

Unit #1: Beginning the Argument

AP Language and Composition

Mr. Coia

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Since this is the first unit guide, let me explain a few items.

- ✓ Each unit guide will cover anywhere from one-four weeks. You'll have all the information in case you are absent. Share this with your parents immediately. Print off an extra copy to put on the refrigerator.
- ✓ The bulleted points show what we will try to do in class. If we don't get to it, I'll have you move/remove activities.
- ✓ HW=homework. It's due the next class period unless stated otherwise.
- ✓ Items in **bold** show larger items (papers, tests, etc.)
- ✓ Remember, while major tests will always be listed, quizzes can spring up anytime.
- ✓ Write your name on this, and put in your Handouts section of your notebook now.

Mon 8/26 (Tues 8/27)

- Introduction to the course
- Name card with favorite movie & book
- How do we persuade? How are we persuaded? List ways for each
- Aristotle's definition of rhetoric: "The ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion."
- List how people persuade others (use politics, religion, health, charity, personal gain.)

Wed 8/28 (Thurs 8/29)

- Name card presentations
- In-Class writing: The first day of school or the first time you learned a skill
- Rhetorical Triangle--Logos, Ethos, Pathos
- How do we make our point in these three different ways?
- Read "Composing Rhetorically" (*Writing America*, p. 49-52)

Fri 8/30 (Tues 9/3)

- Triads: What does the chapter teach us about rhetoric?
- Rhetoric in political cartoons
- Marking text discussion (How? What do you mark?)
- Read/mark/discuss [President Bush's 9/11 Speech](#).
- Introduction to SPACECAT

HW: Read, mark ["AP Classes are a Scam"](#)

Wed 9/4 (Thurs 9/5)

- Triads: Discuss article on AP classes; share markings
- Read Trevor Packard's [response on NPR](#); mark
- SPACECAT
- **Writing:** Which is more persuasive and why? (2-3 paragraphs; use text from either essay)

HW: Read and initial rules sheet; Parent/student signature; class supplies

Fri 9/6 (Mon 9/9)

- Define: Schemes and Tropes
- Begin "Superman and Me" by Sherman Alexie; in these opening paragraphs, what do you notice about his use of language or syntax?
- Continue reading/marking text

HW: Finish "Superman"; Read and initial rules sheet; Parent/student signature; class supplies

Tues 9/10 (Wed 9/11)

- **Notebook/supply check**
- Rules sheet/parent signature due
- Answer "Questions for Rhetoric" 1-6 and SOAPS
- Discuss "Superman and Me" and share answers
- Finding textual evidence
- Schemes and Tropes
- SPACECAT Introduction on "Superman"

Wed 9/11 Open House 1730-1930

Thurs 9/12 (Fri 9/13)

- Read/listen to ["This is Water"](#) by David Foster Wallace
- SPACECAT work on "This is Water"
- What is his main argument?

Mon 9/16 (Tues 9/17)

- Collecting Rhetorical terms from our readings
- AP Classroom signing in and AP Practice Questions: reading and questions.
- Grading and discussion
- Narrative essay directions

Wed 9/18 (Mon 9/23)

B2 and B3:

- **Narrative Paper Due** (attach first draft to back; rubric in front)
- Reading student narratives. Discuss rhetorical devices in the student essays. Schemes and tropes?
- Peer review

A4: Reading technology articles to prepare for Pinwheel activity

(Thurs 9/19) Fri 9/20

- Work time on narrative essay on first day of school, learning to do something, etc. This is to be in the style of Alexie or Foster
- Look at student examples

HW: Narrative essay due **next class**. Follow *How Do I Format My Paper?* Handout; see rubric in student examples

Tues 9/24 (Wed 9/25)

A4: Narrative Paper Due (attach first draft to back; rubric in front)

- Reading student narratives. Discuss rhetorical devices in the student essays. Schemes and tropes?
- Peer review

B2 & B3: Reading technology articles to prepare for Pinwheel activity

Thurs 9/26 (Fri 9/27)

- **Pinwheel**
- Pinwheel activity introduction and rules
- Essential Question: What effects does technology have on the teenage brain?"
- [ABSENT? If so, answer the essential question in a 400-500 response using direct and indirect quotations from your article. You must have an argument; do not merely summarize your article. Due next class.]

