

*Bridging the Gap*

**Honors Project**

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By

***Samantha Kinder***

***Mass Communication***

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*Name*  
Honors College Scholar

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Date

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*Name*  
Faculty Mentor

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Date

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Jesse Peters, Ph.D.  
Dean, Esther G. Maynor Honors College  
Or  
Jennifer Bonds-Raacke , Ph.D.  
Associate Dean, Esther G. Maynor Honors College

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Date

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## ABSTRACT

### BRIDGING THE GAP

By: Samantha Kinder  
Honors College Thesis  
University of North Carolina at Pembroke  
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One of the first things I remember learning in college is that college teaches you how to think, not what to think. Composition courses, I believe, act as an introduction to this truth.

The Bridging the Gap Project introduces college level requirements to high school seniors through the individual experiences of college students. This project is based on my personal experiences as I faced the challenge of acclimating myself to the requirements of college level composition courses. This project is not about improving high school English curriculum or changing Composition coursework. As a freshman, I remember my composition courses as extremely challenging because of the portfolio requirement. I did not even know what a portfolio would include, and suddenly one notebook became a huge percentage of my grade.

This paper is about the experiences that lead to the development of the bridging the gap project. The gap is the difference between the pace and expectations that students in high school experience compared to what they are expected to perform in college. The writing process is one of discovery, and after

several attempts to write this paper as a professional thesis paper, I have decided to step out of my shell. Therefore, this paper will feature some examples of my writing before, during, and after my college composition courses. This is the best way to illustrate and explain the need to bridge the gap between college composition coursework, and high school English classes that I experienced as a college freshman. I can only hope that my experiences will help other students in their future endeavors as college level writers.

## DEVELOPING THE SKILLS

In high school, English was one of my toughest classes. However, despite its challenging aspects, I still tended to float through without too much effort. I am good at being a student. The perfect tape recorder; I could listen and retell everything I needed to know without question. I took the easy way out in high school. I never challenged myself to think outside of the box (pardon the cliché). I just wrote whatever I was told to write.. I did not have to form my own opinions, and I was comfortable with that.

My high school English teachers were wonderful. They taught me the skills needed to be a great writer. I learned how to approach every assignment with the well-respected five-paragraph essay format in mind. Five-paragraph essays are easy to organize and easy to write. In my high school, this format served as a strong foundation for learning the writing process, and in retrospect, I believe that this foundation helped me become the confident writer that I am today.

My high school offered an optional grammar class that serves as a life preserver to this very day. This class gave me the opportunity to develop a keen understanding of grammar and its many technicalities. This class' challenging curriculum saved my writing career. Grammar is an important basic writing skill, which must be established before facing college curriculum. Professors acknowledge that different students are at different writing development levels,

but they do expect some basic knowledge of grammar, a building block of writing.

The grammar course at my high school served as a prerequisite for an AP English course. The same teacher taught both classes, and sometimes I like to refer to my senior year in high school as writer's boot camp. I enrolled in AP English and began developing the skills needed to be a successful collegiate writer. This AP English class taught me everything I needed to know about how to write. I continued to develop my grammar skills, developed an understanding of the importance of outlines, learned how to use the five-paragraph essay format as the building block for an elaborate thesis paper, and also learned how to thoroughly research a given topic. In this class, my writing made exponential improvements. AP English made me a confident writer.

High school English courses taught me how to write. I learned all of the basic writing skills, but I still approached writing apathetically. I did not form my own opinions. My senior thesis about Jane Austen did not make any groundbreaking arguments but instead offered many descriptions of an argument that might have been strong if I had elaborated effectively. Instead, I drifted into a summary of my favorite Jane Austen novel and wrote about how it mirrored Austen's life. My focus was split between my love for Jane Austen as a writer and establishing, developing, and concluding an argument. (Appendix A) The paper was not bad, but the thesis development was unfocused. I excelled at

regurgitation in high school, but I did not know how to argue my own opinions, because I did not know who I was as a writer.

## DEFINING THE WRITER

My first composition course in college taught me that just because I was confident in my ability to write, did not mean that I was confident in my ability to persuade and educate. Collegiate writing is about developing a point and finding the facts to back up that point. My Jane Austen paper makes a point, but my ramblings failed to illustrate that point effectively. If you pass the AP Examination, AP English in high school can be used as a substitute for English 1050. I chose not to take this exam in high school because I figured that I would retake the class and get an easy A to help establish my GPA as an incoming freshman. This choice, despite its selfish intention, turned out to be one of the best decisions I could have made. English 1050, was not only challenging, but it also helped me define myself as a writer. I learned what it means to form an opinion and support that opinion with a lot of research and a little bit of creativity.

Two of the first writers my professor introduced us to were Mary Louise Pratt and Paulo Freire. These authors focused on changing the concept of education. Mary Louise Pratt spoke of creating a contact zone in the classroom, while Paulo Freire wrote about abolishing what he calls “The ‘Banking’ Concept of Education.” After reading two essays by these writers, I developed my first argument as a college freshman. I found a link between Pratt and Freire’s proposals and developed an argument to support that link. (Appendix B) My professor was using these two authors to introduce the class to her teaching methods. My English 1050 class became an open conversation amongst the



students that lead to breakthroughs in writing that I would have never thought possible. I learned from both my peers and my professor, and developed writing skills that could only be defined as unconventional.

I illustrated this unconventional method of writing in one of my final papers for my portfolio. The paper “Lesson of the Illusion,” developed by combining some of my own life experiences with one of the essays that we studied in my English 1050 class. Susan Bordo’s essay “Beauty (Re)discovers the Male Body,” has been the foundation for many of my college papers, but “Lesson of the Illusion” was the first. In this paper, I decided to use a fictional short story to illustrate my assertions. I developed a dream world in which everyone had super model good looks, and I implied that when everyone was too busy making sure that they remained beautiful, society itself would die. (Appendix C)

English 1050 taught me how to use the basics of writing to develop my own personal style of writing. As a writer, I like to have a strong, creative title that represents the entire paper. I like to capture my audience’s attention with those first few words and keep them captivated with a strong thesis. I learned to have one-topic paragraphs in English 1050, and although I did not develop this skill completely my first semester in college, I did learn its importance in English 1060. My English 1050 reflective essay speaks of what I experienced that semester. (Appendix D)

## ACCEPTING THE DEFINITION

English 1060 was class that challenged me to set aside my biases and approach the controversial topic of the death penalty in America. This class is where I learned to accept myself as a writer who is unconventional and open-minded. I decided to approach the death penalty focus of this class by setting aside my fears and diving into the topic. In English 1060, I discovered that people must have the ability to change because I changed in this class. I went into the class as a strong supporter of the death penalty. I believed that it was efficient in deterring crime and sufficient punishment for the worst criminals in our nation. However, after casting aside my original ideas and looking at the topic as an outsider, I found that my research did not support my claims. This truth made me angry and, after admitting defeat, I am now whole-heartedly against the death penalty. This class taught me to stay true to myself, and my writing techniques, by forcing me to challenge my own beliefs.

