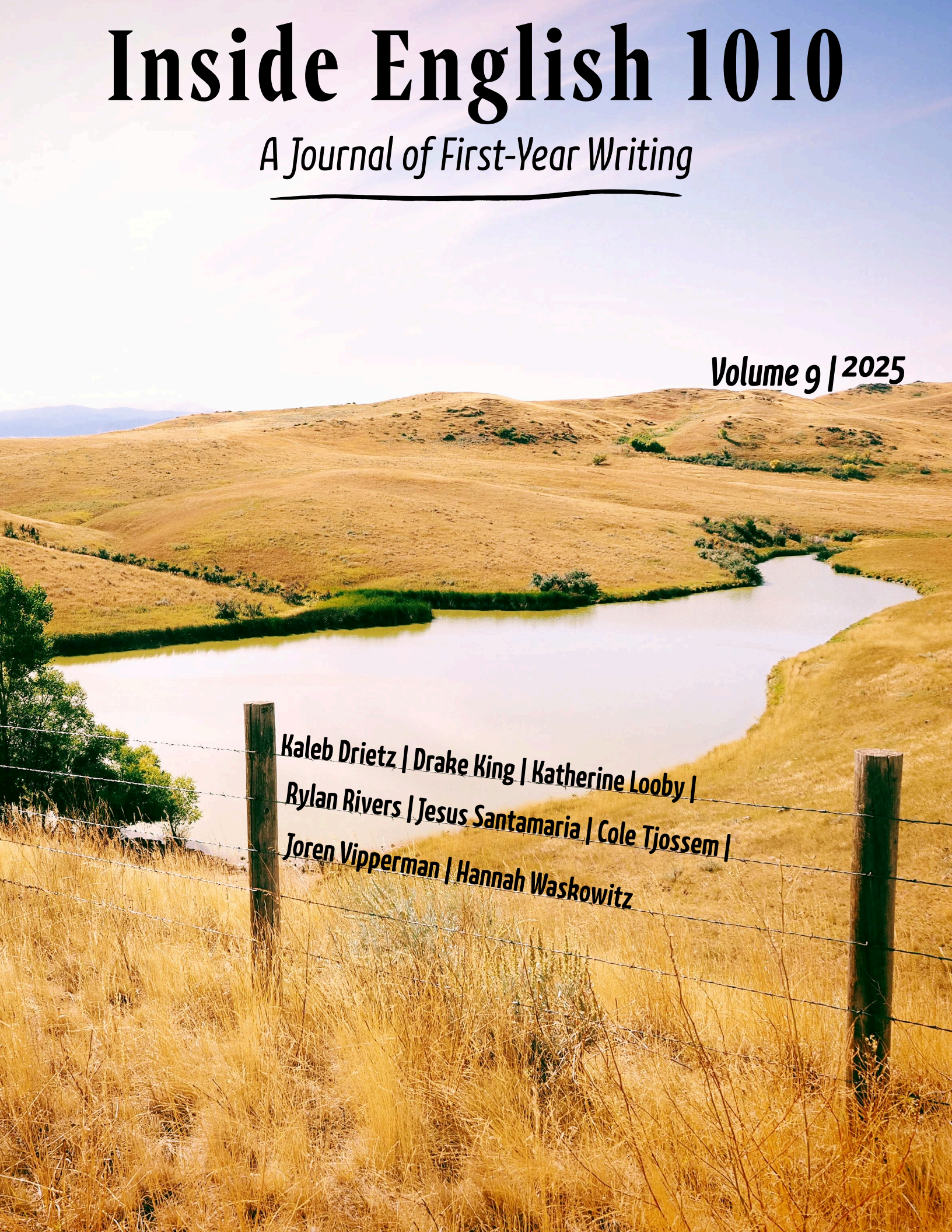


Inside English 1010

A Journal of First-Year Writing

Volume 9 | 2025



**Kaleb Drietz | Drake King | Katherine Looby |
Rylan Rivers | Jesus Santamaria | Cole Tjossem |
Joren Vipperman | Hannah Waskowitz**

Inside English 1010

A Journal of First-Year Writing

Kaleb Drietz | Drake King |

Katherine Looby | Rylan Rivers |

Jesus Santamaria | Cole Tjossem |

Joren Vipperman | Hannah Waskowitz

Inside English 1010

Volume 9 / 2025

*Inside English 1010
Department of English
University of Wyoming
1000 East University Avenue
Laramie, WY 82071*

Staff

Lead Editor & Production Editor: Makayla Kocher

Faculty Advisors: Michael Knievel

Founding Editor: Kelly Kinney

Editorial Board

Faith Breads

Shelby Dodds

Lydia Portuo Dompey

Cheyenne Hume

Rabbia Khalid

Grace Langeberg

Mercy McAndrew

Faculty Acknowledgements

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Spring 2025 issue of *Inside English 1010*, a celebration of some of the best work that students in English 1010 produced over the past year. We hope that some of the families and friends of our published authors get a chance to see the smart work that their child, sibling, or friend was up to in English last year. We offer, too, a special welcome to new students and instructors as readers navigating their own paths through English 1010—we hope that you find inspiration and direction from the writing included here.

Beyond giving rise to some great student writing, the past year has been an enjoyable one in our writing program. Our core curriculum and assignments in English 1010 have remained largely stable from last year to this year, but we did see a significant change in our program's leadership and mentoring, as our Associate Director, Ashley Burchett, moved on to a new writing center position mid-year. Though we miss her, we are excited to see Ashley pursue this opportunity.

But back to *Inside English 1010* and this new issue: Assistant Director Makayla Kocher has led an editorial process over weeks and months that surfaced some excellent writing—a process characterized by the care and attentiveness that Makayla brings to all her work (thanks, Makayla!). The design and layout of the journal helps reveal its strengths, and I appreciate the effort and commitment behind it. Bringing together an issue of *Inside English 1010* takes many hands, and Makayla assembled a wonderful group of instructors to work on the editorial board. Thanks to all of you for your time and commitment!

The issue represents students' strong work across three different assignments, each of which features different but overlapping skills, along with unique rhetorical situations. The Visual Analysis (VA) requires careful observation and effort to make sense of what is “seen” in a visual text while placing those observations into conversation with historical and cultural contexts. Working in this vein, Kaleb Drietz offers a strong rhetorical analysis of a cyberbullying public service announcement (PSA) that highlights the importance of empathy, while Rylan Rivers considers an Australian train safety mural and its multi-faceted appeal to travelers and citizens—an audience that, according to Rylan, “...doesn’t want to hear a serious message but rather needs to hear the message” (I love this sentence!). Jesus Santamaria’s VA rounds out this section of the issue, examining a PSA titled “Keep Your Distance & Prolong Existence,” a throwback to COVID-era social distancing messaging drawing from vintage comic-style illustration to augment its appeal. These three essays nicely engage with the pivotal messages that surround us, highlighting the kinds of appeals used to both attract attention and shift behaviors for the public good.

Our two Researched Argument (RA) essays feature well-reasoned classical arguments around disparate topics, with Cole Tjossem arguing for ways in which policy and law surrounding advanced hunting technologies might be applied to ethically advance the interests of both hunters and animals. Hannah Waskowitz takes up an issue—AI—concerning many at the current moment, arguing powerfully for the unique disadvantage that children who are still-developing critical literacy toward technology and AI might suffer in the face of this novel challenge. Finally, in our Public Genre Assignment (PGA) focused on rhetorical storytelling, Drake King and Katherine Looby take compelling personal narratives and link them to broader conversations and communities. Drake tells a compelling story of reconciling a challenging health condition with hope for the future, while Katherine’s story of her family dog connects readers to a powerful lesson about love, grief, and empathy. These RAs and PGAs are so fascinating to read next to one another, all making arguments but doing so in radically different ways, expanding readers’ perspectives on important issues of public policy and personal growth.

Finally, while we celebrate the efforts and thoughtful work of our student writers included in this issue, we also salute the devoted instructors who did so much to guide these writers. Thanks to all of you for the work that you do each class day and across the weeks and months to help our students grow during this formative moment in their academic lives. Thanks, too, to our editor for this issue, Makayla, who, is our terrific Assistant Director of our writing program, and to our wonderful mentors, Shelby Hutson and Allison Gernant. I am reminded again and again of these colleagues’ brilliance, integrity, and commitment in all of their work with our instructors and students. Finally, a special thanks to our outgoing department chair, Kelly Kinney, who launched this journal and who, as the director ten years ago, shaped much of the first-year writing program’s identity. We are so grateful for her constant support.

Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Michael Knievel

Letter from the Editor

As the Assistant Director of First-Year Writing, I am pleased and privileged to introduce readers to this year's issue of *Inside English 1010*. This journal is a testament to our curriculum and the hard work of our students. It is both a celebration and a resource for the first-year writing curriculum at UW.

Moreover, the essays in this journal showcase the range of topics UW students are encouraged to explore in English 1010. These essays not only demonstrate our students' creativity and capabilities as writers, but also remind us of the endless effort and care of the UW English department's instructors. Their teaching, mentorship, and relationship-building create an environment where students can find community, inspiration, and develop as both writers and individuals.

While the students' work is the focus of this journal, I also wish to acknowledge the many people who contributed to the development of this volume of *Inside English 1010*. I would like to extend a special thank you to the other English graduate students who were fundamental in creating this journal: the editorial board members—Faith Breads, Shelby Dodds, Lydia Portuo Dompey, Cheyenne Hume, Rabbia Khalid, Grace Langeberg, and Mercy McAndrew. The editorial selection process is challenging and takes considerable time, as the editorial board reads, reviews, discusses, and ultimately selects the featured essays. Thanks to these thoughtful individuals, this volume of *Inside English 1010* presents a wide range of topics, students, and approaches to the core assignments in English 1010.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Michael Knievel, Director of the First-Year Writing Program, for his unwavering support. Mike provided keen insight, advice, and feedback throughout the editorial process. He was instrumental in the journal's planning, development, and final distribution. I also want to thank the many students who submitted their work for *Inside English 1010*; your contributions, whether accepted or not, are a testament to your skills as writers, communicators, and intellectual individuals. Thank you.

While my time as a master's student at the University of Wyoming is coming to an end, this journal stands as a testament to the dedicated English 1010 instructors and students at UW. Collaborating with instructors and students alike to create this volume of *Inside English 1010* has been a true honor. I hope that this journal can serve as a resource that inspires future students and instructors to think differently about the core assignments in English 1010 and to showcase exceptional student work.

Happy reading,

Makayla Kocher

How to Use Inside English 1010

Welcome to this year's issue of *Inside English 1010*! I am delighted to present an introduction to the student papers selected. As you read through these student papers, keep in mind the range of topics, approaches to assignments, and student voices that vary from sample to sample. This variability highlights the power of student voices and student-led decisions central to the 1010 curriculum. First, I will provide a brief overview of the three core assignments, and then I will offer suggestions for the different audiences reading and utilizing this journal.