Mon 9/30 (Tues 10/1)

- In-class writing: Answering an AP argument essay prompt (40 minutes). This is our first one.
- Reading anchor papers to AP essay
- How does your essay compare to the anchors?
- Using the rubric to grade.

Wed 10/2 (Thurs 10/3)

- Anchor papers from AP prompt
- **Practice AP Multiple-Choice**

HW: **Print at home** the complete text of MLK's "[Letter from Birmingham Jail](http://mrcoia.com)" ([print copy from mrcoia.com](http://mrcoia.com))

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Standards for This Unit, or, Why We are Learning This?

Reading

CCR.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCR.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCR.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCR.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Writing

CCR.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

CCR.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Speaking and Listening

CCR.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Language

CCR.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Assignments for this Unit

Non-Fiction Stories: We'll use non-fiction pieces to begin to look at language and how it works to communicate a message. For each piece, you will actively read by making comments in the margins and underlining throughout.

Narrative Essay: After reading the three pieces, you will write a narrative about a first day of school, learning to do something new, or something similar. Try to mimic the aspects of writing that you noticed in Truth's, Winter's, or Alexie's story. This can be humorous or serious. Type about 500 words, following essay format sheet.

Narrative Essay Grading Rubric					
<i>This is a short account on learning something in the style of our other readings</i>					
--Creative, original ideas/details	0	1	2	3	4
--Creative word choice	0	1	2	3	4
--Format (margins, spacing, font, header, title, length)	0	1	2	3	
--Conventions (grammar/usage/punctuation)	0	1	2		
--Anaphora is interesting and <i>italicized</i>	0	1	2		
--Reflects the style of Alexie/Foster	0	1	2		
Total:					/17

Practice Quizzes: We'll start early by practicing sample AP Lang quizzes, and we'll continue throughout the year.

Short Response Questions: Students will respond to our reading pieces in shorter-than-essay responses. This will give students practice on analyzing text without needing to complete an entire essay. These are not, however, mere one-sentence responses. Rather, students will offer college-level paragraphs to include two excerpts from the text. Example:

Response Example:
 5. Although the entire essay is not strictly chronological, Rodriguez structures it with signals to chronology. What are they? Why are they effective?

Rodriguez has set himself a complicated task as he recalls his childhood and develops an argument concurrently. One way to keep track of the shifting between these two is through his time markers. Examples of this include: "Many years later" (para. 5), "At the age of five, six" (para. 20), "Three months. Five. Half a year passed" (para. 29). By placing these markers at the start of paragraphs and sections, Rodriguez provides transition and reinforces that he is drawing from a lifetime of experience and rumination. One effect of these shifts is to remind us that the past is very much a part of Rodriguez's present, that he continues to reflect on these formative experiences. Time passes, and with each passing moment, Rodriguez learns and grows. These markers are important signposts to a life well lived.

Notebook and Supply Check

You'll need the following for our notebook check **Tues 9/10 (Wed 9/11)**. Remember, this is the first, and we'll add to this throughout the year to provide you with an orderly notebook. Therefore, you need ALL the pieces to receive credit. No partial credit offered on this.

You need two tabs with the following:

