the latter by asking, "How do you think we'd manage if you were" (Williams 395) implying that all of their well-beings depend on him. He holds down a job at a warehouse, but poetry is his passion. He finds himself "desperately unhappy with his job and frustrated by his poetry" (Tischler par. 15). The constant pressure to live up to someone that he is not leads him to his final, family-related choice. Even by leaving, he finds that he is still not free. Tom discovers that he cannot "leave [her] behind ..." (Williams 420) when thinking of his sister. The effects are that of a piece of fractured glass, not truly broken, but beyond repair.

Tom's recollections of Laura make her out to be more fragile than she might have been. It is easy to think of her as a piece of clear, hand-blown glass, fragile and see-through at the same time. She refers to herself as "crippled" (Williams 392), even though her mother tells her it is "a little defect—hardly noticeable..." (Williams 393). This little defect has had an impact on her demeanor and becomes the cause for separation from reality (Tischler par. 19; 21). She truly feels that her whole being was transformed due to the defect in her leg (Tischler par. 21). This leads to her spending a great deal of "time with her glass animals" (Holditch par. 4). Upon a closer look, one is not so sure that there was not more to her than just being shy over her leg. Rather than telling her mother the truth about quitting school, she spends her time walking and visiting the zoo. This makes her personality seems faceted, like cut glass. She seems fragile and in need of protection on one hand; on the other hand, her grasp of reality is uncanny. She is always the one who must strive to keep the peace between her brother and mother. Jim, whom Tom brought home due to his mother's insistence, came over for dinner and found Laura very likable. After dancing and a kiss, he informs her that he has "been going steady!" (Williams 417). Rather than crying, becoming ill, or excusing herself, she offers him one of her glass animals as a "souvenir" (Williams 417). Just like in Tom's case, perhaps their mother has caused part of their need to attempt to live through various forms of illusion (Panesar par. 13).

Amanda is a Southern woman who falls in love with "a man who worked for the telephone company . . ." (Williams 408) and moved to St. Louis. He has left her and the children long ago. Since she does not witness him "growing old and ugly" (Tischler par. 9), she still

reflects a great deal on the past. This "rose-tinted view of the past" (Panesar par. 14) affects the way she interacts with her children. She is like the prettiest piece of painted glass that is in desperate need of dusting because her past mars her present. As for Tom, she is not too worried about his future but more with his present. The constant nagging and nitpicking start to take their toll on him. To his mother, he is responsible for the family in place of his missing father. Even upon her discovery of his interest in the merchant marines, her only concern is demanding that he put his wishes behind him until "Laura has got somebody to take care of her. . ."(Williams 398). Her attempts to place Laura in school and find her a gentlemen caller were to no avail. All of her hopes for herself and her children have become "shattered" (Tischler par. 23), just like a goblet being dropped from some great height.

In the end, Tom leaves, and Amanda and Laura are alone. All of the years of refusing to accept reality have come crashing in on the Wingfield family. Tom speaks fondly of Laura and of his sorrow for leaving her but not for having left his mother. The menagerie varied a little too much to hold together; in the end, the family bond is just as fragile as glass. In a way, it seems that the playwright is telling us more than just a sad story of an overbearing single mother. The audience receives a chance to look clearly through the glass and see what lies on the other side. All families represent a menagerie, but most use their differences to become stronger rather than let the differences tear them apart.

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The Dramatic Life of August Wilson

By Michael Deschenes

Drama is about bringing reality to life through acting and interpretation. August Wilson wrote the play *Fences* about his life: the heartbreaking reality of racism in his own life and the struggles he faced to overcome it. He had a hard childhood and career due to prejudice and fatherly abandonment, and he reflected that through his works of African American drama. Wilson uses the character of Troy, his family, and his friends in *Fences* to pour out his life, his hardship, and the horrifying difficulty African Americans faced throughout the generations.

August Wilson was born in a ghetto area of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania to his white father, August Kittel and African American mother, Daisy Wilson Kittel. His father left him, his mother, and Wilson's five siblings when Wilson was a young child. His mother worked as a cleaning woman until she remarried. His stepfather moved them to a primarily white neighborhood where the family was subjected to fierce racial prejudice. Wilson has also married several times, having two children, one each from separate marriages (Galens 181).

One of Wilson's most prominent dramas is *Fences*, in which he strongly deals with the issues of civil rights he struggled with in his life. The "fences" in the play are a representation of blockages in the relationships of the characters' family ties and their racial issues. The actual fence in the play was built with the intention to keep the family together while the title word "fences" has a different meaning, that is, to impede movement or departure of individuals, families, or ethnicities. Robert Frost wrote of fences in his poem "Mending Wall" showing how fences are designed to keep people in or out and how that separation may become offensive (32-36). Wilson wrote *Fences* about certain fences or walls that keep the family together and keep away those they wanted out. The character Rose wanted a fence built to "hold on to" her family, especially Troy Maxson – her husband (Wilson 2.1.68). W. P. Kenny explores that the fences in the play are "rich symbol[s]" that convey the barriers of a "racist society" (Kenny par. 18). The fence of racism in Wilson's life led him to write about the racism he faced throughout life and the racism many face each day of their lives.