Brief Overview of the English 1010 Assignments

In the Visual Analysis (VA) paper, students are asked to examine a visual text, such as an advertisement or public service announcement (PSA), using rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) to inform and persuade an academic audience. Students describe the visual and its historical context while using visual analysis techniques. As evident in the three Visual Analysis papers included in this volume, the types of visuals used for this assignment can range from historical to present day, from posters to billboards, and from wartime propaganda to social issues or to the everyday advertisements students see on social media.

In the Researched Argument (RA), students learn to use source location and evaluation, synthesis, and structure to make an academic argument. Some students have, and others haven't encountered this type of writing in their high school English classes; thus, in 1010, we approach this assignment with various strategies. Students are encouraged to pursue a topic that piques their curiosity. Throughout the process, students learn to engage with different and contrasting perspectives, develop an annotated bibliography, and recognize the variability of argument building and structuring. As with the examples in this volume, the assignment fosters critical thinking and proficiency in academic writing.

The Public Genre Assignment (PGA), asks students to add their perspectives or ideas to public discourse, contributing to civic conversations and seeking to persuade the public audience. In its most recent rendition, the Rhetorical Storytelling Assignment asks students to tell a first-person memoir-style story about being a member of a community of their choice. The PGA is likely the most variable in terms of design and instruction, incorporating creative writing, storytelling, and document design. This variability is why the student samples in this volume vary in tone, seriousness, topic, and community addressed. This is yet another assignment where students' autonomy and voice are at the forefront.

A Resource & Pedagogical Tool For Instructors

1010 instructors, I encourage you to utilize this volume (and others) of the *Inside English 1010* journal as a resource for sparking classroom discussion and considering your pedagogical approach to each assignment. As mentioned above, the range of topics is wide in the VA, RA, and PGA. It is exciting and demonstrates the broad array of ideas, interests, and perspectives of our 1010 students. I hope this serves as a reminder for instructors to embrace their students' curiosities and to ensure that student voices and opinions are heard and welcomed in class. Invite your students to move beyond commonly selected topics. Ask them to do a free-write on topics, hobbies, and curiosities.

Engage with these samples alongside your students to help inspire them and to assist them in visualizing what the assignments can and do look like. Remember that each assignment varies slightly from year to year and that the ways the assignments are taught and understood will impact the outcome of the essays.

As you read through these samples, I ask you to pay close attention to how students addressed the different assignments. Consider how these topics are relevant to current events in 2024. This is important as it suggests not only students' interest but also how topical selection can be drawn from our everyday lived experiences. Also, pay close attention to the techniques used by students. For example, in the **VA**, observe how the student's thesis statement serves as the argumentative cornerstone that filters into each topic sentence. In the **RA**, consider how effectively integrating quotes enhances the student voice and how the placement of the counterargument—woven throughout, in a specific paragraph, or in multiple places—affects students' structure and argument-building approaches. In the **PGA**, note how paragraph structure and tonality become more colloquial while student voices are enriched by the design of the assignment. Throughout the samples in this volume, you will notice a common thread: the development of student voice, the importance of analysis (visual or textual), and the presence of rhetorical tactics and appeals. There is much more that each of these genres and the samples here can offer, so read with an eye toward how these samples speak to instruction and how they can impact your approach to teaching these assignments.

I encourage you to read the following section closely. While addressed to students, it can serve as a space for reflection and innovation in teaching the VA, RA, and PGA.

A Guide & Resource for Students

As you read through these samples, I encourage you to pay close attention to how these papers are written. Consider the writing style and how it varies from the more academic styles in the **VA** and **RA** to the more colloquial approach of the **PGA**. Importantly, consider the wide range of topics students decide to focus on for each paper. There aren't any "right" or "easy" topics to choose from; rather, you should feel comfortable exploring a topic that interests you.

Consider the techniques used to integrate source materials—notice how students approach the blending of their voice with summarized or direct quotes from evidence. This is especially important in the **Researched Argument**, where students work with various outside sources. Remember that research is not the argument. You, as the student, are making an argument supported by research. This means ensuring that your voice is front and center, which is why quote integration is a valuable skill to learn in English 1010. For instance, consider **Hannah Waskowitz's RA**, "Dangers of Human-Like A.I. During Childhood Development." Hannah does an exceptional job weaving together evidence with her voice. The evidence doesn't overshadow her voice; rather, it builds her argument in subtle and effective ways. Consider how the arguments are constructed: How does the visually based argument in the **VA** differ from the evidence-based, argument-driven **RA** or the personal narrative-driven **PGA**? How do students' thesis statements lay the groundwork for their papers? Look closely at how the thesis statement (argument) is linked throughout the paper via the topic sentences and rhetorical moves made.

Consider how students capture our attention at the beginning of their papers. These "attention-grabbers," or "hooks," as they are more formally referred to, aren't always necessary, but they can engage the reader and allow a writer to dive directly into their topic. It's important to note that introduction paragraphs are most effective when they go straight to the paper's topic. If you're uncertain how to do so, try modeling your approach after one of the papers in this volume. For instance, consider how **Cole Tjossem's RA**, "Permissibility of Modern Hunting Technology," begins with, "The rapid growth of hunting technology has sparked long arguments about whether or not modern hunting technology should be permitted." This opening immediately focuses the paper and helps the reader understand that Cole will be arguing about modern hunting technology.

When reading the **Visual Analysis**, look closely at how the students have crafted their thesis statements and how these statements specifically draw on the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos. **Kaleb Drietz, Rylan Rivers**, and **Jesus Santamaria** excel in asserting the argument of their respective visuals by adding specificity to the use of ethos, pathos, and logos. You might examine their visuals and consider a completely different argument than the one made; this is natural. Each of us has our perspectives, perceptions, and beliefs that influence how we view the world. These differences also affect how we understand and thus express ourselves, or in this case, write. It is important to notice how these writers construct their argument about a visual and use rhetorical appeals.

They go beyond a generalized statement of these appeals to reference specific instances of them in the visual. Not only does this establish ethos for them as writers, but it also informs the reader directly how their paper will outline its argument using rhetorical appeals. This strategy is effective and can be a model for you as you consider writing your Visual Analysis. Remember, your thesis statement should be uniquely your own, but there is nothing wrong with modeling after other writers. To do this, consider the structure of the thesis statement—how is it laid out? What elements are included? Is it a single sentence or multiple? Take, for instance, the different approaches of Kaleb, Rylan, and Jesus: Kaleb and Jesus use a two-sentence thesis statement that asserts an argument and then discusses the use of the appeals. At the same time, Rylan combines the two in one sentence, thus employing a colon. There will always be discrepancies, and there always should be. These discrepancies are evidence of your voice and style as a writer. They are important because they reflect who you are as a writer.

Take note of the writing styles, audience engagement, and document design. I want to draw your attention to the **PGAs**. Observe how, in **Katherine Looby's PGA**, “The Heart of a Dog,” she uses bold, left-aligned headings to mark the timeline of her story. This is a rhetorical move on Katherine's part, as it can function as a set of diary entries for the assignment and enhance the emotional appeal of her narrative. In terms of audience engagement, take a close look at how **Drake King's** “Chronic Illness, Absurdity, and Coffee” offers a strong introductory paragraph that hints at and addresses the topic of the narrative without revealing the entire story. This draws the reader in; the use of evidence in the paragraph develops Drake's ethos and asserts a personal takeaway from the story. I also want to highlight **Joren Vipperman's** “Long Live Love” essay, which recounts a heavy and emotional experience and is handled with care. Joren offers insight and reflection that not only presents a powerful message but also asks his readers to reflect on the power of community.

Remember that a focused topic, regardless of whether you are writing a VA, RA, or PGA ensures that you, as the writer, remain focused. Still, it also helps your reader follow along with the argument or narrative being shared.

Taking time to engage with these strong examples in these different genres will help you recognize what is and isn't working, what you like and dislike, and hopefully inspire you to reflect on your own writing style. Consider these essays as examples, models, and inspiration for your own writing, and remember that there is never one specific or “right” way to approach writing! I encourage you to read with a careful and critical eye. To learn from these incredible students' work and to feel inspired as you consider how you might/will approach these assignments.

Once again, happy reading,
Makayla Kocher

Table *of* Contents

Contributor Biographies | 12

Visual Analysis | 13

Researched Argument | 26

Public Genre Assignment - Rhetorical Storytelling | 37

Contributor Biographies

Visual Analysis

Kaleb Drietz is a student at the University of Wyoming studying astrophysics. However, he is attempting to change his major to linguistics and hopes to be a multilingual interpreter for the United States Navy someday. Kaleb has lived most of his life here in Laramie and enjoys almost any activity that takes place outdoors. He particularly enjoys archery, fishing, and stargazing.

Rylan Rivers was born and raised in Laramie, Wyoming. Despite taking English 1010, Rylan is not currently in college—at the time they wrote their Visual Analysis, Rylan was actually in High School taking ENGL 1010 through dual enrollment! Rylan plans to start college this fall and hopes to study computer science and minor in music. Rylan says music is what they enjoy most, whether listening to it or playing it. Alongside music, Rylan enjoys crafting and spending time with friends and family.

Jesus Santamaria is from Rawlins, Wyoming. He is an undergraduate student studying civil engineering, and he plans to earn his PE and PLS. Jesus enjoys spending time with family and playing music.

Researched Argument

Cole Tjossem is an undergraduate student studying Criminal Justice. After college, he plans to pursue a career in federal law enforcement. He grew up on a farm in Iowa, where he enjoyed many outdoor hobbies, including fishing, hunting, and riding dirt bikes.

Hannah Waskowitz (omitted by author)

Public Genre Assignment: Rhetorical Storytelling

Drake King is an undergraduate music major at the University of Wyoming from Cheyenne, Wyoming. He is a musical composer of five years dedicated to bringing people together through creating new music to enjoy. His dramatic experience about being diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes and his recognition of those with similar stories inspired him to share his own story.

Katherine Looby (omitted by author)

Joren Vipperman is a freshman majoring in Biology from Cody, Wyoming, where he has lived his entire life. After graduating high school, He spent a year abroad in Sardinia, Italy, learning about different cultures. Joren loves being outdoors and exploring new areas but also thrives in exploring those common places we pass by often. In the future, Joren wants to become an oncologist to help people live their best lives.