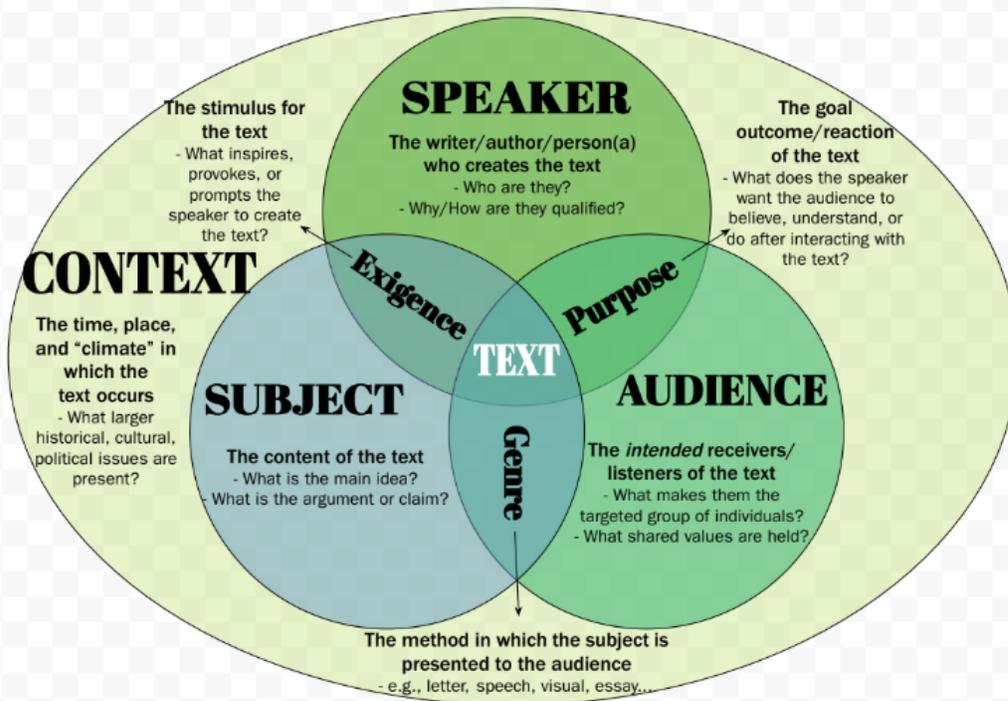
LA Handouts:

- Unit guide 1 (on top)
- "Superman and Me"
- "AP Classes are a Scam and Response"
- Class Rules sheet, initialed

LA Classwork:

Notes from lectures, presentations, mini-lessons. Remember you should be taking notes each class period. You will also have at least 25 sheets of loose-leaf paper.

The Rhetorical Situation



President Bush's 9/11 Speech 9/11/2001

Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes or in their offices: secretaries, business men and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. The pictures of [airplanes flying into buildings](#), fires burning, huge -- huge structures collapsing have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed. Our country is strong.

A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining. Today, our nation saw evil -- the very worst of human nature -- and we responded with the best of America. With the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could.

Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's emergency response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington D.C. to help with local rescue efforts. Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured, and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks. The functions of our government continue without interruption. Federal agencies in Washington which had to be evacuated today are reopening for essential personnel tonight and will be open for business tomorrow. Our financial institutions remain strong, and the American economy will be open for business as well.

The search is underway for those who were behind these evil acts. I have directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.

I appreciate so very much the members of Congress who have joined me in strongly condemning these attacks. And on behalf of the American people, I thank the many world leaders who have called to offer their condolences and assistance. America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.

Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a Power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23:

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me.

This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day, yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world.

Thank you. Good night. And God bless America.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

"Superman and Me" by Sherman Alexie

Questions on Rhetoric and Style

1. What is the effect of Alexie's analogy of a paragraph to a fence (para. 3)?

2. What does Alexie mean when he describes "an Indian boy" who "grows into a man who often speaks of his childhood in the third-person" (para. 5)?

3. In paragraph 7, Alexie deliberately uses a number of short, simple sentences. What effect is he trying to achieve?

4. This eight-paragraph essay is divided into two distinct sections. Why? How would you describe the arrangement of material? How does it suit Alexie's overall purpose?

5. Discuss Alexie's use of parallel structure and repetition in the last two paragraphs.

6. Who is the audience for this essay? Cite three specific passages to support your response.

Possible AP Essay Question:

Read "Superman and Me" and then write a well-organized essay in which you explain how the _____ uses _____ to achieve _____.

How Do I Format My Paper?

A Modified MLA Format for Kubasaki High School

Susan Harrison	←	Your name
Mr. Washington	←	Teacher name
LA 11 Period A4	←	Class name and period number
25 October 2015	←	Date paper is due in this format
635 words	←	Word count (not including title and heading)

Play-Dough Minds: Plato vs. Popular Teen Culture ←always have a creative title centered

In his *Republic*, Plato had a higher opinion of children and a higher purpose for childhood. Contrary to producers, advertisers, and performers, Plato saw boys and girls as “young and tender thing[s],” and believed that this part of life is the “most important part.” Childhood, according to Plato, is not important because it presents a lucrative demographic; rather, it is vital because it is the formation of the character of a future man or woman in society.

←Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks

do not → skip an extra line between paragraphs

It is important because Plato implies that who we are when we are forty begins when we are four. This is the time in which character is planted and watered. Plato commented that childhood is “a time when character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken.” What, then, is the “desired impression” in these times? For advertising conglomerates, it is to sing an annoying jingle, stamp an impressive logo, or a showcase a tanned body for the sole and unscrupulous purpose of selling products. The desired impression occurring on Madison Avenue is fueled by product placement and the bottom line. Plato, however, seems to desire a more virtuous impression for these young minds. [essay not complete]

Formatting Tips:

- Double-spaced. Poems are single-spaced lines, and double-spaced stanzas
- No “floating paragraphs” (blank lines between paragraphs). If your Word automatically adds blank lines, fix it by going to Format→Paragraph→change *Spacing* to 0 in the Before and After columns.
- 12-point font, standard font (Times New Roman, Arial, Verdana, Calibri, or Helvetica)
- No more than 1-inch margins all around (In Word, go to File→Page Setup→Margins)
- Includes a creative title related to your writing. This is your first introduction to the reader. Make it clever and interesting, and not just the assignment title.
- **Save this sheet and put in your binder. We’ll use this for the entire year.**

In-Text Citations

When you use an idea from an author or directly quote an author in your paper, you must acknowledge the author. Usually, the author-page number method is used. **Ex.** (Jones 22).

Examples:

Direct Quote - She stated, “Students often have difficulty using MLA style” (Jones 2).

Direct Quote - Jones found “students often have difficulty using MLA style” (2).

If the *direct quote is more than 4 lines of text*: omit quotes, start the quote on a new line, and indent

Ex. Jones’ (2009) study found the following:

Students often have difficulty using MLA style, especially when it was their first time citing sources. This difficulty could be attributed to the fact that many students failed to purchase a style manual or to ask their teacher for help (2).

Paraphrase - According to Jones (2), MLA style can be hard for students.

Two or three authors: (Last Name, Last Name, and Last Name p#)

Four or more authors: (Last Name of First Author et al. p#)

No author of article, chapter, brochure or short work: (“Title”, p#)

No Author of book, entire website, or long work: (*Title*, p#.)

Works Cited Page

All sources that were cited in the paper appear at the end of your paper. Write the word “Works Cited” on the first line in the center of the page (no quotes). List your sources flush left. Alphabetize your sources (A-Z) by last name. References longer than one line should be formatted with hanging indentation. (*In Microsoft Word: go to paragraph →special indentation →hanging*)

- **Periodical** (journals, magazines, newspapers, newsletters): Last Name, First Name, and First Name Last Name. “Article Title.” *Journal Title*. Volume.Issue (Year): pages. Medium. Date of Access (if retrieved online).
- **Website:** Contributor’s Name(s) (same format as above). "Title of Resource." *Title of Web Site*. Sponsor, Last Edited Date. Web. Date of Access.
Note: The contributor can be an author, editor, or organization.
- **Book:** Last Name, First Name. *Book Title*. City of Publication: Publisher, Year. Medium.

For more information on Works Cited formatting, please go to <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01> or refer to *Holt Handbook*

This is Water by David Foster Wallace

There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says “Morning, boys. How’s the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes “What the hell is water?”

This is a standard requirement of US commencement speeches, the deployment of didactic little parable-ish stories. The story thing turns out to be one of the better, less bullshit conventions of the genre, but if you’re worried that I plan to present myself here as the wise, older fish explaining what water is to you younger fish, please don’t be. I am not the wise old fish. The point of the fish story is merely that the most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about. Stated as an English sentence, of course, this is just a banal platitude, but the fact is that in the day to day trenches of adult existence, banal platitudes can have a life or death importance, or so I wish to suggest to you on this dry and lovely morning.