I am very proud of the final paper that I turned in for this class. I decided on a unique topic that had never been done before. I focused on the death penalty for female inmates and the inequality that these women face in the prison system. This paper uses all of the research that I did throughout the entire semester, and applies it to a subtopic about the death penalty. I thought that this paper was incredibly informative, and it argues my opinions effectively. I also used one-topic paragraphs, and I really like the final product. (Appendix E)

My writing has developed even more as I continue through college, but I attribute my ability to stay true to myself and argue my thoughts effectively to the first two composition courses that I took in college. I was incredibly blessed to go to a school that provides me with extraordinary professors who take on the challenge of getting to know me as a person and helping me harness my abilities as a writer. My English 106 reflective essay illustrates who I became as a writer. (Appendix F)

Developing great writing skills is important in every aspect of learning. I have used the skills I developed in almost every collegiate course since. I know who I am as a writer thanks to the portfolio process. I took my assignments seriously and worked diligently on all of them. College English courses took me from a child-like writer to an adult learner in two semesters. The Bridging the Gap project will give me the opportunity to help other students reach this same conclusion.

## BRIDGING THE GAP

The bridging the gap project developed from my experiences. College composition courses are challenging, and the adjustment from high school curriculum to college coursework is daunting. However, with the bridging the gap project, I hope to introduce high school student to the writers that their predecessors develop into as they complete college composition courses. The portfolio requirements here at UNCP give me a unique medium to use to accomplish this goal. These portfolios are the products of an entire semester of work at the college level, and they highlight the expectations in composition courses.

The gap between high school English and college composition courses is a concern that affects many freshman college students. The Bridging the Gap project is my attempt to shrink this gap, and give high school students the advantage of preparedness as they enter college. I can think of no better way to pay my professors back for their eagerness to teach me to become a better writer than to help them expand their reach. This project uses some of my work from my own portfolio. Maybe in the future UNCP can donate other student's portfolios to local high schools to help expand that reach.

## THE FINAL REFLECTION

Four years ago, I had an idea, and this project is the realization of that brief thought. I can think of no better way to end this process than with a final reflection. My freshman year I learned how to write a reflection paper, and just as a conclusion paragraph in a well planned essay always mirrors the introduction my senior year in the honors college echoes what I learned in that first composition course. My senior project, "The Bridging the Gap Project," ended better than I could have ever imagined.

The original idea of donating freshman portfolios to local high schools became something completely different when we decided that sharing personal experiences was more important. A focus on personal experiences kept the project small and allowed us to step around the red tape that comes with attempting to promote university relations. It also kept me from stepping on the toes of the high school teacher that I would be talking with. However, this new focus had an unexpected result when I went into the classroom. I met with Sean Queen, an English teacher at Richmond County Early College High School, and was given access to his classroom. The classes responded to my personal experiences enthusiastically. As I stood in front of the younger students, I felt a camaraderie form between us. I became one of them, and they were comfortable asking me questions. They wanted to know how much reading I had to do in college, what I had to do to make a name for myself in my classes, and how I used my general education classes to decide on a major. The questions were

coming from all sides of the room, and I couldn't believe the overwhelming response could be so exhilarating. With each question a student asked I could almost feel the gap between high school and college closing, it was an amazing experience.

As I said before, making the project personal wasn't the original idea, but the ramifications of the decision to change to idea were better than expected. So the next question I face is why does this project matter. This project can become a program at UNCP that establishes a link between students in high school and students in college, and it will be beneficial to all parties involved. The students in high school get to learn what it takes to succeed in college, and the college students get the experience of sharing their success stories in front of an interested and invested audience, while the university gets a unique program tailor made to recruit new students. The information gathered in this project is expandable. If a Bridging the Gap Program is established at UNC-Pembroke it doesn't just have to be about Composition courses. There are talented students in every department at this university, and all of those experiences can be used as a beam to complete the bridge over the gap between high school and college. From the arts to the sciences every aspect of higher education can be covered in the Bridging the Gap Program.

Four years ago, I had an idea that donating good composition portfolios to local high schools would help better prepare students for college coursework. However, when the portfolios didn't live up to my expectations, and red tape

prevented me from going straight to a high school my advisor and I decided to change the focus of the project to personal experiences. The high school teacher received samples of my own work, and I was able to use those samples as a foundation for a deeper more meaningful conversation with the students in his class. After all of the challenges with time conflicts, and my own crazy schedule getting in the way of completing this project. I have to say that everything I went through was completely worth it. This project was one of the best experiences I had in college, and it will be something I remember for the rest of my life.

## APPENDIX A



### **Young Life, Old Stories, International Classics**

Although her novels were published in the early nineteenth century, Jane Austen's internationally classic stories relate more to eighteenth century England. She uses characters that display the mannerisms of English gentlemen and women, unlike the manners that citizens portrayed after the industrial revolution that began with the beginning of the nineteenth century. Her novels shine with her precisely controlled sense of order and her witty observations of a small segment of contemporary society. In fact, it could be said that the only influence on Jane Austen's novels is her own life experiences. This is quite evident in Pride and Prejudice.

We often hear that youth is wasted on the young. Now I may not know who said this or when, but what I can say is that at the end of the eighteenth century a young girl was born who instead of wasting her youth she adapted it into stories that have become classics for all the world to read. Jane Austen's novels present a new world to her readers; she uses the lives of simple country people and with witty precision creates a masterpiece that challenges the mannerisms of her time. She does not let the outside influences of her time affect her writing, instead she manages to keep the focus on her characters and their immediate situations. In fact, it seems to me that the only influence on her writing was her own life, the life of a simple country girl who was not very well off. Her life and her characters' lives seem to almost mirror each other.

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775 in the Steventon Parsonage, Hampshire, England her life as a young girl was filled with love, support, and eight children, including herself. Jane Austen's family was largely literary. The family had a tradition of reading aloud, and after much practice and preparation, the family would often invite friends and relatives over and entertain them with summer performances in the rectory barn. Her father was the parish clergyman in the small Hampshire village of Steventon, where Jane spent most of her childhood. "Jane Austen's life was private and uneventful, and by modern standards extraordinarily narrow and restricted." She grew up among family and friends, and lived her life as close to home as possible. Her social life was bleak, making her an "unknown" among the public (Scott-Kilvert 107).

Growing up in the country did not give Jane many opportunities to spread her wings, but as any young girl will do, she found ways to make her life full and vibrant. Volume two of The Critical History of English Literature says that Jane had a daily routine in the country consisting of "visits, shopping, sewing, gossip, and other trivial matters" it is in these excursions that she found "the raw material for her novels (Daiches 744)."

"Her life, lived as it was amid English country society of neither the lowest nor the highest stratum, provided her with the opportunity of learning by heart the world of social pretension and ambition, of balls and visits and speculations about marriage and giving in marriage, and of the hopes and fears of genteel people of moderate means. A world which through her delicate and highly finished art, she turned into a microcosm of life in its social aspect (Daiches 744)."

Jane Austen, like many other writers, uses her life as her resource. Her writing seems restricted because she is writing only of what she knows, for example she refers to soldiers simply as entertainment for the women in her stories completely excluding the wars taking place throughout her time (Daiches 744).

“She invented her own special mode of fiction, the domestic comedy of middle-class manners, a dramatic, realistic account of the quiet backwaters of everyday life for the country family of Regency England from the late 1790s until 1815 (Scott-Kilvert 102).”