Visual Analysis

Comment Crisis by Kaleb Drietz

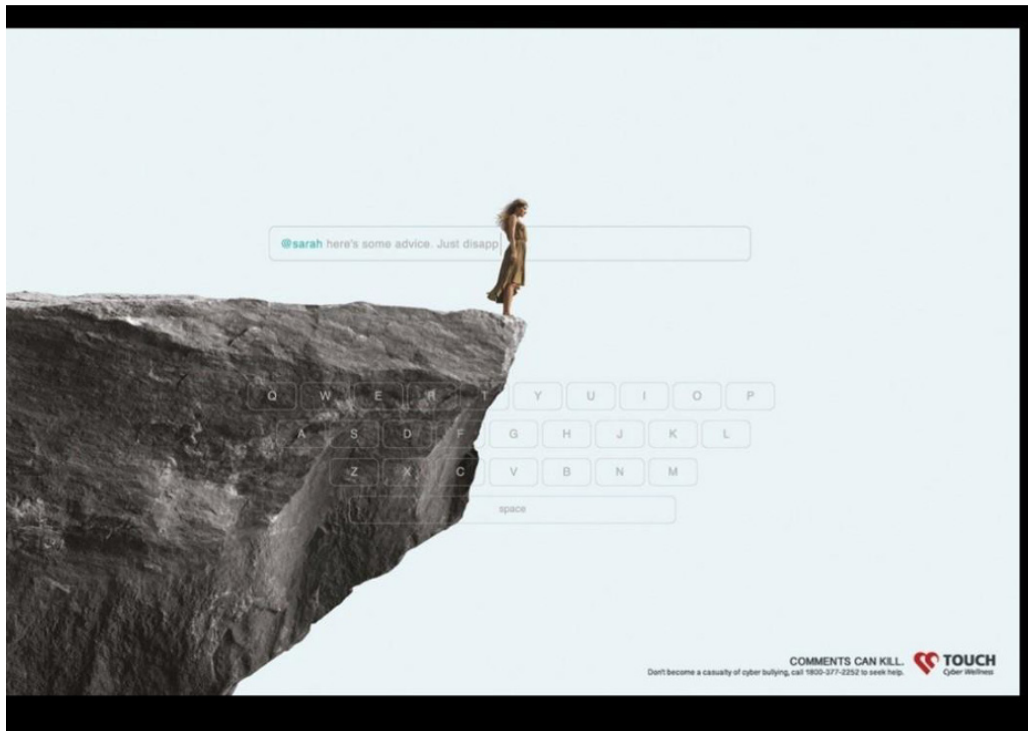


Figure 1: “Cliff”. <https://www.adforum.com/creative-work/ad/player/34510417/cliff/touch-cyber-wellness>.

Social media is commonplace in today’s world. The internet is a great place to interact with people from around the world and experience differing viewpoints, cultures, and opinions about many things. Just about everyone has a smartphone with some form of social media platform. From work to school to everyday use, the internet has helped streamline processes and make hard tasks simpler. But with all the new advancements also comes an easier way to bully and hurt others. Social media provides a “safe,” anonymous space for bullies to attack people on a larger scale than ever before. With the threat of cyberbullying, there is a need for internet users to become reacquainted with how powerful words can be. The “Cliff” ad by Touch Cyber Wellness displays the aspects of ethos through its use of a brand name and color to draw the eye to specific areas on the picture, logos by using size and color to convey its message, and pathos by using suggestions within the picture itself.

“Cliff,” posted by Touch Cyber Wellness, can be found on the internet, which is ironic considering that it talks about the harmful effects of social media. It is almost completely white, but the left side has a very dark rock jutting out into the middle of the page. Overlaid onto the picture is a keyboard that rests half on the dark stone and half on the white background. Just above the keyboard is the outline of a rectangle that is reminiscent of a search bar. The bar has a pop of teal with a username that reads, “@sarah,” and text following it saying, “here’s some advice. Just disapp” (Fig. 1). The words end at the back of a woman who is standing at the edge of the rock and looking off it. She is posed as if she is about to jump off the cliff. In the bottom right corner of the frame are some words that read, “Comments can kill. Don’t become a casualty of cyberbullying, call 1800-377-2252 to seek help” (Fig. 1). Next to the words is the red, heart-shaped logo of Touch Cyber Wellness. This dramatic scene shows the effects of cyberbullying and just how harmful comments on social media can be.

The “Cliff” ad creates credibility by drawing the reader’s eye to the bottom right corner, where the brand name and logo are located. While the rest of the paper is monochromatic, the brand name and logo are bold, capitalized, and striking red (Fig. 1). This technique is very purposeful. The inclusion of a brand name in the first place creates ethos because, even if the audience is not familiar with the company, they will assume it comes from a credible source.

Also, the vibrant heart-shaped logo demonstrates that this is a place to find acceptance, hope, and love. The logo is not the only place that uses color to draw the eye of the reader. In the middle of the image is a woman dressed in pale gold, her head downcast and her body positioned precariously on a cliff (Fig. 1). Suicide is a theme that has become far too common in our culture and is a topic that many people have experience with. The sight of this image on the ad draws in the audience and provides authority to the source: anyone willing to openly discuss a matter as touchy as depression and suicide must have put in the time and effort to provide something useful to the public.

Along with ethos, Touch’s ad also uses logos to explain the significance of the PSA with formatting techniques. The image is trying to get its readers to see how hurtful comments can be on the internet. It displays this by placing the woman at the cliff’s edge (Fig. 1). The shape of the cliff itself even shows the ad’s logic. The angles on the bottom of the rock direct the eye to the woman and what she is about to do (Fig. 1). The placement of the comment bar shows the words pushing on her back to shove her over the edge, showing the reality of hateful words (Fig. 1). Even the color of the woman’s dress shows some logic. She appears to be dim, dull, diminishing, and ready to jump. The sheer lack of color gives the impression that the vibrancy of life has been lost. Perhaps the most important aspect of logos, however, is the description of the ad in the bottom right corner. The words read, “Comments can kill. Don’t become a casualty of cyber bullying, call 1800-377-2252 to seek help” (Fig. 1). The addition of these words and the fade of the keyboard from black to white clearly indicates that the woman in the picture does not need to kill herself, there is hope and people who will listen.

The idea of suicide vividly displays pathos to the ad’s audience by implying a scenario that most people are uncomfortable with. The suggestion of a woman who is about to kill herself is a hard thing for most people to think about. No one likes the idea that someone can be in so much pain that they would physically harm themselves. Two emotions evoke a response from the reader: despair and hope. Despair can be seen in the words on the screen, “Here’s some advice. Just disapp” (Fig. 1). We need to be careful not to be bullies who write insensitive comments to or about others. Hope is shown in the image of the girl who pleads with the readers never to let it get this far. Seek help.

Many studies have shown that cyberbullying most often begins with teens in high school and carries over into their college experiences (Bergman). Too often, children in this age group see no hope because cyberbullying is such a public domain. This was not a secret note passed in the halls but an open comment for the whole world to read, which compounds depression and suicidal thoughts. There has, actually, been a substantial amount of research done on the effects of social media on mental health over the years. The conclusion of most of these studies is that extensive use of social media leads to a decrease in mental health and an increase in suicide rates. One article states

that the CDC did a study that showed that the suicide rate in adolescents increased by fifty- seven percent between the years 2007 and 2017 (Walsh). Mental health is a serious problem in our culture today, which is a fact I believe few people would dispute. In the impersonal platform that social media creates, we have forgotten the effect that our words can have on the mental health of other people.

“Cliff” successfully shows how words can negatively affect those who read them. The ad’s use of rhetorical techniques should not be applied to only ethos, pathos, or logos. Instead, they should be applied to all three. This fact allows the ad to come together coherently with a straightforward message. The strong emotional images within the ad turn an impersonal world into a personal realization of the mental impact of words. Using logos turns the ad from a sad image into a logical story. It shows how the comment pushed the woman to suicide but how, on the light side of the page, there is help if you just call the number listed. Finally, including the brand name and logo adds validity to the argument and creates trust that words can hurt and that someone can help.

The “Cliff” ad by Touch Cyber Wellness makes a convincing argument with ethos, with a brand name and color; logos, with shape and color; and pathos, with the emotions of the image itself. This argument reminds its audience that the pen is mightier than the sword. It shows how words can tear people down and destroy their lives, even on an impersonal platform like social media. I believe that depression rates could be decreased if people stop thinking about themselves and think about the impact that their words can have on others. Just as the ad shows a keyboard on a white and black background, we should consider how to use our words to build one another up instead of tearing each other down.

Works Cited

- Bergman, Matthew. "Effects of Cyberbullying." *Social Media Victims Law Center*, 3 Jan. 2024, <https://socialmediavictims.org/cyberbullying/effects/>. Accessed 2 Feb. 2024.
- "Cliff." *Adforum*. <https://www.adforum.com/creative-work/ad/player/34510417/cliff/touch-cyber-wellness>. Accessed 25 Jan. 2024.
- Walsh, Dylan. "Study: Social media use linked to a decline in mental health." *MIT Sloan School*, 14 Sept. 2022. <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/study-social-media-use-linked-to-decline-mental-health>. Accessed 2 Feb. 2024.

Smart Ways to Live: The Message Behind Dumb Ways to Die by Rylan Rivers



Figure 1: I Solemnly Swear To Be Safe Around Trains

It isn't unknown that how people live today leaves them disconnected and unaware of certain surroundings. One of these surroundings is our personal safety; therefore, there are so many circumstances under which people are not as aware of their safety as they should be. In 2012, the Metro Trains company in Melbourne, Australia, decided to make a statement on this lack of safety – specifically, this lack of safety around trains. Their statement was released through various forms of media, such as videos, games, and murals. One of these murals, located in the Flinders Street Railway Station in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, is the visual text we will analyze further. Melbourne Metro Trains persuades people in the train station to be more cognizant of their safety by using rhetorical appeals in their campaign: appealing to ethos by establishing authority in the message, to pathos by emotionally connecting to the audience, and to logos by using characters to demonstrate the risks of inadequate safety.

The first step in analyzing this text is breaking down all visual elements seen in this public service announcement (PSA). This PSA includes two distinct visual sections, the first featuring characters from the game *Dumb Ways to Die* and the second including a written message, symbol, and figure. Starting with the simpler of the two sections, the text "I SOLEMNLY SWEAR TO BE SAFE AROUND TRAINS" (Appendix 1) can be seen close to the top of the mural in a large black font. Below this, at the very bottom of the mural, a simple outline of a person can be seen in a black dotted line. Additionally, the Melbourne Metro Trains logo is in the top right corner. In the second section, around twenty characters from the video and game *Dumb Ways to Die* can be seen; these characters resemble small cartoon beans of various colors. In the mural, each bean is pictured dead due to some injury, has a smile on its face, if they have one, and looks to be swaying its arms. These two sections work together to create this mural and the message provided to the audience.

Now, we must fully understand the context surrounding the appearance of this campaign. Around 2012, train safety became a growing concern due to the number of reported fatalities and injuries involving trains. Reportedly, “Metro recorded 979 slips, trips, and falls by passengers in its annual safety report for 2011-12... It reported 23 collisions between a train and a person, not counting suicides or attempted suicides. Six pedestrians were hit at a level crossing, two of whom were killed” (Sharpe). Despite attempting to bring light to this problem, many still brushed rail safety off as a non-serious issue. Knowing that people were not listening, the Metro Train company produced the Dumb Ways to Die safety campaign with the help of McCann Melbourne to sneakily persuade people to pay attention to their safety. The company released the campaign in November of 2012 on local radio, in newspapers, as murals, and on YouTube to promote rail safety (“Dumb Ways to Die”). Following its release, the campaign quickly spread across the world through various forms of social media, becoming one of the most widely known PSAs worldwide. Since this PSA gained so much traction, a game that included the characters – officially called ‘beans’ – and the catchy music and the underlying message was released in May of 2013 (“Dumb Ways to Die”). From there, Dumb Ways to Die has advocated for one thing – safety around trains – using the rhetorical appeals mentioned in several other games, YouTube videos, and murals.