Of course the main requirement of speeches like this is that I’m supposed to talk about your liberal arts education’s meaning, to try to explain why the degree you are about to receive has actual human value instead of just a material payoff. So let’s talk about the single most pervasive cliché in the commencement speech genre, which is that a liberal arts education is not so much about filling you up with knowledge as it is about “teaching you how to think.” If you’re like me as a student, you’ve never liked hearing this, and you tend to feel a bit insulted by the claim that you needed anybody to teach you how to think, since the fact that you even got admitted to a college this good seems like proof that you already know how to think. But I’m going to posit to you that the liberal arts cliché turns out not to be insulting at all, because the really significant education in thinking that we’re supposed to get in a place like this isn’t really about the capacity to think, but rather about the choice of what to think about. If your total freedom of choice regarding what to think about seems too obvious to waste time discussing, I’d ask you to think about fish and water, and to bracket for just a few minutes your skepticism about the value of the totally obvious.

Here’s another didactic little story. There are these two guys sitting together in a bar in the remote Alaskan wilderness. One of the guys is religious, the other is an atheist, and the two are arguing about the existence of God with that special intensity that comes after about the fourth beer. And the atheist says: “Look, it’s not like I don’t have actual reasons for not believing in God. It’s not like I haven’t ever experimented with the whole God and prayer thing. Just last month I got caught away from the camp in that terrible blizzard, and I was totally lost and I couldn’t see a thing, and it was 50 below, and so I tried it: I fell to my knees in the snow and cried out ‘Oh, God, if there is a God, I’m lost in this blizzard, and I’m gonna die if you don’t help me.’” And now, in the bar, the religious guy looks at the atheist all puzzled. “Well then you must believe now,” he says, “After all, here you are, alive.” The atheist just rolls his eyes. “No, man, all that was was a couple Eskimos happened to come wandering by and showed me the way back to camp.”

It’s easy to run this story through kind of a standard liberal arts analysis: the exact same experience can mean two totally different things to two different people, given those people’s two different belief templates and two different ways of constructing meaning from experience. Because we prize tolerance and diversity of belief, nowhere in our liberal arts analysis do we want to claim that one guy’s interpretation is true and the other guy’s is false or bad. Which is fine, except we also never end up talking about just where these individual templates and beliefs come from. Meaning, where they come from INSIDE the two guys. As if a person’s most basic orientation toward the world, and the meaning of his experience were somehow just hard-wired, like height or shoe-size; or automatically absorbed from the culture, like language. As if how we construct meaning were not actually a matter of personal, intentional choice. Plus, there’s the whole matter of arrogance. The nonreligious guy is so totally certain in his dismissal of the possibility that the passing Eskimos had anything to do with his prayer for help. True, there are plenty of religious people who seem arrogant and certain of their own interpretations, too. They’re probably even more repulsive than atheists, at least to most of us. But religious

dogmatists' problem is exactly the same as the story's unbeliever: blind certainty, a close-mindedness that amounts to an imprisonment so total that the prisoner doesn't even know he's locked up.

The point here is that I think this is one part of what teaching me how to think is really supposed to mean. To be just a little less arrogant. To have just a little critical awareness about myself and my certainties. Because a huge percentage of the stuff that I tend to be automatically certain of is, it turns out, totally wrong and deluded. I have learned this the hard way, as I predict you graduates will, too.

Here is just one example of the total wrongness of something I tend to be automatically sure of: everything in my own immediate experience supports my deep belief that I am the absolute centre of the universe; the realest, most vivid and important person in existence. We rarely think about this sort of natural, basic self-centeredness because it's so socially repulsive. But it's pretty much the same for all of us. It is our default setting, hard-wired into our boards at birth. Think about it: there is no experience you have had that you are not the absolute center of. The world as you experience it is there in front of YOU or behind YOU, to the left or right of YOU, on YOUR TV or YOUR monitor. And so on. Other people's thoughts and feelings have to be communicated to you somehow, but your own are so immediate, urgent, real.

Please don't worry that I'm getting ready to lecture you about compassion or other-directedness or all the so-called virtues. This is not a matter of virtue. It's a matter of my choosing to do the work of somehow altering or getting free of my natural, hard-wired default setting which is to be deeply and literally self-centered and to see and interpret everything through this lens of self. People who can adjust their natural default setting this way are often described as being "well-adjusted", which I suggest to you is not an accidental term.