She once said to her niece who was writing a novel, “ Let the Portmans go to Ireland, but, as you know nothing of the manners there, you had better not go with them.” Jane Austen’s novels give a distinct description of the life of a country girl in the late 1700s (Kunitz 22).

“She worked deftly and wittily, with a fine pen, and restricted her scope deliberately because her intention was microcosmic-to create a world in little, perfectly proportioned and shown in the liveliest detail and an accurate model of the total social world of which it was only one small part (Daiches 745).”

Jane Austen lived her life as an observer. She never attempted to be something she was not, and her characters reflect her attitudes. Instead of joining in the drama of social life, Jane chose to stand aside and watch taking mental notes of the manners and the beliefs of her time. Her life was not affected by the revolutions taking place all around her. Whether the revolution was

philosophical, political, or industrial, she did not allow the genteel environments of her novels to be influenced by society's many issues (Witherspoon 688).

Jane Austen's sense of society permeates the stories she writes. She writes about young girls using her own life as a model. She would have been twenty-five before the beginning of the nineteenth century, and it is not ironic that most of her stories revolve around the life of a young girl under the age of twenty-five. Jane Austen describes an eighteenth century world because it is an eighteenth century world that she grew up in. She would have been considered on the brink of spinster-hood being an unwed twenty-five year old women. Eighteenth century society was filled with lavish balls and the obligation to wed. Being married was the one way a woman could be assured a good life. Marriage would provide the assurance of being well taken care of, giving women more opportunities of "personal satisfaction" and "social esteem." Nineteenth century England seems to have no affect on Jane Austen's stories because the industrial revolution began and this environment had nothing to do with Jane Austen's focus on penetrating eighteenth century middle upper-class society.

"The world which her books present to us is essentially an eighteenth-century world in its habits, tastes, and appearance. Jane Austen wrote just before the Industrial Revolution changed for the worse so much of the face of England. The clean stillness of her country towns, the unspoiled beauty of her countryside with its well-kept estates and cheerful forms, provide a perfect background to her finely etched pictures of social life. There is a luminous clarity about her style as well as about the scenes she portrays. She was describing though she did not

know it, the last generation of Englishmen and Englishwomen who could face life as they faced a minuet, with cheerfulness, decorum, and determination to go through the appropriate motions with grace, elegance, and enjoyment. This is neither romanticism nor sentimentality, but shows a remarkable insight into the relation between social convention and individual temperament (Daiches 744).”

Jane Austen’s opinion of the concept of marriage leaps off the page in Pride and Prejudice. She uses “the dreaded cousin, Mr. Collins” as her example. Mr. Collins is a clergyman who could provide any woman with financial security, both as a clergyman and as the direct inheritor of Longburn, Mr. Bennet’s estate. Mr. Collins, in an attempt to give penance for inheriting Longburn, wishes to marry one of the Bennet sisters and chooses our main character Elizabeth to be his bride. But being that Mr. Collins is a grotesque man presented as a mixture of “pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility,” Elizabeth is prompt in turning down his offer, and refuses to yield. However it is not until Elizabeth’s best friend, Charlotte Lucas, accepts Mr. Collins that Jane Austen voices her opinion. Elizabeth’s thoughts give the author a voice and as for the situation Jane Austen reveals, “ She could not have supposed it possible that when called into action, Charlotte would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage.” And so Jane Austen shows that “economic security can be won at too great a cost (Austen 109; Daiches 752).

“Jane Austen transformed the eighteenth century novel-which could be a clumsy and primitive performance, uncertain in its technique into a work of art.”

She allows her novels to flow situation by situation each feeding into the other playing hand in hand creating perpetually endearing classics that the world enjoys. The story aforementioned is a brilliant example of her unceasing “precision and vivacity” that “carries the reader through the novel with ease and spirit.” The first draft of Pride and Prejudice was entitled First Impressions it was supposedly finished in 1797, and revised for publication at a much later date, making it the second of her novels to appear before the general public (Daiches 745, 750).

Jane Austen’s novels, like the most popular Pride and Prejudice, are “novels of manner, not of propaganda, and they have no more serious purpose than to abuse her well-bred readers.” Jane Austen speaks of Pride and Prejudice in a letter to her sister:

“It is rather to light, and bright, and sparkling; it wants shade; it wants to be stretched out here and there with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had; if not, of solemn special nonsense, about something unconnected with the story; an essay on writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparte.”

However, her readers seem to have a slightly better opinion of the novel making it a worldwide classic and one of her most memorable works (Daiches 750; Scott-Kilvert 102; Austen v).

Pride and Prejudice is a story about two young people who fall in love, conquering terrible odds. The two find in each other an intellectual equal, but in the beginning their relationship was anything but lovely. Elizabeth Bennet is the

exact opposite of a submissive, quiet girl in upper-middle class society, instead she is very opinionated and perspicacious. Mr. Darcy is a very prideful and pertinacious man with a hard heart and a lack of consideration for others' feelings. He hates to expose himself to new people and places, and instead of enjoying himself in society he chooses to put a damper on any social function he participates in. These two people complement each other in that they are both steadfast in their opinions and beliefs, but they are complete opposites in how they deal with society. Elizabeth conforms to society, but is always sure to put a new spin on it. She is very aware of her surroundings and acts the proper part for each occasion. Mr. Darcy is aware of his surroundings, but does not seem to care what impression he makes on those around him. He gives off an air of being of prideful, believing himself better than society around him (Daiches 743-765).

Elizabeth becomes Jane Austen's outlet. Throughout the story, Jane Austen's opinions are seen through the way Elizabeth acts and speaks. Jane Austen gives Elizabeth a strong sense of who she is and what she wants to become, introducing a new type of woman to society. Elizabeth believes in life; she is confident and strong, unlike many of the women in eighteenth century society. Elizabeth feels that she could make it through life without a man, and yet she is still hoping to find true love. Which after learning many life lessons on both parts these two characters find in each other. They have to learn to compromise, and to change themselves in order to find happiness. Their first impressions of

each other lead to comical tensions that lead too much funnier arguments (Daiches 743-765).

Jane Bennet is Jane Austen's comparison character. Jane, the oldest and the most beautiful of all of the Bennet sisters, sets an example for the rest of the characters. She possesses an innate ability to find the good in any situation, even if that situation brings her heartbreak, and discontentment. It is through Jane and Mr. Bingley, another comparison character, that the reader sees the way manners can have a true affect on the audience one draws to one's self. Mr. Bingley and Jane fall in love, and it is their relationship that gives an example as to what a relationship should be like. This relationship contrasts Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, Charlotte and Mr. Collins, and even Lydia and Mr. Wickham. Mr. Bingley and Jane set an example as to how a give and take relationship works, and although they are torn apart by Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley's sisters, it is certain throughout the story that the love they feel for each other cannot be extinguished (Bloom 163-178).