One of the reasons this mural has been so influential is its appeal to ethos, that is, how it builds credibility and trust behind its message. As mentioned, before the release of this campaign, train safety had been an increasingly pressing issue due to the number of injuries and fatalities recorded in train stations. Various companies and individuals had spoken out on this topic previously, but people never really listened; consequently, Metro Trains Melbourne decided to step in and find a way to persuade people to listen. This mural builds this authority, or trust, by putting the Melbourne Metro Train’s logo in the top right corner of the piece. When first looking at this mural, one might assume it is a piece of art from some insignificant entity trying to convince them to do something. However, we humans don’t listen to anyone; we need messages from someone important to us or someone with authority on the said topic. Putting the logo on the mural does just that; it shows the audience that the message comes from someone with authority on the topic. After all, this mural is in the Flinders Street Railway Station in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, which is part of the Melbourne Metro Trains company; therefore, having this logo in the mural is like telling the audience, “If you trust our trains, you should trust this message!” This small detail in the mural, affirming its credibility, makes a dramatic difference in the effectiveness of the message.

In a similar fashion, the mural appeals to pathos, or emotion, to influence the audience. By incorporating fun, colorful characters dancing and an “I” statement, the mural is able to tap into the audience’s emotion. When first looking at the mural, people typically notice the colorful bean characters and assume the message they are about to read is not something serious or of importance. This is because bright colors and cartoon styles are typically associated with humor or media tailored towards children. Therefore, the use of these elements gives the mural a fun or playful feeling, enticing people to look and read what it’s saying because they assume it’s going to be a source of fun entertainment. The Dumb Ways to Die PSA outwardly uses this to its advantage. In an interview with the executive creative director of McCann Melbourne, John Mescall, he acknowledges how this appeal is exploited in the campaign. He states, “The aim of this campaign is to engage an audience that really does not want

to hear any kind of safety message...” (“Dumb Ways to Die”). The attraction people have towards colorful, entertaining media is used to capture the audience's attention and then state an alternatively serious message. This mural also appeals to pathos by incorporating the audience into the message. The text in this mural states, “I SOLEMNLY SWEAR TO BE SAFE AROUND TRAINS.” Putting “I” at the beginning of the sentence forces the audience to read the statement as if they are swearing to be safe around trains, emotionally attaching them to the message. Similarly, the mural includes a dotted outline of a person meant for people to stand in front of as if they were part of the mural. Again, this forces the audience to think they are the ones swearing safety around trains. By using these assumptions and including the audience in the mural, the mural appeals to the audience's emotion and sneakily influences them to consider their safety around trains.

Likewise, the mural uses a combination of elements to appeal to logos, or logic and reason, when making its argument. The beans pictured in this mural are all clearly dead due to some injury: for example, some are split in half, on fire, or missing part of their body. If you look closer at them, though, you can either see or infer their cause of death. For example, one bean who is decapitated is wearing a pilot hat, indicating he got decapitated in an airplane crash (Appendix 1). Looking at all these characters together, it is apparent that the three in front are intentionally larger and in front of the other beans, suggesting they are more important. If we inspect these three prominent beans, or if you are familiar with the Dumb Ways to Die music video or game, you can tell that they all died in a train-related incident. By bringing your attention to these characters, the mural warns the audience that “if you aren't careful around trains, you could end up like these beans.” These little details in the mural are a great example of its appeal to logic, done by providing evidence as to why we should be safe around trains.

Altogether, this mural is an excellent representation of the persuasion we see in media today. By using rhetorical appeals, the mural can quickly and effectively persuade an audience that doesn't want to hear a serious message but rather needs to hear the message. By drawing the audience in using its appeal to pathos, the mural provides a well-thought-out argument with evidence as to why we need to exhibit safety around trains, thus persuading the audience to consider their safety. Even though this visual uses rhetorical appeals to support its argument, there is an unforeseen flaw in its execution: the use of cartoon visuals. Despite how the fun atmosphere of this mural is helpful when getting people's attention, it may work against the goal of the argument. People may observe its colorful, playful manner and assume the message is unnecessary or a joke, leading people not to take it seriously, therefore defeating the purpose of the message. Regardless of this, the mural provides an effective argument and works to persuade its audience to be safer around trains.

The Dumb Ways to Die mural in the Flinders Street Railway Station uses these rhetorical appeals to provide a compelling argument to an audience that may not even want to hear the argument in the first place. By appealing to logos, pathos, and ethos, this PSA allegedly contributed to “a 20% reduction in ‘near miss’ accidents compared to the annual average” (“Dumb Ways to Die”). Though it might not be the most well-known societal issue, companies today still advocate for safety around rails. Understanding how and why this campaign influenced the world provides insight into the unusual ways seemingly trivial things can make a stark difference in our world, even saving lives.

Works Cited

- “Dumb Ways to Die.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 18 Sept. 2024,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dumb_Ways_to_Die. . Accessed 14 Sept. 2024.
- Sharpe, Pierce. “Dumb Ways to Die: Group Uses Shock Tactics to Promote Safety.” *CBS 6 News Richmond WTVR*, 16 Nov. 2012, <https://www.wtvr.com/2012/11/16/dumb-ways-to-die-song>. Accessed 14 Sept. 2024.

Prolonging Existence

by Jesus Santamaria

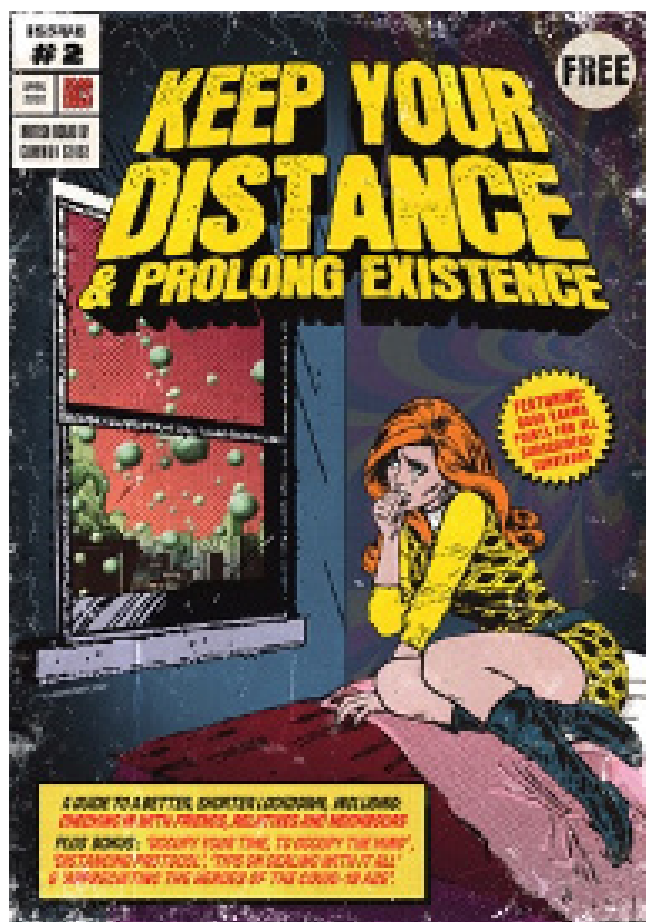


Figure 1: “Keep Your Distance & Prolong Existence.”

Citizens are trembling in their homes. While chaos is raining outside, depictions of Covid-19 viruses are taking over the city. There is nothing to do except take shelter and wait for the storm to pass. This is depicted in Keith Davey’s poster “Keep Your Distance & Prolong Existence” (Figure 1). Created during a time of uncertainty known as the COVID-19 pandemic, this poster offers a clear and strong message to the public: “stay indoors to prevent shortening your lifespan.” Davey’s message appeals to pathos by painting a dire situation that resonates with the audience, to logos by establishing the relationship between survival and staying indoors, and to ethos by being based on experts’ advice and leveraging the audience’s emotions.

Davey’s poster is in the style of a vintage horror comic book title, depicting a woman in tears, hiding in a corner. She is staring outside the window as depictions of COVID-19 viruses are in the air, spreading around the city. Furthermore, the comic book also includes the following text, “keep your distance & prolong existence” and “A guide to a better, shorter lockdown, including checking in with friends, relatives, and neighbors” (Figure 1). Both are in big, bold, and red text, which signifies their importance. Next, on the sides of the poster, it reads, “British Board of Common Sense” and “plus bonus: occupy your time, to occupy the mind, distancing protocol, tips on dealing with it all & appreciating the heroes of the COVID-19 age” (Figure 1). There is also an ominous red sky, and the edges of the comic are fading into darkness.

Going on to essential information, this poster was made in 2020 during a global pandemic, more specifically the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is a contagious disease that causes respiratory symptoms and spreads when a sick person's droplets and other small particles come into contact with another person's eyes, nose, or mouth (CDC). The number of cases increased dramatically during this period, overwhelming the healthcare system. Advice on this disease from the CDC was to stay home to prevent the disease from spreading, have good hygiene, wear a mask, and other valuable pieces of advice. One of them being "If You Test Positive for COVID-19 (Isolate) ... If You Were Exposed to Someone with COVID-19" (CDC). Posters and other media helped spread advice on how to deal with the situation better, including Davey's Poster.

Davey's poster shines a light on how people felt during such a devastating and uncertain period, helping build a sense of trust with the audience and appealing to ethos. Creating an image that tells the audience how to better deal with the situation gives them a feeling of ease, a feeling that they aren't alone, and that better times are coming. The phrase, "A guide to a better, shorter lockdown," is a prime example of this (Figure 1). Furthermore, Davey's work gains more credibility by basing its message on medical reasoning, such as staying home when you are sick stops the spread of diseases.

By establishing a relationship between isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing the chances of a person's survival, the poster appeals to logos. This relationship is emphasized through the central text, "Keep Your Distance & Prolong Existence" (Figure 1). Logically, why would anyone risk their life if they knew going outside would lead to the endangerment of being caught by the viruses outside? The artist shows how illogical it is by including the brief message, "British Board of Common Sense" (Figure 1). Combining this, with the imagery of a person taking shelter, the artist is calling for people to quarantine inside their homes during the pandemic.