Wilson encountered racism early on in his life and this began to influence his writing. In fact, *Drama for Students* states that Wilson was falsely accused of plagiarism and had to drop out of school at fifteen (Galens 181). Similarly, when Troy was fourteen he was forced to leave home because of his cruel father. W. P. Kenny details how Troy had to "harden himself" from the dangerous world around him to protect his dreams (Kenny 14). It is Troy's hardness that defines choices he makes with his son Cory. Troy and Wilson both faced hardship early on and it defined them greatly, although differently. Because of the toll of severe racism, Wilson had great difficulty attaining the education he needed to become a playwright as he had dreamed. However, he did not allow this impediment to deter him; he was determined to attain a proper education and writing career.

Despite the complications due to racial prejudice that impeded his early education and career, Wilson did not give up and he succeeded in writing many works of modern drama such as *Two Trains Running* and *Gem of the Ocean*. His reluctance to give up is also reflected in *Fences* through encouraging others not to give up on challenges they face especially racial issues. Troy was reluctant to give up and fought long and hard to become the first "colored driver" for the trash company he worked for (Wilson 1.4.107). Troy had to take great risk to attain this promotion: he could have been fired for speaking out against whites, but he states "I ain't worried about them firing me" (Wilson 1.2.58-59). In the end, standing up against his white

bosses works out for Troy as he is promoted to a driver. Joseph Wessling demonstrates that *Fences* encourages African Americans and all of humanity to look for a better prospect in life to come (Wessling 124). While Troy's success in becoming a garbage truck driver may not be much, it was a substantial advance for African Americans of the time. In fact, W. P. Kenny explains that it is difficult to see "hope as founded" on hardship of people like Troy Maxson (Kenny, par. 17). Wilson places his success and those of his characters as a means of hope for mankind to look for in the battle against racial prejudice that many face each day.

Wilson suffered more than racism in his life; his father left him and several siblings early on. His stepfather did not take great care of him and he ended up in a primarily white area where he faced serious racial prejudice (Galens 181). Troy reflects this in his characteristics and how he treats his son Cory. Troy is very hard on Cory, refusing to give him a chance at football because he "didn't have a chance" (Wilson 1.4.479). Troy is incapable of showing his son love. Rather he is all about responsibility: he states "[i]t's my responsibility [. . . a] man got to take care of his family" (Wilson 1.4.289-340). Wilson further explores the depths of what a father is when he shows Troy's past. Troy had a harder father than the one he is: his father beat him in order to sleep with Troy's girlfriend (Wilson 439). W. P. Kenny asserts that eventually Troy had to reject his own father (Kenny par. 15), quite like Wilson had to move on from his father's abandonment. Wilson tied his own his childhood loss of a father into the characters Troy and Cory to show part of the hardship he had and the African American experience.

August Wilson incorporated part of his life and part of the African American experience into his characters in *Fences*. Troy and family are characters brought about by the author's mind, created by his imagination and experience. They are brought alive by actors who try live up to the genius of August Wilson. The characters are representations of Wilsons's life: how he struggled and how he felt for other African Americans. Wilson's life early on and throughout his career was heavily affected by racism; however, it is that racism and hardship which helped him to form a foundation for some of the most significant modern drama ever.

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The Standard

By John Owen

A measuring stick is a double-edged sword. It is a standard by which we judge. With its rulings we judge good or ill. Because there is a standard there is victory, and because there is a standard there is defeat. For the same reason there is honor and there is shame, which leads to guilt. How is it that people deal with shame? Some face it straight on, some try to escape from it, and some even try to explain it away. Flannery O'Connor and Edgar Allan Poe both explore how people respond to shame from similar perspectives but from very different angles. Edgar Allan Poe in "The Black Cat" looks into shame from the perspective of an abusive husband who in trying to escape his guilt goes to extreme measures ending up on death row (par. 1). Flannery O'Connor examines shame in her short story "Good Country People" through the character of Hulga, an almost old maid who attempts to explain away all standards in order to escape her shame, only to be put to shame by someone she looks down on (par. 2;18;20;143). Both Poe and O'Connor use religion in their stories: Poe uses religion to chain his narrator to shame driving him to greater and higher extremes, while O'Connor uses religion to create a standard for the character of Hulga to argue against, denying all shame.

In Poe's "The Black Cat," the narrator recounts his story in an attempt to absolve himself of guilt. The narrator is sitting on death row the night before his execution and decides to write down an explanation of why he finds himself in this predicament. His tone is pleading while trying to sound objective: "For the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence" (Poe par. 1). The narrator has already told his story. He told it to 12 of his peers who found him guilty. Yet he feels the need to recount again. He is trying to tell it again in order to convince the reader that he is only the victim of circumstances and not responsible for his actions, that the shame of his guilt is the fault "of the fiend Intemperance" (Poe par. 6).