Given the triumphant academic setting here, an obvious question is how much of this work of adjusting our default setting involves actual knowledge or intellect. This question gets very tricky. Probably the most dangerous thing about an academic education—least in my own case—is that it enables my tendency to over-intellectualize stuff, to get lost in abstract argument inside my head, instead of simply paying attention to what is going on right in front of me, paying attention to what is going on inside me.

As I'm sure you guys know by now, it is extremely difficult to stay alert and attentive, instead of getting hypnotized by the constant monologue inside your own head (may be happening right now). Twenty years after my own graduation, I have come gradually to understand that the liberal arts cliché about teaching you how to think is actually shorthand for a much deeper, more serious idea: learning how to think really means learning how to exercise some control over how and what you think. It means being conscious and aware enough to choose what you pay attention to and to choose how you construct meaning from experience. Because if you cannot exercise this kind of choice in adult life, you will be totally hosed. Think of the old cliché about "the mind being an excellent servant but a terrible master."

This, like many clichés, so lame and unexciting on the surface, actually expresses a great and terrible truth. It is not the least bit coincidental that adults who commit suicide with firearms almost always shoot themselves in: the head. They shoot the terrible master. And the truth is that most of these suicides are actually dead long before they pull the trigger.

And I submit that this is what the real, no bullshit value of your liberal arts education is supposed to be about: how to keep from going through your comfortable, prosperous, respectable adult life dead, unconscious, a slave to your head and to your natural default setting of being uniquely, completely, imperially alone day in and day out. That may sound like hyperbole, or abstract nonsense. Let's get concrete. The plain fact is that you graduating seniors do not yet have any clue what "day in day out" really means. There happen to be whole, large parts of adult American life that nobody talks about in commencement speeches. One such part involves

boredom, routine and petty frustration. The parents and older folks here will know all too well what I'm talking about.

By way of example, let's say it's an average adult day, and you get up in the morning, go to your challenging, white-collar, college-graduate job, and you work hard for eight or ten hours, and at the end of the day you're tired and somewhat stressed and all you want is to go home and have a good supper and maybe unwind for an hour, and then hit the sack early because, of course, you have to get up the next day and do it all again. But then you remember there's no food at home. You haven't had time to shop this week because of your challenging job, and so now after work you have to get in your car and drive to the supermarket. It's the end of the work day and the traffic is apt to be: very bad. So getting to the store takes way longer than it should, and when you finally get there, the supermarket is very crowded, because of course it's the time of day when all the other people with jobs also try to squeeze in some grocery shopping. And the store is hideously lit and infused with soul-killing muzak or corporate pop and it's pretty much the last place you want to be but you can't just get in and quickly out; you have to wander all over the huge, over-lit store's confusing aisles to find the stuff you want and you have to maneuver your junky cart through all these other tired, hurried people with carts (et cetera, et cetera, cutting stuff out because this is a long ceremony) and eventually you get all your supper supplies, except now it turns out there aren't enough check-out lanes open even though it's the end-of-the-day rush. So the checkout line is incredibly long, which is stupid and infuriating. But you can't take your frustration out on the frantic lady working the register, who is overworked at a job whose daily tedium and meaninglessness surpasses the imagination of any of us here at a prestigious college.

But anyway, you finally get to the checkout line's front, and you pay for your food, and you get told to "Have a nice day" in a voice that is the absolute voice of death. Then you have to take your creepy, flimsy, plastic bags of groceries in your cart with the one crazy wheel that pulls maddeningly to the left, all the way out through the crowded, bumpy, littery parking lot, and then you have to drive all the way home through slow, heavy, SUV-intensive, rush-hour traffic, et cetera et cetera.

Everyone here has done this, of course. But it hasn't yet been part of you graduates' actual life routine, day after week after month after year.

But it will be. And many more dreary, annoying, seemingly meaningless routines besides. But that is not the point. The point is that petty, frustrating crap like this is exactly where the work of choosing is gonna come in. Because the traffic jams and crowded aisles and long checkout lines give me time to think, and if I don't make a conscious decision about how to think and what to pay attention to, I'm gonna be pissed and miserable every time I have to shop. Because my natural default setting is the certainty that situations like this are really all about me. About MY hunger and MY fatigue and MY desire to just get home, and it's going to seem for all the world like everybody else is just in my way. And who are all these people in my way? And look at how repulsive most of them are, and how stupid and cow-like and dead-eyed and nonhuman they seem in the checkout line, or at how annoying and rude it is that people are talking loudly on cell phones in the middle of the line. And look at how deeply and personally unfair this is.

