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# ELI STUDENT VOICES

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## **A Letter That Cannot Be Delivered**

*Rasha Mansouri*

(1<sup>st</sup> Place)

*R/W 60*

I miss you so much. I wish you were still here supporting, caring, and protecting me. I need you around me. I need to see your charming smile that used to provide my heart with peace. I need to feel your fingers through my hair and telling me that everything is going to be alright; and the most I need to flop into your lap and cry telling you everything that hurt me. I need you, only you because no one else knows how to soothe my sadness as you do. I miss you more than anything else, my grandma.

I cannot stop me thinking of you, of us. You occupy almost all of my memories. Everything around reminds me of you because simply you belong to all the places where I like to be. I cannot avoid you, and honestly I do not want to.

Grandma!! Do you remember the park, our park? I have never stopped going there. I like to go there, taking your usual seat. I watch the children swinging, sliding, following their balls, or running around aimlessly. I like being there. Their yells and laughter are reflected on my heart. They make me smile, not because of them but because of you. They evoke my old days. They make me live my moments with you again. I can see myself flying away on the swing and your voice reaches my ears: "Fly, fly, butterfly." I can feel your hands catching me away from the slide while pressing your kiss on my forehead. I can imagine throwing the ball to you and seeing you pretend how hard my toss was. I can hear you warning me loudly: "slow down honey, we do not want to see any blood today." I can smell your luscious sandwiches while I am running from the farthest corner to let you feed me with your soft hands. You sit me next to you sometimes or on your lap other times, but most importantly, you will never let me go without finishing my meal, the one that you prepared especially for me, according to my desire. I can feel the taste of the fresh juice in my mouth; you never let me have the ready-made juice: "it is not healthy honey; don't you want to grow with long hair, a shaped body, beautiful skin and sharp cleverness that you always pray for?" I can feel your hand holding my hand tightly while I am trying to match my steps with yours constantly. I can feel your warm body next to me in the car and see your hand waving to the park: "Bye bye park, will come to visit you soon." You had never broken your promise. You always brought me back to the park. But today, I am here alone. You are not here anymore to fulfill this promise. You are not here anymore to join me or share any of my precious moments.

I miss you grandma. I miss you seeing me grow up and achieve all my dreams, our dreams. I miss you sharing my

success when I graduated. I miss you sharing my happiness when I got married. I miss you carrying my baby when I gave birth to her. I miss you being by my side every time I decide to make a new step in my life.

I miss you, grandma, badly. I miss you today more than yesterday, and tomorrow more than today. I want you back. I can fill unlimited pages reminiscing about you, but can this return you back alive to me? I whisper, I scream, I am calling you back daily. Maybe you can see me, hear me, but can you be with me again, only once again? Agonizingly, your returning is not that easy, your returning needs a miracle that will never exist. And bitterly, this letter, my letter for you, cannot ever be delivered.

## **Memoirs of That July 4<sup>th</sup>**

(2<sup>nd</sup> Place)

*Marcelina Alvim*

*R/W 60*

July 4, 1994, should have been one of most exciting days in my life, but it was not. In the afternoon, the Brazilian soccer team would play against the American soccer team in the World Cup. That event was awaited by Brazilians because the USA would play at home, on their National Day. We Brazilians were pretty optimistic that we would win that match.

That day, I woke up early and called my grandmother. I used to do it every weekend, because my relationship with my grandmother was special. Actually, she was special because she breathed goodness and spread serenity. When I was a child, I was raised by her for many years and it created a strong bond between us. She was the most special person in my life and my sweetest memory. I thank everyday for having had a grandmother like her.

Well, I knew she was expecting that day anxiously because after 3 years she had permission to attend to church. She was a very religious person and this event would be extremely important for her. It sounds a little bit strange, but it was exactly what happened.

My grandma lived in a small city in the rural Brazil, Teixeiras, setting of my childhood, in a big house. It was an old farmhouse, where my great-grandparents had lived surrounded by many slaves about 100 years ago. That house had secrets and mysteries that occupied my imagination. My grandma used to tell stories about ghosts, gypsies, and aliens.

"Lina, don't play outside at night because the gypsies can take you away," said my grandma when I was about 5 years old.

Asking some kid to not do something is the same as saying "Do it!" So, I put my face through the window slowly making sure that no one was outside and I saw nothing.

“Grandma, are the gypsies outside?” I asked.

“Yes. They are outside waiting for some disobedient child”.

I went back to the window and looked at the outside again. Actually, I didn’t want to play outside. I just wanted to see the gypsies. Hours after peeping through the window, I still couldn’t see them. That was frustrating.

“Grandma, are the gypsies outside right now?”

“Believe me. They are.”

“Grandma, can I ask you something? What is a gypsy?” I asked frustrated. She laughed a lot.

“You don’t even know what a gypsy is, but are you scared of them?”

In her home, my world of make-believe became real and it made my childhood unforgettable.

My grandma lived in that home along with my 38 year-old-aunt, who had Down syndrome. Although my grandmother had a housekeeper, she took care of my aunt alone. My aunt studied in a specialized school only for a few years, while she and my grandmother were living in a big city. When they went to Teixeira, my aunt had to stop studying because there were not such schools there. So, she couldn’t develop her abilities. She was kind but very hard to control sometimes.

One day, my grandmother and my aunt went to the church, as they used to do every Sunday. That day my aunt was annoying. She talked to her imaginary friends aloud, discussed with them, and bothered the people that were paying attention in the mass. Her behavior was uncontrollable and my grandmother got really embarrassed. At the end of the mass, the priest told my grandmother he needed to talk to her for a while. My grandmother knew that the conversation would be about my aunt’s behavior. The priest said to her, “You have done a good job for God. You have taken care of your daughter who has Down syndrome alone for the past 33 years. You don’t need to come to the mass anymore, because you already have a place beside God”. My grandmother was very upset because the priest not only stopped her from attending the mass, but also discriminated against my aunt. From that day on, they didn’t go back to church.

Three years later, the priest died and another one replaced him. People mentioned what had happened to my grandmother and my aunt to him, who thought this was completely absurd. He went personally to my grandmother’s home and asked her to come back to the church with my aunt. He said, “The church is the house of God and everyone has a right to attend there in any circumstances. You and your daughter will be always welcomed in my church.” Nobody can imagine how happy my grandmother got with that gesture. She had stopped attending church she had been attending all her life. For 3 years, she did her prayers at home, in a small chapel built by her, but it hadn’t filled the feeling of emptiness caused by the insensitive priest. As soon as she received the good news, she called to tell me. I still remember her words: “Next week your aunt and I will attend the church and after the mass I will celebrate the moment taking her to eat a sandwich and drink some Coke.” It was the best activity for my aunt, considering her limitations.

My grandmother had a huge worry towards my aunt. She didn’t want to die before my aunt, because she thought nobody could take care of her. In part it was true; few people were patient with my aunt. I still remember my grandmother saying: “God will take my daughter before me”.

The expected day had come. On July, 4, my grandmother and my aunt went to the church at night. Surprisingly, my aunt behaved pretty well. After the mass, they went to a bar and had a snack. When they were getting home, a builder who had been working for my grandmother, asked to talk to her. They were talking on the sidewalk, when a drunk man ran over them with his car, almost in front of their home. My grandmother died immediately. My aunt screamed, “Mom!”, but it was too late. While the doctors were putting my aunt in the ambulance, she also died. I have no doubt that my grandmother arrived in heaven and thought, “Whoops! I’m forgetting somebody!” So, she came back immediately to pick up my aunt.

As I said before, July 4, should have been one of the most exciting days in my life, but it was not. I can’t deny that God answered my grandmother’s request, after all they died together. What happened to the man who killed them was predictable. He was convicted by the court of law and got 4 years in jail. Only 4 years. But, from this whole story I prefer to remember only the best part, “How happy my grandmother was on July 4, 1994!”

## **My Best Friend**

*(Honorable Mention)*

*Salman Altamimi*

*R/W 60*

My first best friend passed away and I was only fourteen. I heard my father coming back home at 3 am in the morning. I got off my bed to ask him if my grandfather woke up from his coma, but all I saw were tears and sadness on my father’s face. When looking at his face, I realized that my grandfather had passed away. I hugged him and said, “I love you dad, he was a good person, and I’m sure he is in a better place now.”

I was not in a good relationship with my grandfather because after my parent’s separation I was only three years old and I was moving between my mother’s house and my father’s house and too busy to meet my grandparents. When I got old enough, I asked my father to meet my grandfather. I will never forget the moment when I walked in his house. I saw my grandmother at the kitchen making lunch. She hugged and welcomed me to their house. I was eager to meet my grandfather, given all the stories that my father told me about him. I went to his room, and what a room it was! I saw him sitting on his desk doing the crosswords. I knocked on the door and greeted him.

“Salam alaikum.

“May I come in?”

He turned around with his shiny smiling face and the soft white beard he had, he said, “Of course, come on in and help me do the crosswords, my son.”

I sat on his lap and started the conversation and did the crosswords. I felt the warmth in his heart. After the first meeting, I insisted on seeing him at least twice a week and I did. I used to spend the weekend there. He used to wake me up early in the morning to go to the mosque and pray. Afterwards we would go and buy breakfast and watermelon and sit on the beach, go swimming, and fishing. By the end of the day we would go home and my grandmother would cook the fish that we caught. While growing up, I got closer to him; I spent a lot of time with him. I remember my first time going to the fish market with him. As we walked in, everybody knew him, they all gathered around him with a smile and saying hi to him. He was as happy as them, or even more than I can describe. I felt the joy coming out of him, as if it was telling people to come see me. He opened his pocket and started giving people candy. Everyone knew him because he was kind and generous to everyone. After we left I was eager, surprised, and amazed by how everyone liked him.

“Grandpa, why are you so popular? I thought only famous people are popular. Why were you giving them candy?”

“My son, I will tell you something.

“A smile doesn’t cost a thing, but means a lot.

“Treat the others the same way you want them to treat you.

“Wait, think, and react!

“Giving candies doesn’t cost a lot, but giving it to people means a lot to them, and you will have a good reputation.”

Day by day, I was learning from him and getting closer to him. I loved him more than anyone. I moved to his house and spent most of my time with him. He reared me, like a grandfather, like a father, like my older brother, and like my very best friend. As we were growing older, and years passed by, he got sick and was taking medication.

“My son, I want you to know that eventually everyone has to die, and you cannot get sad. That’s life; we cannot do anything except to accept it.

“But you can do one thing, we have a saying in our religion, ‘when we were born, we were born crying, and the people around us were laughing. So work hard so that when you die, you die happy and the people around you are crying for losing you.’ Do what I taught you to do, smile, treat people with respect. So that when you leave, you leave a good reputation behind you.”