Moreover, Davey appeals to pathos by using dark and ominous colors to evoke strong emotions, making viewers feel the weight of the situation. It depicts a woman in tears, terrified about the situation outside. This appeals to humanity's sympathetic nature in order for it to resonate more with the audience. The slight darkening on the comic's edge gives a sense of seriousness and fear. Similarly, the ominous dark red sky symbolizes danger. These key elements were all used to emphasize that the COVID-19 pandemic should be taken seriously. With the text around the image advising on how to better deal with the situation, Davey gives the audience a sense of hope and something to look forward to. These mixes of strong emotions naturally draw people towards it, making the message more memorable.

The poster's clear message, leaving little to interpretation, is a major reason why it is so effective, its timing being another reason. Being made during a medical crisis resonated more with the audience. Despite the poster trying to make sure the situation seems as serious as it is, it does not always succeed. The main reason being the style of the visual. Being in the style of a horror comic book makes it seem childish. However, it brings a sense of nostalgia and catches people's attention—key components of a good public service announcement. The fact still stands that the artist's work is based on medical professionals' advice and does not deviate from their message, giving the necessary

credibility to the poster. An article from Johns Hopkins stated, “Health experts recommend that self-quarantine lasts 14 days...two weeks provides enough time for them to know whether or not they will become ill and be contagious to other people” (Johns Hopkins Medicine). This leads to the conclusion that the artist’s work was based on facts and made to help spread awareness by creating something that would captivate the audience’s attention.

Ultimately, Keith Davey’s poster persuades the audience to take quarantine seriously and provides practical advice. Davey creates compelling imagery that shows the seriousness of the situation. Establishing a reasonable relationship between longevity and quarantine establishes a logical argument in favor of quarantine. The artist forms trust with the audience by building a relationship with them and having his message be based on a medical professional’s advice. By giving a sense of hope and building trust with the audience, the message resonates more with the audience. All of these factors, in turn, make it an effective tool for conveying the importance of public health measures during a crisis.

Works Cited

- Davey, Keith. *Keep Your Distance & Prolong Existence*. Library of Congress, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppss.01126/>.
- CDC. "About COVID-19." *CDC*, 13 June 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/about/index.html>.
- CDC. "Respiratory Virus Guidance." *CDC*, 1 Mar. 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/index.html>.
- Maragakis, Lisa. "Coronavirus, Social, and Physical Distancing and Self-Quarantine." *Johns Hopkins Medicine*, 15 July 2020, <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-social-distancing-and-self-quarantine>.
- Morgan, Jay P., "Laws of Light: How light Conveys Emotion." *The Slanted Lens*, 22 June 2017, Laws of Light: How Light Conveys Emotion - The Slanted Lens.

Researched Argument

Permissibility of Modern Hunting Technology

by Cole Tjossem

The rapid growth of hunting technology has sparked long arguments about whether or not modern hunting technology should be permitted. Different topics such as fair chase, wounding loss, and hunting ethics are often discussed in these arguments amongst hunters and lawmakers. Fair chase is the idea that animals should have an equal opportunity to avoid detection or escape hunters as hunters have the chance to harvest them. Wounding loss occurs when an animal is shot, but the hunter doesn't properly place the shot, allowing the animal to run away to die somewhere the hunter won't find. These debates resulted in some states legalizing technology such as thermal scopes, but others are still heavily against using specific technology to hunt. Hunting laws revolving around technology are very confusing currently, as each state has a unique twist to its rules or conflicting wording compared to other states. A structured framework needs to be installed in the lawmaking process to determine what hunting technology should be permitted based on reduced wounding loss, increased hunter safety, and efficiency of population management.

Passing laws on hunting technology is difficult right now because there are many varying opinions on what should and should not be permitted. Some hunters view the use of modern technology as unethical as it takes away from the idea of fair chase in their traditional hunting ethics. According to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Committee, "The framework divides fair chase into two categories for consideration, one related to an animal's ability to avoid detection and the other concerned with the animal's ability to elude harvest if detected" (Kerr 2). Wanting to uphold these main ideas of fair chase, some hunters believe that new technology gives hunters too much of an advantage over the animals they are pursuing. Other hunters with less desire to keep traditional hunting ethics seek technology to make them more successful in their hunts. This clash between values and ethics leads to a standstill between lawmakers and differing opinions among hunting groups. Lawmakers want to keep the common interest in mind when enacting new laws.

According to hunters with more of a traditional view on hunting ethics, the solution to this standstill is to prohibit the use of any technology beyond the standard rifle, rifle scope, bow, and bow sight. Overly advanced technology, such as thermal scopes for night hunting and high-powered rifle scopes with built-in ballistic calculators, makes hunting too efficient and diminishes the fair chase between hunters and animals. In "Skill or Slaughter in 'Fair Chase': Animal Resistance to Modern Sports Hunting" by Erica Essan and Micheal Allen, the authors effectively describe the mentality of the hunters with more traditional hunting values. For example, on page one, they write, "Another is that recent developments in hunting practice undermine the internal justification by reducing the necessity for hunters to refine their performance skills, in effect allowing them to rely on technology and shortcuts in place of sportsmanship" (Essan 1). These hunters believe that hunting is no longer morally right when technology takes over because of a lack of skill. They believe hunters should have to practice, refine their skills, and rely on the ideal situation in order to successfully harvest an animal without technology, making the situation perfect for anyone. This is the dividing opinion among hunters who approve of new modern technology being implemented into hunting laws.

The counterargument to their solution of banning all modern technology might be using some technology to manage particular populations of animals more efficiently. Different species of animals can be more difficult to properly manage through hunting due to their behavior or sleeping habits. For instance, the coyote population in parts of the Midwest and certain states in the South has run rampant. Traditional hunting technology only allows hunters to set up during the day in hopes of catching a few coyotes walking by or hunting mice in the fields. However, this is inefficient as coyotes are the most active at night when prowling around the countryside. This hunting style led the coyote population to increase unchecked, resulting in more cattle industry predation and a reduction in white-tail deer populations. As stated by Kyle Brewster, “The monetary value of livestock losses attributed to coyote (*Canis latrans*) predation in North America has increased during the past 20 years” (Brewster 400). This unfortunate statistic proves that a new hunting technique is required if cattle producers want to protect their business by keeping their local coyote population in check. The use of thermal scopes and being able to hunt at night is a very efficient and successful strategy for hunting coyotes. Some states, after seeing the dangerously large population of coyotes, implemented the use of thermal scopes to hunt coyotes in their hunting regulations. Thus, allowing hunters to partake in the responsible and ethical management of said coyote population.

The other subculture of hunters with less traditional views on hunting proposes that any new hunting technology should be permitted as it is their right to buy the best gadgets to support their hunts. They see hunting as a sport and want the best equipment available, just like football players wanting the newest football gloves. These hunters do not value traditional hunting ethics; they prefer to look into the future of hunting as everything else in the world progresses through modern technology. One of the ideas behind fair chase is that the animal must be able to escape harvest if detected. Although long-range hunting often leaves the animal clueless about the hunter’s presence, leaving the animal unable to escape, these hunters still love the idea of buying the best scope and high-powered rifle to take down an animal at impressive distances. For instance, Aaron Kerr stated, “Advances in firearm design, sighting devices, ammunition and the willingness of hunters to embrace new technology has enabled hunters to harvest game at increasingly greater distances” (Kerr 29). While long-range hunting takes skill, new technology greatly reduces the skill required to make accurate shots, and this subculture of hunters appreciates the aid that is provided by this technology. They tend to see the benefits of the technology in their hunting success without looking into the effects that it has on animal populations and the ethics surrounding hunting.

The proposition to allow hunters to use the latest and greatest technological advancements raises the question of where we draw the line. When is technology too much? When technology completely removes the skill, animal populations will severely suffer and decrease as their ability to evade harvest will also drastically decrease. The whole reason animals can be hunted without going extinct is the idea of fair chase and their ability to escape. Technological hunting makes it way easier for the hunter by abolishing hunting barriers that animals use, such as running, hiding, or deceiving the hunter (Essen 99). These barriers are what make hunting, hunting, and not just killing. The animals should have a chance to escape and outwit the hunter. Not all hunts are successful, and this is a great thing for not only the animals but also the hunters. It allows the animal population to stay healthy while also providing the hunters an opportunity next year to go out in the woods and hope to successfully harvest an

animal. Technology, such as the use of drones to discover herds of animals, greatly diminishes the herd's ability to fight back. It takes away the idea of predator vs. prey and brings in a new term of predator vs unsuspecting and vulnerable animal with no hope of fighting back.

The best common ground solution to solve the stalemate between lawmakers and hunters with varying opinions on modern technology is installing a structured framework that would be used to determine which hunting technology should be permitted. This framework should measure permissible technology by how the technology affects wounding loss rates, effectiveness of population management, and hunters' safety. Wounding loss happens when a hunter improperly places their shot on an animal, which results in the animal slowly dying somewhere the hunter can't track (Kerr 28). Unfortunately, this makes the animal's death pointless and unethical because no meat could be harvested from the animal. The goal is to allow technology that would decrease those rates of wounding loss, such as better clarity rifle scopes as well as quality rifles that allow for more precise shots on animals. Traceable arrow usage should be permitted to help find wounded animals so the hunter would not let the animal go to waste (Kerr 28). On the side of population management, using thermal scopes is a great tool. Particular species will take over an ecosystem if their populations do not have any natural predators in that area. This is happening in the Midwest as coyote populations have rapidly grown, affecting other species, such as white-tail deer. Not only does this affect wild animals, but it also affects ranchers' cattle. Kyle Brewster states, "The latest report of cattle death loss reported coyote predation on cattle nationally accounted for \$48.2 million of damage or 116,708 head of cattle" (Brewster 401). This shows that ranchers and hunters need an effective way to manage the coyote population. Due to coyotes mainly being active at night, implementing the use of thermals has allowed hunters to help control the population and keep it healthy for the ecosystem in some states. Lastly, according to this framework, technology that keeps hunters safe would fall under acceptable technology. An example of such technology would be the use of GPS tracking apps. OnX Hunt is an app available to purchase that shows hunters location without reception, displays property boundaries to prevent trespassing, and uses elevation maps for hunters to safely plan trips (onX Hunt 0:00-3:15). Meeting the criteria I listed of this proposed framework would help guarantee that the only technology legalized would benefit hunters and wildlife equally.

The counterargument to this proposed framework is that hunting, in general, is not ethical nor should sport hunting be allowed because hunters are killing innocent animals that have no means to defend themselves against hunters. Erik Cohen states, "Proponents of an ethics of conviction in the discourse of animal ethics (Fennell 2012a), such as the advocates of animal rights (Fennell 2012b; Regan 2004), animal liberation (Callicutt 1980; Singer 1995), deep ecology (Reis 2009) and eco-feminism (Kheel 1996), prioritize unconditionally the preservation of life of individual animals and hence oppose hunting under any circumstances" (Cohen 6). If hunting is unethical, then any technology to aid in hunting is also unethical. While this is a valid point for people who view hunting as unethical, many others view hunting as a necessity for life. At one point, all of our ancestors had to rely on hunting as a main food source, and people today in certain locations still do. Hunting is a freedom that all Americans are born with, and to revoke that right would be unconstitutional. People who want to participate in the circle of life by managing populations and gathering food through hunting should be able to, and people who don't want to hunt don't have to.