The deeper the story goes, the more the narrator fits the profile of an abusive husband. The narrator explains that in his youth he was mild and humane, an animal lover, and that character followed him in to manhood (Poe par. 2). He tells the reader that he was married young and implies that the marriage was happy due to their common love of animals (Poe par. 3). But then the narrator becomes an alcoholic. He becomes verbally abusive to his wife and then physically abusive to both his wife and pets, except for Pluto the black cat. However, one night the narrator comes home drunk, imagines that Pluto is avoiding him, becomes enraged and cuts Pluto's eye out (Poe par. 7-6). Eventually the narrator kills Pluto by hanging because he feels that Pluto no longer loves him (Poe par. 9).

Ann Bliss tries to explain the narrator's extreme behavior "through the lens of gender construction" (1). She argues that the narrator was an effeminate boy, explaining why his "docility" and "humanity" were "the jest of my [boyhood] companions" (Poe par. 2). Bliss proposes that the narrator's extreme actions are in fact extreme reactions to being seen by his peers as effeminate throughout his life (1-2). While this theory is solid, it does not take into account the strong religious imagery, nor does it fit the profile of an abusive husband. In paragraph nine, before the narrator describes the hanging, he tries to shift blame from himself to the "spirit of PERVERSENESS," explaining that the only reason one breaks the "law" is because the "law" exists (Poe par. 9). The language that Poe uses indicates that he is not talking about the law of man, but rather, the law of God. The narrator says that he hanged Pluto because: "I

knew that in so doing I was committing a sin -- a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it -- if such a thing were possible -- even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God" (Poe par. 9). It was the "law" of God, or religion, that the "spirit of PERVERSNESS" compelled him to break. The second black cat is an accuser, from its single eye to the white patch on its chest that the narrator thinks is a gallows, to the "...informing voice [which] had consigned me to the hangman" (Poe par. 18;20;32). The second cat is the "law"; it is religion.

While Poe uses religion as a rigid law, O'Connor uses religion to shape societal norms. Flannery O'Connor's "Good Country People" tells the story of Hulga, a 32-year-old woman whose leg was shot off in a hunting accident when she was ten. She never had any sort of relationship with boys and since returning from college with her Ph.D. in philosophy, "she looked at nice young men as if she could smell their stupidity" (O'Connor par. 19). She is described as a "large blonde girl who had an artificial leg" whose movements are described as "lumber[ing]" (O'Connor par. 2;19). While Hulga is her real name, it is not the name her mother gave her. But since her leg was shot off, the name Joy had not fit her. She changed her name to Hulga because it fit her better, because it was an ugly name, and because it symbolized a triumph over her mother's ideals (O'Connor par. 16). Through her degree in philosophy Hulga has found vindication and refuge from all the boundaries her mother tried to force her into, boundaries of superficial religion and the Southern ideals of womanhood:

To her own mother she had said – without warning, without excuse, standing up in the middle of a meal with her face purple and her mouth half full – 'Woman! Do you ever look inside? Do you ever look inside and see what you are *not*? God!' she had cried sinking down again and staring at her plate, 'Malebranche was right: we are not our own light. We are not our own light!' Mrs. Hopewell had no idea to this day what brought that on. She had only made the remark, hoping Joy would take it in, that a smile never hurt anyone. (O'Connor par. 18)

Then along comes a young man named Manley Pointer. He is a Bible salesman who says that he has no desire to go to college but instead wants to devote his life to "Chrustian Service" (O'Connor par. 27). When the boy leaves, he meets Hulga in the yard and convinces her to meet him the next day for a picnic. He calls her "brave" and "different" for having a prosthetic leg (O'Connor par. 79;127). He then convinces her to go on a picnic with him the next day, and Hulga agrees to go. That night Hulga fantasizes about seducing the young Christian boy; the thrill of the idea is not sexual for Hulga but intellectual: "True genius can get an idea across even to an inferior mind. She imagined that she took his remorse in hand and changed it into a deeper understanding of life. She took all his shame away and turned it into something useful" (O'Connor par. 90). Hulga wanted to break down the barrier of his religious piety and then show him that what he believed in was a fraud and that all he needed was her to show him there is no shame because there are no rules.

The next day Hulga meets Pointer for the picnic (O'Connor par. 92). In a very short time Pointer's character changes and the reader realizes that it is Hulga who is naïve and Pointer who is doing all the teaching. At one point Hulga condescendingly says to Pointer, "We are all damned ...but some of us have taken off our blindfolds and see that there's nothing to see. It's a kind of salvation" (O'Connor par. 117). Manley Pointer then proceeds to seduce Hulga and tricks her into taking her leg off for him (O'Connor par. 130). Soon Hulga realizes that Pointer is not who she thought, and as he is leaving with her leg he says to her, "You ain't so smart. I been believing in nothing ever since I was born" (O'Connor par. 143). Henry Edmundson

observed of "Good Country People" that "Compared with Manley Pointer, Hulga is a dilettante in nihilism, an amateur in 'nothingness.' She knows and believes just enough about nihilism to get herself in serious trouble. Pointer, by contrast, is an expert" (66). Hulga clung to her beliefs so that she could live counter to the norms of her society without shame, and placed herself in her own mind above what she saw as dictating those norms. As Edmundson points out, she is shamed by her own beliefs when schooled in them by an expert (67).