Jane Austen portrays manners in her novels as a language all their own, the manners of her character communicate to the reader the characters morals and attitudes, but they also help to introduce the characters to the other characters in her novels. For example, when Darcy is first introduced Jane Austen describes his manners as "giving a disgust," which despite his wealth, "turned the tide of his popularity." First impressions can only ever happen once and Mr. Darcy's first impression made him unfit to be "compared with his friend,



Mr. Bingley.” In contrast, Mr. Bingley’s manners made him out to be a highly respectable young gentleman, who was unafraid to mingle with people lower than him. He is respectful to all and immediately becomes the talk of country society. His manners give him the advantage over Mr. Darcy, and because his manners seem to only be equaled by Jane Bennet it is only right that the two of them become a couple. Elizabeth’s manners when compared to her sister’s are almost equivalent, but she is a very judgmental girl who although she is kind when approached she is really making an opinion of you that might be good or bad. She is not as sweet as her sister, and she is more than willing to tell the truth about you to your face. But what she does not realize is that being too fast to pass judgement on someone, is just as bad as being too prideful, because a wrong judgement could make her lose the opportunity to make a lasting friend or love (Bloom 175).

It is the manners of Elizabeth and Darcy that cause such a great misunderstanding. The prideful Mr. Darcy is too quick to pass judgement on Elizabeth calling her, “Tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me.” Thus causing Elizabeth to pass her own judgement thinking him too prideful, and stating herself, “Determined to loathe him for eternity (Austen 12, 78).” And so the long road to love begins going from hate, to general dislike, to like, and finally to love for the young Miss Bennet, and going from unimpressed, to indescribable love for Mr. Darcy. If the reader of the story will notice it does not take long for Mr. Darcy to fall in love with Elizabeth, all Elizabeth has to do is be her self, and

Mr. Darcy realizes how much he loves her. The fact that Elizabeth would run to a sick sisters aid, or openly insult someone who is higher in class than her, and defend her families character although she knows that they lack a certain amount of discreetness impresses Mr. Darcy and he is quick to fancy her. However, on the other hand Elizabeth is much more apt to keep her original opinion of Mr. Darcy after being lied to by Mr. Wickham about his character. She continues with this opinion until the climax of the story when Mr. Darcy asks her to marry him for the first time in the Collins' parish. It is at this moment that each person's true nature comes under scrutiny. Mr. Darcy is sure to tell Elizabeth how much he loves her, but in the process he succeeds in wounding her pride beyond quick repair. He tells her how much he loves her, but ruins his proposal by reminding himself of the problems it will present to him, because of her inferiority. He is sure that they will not be approved of in society, because of the distinct difference between his station and hers, and after confessing all of this he is sure that she will not turn him down. However, Mr. Darcy does not know the extent of Elizabeth's pride, and when she turns him down he is shocked. He later presents her with a note defending his character and his decisions pertaining to Mr. Wickham and the way he coerced his friend Mr. Bingley into abandoning her sister causing the both of them much heartache. After reading this not Elizabeth is forced to face how she handled the situation and both have to abandon much pride and prejudice before they meet again (Bloom 3-6).

Jane Austen has been called the first great woman novelist, and it is through her example that many other women novelists have found the courage to excel today. She has influenced the entire world of literature, as we know it. She had an ability to turn what seemed a simple story into a work of art. She broke the boundaries by setting strict boundaries. She picked a topic and stuck to it letting the topic define the story. Her novels flow and with each read you find new ironies (Austen v).

“Irony, the concern of most critics of Austen, seems more than a trope in her work, seems indeed to be the condition of her language, yet hardly accounts for the effect of moral and spiritual power that she so constantly conveys, however implicitly or obliquely (Bloom 1).”

Jane Austen was firm in her beliefs. She did not believe that people had a right to belittle others based on noble birth. To Jane that was just confirmed snobbery and unmannerly.

“Jane Austen of course accepts the class structure of English society as she knew it; but she accepts it as a type of human society, in which privilege implies duty. Her view of life is both moral and hierarchical. But it is far from snobbish, if by snobbery we mean the admiration of rank or social position as such (Daiches 754).”

Jane Austen refused to let her opinions go to waste. This is why she can be referred to by The Critical History of English Literature as, “The greatest of all novelists of manners of this or any other period, and one who raised the whole genre to a new level of art.” As The College Survey of English Literature says, “

Jane Austen is the one notable literary figure of her time who was not affected by the Romantic influences of either the eighteenth or nineteenth, except in so far as she was led to disapprove of them. She was in the Romantic Period rather than of it.”

In conclusion, Jane Austen’s novels are novels reflecting the manners of the eighteenth century. She writes of manners using what she learned growing up in upper-middle class country society to craft stories that capture her readers’ opinions from start to finish. Pride and Prejudice is a prime example of a story that captured the hearts of the world, by describing small country social life in its entirety. She is capable of producing art with restrictions and by doing this defied the literature laws of her time. This is why Jane Austen is hailed as a literature genius all around the world. She changed eighteenth century novels opening a path for novelists in the nineteenth century and beyond to make their mark in the universe.

## APPENDIX B

## Uncomfortable Classrooms

Paulo Freire's problem-posing education could be considered what Mary Louise Pratt calls a contact zone, and establishing a contact zone in the classroom is the best way to educate. To educate, according to The American Heritage Dictionary, is "to provide with formal knowledge, training, or information, and to bring to an understanding." It is a teacher's job to educate, but there are different ways to execute education, and different ways provide different results. What result should teachers aim for? Some teachers want their students to be able to mimic them, being able to spout off facts one after another, but is this result best for the students, and on an even broader spectrum is it right for the world? Or should teachers seek to change their students' lives, to force them to think critically, and therefore give them the ability to apply what they learn to their everyday lives, thus enabling them to affect change on the world, instead of having the students learn the facts for a minute and forget them the next?

Freire is considered a pioneer in education's history, and although it can be difficult to understand what he means. His entire life he introduced challenging ideas about education that made his homeland so uncomfortable that they actually exiled him, and as he lived in exile from Brazil, he went on to change the accepted ideas about education in every other country he entered. He taught people to "take power over their own lives by teaching them to think critically." Freire is credited with "creating a classroom where teachers and students have equal power and equal dignity" (Freire 255-256). Paulo Freire

refers to the mimicking effect as “The ‘Banking’ Concept of Education” (256).

Banking education takes the names away from individual students and makes them a “deposit box,” a number among many other numbers.

Education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories, and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. (Freire 257)

The repercussions of banking education are great. Students educated with the banking concept lose the ability to think for themselves. They can tell facts, but they cannot think critically, therefore, they never really learn who they truly are. They lose themselves or as Freire says, “The people themselves are filed away, through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge” (Freire 257).

The correct way to educate is what Freire calls “problem-posing education.” Problem-posing education gets the students involved while learning. The students, instead of just sitting and listening, become contributors to a conversation that envelops the classroom experience. The teacher learns as much from the students as the students learn from the teacher, because the ground is level. The teacher is not on a pedestal, unreachable to common students; instead, the teacher is just as common as the students making them all “co-investigators,” in a world where life is an investigation. Life is a never ending investigation, a never ending lesson (262-263). “Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming*—as unfinished,

uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality” (Freire 265).

Problem-posing education forces students to participate. It is difficult, at first; but after a while, it becomes habit; and the students begin to think critically on a regular basis. Applying what they learn to life, and using what they learn to challenge others to learn more.