Debates across the U.S. over the use of modern hunting technology would finally be concluded with the installment of a structured framework that would guide lawmakers in evaluating what technology should be legalized. Technology should be judged on its ability to help hunters decrease wounding loss rates, aid in hunters' safety, and effectively manage animal populations. By following these criteria, people who are for and against new hunting technology would come to a compromise. The framework considers both the animals and the hunters and helps ensure healthy animal populations along with future hunting seasons. Hunters and animals equally benefit from this proposition, which is ultimately the goal.

Works Cited

- Brewster, Kyle R., et al. "Cost–Benefit Analysis of Coyote Removal as a Management Option in Texas Cattle Ranching." *JSTOR*, 2019, www.jstor.org/stable/27316145?seq=17. Accessed 21 Oct. 2024.
- Cohen, Erik. "Recreational Hunting: Ethics, Experiences and Commoditization." *Tourism Recreation Research*, vol. 39, no. 1, Jan. 2014, pp. 3–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2014.11081323>.
- Essen, Erica von, and Michael P. Allen. "Skill or Slaughter in 'Fair Chase:' What Does Animal Resistance Tell Us about Modern Sports Hunting." *DigitalCommons@CalPoly*, 2022, digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/bts/vol25/iss1/7/. Accessed 21 Oct. 2024.
- Kerr, Aaron, et al. *Exploring New Technologies for Hunting*. Wyoming Game and Fish Department Committee Members, 11 Dec. 2017, www.wyoleg.gov/InterimCommittee/2018/06-20180510208-NewTechnologiesReport.pdf.
- onX Hunt. "How to Stay Safe by Using the Hunt App." *You Tube*, 19 Oct. 2022, www.youtube.com/watch?v=hztmkwp0KOk. Accessed 21 Oct. 2024.

Dangers of Human-Like A.I. During Childhood Development

by Hannah Waskowitz

Having a super-intelligent assistant, robot butler, or smart house is moving out of the realm of science fiction and into our kitchens, classrooms, and coat pockets as artificial intelligence gains widespread use. While artificial intelligence (A.I.), large language models (LLMs), and other forms of iterative technology have exciting potential, their increasingly human-like interfaces have caused concerns, with some consumers even perceiving them as gaining these human-like qualities independently (Claypool 7). The rise in anthropomorphic technology is no surprise, considering that A.I. and LLM designers use human neural structures as the framework for the technology's internal processing and user interfaces (Copeland). This does not mean that A.I.'s anthropomorphic identity arises the same way our human ones do- rather, we, as users, impose this identity onto objects and technologies through anthropomorphization. Although the design of iterative technologies prompts all users to engage in anthropomorphization, adults are widely capable of understanding that the technology is merely a symbolic representation of a human and not living or sentient. Young children, however, are at a developmental stage where both their ability to make use of symbolic relationships and their understanding of what defines a human or living thing are in constant flux, which puts them at a unique risk of being unable to separate artificial intelligence from a human being on a fundamental level. This confusion could make children vulnerable targets for tech companies in the long term.

Humans have a natural impulse to build relationships with non-human entities through the process of anthropomorphization, and artificial intelligence's layered human-like traits make it a prime candidate for this. Anthropomorphization is not merely the existence of human-like traits in non-human agents but is instead an issue of agency. It is the act of perceiving and assigning anthropomorphic qualities to those agents. Social psychologist and ethicist Adam Waytz identifies "... mental states perceived to be uniquely human..." as the quality most likely to prompt anthropomorphization (411). Although Waytz's research focuses on non-A.I. forms of technology that possess human characteristics, the processes he identifies hold true and are amplified by A.I.'s in-depth human-like design. Consumer advocacy journalist Rick Claypool found the external user interfaces of common iterative technologies to rely on speech patterns, chat bubbles, and "I" statements that mimic human behavior patterns and thought processes (10). These interfaces and their approximations of human mental states are where the majority of people's interaction with technology occurs, so while anthropomorphization remains an act done by people to other entities, A.I.'s design is uniquely likely to prompt that action.

Anthropomorphization was previously thought to be a linguistic tool with no bearing on how humans fundamentally interacted with technology, but modern studies by Waytz show that the anthropomorphic relationship moves beyond linguistic metaphor. In 2010, Waytz's team conducted a series of neuroimaging tests which showed that people engaging in the anthropomorphization of tech used the same part of their brain that was used when engaging with other humans, indicating that there is an element of anthropomorphism that is more literal than a linguistic representation (419). Although Waytz found that adults anthropomorphized technology on

a neurological level, there is no cause to believe that they thought the technology was alive or human, as psychologists have established that people have a firm understanding of what dictates these categories by age 10 (Backsheider et al. 1243). This suggests that anthropomorphization is creating a relationship between humans and technology that is neither fully metaphorical nor entirely literal but instead symbolic.

As with anthropomorphization, this symbolic relationship is created by humans and assigned to technology. In it, a piece of iterative technology acts as the symbol- an object that can be recognized and interacted with as the thing it represents- and human beings act as the referent- the thing that is being represented. Although A.I.'s design closely mimics sentience, agency, and other human mental states, adults' firm developmental knowledge of the distinction between object and human allows them to maintain agency and create this symbolic relationship.

However, this ability to understand and use symbolic relationships is not innate. Child psychologist Judy DeLoache identified the development process of these abilities in a series of studies where she showed two sets of children a room, followed by a miniature model of that room, and asked them to find specific objects from the full-sized room in the miniature one. Children who were told that the model was simply a scale model- a symbol of the real room- were unable to complete the tasks DeLoache asked of them, but children who were told that the miniature room was a shrunken version of the real room- not a separate symbol, but the same object in altered form- had no issue understanding the connection or completing tasks. DeLoache credits the children's difficulty in using symbolic relationships to a developmental inability to engage in dual representation, simultaneously recognizing a symbol as itself and as its referent (308). In the case of A.I., young children can understand that there is a relationship between technology and a human but are developmentally unable to engage in anthropomorphization and create a symbolic relationship.

Although children may be unable to assign anthropomorphism to A.I., that does not necessarily mean they view humans and technology as fully separate. Children ages 3 and 4 use environmental clues to build their understanding of what is and isn't human. University of Michigan psychology professor Andrea Backscheider studied this developmental phase and identified three dichotomies children use to sort objects: living/nonliving, artifact/natural kind, and physical/nonphysical (1242). When first sorting objects into these categories, children rely on rote knowledge and a rudimentary understanding of psychology (Backsheider et al. 1243). Given that iterative technology is designed to possess human mental traits and young children cannot use its symbolic nature, there is a danger of them mis-categorizing the technology while attempting to build their understanding of the living/nonliving and artifact/natural kind dichotomies.

Through a series of experiments focused on children's decision-making processes while distinguishing between these dichotomies, Backsheider and her team found that children frequently base those decisions on the presence of human interaction and psychological human traits in the objects they identify (1243, 1256). In particular, they determined that objects that rely on human interaction to grow or be repaired are overwhelmingly categorized as nonliving artifacts, which, at first glance, would place A.I. into these categories (Backsheider et al. 1255). However, despite A.I.'s reliance on user input and interaction for its growth, a core element of its human-like design is that

its output maintains an appearance of natural spontaneity. The effects of human interaction are hidden from the user, allowing the object to preserve an appearance of internal motivation, a psychological human trait. Given that children are unable to see the effects of human interaction that would lead them to categorize iterative technology as a nonliving artifact correctly but, due to the technology's user interface and design, can see the processes that mimic human cognition, there is a high likelihood that A.I. is, at least partially, being sorted into their developing living and natural kind categories. This confusion in the living/natural kind categories complicates DeLoache's findings that difficulties with dual representation typically stop young children from forming higher-level connections between symbols and their referents. Instead, it raises the possibility that, with A.I., children could move in the opposite direction and collapse the relationship, merging symbol and referent into one (DeLoache et al. 311). DeLoache's study established that "...the more salient the concrete aspects of a symbol are, the more difficult it is to appreciate its abstract, symbolic nature", meaning that children who view A.I. with a high degree of salience in relationship to humans have particular difficulty seeing the abstract nature of A.I. (308). In the model rooms that DeLoache's study used, the high salience of the symbol prevented the children from forming any usable relationship between the model and the full-sized rooms they represented. Although DeLoache's work did not evaluate how children would handle dual representation for objects that symbolize human beings, Waytz's research on anthropomorphization helps to fill this gap. It stands to reason that the neurological mechanisms he identified in adults can carry over to children. Children, however, have not yet reached other developmental milestones that would allow them to balance that neurological response with a strong understanding that human-like iterative technology is not actually human. In this case, young children may end up viewing A.I. as a sort of "shrunk room," using its high salience to humans, the cognitive response of anthropomorphization, and their reliance on rudimentary psychology to bypass the issue of dual representation entirely. This would lead them to instead view A.I. as a human in an altered form.

Research on the relationship between A.I. and early childhood cognitive development is not nearly as robust as in other areas of child psychology. Iterative technology and its impacts are an emerging field, but conclusions can be drawn from current studies on using A.I. in children's toys. Engineer Xin Wang studied potential use cases for iterative technology in both the development and design of children's toys and found that children treated robotic A.I. toys as artifacts "...less than one percent of the time..." (153). Additional research on the relationships between young children and human-like robotic toys found that social trust, which is based on perceived familiarity, is established in robotic toys via "...agency characteristics... not its human appearance" (Baumann et al. 554). This distinction further shows that children's object and social categories are based on psychological characteristics, which supports the theory that A.I.'s appearance of spontaneity and cognition leads children to identify it as a living/natural kind. Given that young children have already started interacting with A.I. devices as if they were human, the ideal solution would be to refrain from using iterative technology with children until they can fully understand the human/artifact distinction and use symbolic relationships. However, the current state of the tech market doesn't hold much promise for this.

While some engineers, such as Wang, have shown concern for child safety in the A.I. market and provided positive justifications for iterative technology in children's toys, the profit incentive for dangerous and predatory uses of

these technologies threatens to outweigh any benefits. Supporters of iterative technology suggest it could be used by low-income families to access advanced educational tools for their children, as A.I. has been shown to provide specialized learning support and encouragement (Wang et al. 153). The potential for equitable access to early education should not be brushed aside lightly, nor should the importance of safe childhood neurological development. To balance these two things, tech companies would need to utilize low-risk anthropomorphic design, which prioritizes using as few human-like qualities as are necessary for a product to function (Claypool 16). Unfortunately, low-risk anthropomorphic design has proven to be less profitable, leading tech companies to become “...well aware of the seductive power of anthropomorphic design and prepare[d] to take advantage of its effect on users” (Claypool 15).