“Why are you saying that grandpa? Are you sick?”

“I am, I am, my son.

“But do not worry, I taught you what you need to know, my dear, beloved, son and friend.

“I’m having an operation next week, and I have a bad feeling about it, but I’m ready for it.

“Your father and uncles asked me to travel and go see one of the best doctors, but I refused. I do not want to burden my loving ones with a coffin and having to move it back to Kuwait. I’m ready.”

“I love you grandpa.

“I will be there with you the whole time, praying for you to wake up after the surgery.

“I will be holding your hands,” I said that with a big hug.

After the surgery he woke up for a few days, but he was in the ICU [Intensive Care Unit]. He looked at me and said, “Be the good person that I taught you to be, and try to be a better person than I am.” After that he went into a coma. I hugged him and kissed him on his forehead and went home. A few days later, while sitting on my bed, praying for my grandfather to wake up from his coma, I heard my father coming back home at 3 am in the morning. I jumped out of my bed, wondering if my grandfather had woken up from his coma, but all I saw were tears and sadness in my father’s face. After that I realized that my grandfather had passed away. I felt like the sky was dark, as if the sky was sad for losing that great person. I visited his room, looking around. I was smelling his clothes, what a smell he had, a smell that shows people what a good person he was.

I was looking through his books, I found this black book, and I opened it, and was shocked of what is in it. I saw names written, every page with no less than 10 names. It was the names of the people he helped, he lent them money. I said, “God bless you grandpa, god bless you. Every day your respect grows more in my eyes. I love you.”

That was the story of how I met my grandfather, my father, my brother, and my very and only best true friend that I have had.

## **Traveling in the Past And Nowadays**

*Abdullah Ashkanani*

*R/W 41*

Traveling has become one of the important activities for most people around the world. Traveling is also one of the most common activities for people all around the world. People like to travel. There are many reasons for traveling and there are many types of transportation. Travel purposes and the form of travel are different in the past and nowadays.

In the past, people used to travel by walking and using animals. It took them a long time and it was very hard. They don't have any technological inventions. In these cases, people always used their physical power, like walking for a long distance. People used to travel to do business. For example they traveled to sell some things that weren't available in other countries. Also, people traveled to look for jobs because they couldn't find jobs in their own country. In the past, everything was hard compared to the present.

Nowadays, traveling had been easier than in the past. There are a lot of types of modern transportation and they are faster than in the past. For example, people can use planes, cars and trains because this transposition is available in most countries. People nowadays travel for business, to take vacations or to study. An example is that many countries want their students to have more experience in other countries so they give students scholarships for study in other countries; those students will bring a lot of benefits home when they return. These are the most common reasons for traveling.

Modern technology has made the traveling life easier and faster than in the past

In summary, there is no doubt that life had been changed between the past and nowadays. Traveling is different and has changed because of the effect of technology. In my opinion, traveling nowadays is easier and safer than in the past.

## **Childhood Obesity**

*Kariem Ghazal*

*R/W 41*

One of the features of the modern lifestyle is the increasing use of a variety of home appliances and electronic equipment. These have indirect negative effects although they make life easy. In addition, there are different kinds of delicious food and candy. Most people have office jobs and they sit at desks all day. So, people consume more calories from many food sources while they have less activity which contributes to adult obesity. With adult obesity, there is another hazardous health impact of modern life; that is childhood obesity.

“Obesity is the results of caloric imbalance and is influenced by genetic, behavioral, and environmental factors.” These factors are important causes in the health impact of childhood obesity.

Many features of our bodies, both biological and psychological characteristics, are related with genetic properties. “Genetic factors that influence fat metabolism and regulate the hormones and proteins that control appetite may play some part in 70 – 80% of obesity cases. Appetite is determined by processes that occur both in the brain and gastrointestinal tract. Eating patterns are controlled by areas in the hypothalamus and pituitary glands.” According to scientific research, we can conclude that the genetic factor is the main factor that causes childhood obesity.

The daily program of our kids is routine every day. Children spend most of their free time watching television, playing more video games, spending more time on the computer than we used to as children, and sleeping a long time. They eat all delicious food without worrying about the calories used. So, children use few calories in exercise compared to the amount of calories consumed by them. This caloric imbalance will cause obesity. Their routine behavior interacts with genetic factors and it can produce childhood obesity.

An Iraqi proverb is “A person should have breakfast like a king, lunch like a minister, and dinner like a poor man.” This advice represents a brief way to define the environmental factors and their effect on childhood obesity. We can control the negative effect for any factor by changing the environment against this negative effect. Family, school, and society which represents a child’s environment is very important to limiting childhood obesity. Family income, society’s culture, lifestyle, and educational programs may interact with the children’s genetic and behavioral factors to determine childhood obesity. This is the environmental factor which is involved in this disease.

In the end, the problem of childhood obesity is a condition in which excess body fat negatively affects a child’s health. It can be caused by genetic, behavioral, and

environmental factors. It is the result of caloric imbalance interacting with the genetics, the child’s behavior and his or her environment. We can limit this problem by following special programs designed for children and their families. “Healthy lifestyle habits, including healthy eating and physical activity, can lower the risk of becoming obese and developing related disease.”

From: <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/obesity/>

## **Mom, I and Technology!!**

*Rasha Mansouri*

*R/W 60*

Tens of major technological inventions have been introduced to our world since 1976, which have made huge effects on the life’s routine. Electrical stoves, microwaves, washing machines, dryers, TVs and cell phones are some examples of these inventions. Almost every home today has at least one of these technological devices, if not a collection of them, where they play a major role in the home life. Although technology is facilitating our lives nowadays, it has negative effects on families’ life especially if we cannot control it.

In 1976, my mom was almost my age but she did not have the technological facilities which I have today. There were no microwaves. She had to use a gas stove all the time for cooking, reheating or even boiling water, which really was hard and took a lot from her time. Moreover, there were no laundry dryers. I can remember her hanging a rope between two walls and cleaning it carefully to make it ready for wet clothes. It was a huge effort just to get our clothes dry and ready to use. In addition to all of these, there were no cell phones. I think this was hard since she was not able to follow and check on us when we were not with her. If this technology had been there in those days, it would have declined a lot of her stress and fear. On the other hand, I think my mom was luckier than me since she had a stable life. We all, my sisters, my brother and I, were around trying to help and looking for her entertainment. Nobody was busy with cell phones, video games or internet. Although she had a lot to do, we were always able to have fun together as a family. Mom, dad, my sisters and I shared our time most of the time, where our parents could find time to know more about our problems and help us to get over hard moments. Simply, we had remarkable quality time.

On the other hand, comparing mom’s days in 1976 with 2011 when I belong to, shows how different are our lives. A microwave which I have in my kitchen as example, it is a time saver. I can reheat food in few minutes and boil water in seconds. It is really helpful and easy to use. Moreover, the dryer that is in the laundry room helps like I have a third hand. With the presence of this technology I do not need to waste my time by hanging a rope and clothes on it. Furthermore, I can get the clothes dry and ready in less than an hour instead of waiting when the weather condition permits. In addition, comparing my life with the cell phones to my mom’s life is the most exciting point. I think I am luckier than her with this. I can call to check on my children whenever and wherever. It does not matter if I

am at work, making shopping or with friends while my kids are in other places. Cell phones also keep me in contact with my husband all the time, and this is really useful especially when he is on a trip. Actually cell phones do more than this: they give me a chance to contact my mom herself anytime to let her know that my family and I are doing well regardless if we are home, in car, in airport or wherever. She finally can be reassured. But with all these advantages that I get of technology, sometimes I miss the family's quality time. My husband is always busy with his laptop and it is hard to separate my kids from their video games. I am struggling with these kinds of technology. I am trying my best to keep my family together and to enjoy each other.

I assume it is obvious that my mom's life style in 1976 was different than mine in 2011. Her life was harder and tougher. I do not think she could find much time to enjoy herself. But I am sure she had something more important and most of us don't have it nowadays. She was surrounded by her family most of the time. She was able to enjoy it more than we do. In contrast, new technological inventions are produced for us every day with their advantages and disadvantages and I think we have to be aware about them. Although we have to learn how to get their benefits to facilitate our lives, we also need to be cautious about their disadvantages and protect ourselves and our precious family from harmful technological control. We have to be smarter and work harder to guide this technology to fulfill our lives with its benefits and to block its negativity away from our homes. Technology should help us to save more time to share it with our loved-ones. It shouldn't overwhelm us and take us away from each other. Actually technology should assist us to enjoy ourselves and our family.

## **Why Is Basketball Exciting to People?**

*Takuya Hayakawa*

*R/W 41*

Now, most university students become "Mad". In March, the university basketball championship starts. During this term, not only students, but also other people see exciting college basketball games. That's why this time period in US college basketball is called "March Madness". Why is basketball exciting to people? There are three reasons; rules, game strategies, and the spectacle of the game.

Every sport has rules that decide how it should be played in competition. For example, in basketball, team members who play on the court play until he has five fouls. The head coach prefers some players and game plans so this makes the game more tactical. This strategic game makes people feel enjoyment. Another rule is that there are three kinds of point shots: one, two, and three. Players have to choose to take a shot by judging their present situation, especially how much game time is left to play and the score itself. In addition, the shot clock, which limits the amount of time that players on one team have to get points or hit the rim gives both teams many opportunities to get points. These basic rules make the basketball competition enjoyable for fans.

The rules also form the character of basketball competition. Basketball is a high scoring game, more so than other sports. It means that a lot of players can make points, depending on the coaching strategies. When players get points, everyone feels excitement. In a basketball game, players and the ball move quickly. People who are watching the game have to observe carefully so as not to miss great action. In the game, the team often uses specially-designed plays, which are special formations, on both offence and defense. For these reasons, basketball tends to be exciting and fun.

On the fan side, there are factors that make people feel joy. Watching basketball in the arena is more enjoyable than watching on television because it is a spectacle. People can feel tension from players and coaches in the arena. People cannot feel so much tension through television. Each home court is cheered up by the band which performs the university fight music. It makes for a pleasant mood, like a festival. In the arena, interesting events are planned before every game. For instance, the audience gets gift towels and shirts; fans can participate in challenges for shooting; fans can also receive free food and drinks. These ideas are elements used to increase customers for the basketball game who can come to enjoy the game at the arena.

There are lots of reasons why people become "Mad" watching the college basketball championship in March. University basketball teams change members every year. Changing players means that game details will change every year. If UF is lucky and becomes a champion this year, nobody knows which team will be a champion next year. One basketball game is not the same game as it was a last year so people can enjoy every game of the yearly championship season, "March Madness."