Problem-posing education could be considered a “contact zone” (Pratt 517). Mary Louise Pratt established the idea of using contact zones, a phrase she coined, in the classroom. A Stanford graduate, who eventually became a Stanford professor for thirty years, Pratt has become an example to teachers around the world. She integrated her ideas in her classroom, and was eventually able to help change Stanford curriculum, making it establish contact zones in classrooms. She recently joined the staff at New York University, and served as president of the Modern Language Association. Her many books have inspired teachers, and students world wide, and her essay “Arts of the Contact Zone,” reiterates what Paulo Freire was trying to say without ever mentioning “banking education,” “problem-posing education,” or even Freire himself (Pratt 515-516).

“Contact zone refers to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (Pratt 519). Contact zones can occur in any situation. But some common ones are when one country forcefully takes over another, or even when a child is forced to mingle among adults, and also when students in a class are forced to speak not only with each other, but also with their teachers. A contact zone is a place where people are uncomfortable; they have stepped out



of the norm and entered into a place that they feel completely exposed. People in comfort zones have stepped out of their “safe house,” and now they are being challenged in ways they never thought existed. A contact zone in the classroom would require students to not only challenge themselves, but to challenge each other. “All of the students in the class had the experience of hearing their culture discussed and objectified in ways the horrified them” (Pratt 529). After leaving a contact zone one should feel not only challenged, but also enlightened. A student in a contact zone learns to think critically, defend their beliefs, and challenge not only other people’s beliefs, but also the lessons they learn in the classroom and throughout life itself.

Along with rage, incomprehension, and pain, there were exhilarating moments of wonder and revelation, mutual understanding, and new wisdom—the joys of the contact zone. The sufferings and revelations were, at different moments to be sure, experienced by every student. No one was excluded, and no one was safe (Pratt 529).

Teachers have the most important job in any culture. A person must first learn in order to succeed. Teaching is the beginning of every career. Society itself would collapse if people were unable to learn. We would not have any government officials, armed forces, bankers, entertainers, business owners, or anything else if we did not first have the opportunity to learn. Teachers provide the opportunity, but it is up to them the method they choose to use.

Creating a contact zone, utilizing problem-posing education, is the best way to teach, because it teaches students to think, and when students can learn to think they can learn to live. Reality is always changing, so teachers need to create students, who can not only adapt to these changes, but also learn to use them to their advantage. In conclusion, teachers make your students uncomfortable.

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## APPENDIX C

## Lesson of the Illusion

Growing up has always been difficult, but children in a world that is focused on the pursuit of perfection face an entirely new demon that is taking over their lives. Perfectionism is the new racism. Some people refuse to become color blind, but the new problem is that the world's population refuses to be blemish blind. A child being called fat or ugly in school is a regular occurrence. How could people so young understand what perfect is, and then be able to make judgments based on their acquired sense of perfection? Most people would like to blame the parents, but it is not the parents that plant these ideas in their innocent minds, instead, it is the advertisements that they are exposed to everyday of their young lives. Do not get me wrong children are not the only ones who cast judgement upon others. Adults are simply less likely to voice their opinions. Thus the cliché "Kids say the damndest things." The world of advertisements is an illusion, and that illusion is creating a society full of narcissistic people.

An illusion is, according to The American Heritage Dictionary, "a misleading visual image." The ads that we are surrounded by everyday of our lives, are the illusions. They have changed our perspectives on what is beautiful, and the truth is that their beautiful and the beautiful of the real world are two completely different concepts. In her essay "Beauty (Re)discovers the Male Body," Susan Bordo states, "We live in an empire ruled not by kings or even presidents, but by images," and these images are making it impossible for men

and women to be happy with themselves. These images demonstrate “flawless beauty,” and with the transition of chemical photo production to digital photo production, the images can be changed or “retouched” making a result that demonstrates perfection (Bordo 205). This is what creates the illusion.

The ad illusion has created controversy, and is causing diseases like depression, “eating disorders, and exercise compulsions” (Bordo 210). The illusion has the ability to suck confidence out of the citizens of the world. It makes them feel like if they buy that outfit or eat that food, they will look just like the people in the pictures, and although this prospect seems very immature it affects people of all ages. The following is a short story created to demonstrate the affects PhotoShop perfection is having on our world, through the dreams of two young people.

### ***Learning Inside the Illusion***

He was fourteen and on his way into high school, scared out of his mind he had no idea what was about to happen to him. He was always very small and never could succeed in athletics, but he had no idea that his size was about to cause him pain. High school can be brutal, but there are always those certain people who receive the brunt of the judgements that give the other students the “right” to impose pain on their victims. He was the victim and it was just because he was small. Is that a crime? His name is Scott and he is twenty-five now and all grown up, but since high school he has spent his life trying to overcome his shortcomings, and sculpt his body into perfection.

She was twelve when the depression started. She realized that she was developing slower than all of the other girls in her classes, and that although her dream was to become a super model she did not have the body for it, because she was a little overweight. For her looking through a magazine just reminded her of a dream that seemed out of reach. She tortured herself and her lack of self-confidence gave her peers the idea that she was an easy target. The torture from herself and her peers nearly killed her and she became determined to change her life and become perfect. She is eighteen and has almost succeeded, but in the process she forgot who she was. She forgot about Jenna.

Scott and Jenna knew the pain of imperfection all too well. But what they do not know is that they are about to be literally sucked into the world that they have been trying to fashion their lives into, they are about to enter a new dimension, a dimension of perfection. Both Scott and Jenna have a lesson to learn, and their journeys are not going to be easy, but it is time for them to face the truth.

Scott was running late for work yet again, he could never seem to get ready in enough time. He had already been late three times this week, and the words of his boss continued to ring in his head, “ Scott, if you are late again you are fired. The world does not stop spinning, so the hard-hitting news stories do not stop coming up, and they are not going to write themselves.” He had been a journalist for three years now, and he had already been fired from five newspapers, he could not afford a blow like that again, and with his mind so preoccupied he forgot to watch for cars. The last thing he remembered was hearing the tires screech while he stared up at the huge Calvin Klein billboard. He felt himself lifting way into the air, he went all the way up to the billboard, and was immediately sucked into it. He would wake to find himself in a world surrounded by perfect people.

Jenna was getting ready for the best night of any eighteen-year olds life. She had the perfect prom dress, the perfect makeup, the perfect date, and the perfect limousine. Her night was going to be absolutely magical. However, she had not quite perfected walking down those stairs in three-inch heels and a prom dress, she fell down three flights of stairs, and would wake to find herself surrounded by perfect people. All she would remember was hearing her mother’s screams as she felt herself float into the “Victoria’s Secret” catalog on the table in foyer.

Scott and Jenna had crossed over. They were now in an alternate dimension. They were inside the illusion that rules the world as it is now, and their journeys had just begun. The citizens in this world had one goal, and that was to look perfect at all times, and they were doing it very well.