Analysis of current A.I. products has shown that highly human-like personality traits and speech patterns spark positive responses and increased trust and obedience in users. Given that tech designers continue to hold user engagement as a primary metric for success, it is unlikely that child-safe, blatantly non-human A.I. will be a top concern in the near future (Claypool 15, Wang et al. 155). When discussing the issues with early versions of A.I. toys, Wang stated, “The interaction performance is far from satisfactory. The robot is talking to itself and can barely communicate with users” (155). Later, when proposing improvements, she suggested adding cartoon faces and animals to “...get children’s love...” and “...help cultivate children’s good moral qualities...” (158). While some tech designers truly hope to find uses for A.I. that can support children’s development and social abilities, these uses go hand-in-hand with anthropomorphic design, which only threatens to harm children’s development in other key areas. As A.I.’s prevalence grows, a lack of safeguards for the most developmentally vulnerable users- young children- cements the danger that iterative tech could break down their distinction between natural kind and artifact altogether.

While the idea that children might see computers as humans sounds like a sci-fi subplot, the fact of the matter is that, while further research needs to be done on A.I.’s direct impacts on the developmental categorization of humans, there is already enough information to know that the type of human that A.I. is approximating is a misleading one. For iterative technology to achieve the goal of maximum user engagement, that technology must be available at all times. These computer programs still rely on human interaction, but a young child who cannot see the impact their interaction has on the program instead only sees an altered form of a human that is “...always available, interested in talking with you, and can discuss any topic” due to its internal motivation (Moore et al.). Iterative technology, to an adult, constantly has the condition of humanness placed upon it. Children in the right stage of open cognitive development, however, are both inputting data to the tech they engage with and encoding the data they receive from it without the necessary tools to parse out what is real and what is a representation. It is not perfectly clear what the long-term implications for a generation that grows up with an ever-present piece of technology designed to draw them in through a convincingly human facade are. Still, there is strong reason to believe that the use of iterative technology for young children should be halted until more is understood, or at least until they can fully understand what it is they are interacting with.

Works Cited

- Backscheider, Andrea G., et al. "Preschoolers' Ability to Distinguish Living Kinds as a Function of Regrowth." *Society for Research in Child Development*, vol. 64, no. 4, 1993, pp. 1242–1257. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1131337>.
- Baumann, Anna-Elisabeth, et al. "People Do Not Always Know Best: Preschoolers' Trust in Social Robots." *Journal of Cognition and Development*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2023, pp. 535–562. *Taylor & Francis Online*, <https://www-tandfonline-com.libproxy.uwyo.edu/doi/full/10.1080/15248372.2023.2178435?scroll=top&needAccess=true>. Accessed 23 Mar. 2024.
- Claypool, Rick. "Chatbots Are Not People." *Public Citizen*, 27 Sept. 2023, www.citizen.org/article/chatbots-are-not-people-dangerous-human-likeanthropomorphic-ai-report/.
- Copeland, B. J. "Artificial Intelligence." *Britannica Academic*, 9 Nov. 2017, <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/artificial-intelligence/9711#358292.toc>. Accessed 2 Apr. 2024.
- DeLoache, Judy S., et al. "The Credible Shrinking Room: Very Young Children's Performance with Symbolic and Nonsymbolic Relations." *Psychological Science*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1997, pp. 308–13. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40063198>. Accessed 9 Mar. 2024.

Public Genre Assignment: Rhetorical Storytelling

Chronic Illness, Absurdity, and Coffee *by Drake King*

A medical diagnosis can be the most life-altering discovery a person can experience, impacting physical health and mental well-being. Long-term conditions, chronic disabilities, terminal illnesses, and other diagnoses can render a person prone to mental illness. Those affected are twice as likely to experience anxiety/depression and, by extension, are at higher risk of subsequent mental issues (Mental Health Foundation, 2022). When I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes, however, I made a promise to myself and my loved ones that, although incredibly difficult, I think anyone with a diagnosis is capable of. While it would be hard to handle some days, I wouldn't let my medical condition confine, define, or restrict who I am, who I want to be, or what I want to do. I wouldn't allow it to lessen my appreciation of life, and I would live in spite of my condition.

There was a lot that led to my diagnosis and oath. I was a busy kid during the first half of my senior year of high school in 2023, starting my days with a steaming cup of coffee. I was an honors student, taking math courses years ahead of my peers. I was a dual-enrolled student at the community college, traveling from one campus to another daily. I was working over twenty hours a week at Chick-fil-A, working to fund a trip to the Mediterranean. Furthermore, I was a devout musician. Playing in the school's orchestra, assisting my teacher in conducting, and dual composing and directing music for a project. There wasn't a moment in the day when I wasn't doing homework, working the deep-friers, or music-making.

My vigorous schedule began taking its toll on my physical health; as autumn waned into winter, certain symptoms arose. I was spent by evening. An ungodly exhaustion absorbed me when I was freed from work. I was constantly hungry, before and after meals, regardless of size. I was crankier than usual, and I got unreasonably angry at the slightest dissatisfaction. These were all unusual for me, but my family and I excused these symptoms. I was an overworked kid, a growing boy overdue for my pissed-off-teenager phase.

But as November continued, more discomforts manifested. As the air grew colder, so did my demeanor. The flu-like characteristics brought me into doctors' offices. When bacterial and viral tests read negative, the doctors proposed it being GERD, a condition that would limit my diet. It would end slow mornings with my beloved cups of coffee. I prayed it was something, anything, other than GERD. On December 1st, while at one such appointment, my stepdad made a strange suggestion: to have my blood drawn and tested. I thought it was unnecessary, but my mom had been worrying, and I knew it would ease her to hear my blood was fine. I remember a single droplet had escaped their syringe once they had what they needed, a little ruby that glistened in the buzzing fluorescent lights of the office.

The next day, the doctors called with the results of my blood test. The normal level for blood sugar was 70-100 mg/dL (Riley, 2024). In their draw, mine was roughly 480 mg/dL. They urged an ER visit. I remember being laid

on a stretcher, nurses poking, prodding, and asking questions I couldn't figure out how to answer. They had to take a blood draw. As they pulled the needle from my arm and bandaged my elbow, I noticed something. Right there, glistening in the lights. A few drops of blood had spilled from the needle; viscous, syrupy little rubies, seeping into the fabric of the stretcher. The same little rubies that lead me there in the first place. I suppose that, in my starved, angry, cloudy delirium, something about seeing the whistleblower of my condition was so amusing, that right there on the stretcher, the closest to death I've ever been ... *I began to laugh...*

A few days later, I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus, a genetic, chronic disorder. A new dismay struck me, and I looked at my mom, who hadn't left my side since I was admitted, and I saw that look in her that made me hurt. So, in hopes of raising spirits and maybe even laughs, I asked the doctor: "So, I can still drink my coffee?"

Sitting in the hospital bed gave me time to think about my diagnosis. I'd have to completely change my lifestyle, or I'd die before my forties. I feared the rest of my life would be monotonous, dull. I remember the visceral anguish I grappled with in that hospital room; why me? What did I do to deserve this? I was a good person, why was I doomed to this curse that would hinder every decision and, most likely, kill me? *God, why me?*

Amidst the chaos in my mind, an odd memory resurfaced. Before my hospitalization, I read a book called *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus, where Camus used Sisyphus as a catalyst to explore our struggle to find meaning. Through this, I discovered Absurdism. It was a philosophy that, instead of giving me the answers I begged for, acknowledged the chaos of the world and concluded that there is no reason for any such things (Rassulov, 2023). In this crazy existence we all share, where answers and reasons are unobtainable, our fate and purpose is up to us to decide. The same terrifying, thieving havoc that surrounds us allows us to choose our destiny.

And upon this conclusion, the despair I felt turned on its head to hope. No, I may not have done anything to deserve this. But what happened happened. There was no use sitting around and moping for the rest of my life. My eyes glanced from the past I missed to the unwritten, inviting future. It was then and there I made my promise. Lying in that bed with my mom by my side, alive and now, happy. I felt like I was no longer bolted to the cold floor but now could soar free into the sky.

I've heard stories of patients who were diagnosed and caved inwards, either relinquishing into personal solitude or completely giving up. But I know there is strength in all of us. Realizing that our conditions aren't our limits can help us move forward and live full lives. I hope my story can help people like me appreciate themselves and discover their potential to live despite their conditions, because life is beautiful and shouldn't be missed for doable obstacles, big or small. I could've given into that sorrow in that hospital room. But I pushed through and have done so much. I graduated high school, got to the Mediterranean, composed bigger and better music, made it to college, and secured my first public premiere as a respected contemporary classical composer. Life is worth fighting for, whether for something as ambitious as chasing your wildest dreams, or as quaint as slow mornings with a steaming cup of coffee. After all, as Camus said, "one must consider Sisyphus happy."

References

- Mental Health Foundation. (2022). *Long-term physical conditions and mental health*. Mental Health Foundation.
[https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/
long-term-physical-conditions-and-mental-health](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/long-term-physical-conditions-and-mental-health)
- Rassulov, R. (2023, December 6). *Absurdism: Your guide to navigating chaos*. *That's Philosophical*.
<https://thatsphilosophical.substack.com/p/absurdism-your-guide-to-navigating>
- Riley, L. (2024). *Mean fasting blood glucose*. *World Health Organization*.
<https://www.who.int/data/gho/indicator-metadata-registry/imr-details/2380>

The Heart of a Dog *by Katherine Looby*

There is no feeling equal to the joy of receiving a puppy. Maybe getting your dream job, buying your first house, or even having your first baby, but a puppy expects nothing more from you other than just love. When I picked up the heap of golden fur that bitter Christmas morning, I knew I was going to cherish this dog until the day she died.

December 25th, 2011:

“She is perfect!” I announced to my family as we all gawked over our newest addition.

“Her name is Stella, and she is a Golden Retriever, they are supposedly great family dogs!” exclaimed my dad enthusiastically. As my siblings began opening their other presents, I was unable to focus on anything else besides Stella. What other gift could there possibly be that is better than this precious ray of light? My mom rustled me up amongst all the chaos just to get a picture of me and my favorite gift. FLASH!

January 1st, 2012:

The following week was a blur of unboxing presents, doing dishes, and collecting wrapping paper. Although it had only been seven days since Santa brought us Stella, I had already begun picking up on some of her quirks.

“Does anyone know where Stella is?” my mom called out from upstairs.

“I found her, she is in the kitchen behind the curtains!” I yelled as I started pulling our puppy from her latest nap spot. “There you are, Stelly Belly! We were looking all over for you.” Stella was so happy to have been awakened from one of her famous puppy naps that her tail started wagging in all directions. She was spinning in circles, giving me kisses, but through all the elation, she did not bark. *Never once did Stella bark.*

Later that day, I was so caught up in all the puppy love that I did not realize the rancid smell coming from our living room. “Gross!” yelled my younger brother Joey, “Stella pooped on the carpet!” My mom walked into the living room, paper towel and carpet cleaner in hand, and began tackling the chore.