## **What I Want To Say Is...**

### **And the Importance of a Second Language**

*Carlos Luis Pimentel H*

*R/W 50*

One day, a reporter asked Warren Buffett, one's of most wealthy business men in the world, what, another language to learn? He gave a speed answer: "Finance language." After, I asked the same question to my brother in law, who is an US citizen with many businesses outside the country. He responded: "Mandarin of course!" Both answers go in different way than mine for one reason. They speak English and I don't.

The planet is a global world. All people are communicated in some way. There are many devices to translate different languages. However, knowing a second language is an open door to many opportunities. The issue is what another language to learn? This depends on each circumstance. People have to make the choice according their needs. The north, be attempt to explain, not attempt to hear.

For business men like Mister Buffett, knowing financial concepts, structures and steps are a language implicit. In Wall Street there are other ways to communicate and to express offers, assets, and shares, buying and selling. It is

definitively another language important to know if you are in this environment.

For my brother in law, a more real business man, Mandarin is the best choice to learn, because China is an awesome market with many opportunities. This economy will lead the way in trading market in the next twenty five years according to him. It means Mandarin is a language to know for the trading global word.

In both cases are easy for them other options different than English because it is their native language. For a non English speaker, English is essential to learn. To be in a country with a language different than the born or resident country English will help. There are many stories about visitors in problem in other country and they got a solution speaking English. It is because they were lucky to find a person who could speak English.

I remember the quotation of the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset: "I am I plus my circumstances." Our circumstances effectively define our resolutions and choice to learn and speak another language is one of them. It doesn't matter which language to choose, the importance is to communicate, and the rule is the speaker have to make the effort to explain, to express. It isn't the listener's job. That is important other language, many people can understand, but not many can explain, and the meaning depends on the speaker.

To choose a second language is tough and necessary decision. The world demands us communicate with people in other language. It depending on our circumstances, we can decide which is better. The fact is another language always helps.

## Norooz

*Pantea Nayebi*  
*R/W 41*

What does Norooz mean? It is Farsi for New Year, the beginning of spring and the first day of the Persian calendar. Norooz is the oldest Iranian holiday, which goes back to over 3,000 years, and is celebrated by all Iranians from different religions and different tribes. Norooz is also the longest holiday celebration in Iran.. Before the New Year starts, people start to clean their houses, buy new clothes and prepare a special table of seven items that starts with letter "s"., Iranian people have lots of traditional customs for Norooz and the most important ones are: **Char Shanbe Soori** (Festival of Fire), **Sal Tahvil** (Beginning of the Year), and **Sizdeh Bedar** (Celebration of the Thirteenth Day of the Year).

One of the traditions of the New Year's celebration is **Char Shanbe Soori** (Festival of Fire). It takes place on the last Wednesday of the old year. People make a small fire outside the house and jump over the fire, and they sing a poem which means: "I will give you my yellow color, and you give me your red color." People really like this celebration, especially children.

"**Sal Tahvil**" is the most important moment of the New Year. All families prepare a "**Haft Seen**" table with special items. First, on the table are seven items that start with

the Persian letter S in Farsi (the official language of Iran). The seven items are **Sabzeh** (grown wheat or lentils) for a new start, **Samanu** (cooked flour and sugar) for sweetness of life, **Sekeh** (coins) for wealth, **Senjed** (dried fruit) for love, **Seer** (garlic) for health, **Somagh** (sumac berries) for warmth, and **Serkeh** (vinegar) for patience. Next, they put other items on the table, such as painted eggs that represent wealth, a mirror that represents the reflection of life, and goldfish in a bowl that represents life. After the **Sal Tahvil**, the moment that new year starts, people hug, kiss, wish each other "Happy New Year!" and exchange their gifts. Usually older people give presents to younger people.e.g., grandfathers and grandmothers give presents or money to their grandchildren.

The most popular day of the holiday season is called **Sizdeh Bedar**. On the thirteenth day of the new year, people go on picnics because they believe that the thirteenth day of the year comes with bad luck, and they spend their time with families and friends outside their house to get away from the bad luck. At the end of their picnics, people throw away the **Sabzeh** (from the **Haft Seen** that they prepared for the table). The **Sabzeh** (grown wheat or lentils) is supposed to have collect the hidden sickness, pain, and ill fate hiding which might visit the family during the coming year. They believe that **Sabzeh** should not stay in the house after **Sizdeh Bedar** because keeping it at home is considered to be unhealthy. On this day, people toss the **Sabze** into river or any running water.

In conclusion, **Norooz** is the main Iranian holiday celebration at the beginning of the New Year which was recognized by UN's General Assembly in 2010 as an ancient Spring festival of Persian origin. All of the customs are unique for Iranian people, but these three customs (Festival of Fire, **Sal Tahvil** and the **Sizdeh Bedar**) are very interesting for all people. I hope the new year brings health, wealth, happiness and peace to everyone.

## My New Life in the USA

*Tatiana Velasco Bruno*  
*R/W 41*

I moved to Gainesville, Florida, in August 2010, where I begun to experience a different and brand new life style. I lived in Santa Cruz, Bolivia for most of my life; I never thought that I would have to move to another country. My family relationships, my work and the location, are the most different things that are in my life right now. These differences enrich my life and make it more interesting.

My family relationships have changed a lot. In Santa Cruz, I was outside my home the whole day. I went out at 8 am, after I sent my kids to school, came back for lunch for 60 minutes, and came back in the evenings at 8 pm, when I had no social commitments with my husband, or with my family or friends. In Gainesville, I stay at home the whole day, looking after my kids, my husband and my home. I'm enjoying my family in Gainesville.

My activities have changed completely. In Santa Cruz, I worked in my little blanket factory, in my communications office and in a social day care center for poor people. I was

working all the time, solving problems, attending to people, and taking phone calls. In Gainesville, I learned how to be a housewife. I cook, I clean the house, I do the laundry. Doing this new daily routine makes me happy.

Santa Cruz and Gainesville are very different places. Santa Cruz is a city of almost 2 million people. It is an unorganized, dirty and dangerous city. The traffic is unbearable. Gainesville is a small, clean, very organized and safe city. The traffic flows easily. The drivers are very respectful. In Gainesville I (and my family) can live more peacefully and serenely than in Santa Cruz.

The differences in my family relationships, in my daily activities and in my location (from Santa Cruz, Bolivia to Gainesville, Florida, US) are major differences. I live in Gainesville very happily, but I love my life in Santa Cruz. I love my hometown and the people there, and I miss them so much. I hope, I can return soon to Santa Cruz. Before that, I will continue enjoying my life in this university city of Gainesville.

## **Education: A Powerful Tool**

*Rafael Rivera*

*R/W 41*

Would you like to know about the benefits of education? Admittedly, this is a good question; if you are interested, here is the answer. In fact, education is one of our most powerful tools and it is the path to knowledge. Education makes us meditate about what is right or wrong; it creates a clear image of our surroundings. It makes us competent to plan our future and make good decisions. It gives us power to understand other cultures and civilizations. It permits us to face our fear and how to defeat it. It gives us the skill to communicate efficiently in other languages and how to be diplomatic. It might convert us to be better people and great leaders. And it might help to make our dreams come true. Certainly, these are some of the many benefits that education offers us. Education is the path to knowledge and knowledge is power!

## **My Favorite Family Tradition**

*Marie Danielle Jean Baptiste*

*R/W 41*

January 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> are the most important dates for my Haitian family because this is the time we all get together in order to celebrate, for those family members who are live abroad and for those who live in my hometown, Mirebalais. Indeed, it is also Haiti's Independence Day, but the main purpose of our celebration is a family gathering in a rural area near where my grandparents lived. Usually, I am the planner of these activities extending over three days. Each day contains a special event: first, our traditional breakfast; second, the family prayer meeting; and third, our traditional party. These events make our family reunion unforgettable.

The first day is our traditional breakfast. When we arrive in the morning, I distribute roles for everybody. We then prepare all the ingredients to make the soup. In a small kitchen behind the house, built with boards and palm leaves, beside a beautiful garden, some of the young members of my family are responsible to cook the soup; others do something else such as cleaning the kitchen, cleaning the dishes, preparing a traditional fire we make with wood and rocks, which serves as a stove. When the soup is ready, we eat together after a special prayer.

The second day is our family meeting. Early in the morning, when we wake up, we start with the prayer meeting. This is the most important moment for each member of my family. Indeed, not all of us practice the same religion, but we are all Christian. After the prayer, we eat breakfast and we start with the family meeting. In our small living room, there are not enough chairs for everyone, so in this case, some of us sit on the floor. My older uncle, who is the patriarch of my family, leads the meeting. Point by point, he presents the components of the agenda. Usually in this meeting, some of us confess if we have hurt other members of our family and ask for forgiveness. This is the moment of reconciliation. We also talk about our individual accomplishments of the last year, and we share our plans for next year.

On the third day, which is the last one, is our traditional party. The young members of my family present sketches, traditional dances, and jokes that all family members learned when we were kids. During the first two evenings of the family reunion, I organize a small meeting with the young people who will perform during the show so they can rehearse to make sure that everyone is ready. The best part that makes the party interesting is that we use tropical musical instruments, especially the tambour (the Haitian drum) which we use to make music or folkloric dance. At 7 pm, the party starts. The young people dance, present sketches, sing and joke, and everybody enjoys the party. In my opinion, this is the most significant part of my stay because it makes me remember my sweet and remarkable childhood life.

This is my favorite family tradition. Every year, between January 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> we meet together to enjoy our traditional breakfast, our family prayer meeting, and a traditional evening party. During these events, we have an opportunity to share the best and the worst things that have happened in our lives with the people whom we love and trust. We start the new year with joy. For these reasons, I do not want to miss even one of those three outstanding days of the year.

## **The Internet and Knowledge**

*Mimonah Al Qathrady*

*R/W 60*

We always criticize the internet saying that it consumes our time. We don't have a chance to enjoy real life or even spend time with our families or friends as people did before this technology. On the other hand, we can't ignore the positive effects of it. One of the greatest gifts that the internet gives us every day is knowledge. We can find the information we need and we can access huge number of books and journals.

Using the internet, everyone has an equal chance to get the knowledge and get the information he/she is interested to know. Therefore, the internet is considered as the major constituent of spreading the knowledge around the world.

One of the software that let the internet to propagate knowledge is search engine. Search engine enables the users to type any word and search for the information in the World Wide Web, and then presents the result as a list for the web pages that contain related information. Therefore, if the users have any question or need erudition about any specific topic, the internet is available to answer and give the information at any time. This leads to increase the knowledge of the users because the availability of the knowledge and an ease of access to it. Another characteristic of the search engines is the ability to offer the results in the format that the users want such as images, videos, text and different kinds of file formats. This helps the users to understand the things which they want to know about. For example, if the users want to understand specific term, but they can't understand the explaining text; the images or videos describe this item will give them a better explanation. For instance, if the students try to understand a scientific topic but can't figure out it by reading text books, then they can search for videos that explain it clearly. Moreover, search engine like Google gives e-book search service. E-book search service enables the users to search for the books in any topic, and then the users find a book and which online stores they can buy a book form. Also, some books contents can be browsed online and some of them can be browsed as a whole book. This facility provides the readers who like to read from books a great service because they can search for the books online and read the books they want instead of going to the libraries.