In both tales, Poe and O'Connor use religious imagery. Both authors set religion up as a standard that their characters try to overcome. The major difference in the stories is in how the characters deal with the religious standard and the shame they feel because of that standard. In the "The Black Cat," Poe seems to insinuate that if there were no standard, the narrator would not be compelled to sin. Furthermore, it is in man's nature to break all the rules. The narrator at first goes through a cycle of shame then repentance until he decides to stare down the "law" and knowingly commit a sin against God by hanging Pluto in the full knowledge of his wrong doing. In O'Connor's "Good Country People," Hulga's mother's religion and society's expectations of her made her estranged from and ashamed of who she was. Hulga decides to face it by explaining it away with what she thought was her superior intellect.

In the end, both characters are fools themselves. Poe's narrator thinks that he has faced down the "law" and won. He thinks that he has gotten away with murder and beaten the shaming factors of his life when his blind overconfidence reveals his misdeeds to the horrified authorities. He ends his life in the same situation he thought he had escaped, shamed for his inability to measure up the standard of "law." O'Connor's Hulga is also caught in her own trap. She intended to seduce a young, naïve, and foolish Christian boy. But she ends up being seduced and left in the most compromising situation of her life. The narrator and Hulga both are beaten by the measuring stick they worked so hard to break.

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The Misguided Dream

By Wendy Phillips

Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesmen* is a bittersweet play about the Loman family and their life with a salesman as a father. Most of the play takes place in the Loman home and revolves around a series of conversations and flashbacks from Willy's past. Through these flashbacks, we find out that Willy has had an affair, has a strained relationship with this eldest son, and lies to his entire family about how he is doing at work. Miller paints a fascinating picture of how the wrong ideas to succeed in the business world have not only kept Willy from becoming a great salesman but also led to the failure of his family's life. This failure includes Biff wandering from job to job and Hap talking up his role at his job. The aging traveling salesman, Willy Loman, has the wrong perception of what it takes to be successful in the business world causing lies, infidelity, and disconnection.

Miller's perception that the typical American salesman, given the opportunity, would cheat and lie is a valid idea. In the middle of Act One, Willy begins remembering of a time he spent with a character only known as "The Woman." During part of the conversation, Willy expresses that he plans to see this woman again when he says, "Well, I'll see you the next time I'm in Boston," The Woman responds, "I'll put you right through to the buyers" (Miller 1.787-788). These lines make it appear that he is only with the woman to help further this career, which has long been suffering. By this I mean, the response of the woman leads the reader to the thought that Willy only cheated on his wife to help get in the door with buyers and not because he was unhappy in his marriage. Later on, we find that in addition to trying to get ahead in the business world, Willy's affair was also one of convenience. Willy exclaims, "I'm so lonely" (Miller. 2.1305). Here we see that Willy Loman seems to love and cherish his wife with all his being, but after all the years on the road he has missed out on being with his wife every night and wants some companionship to fill the void. Throughout the play, Willy often embellishes his sales to Linda. During one conversation, Willy says, "I did five hundred gross in Providence and seven hundred gross in Boston." Linda begins to calculate the commission when Willy responds, "Well, I-I did about a hundred and eighty gross in Providence. Well no-it came to-roughly two hundred gross on the whole trip" (Miller.1.671-681). Willy tells his wife that he has made more than he actually did so that he doesn't appear less in her eyes. He wants to make her feel like he is the big man in sales throughout that region. Willy's years and years on the road have taken their toll on the marriage of Willy and Linda to the point of betrayal and lies to keep up the appearance that he is this great man.

Miller shows the reader that the life of a traveling salesman has led Willy to overlook who his boys are and what they have become. Throughout the play, Willy goes back to or reminisces about times gone by when his boys were in school and everyone looked up to them. He never seems to understand that the boys have grown up and are not the same as they once were. Biff, for example, was the star football player who had college offers and people following him around wanting to carry his things just to be part of his life (Miller 2.482-485). He was put on a pedestal by both his father and those around him. Willy never stops to realize that Biff wanders around from place to place and job to job because he is running from the life that he thought he is supposed to live. Biff's inability to know who he is comes from what his father had always drummed into his head coupled with the affair he found out about years earlier. Biff screams, "You fake! You phony little fake! You fake!" (Miller 2.1444). This event seems to have traumatized Biff all because he thought his dad was this great man only to find out that he is

keeping secrets. This pushes Biff to not know truly know who he is because everything he had known is a lie. In Fred Ribkoff's analysis of the play, he notes that instead of "expos[ing] the father's shame [...] Biff runs, and attempts to hide, from the collapse of the ideal, invulnerable, infallible image of his father" (187). He further explains, the guilt felt by Biff isn't that shame for himself but rather a feeling that he couldn't live up to the success that his father wants, which causes him to lead a life of theft and job hopping (Ribkoff 187). Willy's traveling and delusions of what it took to be successful have played a great part in the boys and the lives they lead. The boys have been taught that their looks and past accomplishments would get them through life. They never realize that they had to work hard and earn what they want out of life. Willy's relationship with his sons is based on who they had been in the past instead of the men they had become after growing up with him as a father.