These people were beautiful, but they were robots, they spent their time perfecting their hair, sculpting their bodies, and getting ready for work. However, as Scott was about to find out a world in which everyone is late for work is a world without organization. He went to work, and as usual he was late, but when he walked in and was invited into the boss's office he thought for sure that he was about to lose his job. He was thinking of as many excuses that he could possibly come up with, and when he walked into his meeting with the boss he was shocked to find that the boss was late. When his boss finally did show up, he looked immaculate, he was extremely clean cut, well groomed, and he seemed to have no intention of firing Scott, instead, he scolded Scott for having a hair out of place, and not wearing a better tie. Scott walked out of that meeting in shock he could not seem to figure out why all of a sudden overnight, everyone he knew looked so great, and seemed too preoccupied with making themselves perfect that they were not doing their jobs. He just went with the flow, though, and did not complain. But he would eventually find that a society where everyone is focused on them selves is a world that is falling apart. He found out very quickly that pollution was out of hand, because people were too good to pick up after each other, and there were no trash men. He immediately began a story on the conditions of the city, but when he turned it in to be edited, the editor laughed in his face and asked him why his shirt was wrinkled.

Jenna was experiencing the same problem, she had finally gotten herself to the point where she was one of the accepted among her classmates, but when she got to her prom she found out very quickly that the world sucked when everyone was perfect. Nobody would dance because everybody was too focused on his or her looks. Nobody had a date, because nobody cared enough about anyone else to ask them out.

The prom may as well have been a silent dinner, where the only course that was served was the salad without dressing. The people did not need to get fat. Scott and Jenna are not real people, but they are representations of the people in our society, and they have the opportunity to learn the lesson that every one in the world needs to be taught.

Both Scott and Jenna are facing what happens when people become more focused on living up to the expectations put out by the ads displayed across the world. They were coming to the realization that they were living their lives to please others, and if everyone in the world were to do that, than the world would come to an end. People are too focused on themselves to notice anyone else, although they are only perfecting themselves to impress others. It is really a concept that makes zero sense, but it is very true, when there is no love, but love for yourself, this takes away compassion, and a sense of decency.

“ It is our nature to be imperfect” and the people of the world need to remember this the next time they pick up a magazine featuring men and women with the perfect looks (211). Vanity cannot become the most important thing in the world, and that is what these ads are pushing for. They want the people that see them to experience feelings of inadequacy, so that they will buy the product featured in order to, hopefully, get some sense of adequacy back. Advertising Companies are professionals in manipulating images to make the viewers experience a certain feeling, in hopes that this feeling will help sell more products, and bring in more profits. The lesson of the illusion is just this, love yourself for who you are, and do not try to change for anyone else, you are unique and you must embrace that. No one is perfect.

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## APPENDIX D

## Imperfect Writer

Writing is a form of expression or art. A writer uses words as a creative outlet baring their soul for the entire world to read and enjoy, therefore making a writer an artist. A writer's goal may be simply to entertain, to inform, to convince the reader of a point, or to inspire action, but whatever the reason, writers have a profound affect on the world. Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Nicholas Sparks, all writers, who made their words come to life, and they did not do it overnight. Writing is a long process. It takes talent, but it also takes patience. A writer can not just sit down and write a novel. Instead, they come up with the idea and make changes to a draft, until they feel like they have done all they could do to make their work the best it can be. The same applies to me. I am a student, who will probably never write a novel, but I do write essays, and for me writing an essay goes through the same process. Although my essays stem from assignments required for class, I find myself putting in the effort required to write a novel. I need to succeed, and because writing has always been a major struggle for me, I have to work extremely hard to get an essay to a level that is okay to turn in. Perfection in writing for me is unattainable, so to be honest, I have to admit that none of the papers in this portfolio are anywhere near perfect. In fact, I find these essays decent, but nowhere near complete.

My first essay, "Uncomfortable Classrooms," is a call to action for teachers around the world. The essay reiterates Paulo Friere and Mary Louise Pratt's ideas by making a connection between the two. Both of these people had

wonderful points to make, but bringing them together makes their thinking even more profound. I wanted to light a fire in the hearts of my target audience, teachers in today's society. I wanted to remind them of the importance of teaching, and the importance of using their position to shape their students into free thinkers. While I was revising this essay, I was trying to make it more powerful. I wanted to be sure that all of my paragraphs had one supporting idea. I also wanted my direct quotes to fit nicely in the paper. The main thing I did was to try to give an example of what a problem posing classroom looks like. I also wanted to make a distinct connection between Friere and Pratt's ideas. This essay, according to my professor, was okay to begin with, but I needed to give more details. If I had more time to work on this essay, I would probably add more examples of classroom experiences that I have had. I would make the essay a little more personal, so that my target audience really gets a feel of what banking and problem posing (contact zone) classrooms are like from the students' point of view.

My second essay, "Lesson of the Illusion," was my attempt to be a little more creative. I wanted to use a short story, to create an alternate reality that demonstrated my main idea. I hoped that creating characters, and forcing them into an alternate reality in order to learn a lesson would help get my point across in a lighter sense. I knew that I could get my point across using a standard academic essay, but I wanted to spread my wings and challenge myself, and I must say, that I have never worked harder on an essay in my life. I learned very

quickly that I am not a creative person when it comes to writing, and I worked hard on this essay. However, I know that this essay is not perfect. In my editing process, I had to take out some unnecessary details in the story and try to include my main idea in a more obvious way, because the story was a bit too vague. I also had to fix many comma splice errors, and I had a lot of trouble with the use of passive voice in this essay. If I had more time to work on this essay, I would probably make the story a little more interesting. I wanted the story to be like going on a short learning adventure, and I feel like I did not accomplish that goal. I received help from my professor on this essay, and I also absorbed a lot of input from my peers, hoping to get some creative feed back.

This portfolio was an extremely difficult assignment. However, I feel like I have grown as a writer this past semester, and I think that this portfolio shows that growth. I took some risks, and I think that I learned from those risks. I was able to learn to make my papers coherent, and I learned to incorporate quotes from other authors in my writing. I think that the main thing doing this assignment taught me was patience. I had to learn to be patient with myself, and to learn from my mistakes, and to correct those mistakes. I feel as if I have grown not only as a writer, but also as a person, because I have learned so many lessons from so many great writers. This portfolio is an example of what I have become, and I know there is always room for improvement in any essay I write. My only hope is to continue to challenge myself in every way possible just like doing this portfolio challenged me.

## APPENDIX E



## ***Termination of Existence***

Whether convicted murderers receive the death penalty or life in prison; the termination of their existence in the social world is the ultimate punishment. People are social beings. A part of determining who we are comes from our interaction and association with others. We cannot define ourselves as individuals without first examining ourselves from the point of view of others. Convicted killers lose this ability. They are removed from society and forced to live out the rest of their days in a twelve by eight-foot cage for twenty-three hours a day. After considering this, people on the outside can begin to understand convicted killers' plight. Women especially feed on social interaction; so when a woman is sentenced to death or life in prison, she is starved of a social life, and thus finds it difficult to adjust to her new lifestyle. Women who commit murder are defined in many different ways, and are very rare in society. Therefore, the justice system really does not know how to approach these unusual situations. Exposing the truth of the lives of women trapped in prison for the rest of their days is not an easy task, but it is time for the world to see what these forgotten few face.