The second great service that is offered online is an online school. Online schools offer solutions to the problems of the regular schools students, and they have special features which are not available in the traditional schools. Online schools are more flexible and cheaper than traditional schools. The flexibility of online schools is the most important characteristics of them. They are more flexible because they are available online any time; students can attend classes in university which is actually thousands of miles far from them without the need to travel to the school. For example, the University of Florida has an online degree in bioinformatics where the students can attend the class from their locations and they don't have to travel to Gainesville, Florida where the university is located. Also, online schools design online programs when the students can join the class at their convenience. For example, EF is an online English school, the classes is offered 24 hours a day, the students are from around the world and they can join the class in the beginning of each hour; the students actually join live classes any time and meet a native speaker teacher and international students. In addition to the flexibility in place and time, the lower tuition which the online schools ask is an important factor that attracts many students. Many people around the world have a dream to study and to get a degree in their interested field, but because they can't pay the tuition they have to pay to join traditional colleges, they can't achieve their dreams. As a result, many

students join different online schools and study the programs they hoped to study and they gain the knowledge they seek. This means that the knowledge has been spread around the world by online schools that use the internet as their basic infrastructure.

Getting the information we need, reading the books online for free and watching videos uploaded from education institutions that explain different topics educate us and give us the knowledge that we search for. This means that we have to be happy and thankful because we have the technology that gives a great and easy means to knowledge.

## **Shopping at Stores and Shopping Online**

*Ana Lucia Sevarolli*

*R/W 41*

Nowadays, people have busy schedules that cause a decrease in the leisure time. So, practical activities are imperative in their lives. Shopping on line, as opposed to showing in stores, should help everyone with those practical issues. Shopping online has some advantages in these specific areas: location, cutting edge technology, and costs.

First, to go shopping without leaving home is an advantage that helps a huge segment of society. Some people live far from large shopping centers; others do not like crowded places and some like to be modern. Every Thanksgiving weekend, Black Friday occurs, when a lot of buyers go to the malls looking for items with extremely low prices and people love this activity. However, in the malls, people usually stay one or more days in incredibly long lines. Black Friday also happens on the internet where people can buy the exact same things, sometimes even newer items than in the mall, without staying in those long lines.

Second, almost all new merchandise appears first on store websites rather than in the stores themselves. If customers don't worry about having the newest products as soon as possible, they can wait to buy on the big day when the product appears in stores. However, sometimes buyers can't stand to wait for new products, so they want to go shopping online and buy the new products as soon as possible. For example, the new Ipad was on the Mac website and was available for sale two weeks before they appeared in the electronics stores. The Mac website had a record numbers of buyers with early access who bought thousands of Ipads.

Finally, prices are different between shopping on line and shopping at the store. In stores, the discounts don't happen frequently, only at certain times of the year, yet customers like to go to stores personally and choose each item they will buy. In contrast, the on line market motivates customers to start buying more by internet, so they use promotions, as such free shipping, overnight shipping, discounts or the possibility to split payments. Therefore, customers have the advantage to buy from their homes with great promotions; even if the customers don't like the product they receive in the mail, they can return it and get the money back.

In conclusion, customers can choose which type of shopping they prefer. In order to choose, customer can decide



according to three factors: location, being first with the latest technology, and financial benefits. Nowadays, shopping on line has a lot of advantages, although some people still prefer to go shopping in stores and enjoy this traditional activity.

## **Technology and Business Ethics: How the Internet Has Changed the Way Business Should be Done**

*Orestis Panagopoulos*

*R/W 60*

### **Abstract**

In the modern day, contemporary businesses are making transitions that incorporate new technologies into their businesses operations for the purpose of increasing efficiency. These technological advances, mainly the integration of the Internet into businesses transactions, have led to the empowerment on consumers. Customers can easily compare the services provided by each corporation by evaluating and critiquing them by means of the Internet. As a result, companies must now hold themselves to higher standards in order to remain competitive. It has become apparent that all corporations must strive to reevaluate their ways of conducting business in order to avoid the dangerous consequences that the Internet presents. They must practice corporate responsibility, which means that companies should operate with ethical considerations towards three directions: customers, employees, and the environment.

During the last century business has been in the forefront of technology. The institution and development of computers has led to the creation of innovative products like Blackberries and pioneer services like the Internet. The usage of these tools has brought dramatic, yet positive changes in both the way and pace people do business. Companies also use these tools in order to extend their services, increase the momentum of their functions and augment the number of their customers.

Internet usage in particular has given existence to the term e-business. E-business as a term describes the ability of corporations to transact with their customers through the Internet. Companies involved in e-business enjoy a variety of benefits over those that have chosen not to follow the trend by sticking with the traditional ways of business operations. Cheshire Henbury (2001) has posted that companies such as United Technologies, J. Sainsbury, General Electric and many others are reporting benefits from the use of the Internet. These benefits include improved speed of response, cost savings, communications (information and knowledge sharing), and reductions in inventory. Other benefits observed are improved efficiency and productivity, improved customer service and harmonization of procedures. Finally, corporations that transact with their customers through the Internet observe high acquisition of new customers and increased sales.

Nowadays corporations engaged in e-business are dramatically increasing in number. In the UK, seven in ten businesses have a website (Office for National Statistics, 2007). In the US, the growth in e-businesses will continue

despite the poor economic conditions (Khan, Weishaar, Polinsky, Karasyov, Wei, Bazhenova, and Hong, 2009). Some of the companies have stopped transacting by conventional ways and have chosen to function only by means of the Internet. A common example is e-Bay which does not have shops that customers can visit. The only option one has to exchange products with e-Bay is through its electronic page. While some customers may find this quite convenient, others are distrustful of these electronic transactions. Michelle Darnell, professor of International Business Ethics at the University of Florida, comments that she feels skeptical about the direction that businesses are headed because they have become so technologically dependent (personal communication, March 3, 2011). Such skepticism may come from the idea that technological dependence may lead businesses to focus more on profit generating, and less on the ethical aspects of business.

Regardless of the skepticism that conducting business on the Internet has raised, it has brought positive changes to the business scene by instigating rapid communication between buyers and sellers. Walmart is an example of this fact. In 1996, Walmart began using the Internet as an application platform and launched online stores (Wailgum, 2007). By the following year, Walmart became the largest private employer in the United States with 680,000 associates, plus an additional 115,000 international associates (“History Timeline”, 2011).

Additionally, Internet has actually raised the standards for business operations as well. This has happened because employees, and more importantly customers, have access to the database provided from the Internet. Employees are made aware of the fringe benefits that competitive firms offer, while customers can easily compare deals and online reviews between companies. As a result of this, businesses are under constant public scrutiny and are held to higher standards.

Important information related to companies’ operations, such as news of past illegal activities, present customer reviews, and future plans, are available to everyone and anyone that has access to the Internet. This in fact may be very harmful for some companies. For instance, the cases of defamation have increased at the same pace the Internet has expanded. Competitors or dissatisfied customers are able find information about one company and in turn post negative rumors in the Internet. One may support here that companies could protect themselves from these instances by regulating the information spread through the Internet. However such a regulation seems to be unfeasible considering the pace that the Internet develops and information expands. Enough cases of these reactions can create a permanently damaged reputation for a company, as the Internet in particular is a medium that is too widespread to be contained. The words of unfulfilled customers are projected to the billions of people that access the Internet on a day-to-day basis, which will decrease a company’s popularity among customers in the long run. After the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, BP struggled to save its reputation among the public. US officials pressured the company to disclose “more information about the spill by making a live webcam of the leak available from deep beneath the Gulf of Mexico. The webcam site later crashed, apparently because too many people were trying to view the link” (Pagnamenta & Goddard, 2010). It is

clear that the popularity of the Internet, in this case, harmed BP's image because of the amount of attention that the catastrophe received in the media.

At this point, it seems apparent that all corporations, not only those involved in e-business, need to find other ways to avoid the dangerous consequences that the Internet presents. Corporate responsibility is the only way they can achieve that. Corporate responsibility, in this sense, means that companies should operate with ethical considerations towards three directions: customers, employees, and the environment.

In "The Ultimate Question", Fred Reichheld approaches the first direction of corporate responsibility: the consumer standpoint. Reichheld asserts that net worth is one of the fundamental measures in the success of a business. The ultimate goal for a company should be to deliver customer experiences of such high quality that customers recognize the value in the relationship and become what he would call "Promoters". These "Promoters" generate good profits and fuel true growth. They become, in effect, part of a company's marketing department, not only increasing their own purchases but also providing enthusiastic referrals. By contrast, companies can boost short-term profits by taking advantage of customer relationships, raising prices when they can get away with it or deceptively providing services and goods of lesser quality in order to save costs and boost margins. These acts only boost bad profits, as they extract value from customers at the expense of loyalty, creating "Detractors". Companies cannot achieve long-term sustained growth on the basis of bad profits (Reichheld as cited in "Good and Bad Profits", 2006-2011). It is crucial that corporations are mindful of this fact because dissatisfied customers can do more harm now than ever before. They are empowered by the Internet, where they are able to spread negative reviews for the company with the click of a mouse. This, in most cases, will harm the public opinion on the reliability of the company and lead to further ramifications such as reduced profits.

Starbucks, the world's fastest growing coffee company, serves as an excellent example of a company that attributes their remarkable success to their attention to customer and employee satisfaction. What is crucial about Starbucks, though, is the ways it is at once a globalized consumer institution and a local place in which the mundane daily activities of sipping coffee, writing in journals, and conversing with friends are practiced. (Dickinson, 2002, p. 7). Starbucks has created an atmosphere that has made even the most mundane daily activities a pleasant experience. According to Gaudio (2003), "a coffeehouse is the ideal place for people who want to be alone but need company for it" (p. 659). Starbucks has created such a place, which is what makes it so appealing to consumers. It is apparent that the value that Starbucks has placed on customer experience and satisfaction has led to its rapid growth. Thus, supporting Reichheld's customer based approach to corporate responsibility.

Beyond satisfying customers, the second direction of corporate responsibility aims at the less obvious element of employee satisfaction. It is no coincidence that Starbucks was ranked 16 in Fortune's "100 Best Companies to Work For 2007" ("100 Best Companies to Work For 2007", 2007).

Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks, believes "the best way to meet and exceed the expectations of our customers was to hire and train great people, we invested in employees." To treat its workforce well, Starbucks offers all full-time and part-time employees the opportunity to receive full healthcare benefits, stock options/discounted stock purchase plans, and other benefits (*The Starbucks "Employee First" Philosophy*, 2007). Starbucks seeks to make strong connections with their employees first and their customers second, as Schultz describes, because the company operates with the understanding that employees who are treated well, will in turn, treat customers well. It goes without saying that satisfied customers are profit generators, as they are likely to not only become loyal regular customers, but also spread the word to other potential customers.

The third direction of corporate responsibility is the company's regard towards the respect of the natural environment. According to Preston (2000), massive increases in the volume of global production and consumption have had massive effects on the global environment (p. 1). In many cases, these harmful environmental effects are dangerous and distracting for the population that resides in it. Deforestation, sea pollution and air pollution are just a few examples of the damaging effects that corporations have on the environment.

Our society has shifted in a direction that is almost completely dependent on technological advances. The more developed technology becomes, the more competitive the nature of business becomes, as companies compete to produce at a faster pace and in larger quantities. The problem lies in the fact that this competition is often time at the cost of the environment. While businesses are concerned about profit, little do they worry about the toll that their operations take on the environment. With the increasing popularity of "going green" campaigns among consumers, perhaps businesses should begin to pay closer attention to the negative effects that they have on the environment. If the act of protecting the environment is not enough of a reason, the protection of their public image should be.

Customers nowadays are constantly informed through the media, especially the Internet, about these environmental issues. Thus they are hasty to hold strong opposition to companies that harm environment, while favoring companies that show respect towards it. Fierro, Hart and Redondo (2007) observe that nowadays "companies base their activity on the 'ethics of self-interest' concentrating their efforts on projecting an adequate image – e.g. environmental respect" (p. 1). This tendency is justified due to the positive results on the image of the company that creates. Customers distinguish these corporations and prefer them. As a result, companies that are oriented towards environmental respect more often than not observe an increase in their profits. Patagonia for example, uses low-impact dyes and organic cotton rather than cheaper materials that are harmful to the environment. The company has also created a "1% for the Planet" initiative, donating 1% of all sales to helping environmental organizations. "This unwavering commitment to the environment has certainly struck a chord with consumers. Chalking up \$270 million in revenue for 2006,

Patagonia makes high-quality clothing that is sometimes referred to as the 'Gucci of the outdoors'" (Palmer, 2008).

All three components of corporate responsibility should be followed to diminish liabilities and thereby promote the growth and success of businesses. By moving in this direction, where employees are satisfied and environmental consideration is taken, corporations can earn a solid positive reputation among the people that ultimately determine their successes: the customers. Because the Internet has become such a powerful driving force of business, firms that wish to experience success in the present day must learn to use it to its utmost potential. The only surefire way to do this is by making sure that the Internet has essentially become the ultimate "Promoter" for the company. Some of the most popular companies have modeled their operations along this idea and can attribute their success to the values they place on their customers, their employees, and the environment.

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## Grand Parents Story: "Zorion"

Armando Leon  
R/W 60

I remember a day, when I was 9 years old, sitting close to an older person who was lying on a bed. Just the two of us in the sad-mood room with a clock pointing out the time, it was 9:04am, where beeping machines surrounded us as with barely-opened eyes the older man said, "Where's your *Amama*?" Raising my head to look at him instead of the floor I answered, "Getting something to drink with *Amatxu*. Why? You need something?"

"Nah, it's ok," said the older man, smiling dimly. "Do you know the story about how we met each other?"

Not expecting the question I told him I've never asked before so I just have a vague idea of the story. As soon as I said that, it seemed like the windows, walls, and ceiling would just open slowly for the sunlight to illuminate the room more specifically, his eyes; the sad mood just went away, at least for those couple of minutes. His eyes focused on something other than what surrounded us, thinking about how valuable the story is for him, and he started talking...

"We had a war in Euskadi (The Basque country), back in 1936, many Basque people were hunted down, forced to adapt to the Spanish culture instead of our own. Franco just wanted to be the ruler of Spain, including Euskadi which wasn't part of Spain, and he became the dictator after the war was over, just like he wanted." For a couple of seconds he sighed, and then continued, "We had to escape, and many of our own family couldn't make it. But in the end we had no choice if we wanted to have a future."

Seconds, minutes, hours passed as he kept talking about his life trip, not only with sad facts but also with happy moments too. Several times, part of my family joined us just for a couple of minutes in the story-telling session we had, telling us how he ended up in Venezuela and became part of the merchant marine for years, how he traveled around the world with that job, and how he became a marvelous worker on what he did thanks to being such a meticulous person. Being at sea for a lot of months before returning back to Venezuela was a

hard life, and one day he decided that he would visit part of his family in Chile before doing another trip.

"I remembered there was a known family, the Zabala, but that wasn't that important until one day, when visiting Chile, I saw the most beautiful woman I've ever seen, a white skinned, beaming, and young woman." And as if he was remembering that moment, he took a couple of seconds before continuing, "I invited her many times to go out, but just the simple thought of having 10 years of difference, well, was kind of hard. The thing was, she was so mature for her age that any 30-year-old man like me would have fallen in love with her... with Maria Amaya."

With a smile on his face, he narrated all the facts of convincing Maria to go out with him, and after a time, he had to do another trip. He promised her to go back to Chile afterwards, and wrote a letter to her every single day, until that desired day arrived. She was so innocent that she would not expect a thing, even though the rest of her family had already an idea of what was about to happen.

That highly anticipated day, Maria heard the door bell, and as soon as she opened the door, time stood still, clocks not moving or ticking, leaves not falling, birds, cars, people, and sounds became just witnesses of the moment where my grandfather was kneeling, smiling, and holding Maria's hand and saying, "Would you marry me and make me the happiest man on earth?"

Suddenly the hospital room door opened, and it was my grandmother asking if we needed something else. I'm pretty sure my grandfather was staring at her with loving and grateful eyes for being his other half. You could see that even when 200 miles away. We both said we were ok, but my grandmother said to my grandfather with a worried face, "Alex, you should drink some water, let me give you some please." My grandfather chuckled when looking at me and said, "I don't know how to say no to her, never did."

After my grandmother left, we continued on this past trip of theirs, and he explained how he took her to Venezuela, started a family when he got another, more-static, job, and reared two children, a girl and a boy, guess what, that girl ended up being my mother.

Just as a coincidence, my mother entered the room and interrupted the story saying I should let him rest a little bit, so we agreed on continuing some other time. After my mother and grandmother said long and loving good-byes to him, I stood up from the chair when he told me, "*Zorion*." I looked at him confused since I didn't understand that word. Then he said, "That's what you should be looking for in your life... You'll get it someday." With strange eyes I just got close to him and said, "Everything will be fine *Aitita*," which means grandfather in Basque, and he barely responded with a smile. But that was the most honest, truthful, and loving smile, I had seen from him for a long time.

When I was about to leave the room, a constant beep coming from the machine next to the bed stranded me to the floor, not letting me move. That moment just became a crazy one; doctors and nurses came in the room moving aside so they could maneuver better around him, but even though they did a

lot of things, those 3 feared words became a reality. One of the doctors said, "I am sorry..."

That was a grey day for my family and me. My dear *Aitita*, a person I loved so much, a person so loyal, loving, responsible, warm and kind left my world with those magnificent angels so he could be in a better place. We were all expecting that day pretty soon, and he was already suffering physically, but for a 9-year-old boy, that's something that could not be true.

Even though the day had a clear sky, through my eyes the sky was grey, with big black clouds. I just kept repeating how I call him in the apartment the whole day, "*Aitita*, *Aitita*,..., why?" I had a hole bigger than me in my heart. That was one of worst feelings ever. My poor *Amama* (grandmother in Basque) was destroyed, but I was so young, I didn't notice that right away.

Twelve years later, I'm studying at the University of Florida's English Language Institute in Gainesville, Florida, with a computer engineering degree, a loving family and girlfriend, oh and a cute, small, white, fluffy, peaceful, sleepy dog called Tommy too. We've gone through many bad times together, *Amama*, *Amatxu*, *Aita*, *Amabitxi* (Grandmother, mother, father, and godmother in Basque respectively), and Tommy, but we've also enjoyed many good moments as well.

A couple of days ago, while walking on the streets, something came to my mind that made me smile, just like my grandfather before he passed away. *Amama* told me recently, "By the way Armando, you asked me about '*zorion*' a couple of weeks ago, it means 'happiness'."

The reason I smiled is because *Aitita* wants me to be happy in life, without forgetting my roots. I intend to do that from now on. *Aita*, whose name is Armando as well, tells me the same thing, so just in case I lose track of my objective to be happy, my father will remind me. *Aitita* is in a better place and watching from up there. I'll try to follow his advice and make him proud of me and my actions.

"Gracias *Aitita*"

## **I Am a Student . . . This Is My Voice!!**

*Ibraheem Alawadhi*

*R/W 60*

We are human. Nobody is perfect. You cannot judge people according to what they say or do. You can ask them to make sure then judge them. You can ask others about them and their personalities. You can find excuses for them.

I am sorry; yes I am sorry to be a student who learns English.

I wish I had known English since I was 8 years old. In this case, maybe people will understand me or maybe it will be easier for me to tell them what I want to say. My English is my second language, so please don't put me under the pressure. Everybody makes mistakes but I am a student, I cannot learn without making mistakes. I am supposed to learn English so it is possible to make mistakes.

Last spring break I was in Ohio. "Have a good flight," my aunt, who lives there, said. I said unconsciously, "You too, thank you." Everybody there was laughing. I didn't mean it but I was unfamiliar with this expression so I couldn't deal with the situation very well.

Another situation, I had an appointment with one of my American friends. I was waiting for her when she sent me a message telling me that she was running late. She told me before that she likes to run, so I thought she was really running. One week later, my friend Clay texted me "Sorry I'm running late. I'll be there in 5 minutes." That was on Saturday at 6:00 am. I was curious, "How can he run early in the morning? Is he serious?" After that I asked him, "What does running late mean?" I told him my situation. He laughed then he explained to me what the right meaning is.

The last situation is that day when I was watching Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. I was watching the scene when Harry fell out of the flying car. Ron, Harry's friend, said, "Hold my hand Harry". "Your hand is sweetie", Harry said. I read the subtitles which were written in English. I was confused, why did Harry say sweetie? It is not a suitable situation to say your hand is sweetie. Then, I figured out that sweaty has different meaning from sweetie. I was completely confused between these two words. It's funny, isn't it?

After those three situations, I think you will understand what I was meaning when I said "I love you" instead of "I like you". When I said "He was my friend" instead of "He is my friend" Or when I said "hang up" with you instead of "hang out" with you. The only thing I can conclude is thanking my real friends. Thank you my friends. You correct me when I make mistakes and you don't judge me when I say something incorrect.