Or, of course, if I'm in a more socially conscious liberal arts form of my default setting, I can spend time in the end-of-the-day traffic being disgusted about all the huge, stupid, lane-blocking SUV's and Hummers and V-12 pickup trucks, burning their wasteful, selfish, 40-gallon tanks of gas, and I can dwell on the fact that the patriotic or religious bumper-stickers always seem to be on the biggest, most disgustingly selfish vehicles, driven by the ugliest [responding here to loud applause] — this is an example of how NOT to think, though — most disgustingly selfish vehicles, driven by the ugliest, most inconsiderate and aggressive drivers. And I can think about how our children's children will despise us for wasting all the future's fuel, and probably screwing up the climate, and how spoiled and stupid and selfish and disgusting we all are, and how modern consumer society just sucks, and so forth and so on.

You get the idea.

If I choose to think this way in a store and on the freeway, fine. Lots of us do. Except thinking this way tends to be so easy and automatic that it doesn't have to be a choice. It is my natural default setting. It's the automatic way that I experience the boring, frustrating, crowded parts of adult life when I'm operating on the automatic, unconscious belief that I am the centre of the world, and that my immediate needs and feelings are what should determine the world's priorities.

The thing is that, of course, there are totally different ways to think about these kinds of situations. In this traffic, all these vehicles stopped and idling in my way, it's not impossible that some of these people in SUV's have been in horrible auto accidents in the past, and now find driving so terrifying that their therapist has all but ordered them to get a huge, heavy SUV so they can feel safe enough to drive. Or that the Hummer that just cut me off is maybe being driven by a father whose little child is hurt or sick in the seat next to him, and he's trying to get this kid to the hospital, and he's in a bigger, more legitimate hurry than I am: it is actually I who am in HIS way.

Or I can choose to force myself to consider the likelihood that everyone else in the supermarket's checkout line is just as bored and frustrated as I am, and that some of these people probably have harder, more tedious and painful lives than I do.

Again, please don't think that I'm giving you moral advice, or that I'm saying you are supposed to think this way, or that anyone expects you to just automatically do it. Because it's hard. It takes will and effort, and if you are like me, some days you won't be able to do it, or you just flat out won't want to.

But most days, if you're aware enough to give yourself a choice, you can choose to look differently at this fat, dead-eyed, over-made-up lady who just screamed at her kid in the checkout line. Maybe she's not usually like this. Maybe she's been up three straight nights holding the hand of a husband who is dying of bone cancer. Or maybe this very lady is the low-wage clerk at the motor vehicle department, who just yesterday helped your spouse resolve a horrific, infuriating, red-tape problem through some small act of bureaucratic kindness. Of course, none of this is likely, but it's also not impossible. It just depends what you want to consider. If you're automatically sure that you know what reality is, and you are operating on your default setting, then you, like me, probably won't consider possibilities that aren't annoying and miserable. But if you really learn how to pay attention, then you will know there are other options. It will actually be within your power to experience a crowded, hot, slow, consumer-hell type situation as not only meaningful, but sacred, on fire with the same force that made the stars: love, fellowship, the mystical oneness of all things deep down.

Not that that mystical stuff is necessarily true. The only thing that's capital-T True is that you get to decide how you're gonna try to see it.

This, I submit, is the freedom of a real education, of learning how to be well-adjusted. You get to consciously decide what has meaning and what doesn't. You get to decide what to worship.

Because here's something else that's weird but true: in the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship—be it JC or Allah, be it YHWH or the Wiccan Mother Goddess, or the Four Noble Truths, or some inviolable set of ethical principles—is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always

feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you. On one level, we all know this stuff already. It's been codified as myths, proverbs, clichés, epigrams, parables; the skeleton of every great story. The whole trick is keeping the truth up front in daily consciousness.

Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. But the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they're evil or sinful, it's that they're unconscious. They are default settings.