Miller walks the reader through Willy's misguided views of what it takes to be successful, which has done nothing more than cause failure for himself and his family in the business world. In a conversation with Linda, Willy says, "Biff Loman is lost. In the greatest country in the world a young man with such – personal attractiveness gets lost." (Miller.1.126-129). Here we see that Willy thinks being attractive will help a person to succeed in the business world. In another passage where Willy is talking to Biff, he explains, "... Bernard can get the best marks in school [...] but when he gets out in the business world ... you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises. Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want [...]" (Miller.1.626-636). It is drummed in to the heads of both the boys that as long as they are liked and attractive they will succeed in the business world. Further, these misguided views would become the rules which the boys thought they should live by. These very views kept Willy from accepting the business world had changed, and he would need to adapt to be successful. This would ultimately lead to him being fired. Chester Eisinger sums it up best in his analysis by saying, "Willy Loman gives us the corrupted version of the urban-business-success dream, for which Uncle Ben and Howard, Willy's boss, are the hard and compelling symbols" (98). He goes on to explain, "at the heart of this dream in Willy's factitious rendering of it is the cult of personality. It is necessary to make a good appearance and to be well-liked. Appearance is a key concept, for a salesman must appear to be more than he is: better liked, more successful, more optimistic, more necessary to the life of his firm" (Eisinger 98). The wrong sense of what it takes to make a successful man and the lack of education would eventually keep the boys from being successful.

In *Death of a Salesman*, we are present for the last twenty-four hours of a washed up salesman's life. This man, Willy Loman, never quite seems to know who he was. He feels the only way to succeed in life is to be well liked and the rest would all fall into place. Willy never considers that hard work and education are paramount to being successful not only in the business world but also life in general. His way of thinking is hammered into the whole family, skewing what they all think is important. These very ideas keep Willy and his boys from catching a break in the business world, always being a day late and a dollar short. Willy's last best idea to make it is to sacrifice his life so that his family would finally be a success. Years and years of traveling and ill-conceived ideas of being successful take its toll on the life of Willy Loman and his family.

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The Great "African Hunting Safari" Era

By Julie Perkins

Africa offered many things to the generation of men whose fathers and grandfathers had tamed America's western frontier: iridescent golden rays of sun beaming down upon untamed land; creatures that were dangerous, unique, and beautiful--all at the same time; and the same thrill of adventure. For decades, the safari was glamorized on the big screen with movies, such as *Tarzan* and *Out of Africa*, and in print by authors, such as Ernest Hemingway. Although some of the animals were killed "in the name of science," most were killed for sport, money, or both. The term given to these early sportsmen by the people of Nairobi would stick – "white hunters" (Herne 5). These safaris would have far reaching implications for the future.

Most Americans knew little about Africa until our 26th President, Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt, mounted a safari into the African wilds in 1909. Guided by the famous Frederick Selous, Roosevelt was acquiring specimens for the Smithsonian Institution and the American Museum of Natural History ("Hunting, Colonial Era"). Roosevelt was a man of contradictions. He was on the forefront of the conservation movement. He placed approximately 151 million acres of American land under public protection (Larson). In 1902, Roosevelt would not kill a bear that had been tied to a tree for his "hunting pleasure." The "Teddy Bear" is a symbol of this action (Mukherjee par. 4). Yet in Roosevelt's book *African Game Trails*, he shared that he killed his first white rhino while it slept (Roosevelt 403). He used the idea of getting specimens as the way to rationalize the large number of kills. In the 1909 safari, Roosevelt's group killed more than 10,000 animals for shipment to the Smithsonian ("Hunting, Colonial Era").

While Roosevelt was on safari, the whole country was in the grip of an "African frenzy," wanting to know as much about the culture and its animals as possible. The *Chicago Ledger* publisher, W. D. Boyce, preferred to photograph the animals instead of kill them (Crowley 29). Boyce mounted the biggest safari to ever take off from Nairobi (Crowley 30). He wanted to produce a photographic record of animals in their native habitats, and he decided the best way to do that would be with a hydrogen balloon expedition (Crowley 29). Due to numerous events, Boyce's expedition failed miserably in its efforts to produce pictures of Africa's wildlife (Crowley 31). Defeated, he went to London to sell the equipment used on the failed balloonographic expedition and became lost; he was helped by a 12-year-old boy. He offered that boy a penny, and the boy refused because he was a "boy scout." Further information from the boy led a member of Boyce's party to start the "Boy Scouts of America" (Crowley 75).