Women in general face many different obstacles in society, and these obstacles could be considered the some of the causes for many of the homicides committed by women. "In society, gender role places a unique and demanding stress on females because there are inherent disadvantages to being what is

traditionally defined as female” (Schurmann 147). Women face the added stress of believing that they are inadequate when compared to what the definition of beauty in today’s society has become. They also face what Schurmann calls a “double standard concerning sexuality.” In other words, they are told early on in life that “good girls don’t,” but as they get older if they have not engaged in sexual intercourse, then they are ostracized. However, it gets worse when women are called “sluts” if they are single and have had sex, so they get married to fix this problem and they in turn are unsatisfied in their marriages. Another stress that women face is motherhood. Women that have children can find it difficult to raise the children, because if they do not do it the “correct” way then they are described as unfit parents. Gender bias can also contribute to the stresses women face in their lives. Women are not paid as well as men, so some women feel like they can not survive on their own (Schurmann 148-149). Women face all of these stresses on a daily basis, and after years of internalizing feelings, some women may just explode and commit murder (Schurmann 150).

In order to understand the lives of the women behind bars for committing murder, it is first necessary to shed light on the profile of a woman who commits murder. Society does not like to accept that a woman could actually kill another human being, because women are perceived as the less violent sex. There are four types of murderers, the one-time killer, the child-killer, the serial killer, and the mass killer. In order to understand the child, serial, and mass killer it is much easier if you understand the one-time killer (Schurmann 146). In most cases, a

woman who kills once is trying to “stop being a victim.” These cases occur most often in response to domestic violence. The female one-time killer usually strikes close to home. She does not go far to find a victim, and if the murder is in response to domestic violence she must take steps that will allow her to dehumanize her victim just like a male murderer (Schurmann 146-147). Female one-time killers strike out in an “explosion” of violence. A woman who commits murder is usually in her late twenty’s early thirty’s which proves the theory that women keep all of their frustrations internal until they commit a crime to relieve their emotional tensions (Schurmann 152).

After learning about the one-time killer, accepting the idea of a woman generally viewed as a caregiver, killing children may not come as such a shock. This action stems from a woman’s feelings of inadequacies as a mother, or on other occasions when infanticide takes place “Munchausen Syndrome,” when a woman harms a child for her own personal gain. This mental disorder causes the woman to harm an infant or child, and try to save them in order to get a sense of affirmation. These women love the attention they receive when they save their children, and they truly believe that they are not committing a crime. In most of these cases, however, there comes a point when the woman crosses the line and the child can not be saved (Schurmann 152-154).

Women multiple murderers are easier to understand if you keep in mind the female one-time killer. Schurmann, in her book The New Predator: Women Who Kill, quotes Holmes and Holmes when describing five different types of

female multiple murderers. The first type is the “visionary killer.” “This killer murders in response to voices or visions that command that she kill” (qtd. in Schurmann 155). The second type is the “comfort killer.” This killer kills for financial reasons. She hopes to gain monetarily by killing her victims. The third type is the “hedonistic killer.” Hedonism according to the American Heritage Dictionary is the pursuit of or devotion to pleasure. Therefore, a hedonistic killer kills for pleasure. The most common type of pleasure sought is sexual pleasure. The fourth type of killer is the “power/control” killer. The power seeker “wants control over life and death.” The “disciple killer” is the fifth and final type of killer according to Holmes and Holmes. This killer is usually following some type of leader, and feels as if this leader is “all-powerful” (qtd. in Schurmann 155-156). However another researcher by the name of Kelleher added to the Holmes list three more types of female multiple murderers. These were the “revenge killer, the team killer, and the unexplained killer” (qtd. in Schurmann 156). The revenge killer kills to punish someone (qtd. in Schurmann 156). The team killer kills as a part of a team. These killers usually work with a male that she is attached to, and participates in killing their victims (qtd. in Schurmann 157). The unexplained killer kills without reasons that the outside world can understand (qtd. in Schurmann 158).

Every murderer has their reasons for killing. However, not every murderer receives the same defense in the justice system. Every killer came from somewhere. They were people first. Each prisoner in America has a past. And

every one of those pasts are different, but when looking at the pasts of those on death row similarities of most begin to come to the surface. If you narrow your group even further, and consider only the women on death row, you will soon find that for the most part these inmates faced the same pasts. Multiple murderers especially have many commonalities when reviewing their life stages. According to Schurmann, female, multiple murderers come from harsh, unloving sometimes downright brutal families. They are usually lower socioeconomic class individuals who faced much adversity in their lifetimes, and yet were isolated from society, because of their inability to communicate with others effectively. These women were unable to develop social skills early on in life, and so they are unable to relate to others, their victims are thereby dehumanized and unimportant, making it easier to kill them. These women faced “abandonment issues, instability, and abuse” (Schurmann 69). Therefore, they lose their ability to trust anyone, and their ability to find a confidant, so their emotions of anger and resentment continue to boil under the surface. These women let off steam by killing, because in their point of view that is the only thing they can do to find relief (Schurmann 67-83).

Living in prison is extremely difficult. Wilbert Rideau and Ron Wikberg’s book Life Sentences: Rage and Survival Behind Bars, addresses what it is like to be a prisoner that faces life in prison. This book focuses on men at Angola State Penitentiary, in Louisiana, but much of what it says applies to women facing life or death in prison.

They've been here a long time, living yet not living, dead yet not dead. They eat, they breathe, they feel, and they suffer (or perhaps they're past that point). They've been here so long that they're like part of the woodwork. Wars have been fought, nations born, families lived and died, and man has even gone to the moon...but it holds little, if any meaning to them. They're men who exist without meaning or purpose. (Rideau and Wikberg 51)

Speaking to someone facing life in prison proves just how much these people suffer. They seem strong, but they are losing the ability to define themselves, just as society has lost the ability to give them any other definition except "monster." Frank Moore is an illiterate black man, who has been in Angola since 1945. When asked if he thought "they" will ever let him out, his broken response was "Ah hope dey do," but if they don't "Ah'll just have to stay heah, ah guess" (Rideau and Wikberg 56). This man exemplifies what it is like to face the ultimate punishment, and never be a part of society again. He is broken because his life has lost definition. He has been reduced to the constant repetition of the day to day life behind bars.

Life in prison is worse than death row, because death is an escape from the day to day suffering caused by confinement. Women in society face much adversity, but female offenders face the same fate as Frank Moore, an ultimate and inevitable disempowerment. Every minute of every day they are being watched, their schedules planned out for them, and this reality is a struggle that

begins on the outside, and seeps into the very core of who they are. The constant isolation causes a complete loss of the concept of time. Minutes turn into days, days into months, months into years, years into decades, and decades into lifetimes. A life led in this darkness that is prison, is no life at all. These prisoners will not wake up from this nightmare. They will live on until they enter their eternal sleep through death.