## **Kyoto Trip**

*Ayano Saito*  
*R/W 40*

I made an amazing trip with my friends! The trip's purpose was both that we ask a blessing on our future lives especially in matters of love, and that we eat a lot of delicious foods. We went to Kyoto which is a famous tourist place in Japan. There are many temples there as are found all over Japan. Plus, there are many popular food places near each temple. We stayed at our friend's house, so we could eat the local food and meet-up with local people too.

First, there are many kinds of shrines where you pray for things like for good studying, earning good money, finding a person to love, and, etc. We had planned to go to a lot of shrines for love before the trip, and we carried this out. We went to at least 5 shrines each day. When we got there, we prayed about the same things such as "Please come to me, my true love". As a result, we haven't yet received the true love that we asked for. I think it was also because we didn't believe in just one shrine, but we were greedy and went to many shrines.

We ate a lot of popular food at each place. For example, in the Kiyomizu Temple, I ate the Yatsuhasi which is

what food it really famous for because if someone goes there, they buy a souvenir of that food. Near the Hachimangu Shrine, we ate the green tea parfait. That was the spelling, but I don't know how to pronounce. In Osaka, we walked around and ate the Takoyaki which is also a famous from that place. Therefore, we enjoyed many original foods.

We didn't stay at a hotel, and we stayed at our friends' house. They give us great hospitality. We could meet up with that local people who have warm personalities. They have their Japanese accent that makes sounds that make people feel comfortable. I used to hear that Kyoto's people treated travelers well. I could feel this myself in person while I was there.

In short, our trip was amazing because of the great views, the good food, and the friendly people. We saw Japanese views and ate Japanese food a lot. We had a lot of fun, and we felt like we had a lot of smiles on the trip. I don't think there are better trips than this trip. It became my most unforgettable trip.

## **Island of Charm**

*Rafael Rivera*  
*R/W 41*

There are many amazing places to go around the world but, as my home, Puerto Rico is the best one. However, Puerto Rico is not only my home. It is a beautiful island located between the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean with wonderful beaches, mystic forests, ancient cities and beautiful people. In this short essay, I will describe my small island of the Caribbean and I will mention three wonderful places: Old San Juan, Flamenco Beach, and The Yunque.

Old San Juan (this centenarian city is also called San Juan the, Fortress City) was one of the first cities constructed in the New World under the Spanish government. This city was attacked by pirates, buccaneers, and the governments of Holland, France, England, and the United States. Protected by three enormous and amazing fortresses called San Felipe del Morro, San Cristobal del Morro and La Fortaleza, they are the best tourist attractions visited by people from around the world. Despite hundreds of years, the city preserves its Spanish picturesque style.

Considered as one of the most beautiful beaches of the world, Flamenco Beach is a unique place. It is located to the north of the island of Culebra in Puerto Rico. Its white sands and clear turquoise water make it a place perfect for vacationers. If you like to take sun baths, snorkel and share with friends and families, this is the right place for you.

The Yunque, "Mystic Mountain", is considered as one of the wonders of the modern world. Also known as "The Rain Forest", is it located to the east coast of the island. Its beauty is almost indescribable; vivid vegetation, abundant life, amazing views and spectacular rivers make this place one full of peace and harmony.

Indeed, Puerto Rico is a wonderful island; it is rich in natural beauty and full of history, where old San Juan, Flamenco Beach and The Yunque are the main attractions. In my opinion, each visitor or tourist has to go to see my home, my "Island of Charm".

## **Divorce**

*Ahmed Alotaibi*

*R/W 41*

“Getting divorced” are two words we don’t like to hear from family or friends. Yet, divorce is a reality all over the world. Some marriages last a long time because the partners are able to solve their problems themselves. However, some married people do not have ability to solve their problems on their own. In this essay, I will discuss two causes of divorce: various abuse types and financial issues.

There are many forms of abuse. It’s not just physical abuse; sexual abuse and emotional abuse may be causes for the relationship between two people to deteriorate. Physical abuse is when a man hits a woman and serious injury occurs. Sexual abuse is any situation in which force is used to obtain participation in unwanted sex. The last form of abuse is emotional. That type of abuse includes forceful efforts to isolate the wife, keeping her from contacting friends or family. The abuse can be caused by the man or, in some cases, by the woman.

Aspects related to financial issues are also, of course, a possible cause of disagreement between couples. Some couples may come from poor families, so their marriages start off in trouble. Other couples may have financial problems because one of the couple loses his or her job due to the bad economy. Other couples may have money but mismanage the money they have; they overspend their money on luxuries or on unhealthy and bad substances, like drugs. Finally, married couples could squabble over their shared financial responsibilities.

There are many causes of divorce. There are different forms of abuse which break couples apart. Dealing with money is another reason that marriages fail. In conclusion, I suggest that before marriage, everyone has to take special classes to prepare for a good married life. I hope that the number of divorces in the future will go down, especially with couples that have children.

## **A Beach Trip**

*Abdulgader Bayazid*

*R/W 41*

One of my great vacations was in Miami Beach. I went there recently with my best friends in America. We had already planned for this trip and had reserved a hotel and a car. One of my friends bought a GPS, which was very important on this trip. When we went to Miami, we went to North Beach, South Beach, the Dolphin Mall, and downtown Miami.

When we arrived in Miami Beach, we saw two areas there -- North Beach and South Beach. There are differences between North Beach and South Beach. Our hotel was in North Beach. We saw the biggest and the tallest hotels in North Beach. The expensive hotels are in front of the ocean, and our hotel was in front of the ocean. It was a quiet, nice place. Someone told us "North Beach is for rich people." Do you

know why? It is because North Beach is one of the quietest beaches in Miami.

Now I will talk about South Beach; it is the public beach in Miami. You can go to the ocean even if you don't have a hotel. Also, there are a lot of stores for shopping and a lot of bars. There are also hotels and motels, but they are not as expensive as in North Beach. Frankly, I like this place and I gave it a new name: the "Heart of Miami."

Also, my friends and I went to the Dolphin Mall. The mall is in Miami-Dade County's largest shopping center and it has more than 240 stores, with brands like Nike, Puma, Lacoste, and Polo. When we were there some people spoke Spanish to us because they thought we are Latin. (There are a lot of Latin people who live in that area.). My friends and I bought new shoes and a lot of new clothes at that mall. We really enjoyed shopping!

On the other hand, downtown Miami was boring. When we went there, nobody was there and all the stores were closed. There were some tall buildings, but it looked like a forsaken, yet scary place. We thought it was going to be better, but we didn't like it.

My conclusion is that we had a good Miami vacation. We liked the beaches and the mall. We met some friends there. We plan to visit it again. I hope we do.

## **A Trip with My Family**

*Abdulrahman Alnasser*

*R/W 40*

Do you like to take trips with your family? I certainly do! So one day on March 5, my wife and I decided to make one trip. My trip started in Gainesville then to Orlando and then to Tampa, and ended in Daytona Beach.

First, we left Gainesville at 7AM, and we arrived in Orlando at 9 AM. Orlando is the best city for me. However, we visited the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World because my son and my daughter like it. We spent an enjoyable time in Orlando.

The next day, we went to Tampa. It has an interesting beach. It is called Clearwater, but my children didn't like it. So we went to Busch Gardens. After that, my children became happy.

Last, we visited the best beach in Florida it called Daytona Beach. When I want to take a rest, I go to Daytona Beach. However, we swam at the beach, and enjoyed it.

In conclusion, my trip with my family was interesting. Also, we visited the Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Bush Gardens in Tampa, and Daytona Beach. However, the best trip for me is with my family, but on this trip I missed my mother because I used to take my mother with me on all my trips.

## **TEXTS: What Are These Strange Signals?**

*Martina Scaletta*  
*R/W 60*

The first time that I texted to my mom, telling her that I needed help to solve a problem, she called me three days later asking me “What happened?” For people like my mom, who grew up in the ‘70s, it is really difficult to get used to technology. That happened because the ‘70s generation used to communicate in a total different way. Nowadays it is unthinkable living without a cellphone or a laptop, but try to imagine how difficult it could be for who has grown up without using electronic devices get used to the actual “media system”. At the same time, try to imagine how our actual lives could be less stressful without using electronic devices.

In 2011 everybody should know what a text is or what a social network is, don’t you think so? Well, my mom will not agree with you at all. Firstly, she has a really bad relationship with her cellphone. She never hears it when it is ringing. In reality, she can’t recognize her alarm. So, for that reason, she never answers if somebody calls her. What about texts? As I have already said, if I am lucky, she will call me three or maybe four days later. My sister and I have tried to explain her a lot of times how to send and to read text messages, but she just can’t understand why we don’t call her instead of “sending her these strange signals” (her words for text messages). It should be said, anyway that as a matter of fact she doesn’t suffer from the “cellphone addiction”. She doesn’t care if someone has called her, so she isn’t stressed at all. Secondly, she doesn’t suffer even the “social network’s addiction”. Although, she really can’t understand how to use Facebook. In the beginning she was really interested in Facebook, so she asked me to create an account for her, but after that she has used it once or twice, because she doesn’t find it useful at all. Of course! None of her friends use Facebook, so with whom could she keep in touch on Facebook? That is the problem: people who grew up in the ‘70s are not involved in technologies because none of them does it, so they can’t exchange information about it.

In the ‘70s the style of living was completely different. Firstly, 70s young women and men didn’t use to communicate by cellphones; they used to meet each other at school in the morning. What did they use to do to meet each other out of school? It was easy! They used to arrange their afternoon during the morning. They didn’t need to call each other many times in a day, they just knew that at 4 p.m. everybody would have been in the main square of the city and that was it. Secondly, they didn’t need to use Facebook, because everybody knew everybody. Cities were smaller and life was so simple that they didn’t need a “virtual social network”. What they needed was just to stay together in an open space. How can they understand our way of living? My generation spends hours and hours in front of a laptop between walls uploading Facebook.

In 2011, men and women who are 24 years old like me or younger maybe can’t live without checking their cellphones or their profiles on Facebook at least once a day. I bought my first cellphone when I was 13 years old, so I can say that I grew

up with a cellphone in my hands. I use it every day and for everything. Whatever I am thinking, if I am alone, I can take my cellphone and communicate my thoughts to my friends . I can do the same just by sending a message on Facebook or by uploading my status. For example, once I couldn’t find a recipe for a typical Italian chocolate cake. I posted a comment on my profile asking for it and ten minutes later I had my recipe!

Facebook is also a really amazing system for creating sports event. If you want to organize a beach volley match, what you have to do is send a message to the players that you choose. It is great that we can be free to express ourselves in that way, but, on the other hand, we are losing the contact with the real world. My generation spends most of its free time immersed in a virtual world where everything seems to be possible. Then, when it is impossible to use the internet connection for some reasons, we feel lost and powerless. At the same time technologies steals our time. Answering to the phone, writing text messages and uploading Facebook have become stressful activities.