From the 1930s through the early 1960s, the fascination with Africa continued. To some who had been to Africa, it was paradise. Another famous author to write about the beautiful African countryside and the thrill of the hunt was Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway, also inspired by Roosevelt, used someone that Roosevelt had hunted with, Philip Percival, to guide his safari (Sandison 102). Hemingway wrote *The Green Hills of Africa*, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" from material he gathered while on safari in 1934 (Sandison 105). Philip Percival's business partner, Bror Von Blixen, was another successful white hunter; he was also a friend of Ernest Hemingway. It has been suggested that either Bror Von Blixen or Philip Percival was the inspiration for the character of "Robert Wilson," the white hunter in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" (Herne 122). Bror Von Blixen's wife, Karen, wrote *Out of Africa*, which later introduced a whole new generation to the beauty of the African countryside ("Africa: East"). "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" was made into a movie retitled *The Macomber Affair* in 1946 and became an instant success. The film

version of Hemingway's short story revived the interest in the African safari just like Roosevelt did with his 1909 safari (Herne 185). The role of the "Great White Hunter" became Hollywood's money ticket. Hunters wanted some of what Ernest Hemingway had offered a glimpse of; many would travel to Africa to find it.(Herne 187).

In 1965 things began to change. A former white hunter named Brian Nicholson became a game warden and devised a plan to turn hunting land into leasehold land that could be leased from the government for a period of time. Nicholson's plan had impressive enticements for leaseholders to look after their land and to protect the wild game. Hunters were given quotas they could fill but not go beyond (Herne 375). This forced many of the small time operations to band together, so they could bid on prime hunting land. The East African Professional Hunter's Association was founded this way, and its members were some of Africa's most sought after white hunters (Herne 396).

In the 1970s, dramatic change happened. Africa began to experience a changing political climate and a changing natural climate. A drought killed legions of animals (Herne 409). Nobody ever thought that hunting would be completely banned, yet when the law was passed, those that thought they could work with the corrupt government were sorely disappointed. Dr. Iain Douglas-Hamilton, an African elephant authority, said, "'...and so a seventy-year-old tradition was killed off with the stroke of a pen'" (qtd. in Herne 390). The East African Professional Hunter's Association was dismantled; the days of the white hunters, advocates of managing the wildlife populations, were over (Herne 396).

Today, we have different problems. The habitat is shrinking. In 1960, Kenya had 5.2 million residents compared to 30 million today. Terrorist activity has prompted the U.S. State Department to issue a "Travel Warning" for Africa and to requests that travelers register with them, due to the high number of thefts and kidnappings. Another issue facing Africa is rampant poverty. With rhinoceros horns selling for \$30,000 per pound and ivory from the elephant tusks still a draw for poachers, Africa faces high hurdles (Herne 410; 416). In the days of the past, most safari hunters wouldn't kill an animal unless it was a "trophy" (Herne 409). Perhaps the days of the white hunters were the glory days; most were bound by a sense of honor. The poachers of today could not be considered honorable or even humane. Only 21,500 rhinos are all that save the species from extinction ("African Rhino Poaching Crisis"). Elephants aren't faring much better; it is estimated that poachers kill 33,000 per year. At this rate, they will be extinct in 15 years (Hack par.6).

We are blessed with many things from that era, such as teddy bears, Boy Scouts, and a literal treasure trove of tales, short stories, and films. Sadly, the Africa from the early days is a destination future generations will never have the opportunity to see. For us to see what once was, we must look through the eyes of Teddy Roosevelt, who expressed his vision of Africa in the opening lines of his book *African Game Trails*:

There is delight in the hardy life of the open . . . the strong attraction of the silent places, of the large tropic moons, and the splendor of the new stars; where the wanderer sees the awful glory of the sunrise and sunset in the wide waste spaces of the earth, unworn of man, and changed only by the slow change of the ages through time everlasting. (ix.)

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The Sentient Sound of Nature in Robert Frost's Poems

By Lisa Law

Under the stars of the sky, fifteen-year old Robert Frost explored the heavens through a telescope. He was seeking affirmation of the proverbial question that has plagued mankind for centuries—the proof and existence of God. While surveying the cosmos, Frost's interest was stirred, so he visited a library and obtained books that had illustrated star charts. Within these pages, his knowledge of the stars was edified and a poet was born. Frost's first poems were "astronomical" and invoked a kinship of "cosmology and theology" (Haas 255). As time unfolded, he realized that the cosmos was devoid of providing evidence of God. Similarly, in a short time span, Frost's faith in God became shattered because family members died of illness and disease (Haas 258). As he developed and honed his craft, all the scholarly encounters with philosophers, physicists, and mathematicians helped lay down the foundations of his thoughts on the synonymous relationship of nature and life struggles.

In 1930, Frost presented a nature of poetry to Amherst College Alumni Council to communicate how science and poetry utilize "figurative juxtapositions" to clarify the subtle and intricate philosophy of "natural phenomena" (Haas 275). Furthermore, critic Amy Lowell strengthens his viewpoint and regards Frost as "one of the most intuitive poets [. . . h]e sees much [. . .] both into the hearts of person, and into the qualities of scenes" (March and Bloom, par. 1). With clever poetic purpose, Frost's poems meld the ebb and flow of nature to convey human's struggles and arouse the "sound of sense" within the reading.