Society thinks men who commit murder are monsters, but female offenders are just flawed items. The thought of a woman committing murder is inconceivable to many in the world; the way the government handles these cases proves this fact. The criminal justice system does a horrible job of addressing capital murder cases concerning women. The justice system approaches these cases with the same attitude used in cases concerning men. This is flawed because as Myrna S. Raeder wrote:

A primary goal of the criminal justice system is to mete out justice according to the prevailing norms of the day. As a result, criminal laws and correctional policies are typically written assuming equality of the sexes and gender and race blindness. Yet, in a world where gender and race affect and often reinforce cultural expectations and stereotypes, attempts to legislate equality have backfired on women. (173)

A prime example, of when the criminal justice system completely fails women, is in the case of battered women who kill. The criminal justice system approaches

these cases just as harshly as regular murder cases, and they do not consider the fact that on many occasions they helped drive the woman to commit the murder in the first place (Leonard 116). “Historically, religion, law, traditional family structure, the economy, and other social institutions routinely supported the authority of men over women” (Leonard 106). Yet, when women kill abusive mates, they are treated like crimes, and not creating a means to an end. These crimes are committed to stop the constant beatings. These women may feel trapped, are afraid, and need a way out. They decide that the only way out is to kill. The battered woman defense is a very good defense if used correctly and cautiously. This defense is used in most capital cases that involve women defendants, who lash out at loved ones, because it evokes the sympathy of the jury. However, the constant utilization of this defense could eventually lead to its downfall. The documentary American Justice Lorena Bobbitt: Women and Violence referred to this phenomenon as compassion indifference. Compassion indifference is the point in which society gets sick of hearing the same defense for every female capital case, and begins to cast judgement before considering all of the facts. This would make it impossible to find a jury who would not seek the death penalty, because they have stopped identifying with the defendants as battered women. This jury would therefore be sending these women to a fate that might actually resemble the very thing they committed murder to escape, which is a constant feeling of being trapped and disempowered. However,



although a jury or society may be stricken with compassion indifference there are always going to be cases of domestic abuse that end in horror.

Another example of the criminal justice systems ignorant approach to women who kill is women's correctional institutions. People in the criminal justice system have no idea what women inmates are really like. According to Charles Turnbo there are four main differences between male and female inmates: "Staff-inmate rapport, response to authority and confinement, level of inmate participation in operation and programs, and inmate responsiveness to positive reinforcement" (13). Women form relationships behind bars, their need for social interaction, makes them more likely to be much more open with staff, and on occasion they even become friends with staff members. Women respond better to "self-help and positive self-improvement," than just simply being told "no." If you approach a problem in a female correctional institute by teaching women how to avoid causing that problem in the first place, the prisoners respond, and the problem dissipates. They like to participate in programs and can even be helpful when establishing prison policy. Women love to give their opinions, and female inmates are not any different. If you ask them how they feel about a certain policy, they will give you an honest answer. They may even help you reform that policy making it beneficial for the entire prison community. If you reward women inmates rather than constantly punishing them, then they respond by being positive, and not causing problems (Turnbo 13-16).

Women on death row are so few and far between that the criminal justice system and the prison systems do not know how to respond when facing an execution. Male death row inmates have established areas in prisons, that have heightened security, but female prisons do not. Therefore, females on death row are unable to do many things that men get to do because they are considered security risks. For example, it is much more difficult for a woman on death row to get any time outside. The prison is afraid she could be a potential escape risk because the gates outside are designed for medium security inmates (Lancaster 90). Death row inmates in male maximum-security prisons are given more freedoms if they are well behaved. However, because of the conditions in female prisons it does not matter whether or not the inmate is well behaved they still face the same fate daily. An attempt to rectify this problem that is used by some states, is allowing death row inmates to become integrated into the general society of the prison. However, this causes problems when the inmates face execution, because of the bonds formed between prisoners (Lancaster 90). This same problem applies to health facilities, and visitation areas, so women on death row get less medical attention, and terrible visitation rights. Executing a female inmate is less organized. Women's facilities that are medium security that house death row inmates do not usually have a death house, so these women must be transported to a death house in maximum security prisons. The lack of communication between the two prisons is just the beginning of the problems that apply when attempting to execute a female inmate. The female inmates on

death row have fewer rights than the men, not because those rights do not apply to them, but because it is impossible to fulfill those rights in the circumstances of the prison system (Lancaster 89-93).

Women in prison, face much adversity. They have much more stress on them when they are in society and even more when they are removed from society. Women on death row face terrible living conditions. Women statistically commit less violent acts than men, and yet face much more terrible conditions when sentenced to death. As if losing the definition of who they are isn't enough, the inadequate facilities, do not even allow them the same rights as men. Men have it better on the outside and on the inside, and yet women are still less likely to commit murder. Out of its own self-interest, the criminal justice system needs to change the way they approach women who kill, to avoid consequences later in life. Women should be at the forefront of the argument about abolishing the death penalty, because of the many adversities they face in life, and in death.

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## APPENDIX F

### ***From “Peter Pan” to “Robin Hood”***

Throughout my freshman year at UNCP, I have been learning many new and exciting things, and yet, until I got into English 106, I was resistant to change. English 105 taught me the basics in writing, but English 106 forced me to delve into a public issue and form an opinion. As a matter of fact, when reflecting on this past semester, and more specifically on my development as a writer, and as a person, I found myself focusing on two of my favorite fairy tales, or classic childhood stories. I consider my development a transformation from one to the other.

Peter Pan is a story about a boy who, though he is a hero, refuses to grow up. Peter Pan does not want to mature, and lives in a constant state of imagination. He is a leader among his peers, the lost boys, and his mortal enemy is none other than Captain Hook. Hook is an adult; he represents the evil that can corrupt people, as they grow older. In the beginning of this semester, I found myself resisting the process coming to UNCP forced me to begin. I was growing up, and I did not believe that I was ready. As a writer in English 105, I had developed a new approach to presenting my ideas. I learned to apply concepts that helped my adult audience better understand and identify with my perceptions.

In English 106, I found myself immersed in a class about capital punishment, a public issue that I had never considered. I was forced to approach

this topic as an adult, and I found myself doing exactly what I was trying my best not to do. I was growing up, and learning to form my own opinion. This class allowed me to take the first steps toward becoming the woman that I hope to be later in life. I realized that I am a much more liberal person than I thought possible, because I had always conformed to my mother's conservative ideas. This class forced me to do research on a topic that I knew nothing about, and now I am able to carry on a debate with people (including my mother) about it, and actually teach them something new.

As I began to develop these new skills, of establishing opinions, and supporting those opinions in arguments, I became a new person. I found myself stepping away from the Peter Pan persona, and taking on a new form, relating myself more toward a stronger more opinionated, classic childhood character. Robin Hood was a man who was able to see the wrong in the world, and take a stand against those who persecute others. He stood strong in his convictions stealing from the rich and giving to the poor throughout his lifetime. He was able to unmask the cruelties in the world and influence people to stand up for what is right and just.

As I researched the death penalty in America, and formed an opinion against it, I was able to draw attention to many of the wrongs that go along with executions. I was then able to encourage my peers to take a deeper look at capital punishment and see the truth. As a person, I consider myself neither a democrat nor a republican. As such, I was able to influence people, without



clouding my position with political nonsense that causes the facts of an issue to blur and become less important. Robin Hood saved his society, by revealing the facts. I am now able to capture people's attention by presenting them with an argument about capital punishment that considers only the facts.

In the beginning of this semester, I was a child who did not want to grow up. As the semester progressed, I quickly became an adult on the issue of capital punishment. I was able to form an opinion and present it in an educated, informed state. I went from "Peter Pan" to "Robin Hood" this semester, and as such found liberation from my constant tendency to conform. I became an adult, and I have never been happier. The ability to form my own opinion on the issue of capital punishment has given me the courage to step out of my comfort zone and approach life with new found freedom. I was afraid to grow up and form my own opinions, and now I find myself forming new opinions on every aspect of my life, not just on capital punishment.