They're the kind of worship you just gradually slip into, day after day, getting more and more selective about what you see and how you measure value without ever being fully aware that that's what you're doing.

And the so-called real world will not discourage you from operating on your default settings, because the so-called real world of men and money and power hums merrily along in a pool of fear and anger and frustration and craving and worship of self. Our own present culture has harnessed these forces in ways that have yielded extraordinary wealth and comfort and personal freedom. The freedom all to be lords of our tiny skull-sized kingdoms, alone at the centre of all creation. This kind of freedom has much to recommend it. But of course there are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talk about much in the great outside world of wanting and achieving.... The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them over and over in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day.

That is real freedom. That is being educated, and understanding how to think. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default setting, the rat race, the constant gnawing sense of having had, and lost, some infinite thing.

I know that this stuff probably doesn't sound fun and breezy or grandly inspirational the way a commencement speech is supposed to sound. What it is, as far as I can see, is the capital-T Truth, with a whole lot of rhetorical niceties stripped away. You are, of course, free to think of it whatever you wish. But please don't just dismiss it as just some finger-wagging Dr Laura sermon. None of this stuff is really about morality or religion or dogma or big fancy questions of life after death.

The capital-T Truth is about life BEFORE death.

It is about the real value of a real education, which has almost nothing to do with knowledge, and everything to do with simple awareness; awareness of what is so real and essential, so hidden in plain sight all around us, all the time, that we have to keep reminding ourselves over and over:

“This is water.”

“This is water.”

It is unimaginably hard to do this, to stay conscious and alive in the adult world day in and day out. Which means yet another grand cliché turns out to be true: your education really IS the job of a lifetime. And it commences: now.

I wish you way more than luck.

Is Technology Bad for Our Brains? An introduction to Argumentation

To begin work on analyzing texts, students will read and discuss one of three articles on the topic of technology, teenagers, and the negative effects on the brain.

1. Students will be in groups for one of these articles. Read and mark your article:

- **Article 1:** Is Screen Time Bad for Kids' Brain? <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/10/health/screen-time-kids-psychology.html>
- **Article 2:** Groundbreaking Report study examines effects of screen time on kids <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/groundbreaking-study-examines-effects-of-screen-time-on-kids-60-minutes/>
- **Article 3:** This is Your Brain on Instagram <https://now.northropgrumman.com/this-is-your-brain-on-instagram-effects-of-social-media-on-the-brain/>

2. Complete Reading For Meaning Chart

Article:

Evidence For	Statement	Evidence Against
	<i>Technology causes long-term problems in society.</i>	
	<i>Parents are not as concerned as they should be about their children's technology use.</i>	
	<i>Schools put too much emphasis on technology in education.</i>	
	(student adds an original one)	

3. **Circle of Knowledge—Pinwheel activity**

Students will meet in four groups: Article 1, 2, 3, and provocateurs. They will share charts and prepare main points. We'll have a mini-lesson on writing good questions.

4. **Writing Responses**

Students will write two paragraph-length responses. First is in favor of the essential question. The second, against it. (Pro/con positions)

SPACE CAT

Name _____ Per _____

Text Title _____

S	SPEAKER: Who is the speaker/writer? What do we know about them? What can you tell or what do you know about the speaker that helps you understand the point of view expressed?	
P	PURPOSE: What is the speaker/writer hoping to accomplish? What is the reason behind this piece? What do they want the audience to do after having listened?	
A	AUDIENCE: Who is the speaker/writer trying to reach? How do we know? Do they indicate a specific audience? What assumptions exist in the text about the intended audience?	
C	CONTEXT: What is the time and place of this piece? What is happening in the world as it relates to the subject of the speech or the speaker/writer?	
E	EXIGENCE: What was the spark or catalyst that moved the speaker/writer to act/write? How did that event impact the speaker/writer?	
C	CHOICES: What are the rhetorical choices that the speaker/writer makes in the speech? Think about overall structure, devices, diction, syntax, etc.	
A	APPEALS: Which of the three rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, pathos) are present in the text? Where? Why?	
T	TOPE: What is the speaker/authors attitude toward the subject? Is the tone the same throughout the whole piece? Where does it shift? What evidence is there to demonstrate the tone?	

SPACE CAT

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Text Title _____

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