Historically speaking, the sound of sense was interpreted by Lord Kames in 1762. He affirms that "relationship of sounds will map relationships of sense" (qtd. in "Onomatopoeia" 862). While this may be true, on July 4, 1913, Frost proudly stated to a friend that he alone would define the sound of sense that was "pure sound—pure form" (qtd. in Davenport 27). In the framework of poetic expression, he embraced three sentiments that a poem must speak to: the eye, the ear, and the heart (Frost qtd. in Newdick 298). At the apex of his assertions, Frost affirms that a poem "runs a course of lucky events, and it ends in a clarification of life" (Frost qtd. in Davenport 27). On the other hand, critics thought his style of poetry "was too much like talk" (Newdick 290). Frost regarded their admonition as praise; it was what he wanted to accomplish with his poetic style. In a moment of clarity, Frost finally realized why the rural life in New Hampshire had beckoned him every summer (Newdick 290). On the farm, he could satiate all his senses with real life experiences. As Frost experienced life on the farm, his sound of sense developed in his poems.

According to the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, the sound of sense is the "performance intermedium" in which verbal and sound art are not just mixed . . . but are actually fused." In the poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowing Evening," the horse "gives his harness bells a shake" (9) and the sound of the bells shaking becomes the primary means of the horse expressing "some mistake" (10). Poets desire to make each word essential so that the words "partake of the nature of things" ("Onomatopoeia" 862); after all, the sound of sense is not new because other poets have written in that style (Frost qtd. in Newdick 294). Frost clarified that his style was unique because his poems convey that "the sense [. . .] has a particular sound which each individual is instinctively familiar with [. . .] it must convey a meaning by sound" (qtd. in Newdick 292). In many of Frost's poems, the sound is more essential because it is distinctly intimate to the reader's life experience.

As a poetry admirer, Sidney Cox attests that Frost's poems "cling to idioms and groups of common words [. . .] by the way he places them and by hints that go before, where pauses come . . . a slowing up and a burst" (qtd. in Newdick 299). Cox's observation can be confirmed in the poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," because the pace of the poem speeds up and down: "The only other sound's the sweep / Of easy wind and downy flake" (11-12). Above all else, Frost wants to give the reader an experience with the printed word the impression of "dramatic action and presence" (Ven 238). Within the 59 line poem "Birches," the bending will of the birch trees become an analogy to represent regret and loss of childhood. The drama of that loss can be felt as the adult looks back on his life: "So was I once myself a swinger of birches / And so I dream of going back to be / It's when I'm weary of considerations (Frost 41-43). With a clear mind and sometimes a heavy heart, one can hear the tone, the sounds, and the rhythm of a moment in this poem.

Frost's metric pattern conforms largely to iambic pentameter and adopts a "perceptible rhyme scheme" (Davenport 28). Often, Frost makes statements that he does not write in "free verse"; he writes in "blank verse" (qtd. in Newdick 294). In general, Western literary academia upholds that Frost's style is a "mixed meter" or a "loose" iambic meter. However, American linguist Marina Tarlinskaja regards Frost's writing style as "strict-stress meter" (qtd. in Black 37). When critiquing Frost's poetry, Tarlinskaja points out that Frost would often stray from iambic pentameter. In doing so, Frost ultimately garners what he desired—the essence of the sound of sense in his poems (Black 40). As an illustrative example, in the poem "Mowing," Frost uses the sound of sense to personify the scythe as its labor "whispered" and creates a sense of swaying in the meter of certain lines in the poem: "Perhaps it was something [. . .] / Something, perhaps [. . .]" (4-5). When reading this poem in contemplation, a person can almost feel the swaying motion of thought.

As a whole, most of Frost's poems reflect on nature to present real life situations and struggles. Even the banal events in human experiences become poetic expressions. Upon reading Frost's poems, a reader can quickly realize that Frost is not a "nature" poet. Frost's poems stir the senses as he reaches mankind through universal imagery. In many of Frost's poems, he uses "tones of conflict and conversation" (Black 40). In the poem "Design," he attaches the universal image of mortality within the existence of a white spider, a white moth, and a white heal-all gathered in a "witches' broth" (6). The demise of the moth is presented as being predestined with "Assorted characters of death and blight / Mixed ready to begin the morning right" (4-5). The use of the words 'brought" (11) and "steered" (12) creates in the reader's mind a sense that the moth and spider have no cognizant control, thus being controlled by a creator. At the center point of the poem's significance lays the cornerstone of the imminent nature of a life eventually coming to an end.

Within the context of his poetry, Frost is a wordsmith. Incomparable, Frost's ability to express a feeling in each of his poems through the elements is the reason why he is able to explore mankind's struggles through poetry. When reading his poems, each can be universally understood because they are constructed upon the building blocks of a shared relationship with nature. Frost believes that poetry "should be of major adventures [. . .] important things that occur to you" (March and Bloom par. 12). As Frost ascended into the cosmos and into another milestone of life, he proclaims in his epitaph: "I had a lover's quarrel with the world" (Epitaphs par 33). One can only surmise it would be impressive to read his expositions on the nature of heaven. Perhaps his quarrel with life was remedied with a sublime embrace of heaven.