The use of technologies has changed our lives such in a deep manner that our style of living is completely different from the style of our parents. The 70s generation find difficult to be in touch with technologies, but the reason why that’s happened is simple: they are used to a totally different style of life, less stressful and more real!

## **Car Accidents**

*Mohammad Al-Rasheed*  
*R/W 40*

Technology has a lot of benefits, but also it has disadvantages and one of these are car accidents. Car accidents are one of the most important facts for the negative side of technology. High speed is one of most important causes of car accidents. Not only is high speed a factor that causes car accidents, but also running red lights. Also breaking laws are an important reason for car accidents. Neither the young people who are less than 16 years old nor the old people who are more than 70 years old have enough concentration to drive a car. In short, car accidents are a big problem in the world and it causes a lot of people to die, so we have to reduce the reasons for these accidents.

## **Ice Cream Websites**

*Supanee Hohensee*  
*R/W 4*

Who is an ice cream lover? I am! I think everybody loves ice cream. I remember when I grew up that I always liked to buy ice cream every time the ice cream cart passed by my house. In my country, Thailand, there are many ice cream companies and shops everywhere because the weather is very hot and ice cream is such a refreshing snack during the day. When I moved to the United States, I was looking for a good ice cream shop and here there are so many brands to choose from! This is why I was interested in searching for ice cream

brands. I started to think about the criteria I needed to evaluate the ice cream websites. Then I went to the Google site and found seemingly millions of ice cream websites but based on the criteria I chose, which is graphics and images, quality of information and ease of navigation, I was able to select two websites: Ben and Jerry ice cream, website A (benjerry.com), and Bluebell ice cream, website B (bluebell.com). After a thorough comparison, I decided that I liked website B more than website A. Although website A is more difficult to navigate than website B, they both have nice graphics and images and good quality of information.

Before I started to think about what criteria I should use to evaluate the websites, I went online and searched for what makes a good site and I found that "A successful website meets clearly identified goals and provides compelling content that draws your audience to your site again and again. In addition, it is easy to navigate and last it is attractively designed to complement the content" (What makes a good website, 1999). So I chose graphics and images for my first criteria because pictures are the first things to entice people to look at products. The second criterion was quality of information. I think a good product website should contain useful information for people to read, especially food or ice cream websites, because the information helps people to decide what they want to consume. The last criteria I chose was ease of navigation because I think people like to find and obtain information easily and quickly without spending too much time searching for ice cream flavors. Therefore, I think website B was the best for its attractive graphics and images, quality of information and ease of navigation.

When I saw website A for the first time, I really like the graphics and images on this website. They designed their website by using cartoon animation with colorful graphics to present their products. They have many fun things for people to play with and enjoy such as games, cartoon characters and an online gift shop. I think it was such a fun idea that an ice cream website was presented this way. Website B, on the other hand, is totally opposite. It has a very classic appearance. I discovered that website B (Bluebell) has been in the ice cream business for a long time, since 1907, and I think this is how they want to present their long ice cream history on their website. Although website B does not show much detail on the first page, I assumed that they wanted people to look at each picture and find what they were looking for which I thought was interesting. Though both websites have differences in graphic design, they both have nice graphics and images which are also fun to look at.

The quality of information is another important aspect for a good website. Both websites contain good information. For example, they both have the flavors of their ice cream with nutritional facts which is the most important thing. They also both have a history of the company, store locations, recipes, information about visiting their factories, customers' comments and videos of how to make ice cream. However, there were some small differences in the presentation of the information. For example, website A had games, cartoon characters, franchise information and information about an online gift shop whereas website B had free coupons for their members. Also, I

found the names of ice cream flavors on website A (Ben and Jerry) to be a little more interesting. They had different names such as "Chunky Monkey," "Chubby Hubby" "Everything but the...", "Fossil Fuel," "Berried Treasure," and many more. Website B, on the other hand, had simple old-fashioned ice cream names. Otherwise, however, I considered that website A and website B both had a good quality of information.

With regard to navigation, I thought website B was easier to navigate than website A. Although website A had nice graphic animation, it had too much detail on one page and the font was difficult to read. Also, they actually provided too much information including not only ice cream flavors but also all kinds of activities. I thought it was hard to find the flavors of their ice cream. I also thought they mixed the text in with the graphics too much so it looked very overwhelming. Website B, on the other hand, had better organization. So, it was easy to find ice cream flavors. Although they did not have much writing on the home page, they did have obvious pictures so that people could easily look at each one to find what they were looking for. For example, they had a picture of an ice cream container so that people would know where to find the flavor. A picture of a big suitcase was linked to the store visit page and a picture of a mailbox was presented for customer's comments. Overall, I thought website B was an interesting website that was well organized and easy to navigate.

In conclusion, I have never had to look for ice cream on the web before but honestly, ice cream websites are very interesting to look at! Also, the criteria that I developed to evaluate the websites helped me decide which ice cream brand was the best one to try. It was difficult for me to choose one over the other because I believe that both ice cream brands are tasty. However, the Bluebell ice cream website, website B, made me want to try a taste of their ice cream first because of their attractive images, good quality of information and ease of navigation.

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## **The Movements of an Exchange Rate: How They Affect the Economy**

*Minyoung Kim*  
*R/W 41*

The global financial crisis in 2008 was a difficult time for the world economy. Stock markets had fallen, large financial institutions had collapsed, and exchange rates also were volatile. The crisis affected our world and each country. Since I majored in Business Administration and studied in the CFA (Chartered Financial Analyst) program, I was interested in that situation and want to explain the effect of exchange rate



movements on the world economy. When a currency appreciates, overall, it will have effects on three different aspects of the economy: imports and exports, prices, and foreign investments.

Generally speaking, as a currency appreciates and gets stronger, its buying power will increase in the exchange market. The effects don't appear immediately, but over time, currency appreciation will cause exports to fall and imports to increase. For example, previously people in the U.S could buy a bottle of wine for a dollar from France; as the dollar gets stronger, they can buy more French currencies (Euros). That, in turn, means US citizens can now buy 2 wine bottles for a dollar or for fifty cents each. Since it is cheaper for a U.S. person to buy wine made in France rather than the local wine, money is flowing out of the US; this has caused a deficit in the U.S. balance of international payments.

Next, currency appreciation makes the price of foreign goods go down. If the exchange rate decreases (which means that a currency appreciates, the country would be able to pay less to import raw materials and components than before the appreciation. Also, the prices of imports will decrease, too. Therefore, it makes the domestic prices go down. The movements of exchange rates have a great impact on countries which have a high rate of dependence on imports such as South Korea.

The last topic is about foreign investments. Companies or countries that have huge foreign debt will make a profit while their currency appreciates. The reason for this is that if the dollar gets stronger we can pay back more of the debt because we can buy more of the local currency than before the appreciation.

In conclusion, if a currency appreciates, the balance of payments will worsen, prices will go down and the burden of foreign loans will decrease. On the other hand, if a currency depreciates, the balance of payments will improve, prices will go up and the burden of foreign loans will increase. Whenever exchange rates change, there are advantages and disadvantages.

## **Mass Media Influence on the Criminal Justice System**

*Marcelina Carreira Alvim*  
*R/W 60*

### **Abstract**

The mass media has always exercised influence in people's everyday life, but currently the impact has become substantial and worrying. The media has not performed its role accordingly, especially when the news is related to some crime. It usually creates a dramatic criminal reality that ends up influencing the public opinion. As provider of information, the media has exceeded by pre-judging people and creating a perception of guilt before and during the trial. Although the media tries to show an impartial appearance, the bias is evident, offending directly the right to a fair trial by the accused. In the Democratic State of Law, the law must be utilized as an instrument of the justice above of all.

### **Introduction**

The mass media has always exercised influence in people's everyday life, but currently the impact has become substantial and worrying. The diversity on the means of communication (TV, radio, magazines, internet, books, and movie theater) has allowed people the access to information from anywhere in real-time.

The media has provided both useful and important information for the society, determining the way of thinking and suggesting behavior. It has the power to influence opinions, customs, and trends, performing an important role in people's life by permitting them to form their opinion.

Mass media's influence has reached criminal justice system. On one hand, the media seeks for the widest freedom of information; on the other hand, there is the necessity of defending the rights of the suspect in order to get a fair trial. In order to attract the audience, sometimes the media has made the criminal stories more dramatic. Suspects in a police investigation have been judged and convicted in newspaper and have had their honor, privacy, and intimacy violated and destroyed. When the media suggests the guilt of someone, there is hardly room for defense, which consequently influences the decision of the judge and jurors.

In 2004, Hantler, Schwartz, and Goldberg claimed that "courts and legal commentators are increasingly recognizing that the media, through the way it covers litigation, has a very real impact on the resolution of individual lawsuits" (p. 7). Therefore, despite the fact that the role performed by media seems beneficial, it is necessary to analyze how useful and fatal it is to the society.

### **The media's role**

Media may be defined as "all the organizations, such as television, radio, and newspaper, that provide news and information for the public or the people who do this work" (Longman 2009). The right to freedom of speech is recognized as a human right under article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The media's role is to provide reliable information, raising awareness, entertaining, and discussing important social issues in order to provoke reaction in the society. So, it represents an important arena of power, debate and conflicts mediation. It has the power of choosing events that will be conveyed and will cause social discussion; consequently, it defines the topics that people will talk in the job, social meetings and at home. Therefore, the media influences not only individual behavior, but also changes the social reality. The media has affected trials, election decision, and wars. In this context, the media has a huge social responsibility, as genuine agent of social control. However, what has been verified is that the media has not performed its role accordingly, especially when the news is related to some crime. Before the suspect is judged by the court of law, the media judges and "convicts" the person irresponsibly.

### **How the media influences the society**

For some obscure reason, violence causes fascination in people. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, slaves were beaten and killed in public squares, and in the Middle Ages the church judged and

convicted heretic in public squares as well. Michel Foucault (1975), a French philosopher and historian of social institutions, called this kind of punishment “public spectacle of torture” in his book *Discipline and Punish*.