“This is the third time she has had an accident this week,” my mom said in disbelief.

“I just hope she is not sick,” I said under my breath so that only the wriggly puppy in my arms could hear.

January 8th, 2012:

When I returned home from school that day, anxious to see our puppy, she was not there. A few hours passed until my parents walked through the front door, holding Stella. Anyone would have been able to tell that my dad was

visibly distraught. My mom had also been crying. The streaks of tears visible on her makeup would have raised some questions. But I was five, and all I cared about was that Stella was home and it was time to play. My older, a little more observant sister asked my mom what was wrong, but she told us to wait until after dinner.

After my siblings and I had been fed and bathed, my parents called a rare “family meeting.” These normally occurred when someone was in trouble or if we were going on vacation; there was not much gray area in between. However, the news that my parents were about to lay on my three siblings and me was a hue of the darkest black.

“Your mother and I took Stella to the veterinarian today for a checkup, she needed to get her shots,” said my dad, trying to avoid the elephant in the room. “While we were there, the vet heard a heart murmur. He called the vet cardiologist in, and he proceeded to diagnose her with a condition called hypertrophic subaortic stenosis.” Looking back, I appreciate my parents’ effort to explain this to their four kids, all under the age of ten, but all of the information was going right over my head; I wanted to know what was wrong with our puppy.

“So, what does that mean?” asked my older brother, Lawrence, with a concerned expression on his face.

My mom took the reins and explained to us that there is no cure for this condition. “As she continues to grow, the condition will get worse and her heart will eventually fail, causing her to have a heart attack. The doctor said that she might live to be two years old, but something may happen sooner. It’s all in God’s hands now.”

“Why don’t you put her down!?” argued my observant sister, Lydia, who seemed to have a better understanding of the situation than all my siblings and me combined.

“Stella is a very special puppy that has some problems,” my dad voiced, “Santa brought her to us because she needs a very special home that will give her lots of love and support. Although she may not be with us very long, we need to give her lots of love while she is here.”

The meeting was complete. My parents both said their piece and all they could do was hope we would understand. As Joey went to play with his Thomas and Friends train set, Lawrence and Lydia sat at the table crying, leaving me bewildered. So much was thrown at me all at once, and half of it I did not comprehend. All I knew was that I did not have much longer with my favorite Christmas gift, and I could not do anything to prevent it. All I could do was give Stella unconditional love until her dying day.

September 24th, 2012:

It was a cloudy autumn day. Unlike the bitter Christmas morning that turned golden, this day would stay gray, because this was the day that Stella died. A short 9 months later and just like that, she dropped dead right in front of my 5-year-old brother. Although we knew it would come eventually, we thought we would have more time, “At least two years,” the vet had told us. Instead, this sprung up on us, just like being suddenly laid off from your job.

Unexpected and shocking. We all said our goodbyes to our precious Stella, tears streaming down all our faces, even my dad's, which had taken me aback. I never saw dad cry.

...

As I grew up and recalled the puppy that brought us so much excitement and sadness, my parents finally revealed to us that Stella was from a puppy mill. My dad admitted he was unaware that it was a puppy mill when he arrived, but he felt guilty leaving without one of the suffering puppies. Puppy mills are factory farms for dogs. At a puppy mill, profit is prioritized over health; owners will inbreed the dogs to make a buck (Best Friends). This may result in a puppy having some deformity or a critical medical condition, just like our Stella.

I recollect asking my dad, just like my sister did years ago, why they did not put her down. He told me, "Your mom and I considered it. We even considered taking her back to the breeder in exchange for a different dog. However, we decided that we could not abandon this little puppy. That was not the lesson we wanted to teach you guys." My dad explained that there were three lessons he wanted my siblings and me to takeaway from Stella.

The first lesson was learning how to deal with death, loss, and grief. My parents wanted us to have these life experiences at an early age so that we would know how to cope in the future. The second was knowing how to support a family member during a time of need. My parents wanted to teach us not to abandon someone or something close to us because they are minorly flawed. Finally, they wanted us to discover how to enjoy the time we have with someone or something, even if it might be short. I can confidently say that although Stella had a sick heart, there was no shortage of love in her heart.

Stella was not solely a "teaching moment" or a "charity case" in my siblings' and my childhood. Yes, my parents made the pivotal decision to keep her in hopes of "teaching" us lessons about life, but she was more than that. Stella was a Golden Retriever, a great family dog. She loved belly rubs, playing dead, and sleeping behind the curtains. But most of all, she remains a part of my family to this day. Owen Wilson said it best, "A dog doesn't care if you're rich or poor, clever or dull, smart or dumb. Give him your heart and he'll give you his" (Marley and Me, Frankel).

Works Cited

Marley & Me. Directed by David Frankel, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corp, 2008.

“What Is a Puppy Mill?” *Best Friends Animal Society - Save Them All*,
bestfriends.org/advocacy/ending-puppy-mills/what-puppy-mill. Accessed 20 Nov. 2024.

Long Live Love by Joren Vipperman

[Dear Reader: Joren's essay touches on sensitive issues related to suicide and mental health.]

Everyone knows that the happiest, kindest people can fall prey to suicide. Think of Marilyn Monroe or Robin Williams. We hear of different stories of people taking their own lives and countless other statistics that run amok in our heads. But what about the people who are more than just a “kid I know” or a friend of a friend, but best friends, sons, daughters, mothers, or fathers? People who are so full of love tend to hold it for others so deeply that the love they have reserved for themselves begins to deplete. It is important to love oneself first before attempting to love the rest of the world. This is the story of one of the brightest souls I’ll ever know, who forgot to take the time to love himself.

Tommy Coleman is my childhood best friend. We haven’t known each other since birth like the stories you hear, but I wouldn’t want it any other way. Our friendship was organically grown, not something we were born into. He was the type of kid who was unapologetically himself, which is why I felt drawn to him. Tommy was a medium-height, skinny kid with a certain lightness in the way he moved. It was almost as if he was God’s personal marionette, just bouncing along the path, seeming to barely touch the ground. After becoming so close to him, something opened in me. I finally felt like I was allowed to enjoy the things I was passionate about, no matter how silly they may have seemed. We may not have been the most popular kids with our Rubik’s Cubes, computer games, and terrible comic book-making skills, but we sure did enjoy the life we led.

Before our friendship, we knew of each other but never truly interacted until Mrs. Dove’s fifth-grade class at Eastside Elementary in Cody, Wyoming. We were both a bit nerdy but still loved to make people laugh. He was among the smartest kids in our grade and one of the highest scorers on every reading and history test. Yet, everyone knew who Tommy Coleman was for who he was as a person, not because he was a geek. They knew him as the fun kid, the relaxed, easy-going kid. During seemingly boring assignments, he’d always ask the teacher if we could spice up the project by adding art or designs rather than keeping it as a simple writing prompt. We were only in fifth grade, but by no means did that stop him from asking questions and attempting to make everyone enjoy classes just a tad bit more. We even gathered some friends and made a school-wide newspaper; we’d interview teachers, janitors, and even the principal about topics we thought were interesting. There were never any groundbreaking ideas, but rather ideas that connected the students and the staff on a deeper level. Who knew the principal missed playing on the monkey bars as a kid? But behind the joy of the collaborative creation, there was always the mastermind, Tommy Coleman.

Outside of school, he was active in church, Boy Scouts, and whatever seemed fun at the time. He was and remains one of the most committed people I know; for two summers straight, he worked his fingers to the bone to buy a dirt bike, another project to pour himself into. Throughout our years of middle school, we managed to start a Rubik's Cube club, a small airsoft group, and even a computer gaming club (although slightly against the rules, we still managed to find ways to get away from the bustling cafeteria). He was someone who loved what he did and wanted to share it. Most things we did together, he taught me how to do.

My love for skiing: It was the landline call I'd get every weekend from Tommy Coleman that brought me into a hobby that I love to this day.

My first airsoft gun: The excitement of digging through our dumpsters for old cans to use as target practice kept me sane through the long days of elementary and middle school.

Biking to school every day: I'll never forget all the cold, dewy mornings Tommy Coleman and I met on the corner of 17th and North so we wouldn't have to show up to class alone.

He was not only passionate but also a sweet boy. The worst thing he'd call anyone was a yuppie, yet he remained a stoic kid. Not many people got to know what he felt or what made him tick, but those close to him knew that Tommy Coleman understood that loving was never the wrong thing to do. I was one of those people; with every action he took, I could see the love pouring out of his heart like a whiffle ball under a faucet; hatred was simply a word that didn't exist in his vocabulary. He was deeply passionate about whatever he loved, whatever gave him a sense of purpose or meaning. He devoted his full attention to his interests without a second thought to whoever disapproved, loving wholeheartedly without regrets. No one could stop him from pursuing what he loved, unless, of course, he loved the person just a bit more than the activity itself. I looked up to Tommy Coleman at every moment, consistently striving to love something as deeply as he could. He showed me that I should make time for what I truly loved. I shouldn't run away for fear of becoming dependent on these things; I should let them envelop my life and my every thought.

The issue of loving everything so deeply is one tends to skip on taking time for themselves. The people who seem incredibly passionate may seem that way because they pour their souls into everything but themselves. On August 26, 2021, Tommy Coleman took his own life. Even on his suicide note, the love spilled out from the letters. Each scratch of a worn pencil somehow felt like a hug. The way he always waved in the halls, the empty promise of playing tennis with me just 3 hours before, he never stopped loving. Even the last beat of his heart resounded with tenderness. Loving is never the wrong thing to do unless one fails to love themselves first.

Wyoming consistently has one of the highest suicide rates in the entire nation, with an average of 29.4 per every 100,000 people in 2019, effectively doubling the nationwide average of 14.5 ("Stats of the State"). Suicide is stealing beautiful souls from our state and has been for a long time. Mental health is something we, as Wyomingites

and the like, need to bring attention and importance to. It's a tough place for love to flourish, a place where men don't cry and the only sound heard at funerals is the wind through the rafters, but we've been raised to love our neighbors, so where is that age-old sentiment now? In Wyoming, middle-aged men and teenagers are most likely to take their own lives, and we need to act to change this before we lose more of our Wyoming cowboys ("2021 Suicide"). We need to share love and show each other that everyone deserves love. We need constant reminders to not only remember this story and the countless other suicide stories we've heard but also to take them to heart. Never forget that you deserve love; if you ever feel as if you don't, remember that there is always someone who will love you anyway.

Works Cited

- “Stats of the State - Suicide Mortality.” *CDC*, 2021,
<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/suicide-mortality/suicide.htm> Accessed 17 Nov. 2024.
- “2021 Suicide in Wyoming.” *Wyoming Department of Health*, Wyoming Department of Health,
<https://health.wyo.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2021-OFFICIAL-Suicide-Infographic-1.pdf>.
Accessed 17 Nov. 2024.