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About the Authors and Their Process

Eun Kim- In my opinion, one of the most important facets in writing an analytical paper is having a thorough understanding of the story or work that you are analyzing. Once I was given a topic to write about, I read through the story again with the topic in mind to just get a mental image of how my paper could potentially flow. Once I solidified the main points that I would write about, I was able to provide a couple of supporting points for each of the main points and elaborate from there until I had a well-detailed paper. The final steps in my writing process were to read over what I had, correct any grammatical errors, and ensure that the paper had good transitions and overall flow.

Jason Nida - I am a thirty-seven-year-old Arkansas native. I was born in St. Mary's Hospital in Rogers and have lived in this area my entire life. I went to school in Rogers through the eighth grade when we moved to Pea Ridge. I finished school there graduating in 1991. I have been married for thirteen years and have two teenage daughters, one of whom will graduate from high school about the same time as I earn my Associate of Applied Science degree from NWACC. After working since the age of fourteen and trying different jobs in which I was going nowhere due to only having a high school education, my wife and I decided that my going back to school was in the best interest of our family's future. We once again put our trust in the Lord and quit my job and started school full time.

Valery Sanchez- I'm a non-traditional student and am finding myself both loving and loathing the school work that is put in front of me every day. I work full time at a clinic in a job I love with people who are constantly encouraging me and who are the ones who have put me on this track of going to school. I grew up in California and will always call that home, but in Arkansas I have found friends and a future that I never thought possible. My writing process this year started with structuring my papers. I would create my outline and start brainstorming, figuring where I want my paper to go. My finished paper didn't always look exactly like my outline, but it was always very close. In Comp II this year, I learned that the freestyle writing process that I had used before could only benefit from starting with a point of view, even if it's not the view that I ended up with.

Jacqueline Serrano- I was born in California. The school system there is very different than in Arkansas. You either learned the material or were left behind and had to repeat that grade level. I was at a disadvantage when I began school because I did not know English. To this day I find myself often thinking in Spanish rather than English, which I find ironic since I mostly speak English now. But I have been lucky since I moved to Arkansas to have had wonderful teachers help me with English, especially since attending NorthWest Arkansas Community College. Though my college experience, I have learned that through hard work and help of amazing teachers one can overcome any subject in school and learn to embrace his or her talents, no matter what one's background is with that specific subject.

Sonya Knight- I am currently pursuing a degree in Criminal Justice from NWACC and going into my final year of the program. The decision to return to college did not come until I was forty. After finishing my first semester, I was rewarded by making the President's List. That recognition cemented my resolve to obtain a degree. In my time away from the classroom, I work as a customer service manager for Wal-Mart. I have one son; he is twenty-four and a member of the United States Marine Corp. One of the most important tips I have for English Composition students is to relate your papers to something you are comfortable with.

Michael Deschenes- I was born in New Hampshire, resided in Maine during my early adolescence and currently live Arkansas. I am the fourth of ten children, born to Richard and Jean Deschenes. I was homeschooled since the third grade and dual enrolled at NWACC during my high school years. I plan to attend the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, as a civil engineering major. My hobbies include literature, reading, video games, computers, and aviation. I am an avid runner and enjoy physical fitness. I work for Wal-Mart stores Inc as a cashier. I am a member of the Civil Air Patrol and attend Faith Journey Church in Centerton, Arkansas.

John Owen- My drafting process is fairly simple. I first try to find what I think the main purposes of the stories are and then break those down to their supporting themes. I then choose similar themes in each story and compare the two. Two things I look for are a unique angle and themes that I care about. It is much easier to write about things that are important to you. Finally, I try to find supporting or opposing opinions to work into the essay.

Wendy Phillips- My writing process is pretty simple. I make notes when anything stands out to me during the initial reading. After completing the selection, I rehash what I have read verifying that those points still stand out and if there are additional topics of interest. I then formulate my outline based on my interest points. I go back to the selection to re-read those areas that stood out looking for quotes that I can build upon. I usually select several per topic and work my way down to one or two depending on what the requirements are. In this particular piece, I looked for quotes that I felt could be supported by my outside research. When I have all of this in place, I begin writing my paper. Once I finished, I send the paper to someone else, either the Writing Center or a friend, to see if it all makes sense before polishing the final paper.

Julie Perkins- I am a mother of three wonderful adults. Last year as my youngest, who was then a junior, was looking at prospective colleges, I decided it was time for me to obtain an education as well. My interests are gardening, cooking, and fishing. Working as a Realtor has given me the flexibility to pursue an eventual Masters in Social Work. I plan to work with "in need" youth in the future.

Lisa Law- First, I want to say how delighted and thrilled I am to have my essay chosen for the *Reflections* anthology. I honed my style and craft with the help and guidance of Dr. Hubbard. She is amazing! I have never thought much about my writing process. After pondering about it, I think it's rather peculiar. Before I do any of this aforementioned process, I read the source material and write down my thoughts while I am reading. I believe that method is instrumental when aspiring for my "voice" in an essay. I can't even begin without a title for my paper. If I have no title, the rest of the paper eludes me. Once I have a title, I know what the rest of my paper will be about; then, I begin crafting my introduction which eventually leads me into the promising arms of the thesis statement.