In modern society, people have still shown interest for violence. Therefore, the public square, stage of the ancient public spectacle, was not extinguished, but only replaced by the mass media. This so-called “trial by media” is defined by Diane Furno-Lamude (as quoted in Graham-Smith 2008) as “a regional or national news event in which the media co-opt the criminal justice system as a source of high drama and entertainment. It is, in effect, a dramatic miniseries built around a real criminal case”. Perry (1931), analyzing the trial by media, wrote:

The trial itself is treated like a great sporting event. The papers tell how the state introduced damaging evidence; how the defense scored heavily; how this or that witness' story was unshaken; how the defendant smiled or colored or appeared nervous; how the jury seemed to react. When the trial is over, we read how the ballots stood, with, perhaps, interviews with various jurors. And throughout the daily chronicle of the trial the reporters of this class of papers, aided by photographers and so-called ‘special writers’, seize upon every sensational aspect and detail, and exploit it to the limit. (p. 231)

It would be easy to think that the media performs a praiseworthy job by conveying detailed news about criminal issues and using an accessible language to do so, working as a translator of the judicial proceeding and facilitating its comprehension by the society, unlike the court of the law. However, the media has shown to be more interested in rating rather than in providing reliable information. So, it usually creates a dramatic criminal reality that ends up influencing the public opinion, and has been successful in doing so. According to Brown, Duane, and Fraser (1997), “A number of celebrity court cases have gained widespread media attention and public involvement” (p. 262). As cited by Brown et al. (1997), in the following cases, the media speech was frightening in order to dramatize the violence to shock, generate impact, vibration, and emotion: the trial of Bruno Hauptmann (1932), Patricia Hearst and Claudine Longet (1970), Claus von Bulow (1980), Cristian Brando (1990), Michael Jackson, and O.J. Simpson (p. 262-263).

The media has often conveyed heavily biased news against the accused in order to impact the public and create a feeling of injustice and rage. It tends to present only the prosecution side of the case, which induces the public to prejudge people, so far, under the presumption of innocence. The media has performed not only the informer’s role, but also the judge’s role by intervening in the course of events and creating a widespread perception of guilt regardless of a verdict in a court of law.

### **How the media influences trial**

If the interference of the media affected only the public opinion, it would cause less damage. Nevertheless, this interference has negatively affected the court of law by influencing the judge’s and jurors’ decisions.

As provider of information, the media has exceeded by pre-judging people and creating a perception of guilt before and during the trial. Although the media tries to show an impartial appearance, the bias is evident, offending directly the right to a fair trial by the accused.

Some judges and jurors, influenced by media and fearful of public opinion, have lost their impartiality and put the fair trial on jeopardy. Phillipson (2008) wrote that “trial by jury is rapidly being destroyed in America by the manner in which the newspapers handle all sensational cases”. It is often thought that the judge is trained to act in such a position, which includes knowing the rules of the criminal law and filtering the information disseminated by the media about the guilt of someone. However, the fact that the judge is a human being, biased in essence, and can suffer the influence of the clamor public must be considered.

The well-known Amanda Knox case can be used as a recent example of trial by media that culminated in her conviction by the court of law, although nonexistent clear evidence towards her. On November 1, 2007, Meredith Kercher, a university student from England, was murdered and found on her bedroom floor partially nude and stabbed in the neck at the house she shared with Knox in Perugia, Italy. Rudy Hermann Guede, a resident of Perugia, was convicted of the sexual assault and murder of Kercher and received a reduced sentence of 16 years after an appeal. Amanda Knox and her boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito, an Italian student, were convicted of sexual assault and murder. Sollecito was sentenced to 25 years in prison, and Knox was sentenced to 26 years (Donadio, 2009a). Knox and Sollecito began to appeal their conviction with the review of the DNA used by the prosecution against them during the trial.

This case received much media attention in Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, which inclusively deserved a movie’s production. Although there was no indubitable evidence of Knox and Sollecito’s participation, both were convicted because of the public opinion pressure, which reproved their behavior after Kercher’s death. According to images conveyed by TV, Knox and her boyfriend didn’t show suffering or despair just after the murder, while the police investigated the scene of the crime; on the contrary, they were very calm and unshaken. The media exploited Knox’s odd behavior by considering it incompatible with an innocent person whose roommate had just been horribly murdered. In other words, the media suggested that referred behavior is expected from a murderer and conveyed this image.

In February 2011, Lifetime, an American entertainment industry company, released a made-for-TV movie, “Amanda Knox: Murder on trial in Italy”, in which it is asserted facts unconfirmed in the process in a tendentious way, making her seem capable of committing the murder. The movie suggests motivations (arguments and misunderstandings between Knox and *Kercher* without witnesses), which were not

proved, to justify the crime and insinuates that Knox was afraid of calling the police to tell about the crime, as if she tried to hide the murder. Knox's family tried to block the Lifetime movie unsuccessfully. They claimed that, although Knox had been convicted in Italy, the case is not over. The judgment that convicted her in December, 2009, was not definitive considering that she appealed to the superior instance and is waiting for another judgment in which she will have chance to be declared innocent (*Donadio, 2009b*). The movie, which portrays Knox as a murderer, obviously will be able to harm the result of her appeal by creating bias amongst the judges, affecting her right to a fair and impartial trial.

In the Democratic State of Law, the law must be utilized as an instrument of the justice above of all. It is inadmissible to permit that the mass communication leads the public opinion and presses the judges to decide according to public clamor. History has shown that deciding according to public clamor can be a huge mistake. The legal system must avoid emotion, performing the society desire only based upon the laws.

According to Standler (2004), the Richard Jewell case can be mentioned as a disturbing trial by media. Jewell, an American security guard, became known in connection with the Centennial Olympic Park bombing at 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia. On July 27, 1996, Jewell discovered a pipe bomb, reported it to police, and helped to evacuate the area before it exploded. For three days, he was treated as hero by the media, but afterwards he was considered the prime suspect. Jewell had his reputation ruined by journalists who spent several weeks treating him as guilty. However, on October 26, 1996, the FBI and U. S. Attorney accused another person and recognized that Jewell was innocent. He sued all broadcasters that denigrated his image in order to alleviate the suffered emotional consequences. In cases like these, in which the accused is afterwards absolved by the court of law, the media doesn't give the same publicity that was given previously. The suspect's image gets extremely demoralized, but the media doesn't spend the same time to fix the damage caused.

### Conclusion

The media has acted irresponsibly towards criminal issues, although people think that it performs a praiseworthy job by conveying detailed news about crimes and translating the judicial proceeding in order to facilitate its comprehension by the society. The media doesn't have neither competence nor legitimacy to convict or absolve anyone, being this task appropriated and exclusively to the judiciary. By being prejudged, the suspect's image gets exposed and demoralized, which negatively influences the decision of the judge and jurors and can cause irreparable damages, even in cases in that the suspect is afterwards absolved by the court of law. The media should use its power of communication in a responsible way, performing an unbiased role of informer, which is very important to maintain the democracy.

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### The Blind Girl

*Ashwag Alqahtany*

R/W 52

(Editor's note: Translation of an Arabic poem written by Nezar Qabany.)

You love me, Yet I am blind  
many girls are there, the beautiful, the attractive, the lovely  
unless you are a creasy, for the blind girl feeling sorry

nay, I am in love my dear  
from this world nothing I want, but to be my wife  
God has blessed me with money, cure would not be impossible  
I think

If you return my sight back to me  
I will approve of you ah! my fate you will be

And with you spend my lifetime.  
But whose eyes he or she will give me  
And in which night he or she will bide

One day, in hurry to her he came  
Saying good news sweetie  
And What God create or beautify you will see  
Perhaps I found the donor  
So you will fulfill your promise to me  
And my wife you will be

and when she opened her eyes  
standing he was and holding her hands  
she saw him, she squealed  
a blind also you are  
of her misfortune she wept tears

oh my beloved  
don't be sad  
you will be my eyes rather my guide  
so when you will become my wife

me! marry a blind  
and I already became a seer

so he cried  
saying please forgive me  
who am I? to marry you  
but before you leave  
promise me  
thoroughly of my eyes take care

## **The Causes of Car Accidents**

*Noor Albrag*  
*R/W 40*

In 2005, around 45,000 American people were killed because of car accidents. Most of them were young, and were either men or women. There are many causes of car accidents. First of all, distracted drivers are one of the top causes of car accidents in the world. Drivers usually lose their attention to their driving when they talk on a cell phone, send a message, and eat food. Therefore, it often leads to car accidents. Second, many of the drivers ignore the speed limit and exceed the limit. People who are going above the speed limit cause a large number of car accidents. Third, drunk people usually lose the ability to focus and pay attention while using a vehicle. It is considered not only a small problem, but it is also one of the biggest problems in the world. Also, drunk people are usually out of control. That is why they cause accidents. All in all, there are many causes of car accidents. In order to avoid having accidents, people must pay attention and drive slowly when they are driving cars.

## **Cell Phones and Their Possible Effects**

*Salman Altamimi*  
*R/W 60*

Cell phones are really useful in our modern lives. However, that depends on how we use them. On one hand, some people use them in the right way when necessary and for important things only; on the other hand, some people use them continuously while studying, working, and crossing streets, which affects their personal lives and their studies. More than other age groups, teenagers tend to be addicted to their cell phones. Using cell phones all the time could lead to a lot of serious problems in teenagers' daily lives.

Teenagers are addicted to their cell phone; they use it constantly, and they prefer using their cell phones over hanging out with their parents or completing their studies. They use it when they are in class, when crossing a street, and when they are out for a dinner with their family. In that case, it becomes a distraction and causes separation between the teenagers and their family. Some parents do not have quality time with their children because the children are always busy texting and e-mailing their friends instead of talking to their family and enjoying the company of their parents. Teenagers never talk to their parents about their needs in their studies or their personal lives. As a result, families suffer from a lack of communication and they start separating from each slowly.

Using cell phones intensively could lead teenagers to get low grades at their studies. Teens do not focus on their studies because they are distracted by texting and chatting with their friends. Instead of spending two hours on their studies, they divide it between studying and texting. As a result, they take longer to finish their studies which could be between four to five hours. When teenagers multi-task they cannot remember everything they read because their mind will be in two different places at once. They go to classes unprepared and they turn in their assignments late. Ultimately, some teenagers fail some of their classes because of their addiction to cell phones.

Furthermore, excessive cell phone use could lead to sleep issues. Teens stay up all night just to text their friends or to check their Facebook or Twitter. When teenagers go to bed, they do not turn their cell phones off. Instead they leave them on vibrate, so that they can hear it when they get a text. Therefore, they wake up every few hours to check on their cell phones; consequently, they wake up really late for school and they go to class feeling drowsy. They will suffer from tiredness and lack of sleep, in which case it could lead them to sleep in classes and take long naps.

Lastly, teenagers use their cell phones continuously to text their friends instead of calling them or meeting them in person. Katie Hafner once said, "Based on our experiences with computer users, we know intensive repetitive use of the upper extremities can lead to musculoskeletal disorders, so we have some reason to be concerned that too much texting could lead to temporary or permanent damage to the thumbs." Thus, in the near future, teenagers will suffer from musculoskeletal disorders. That is a really serious problem that we need to avoid.

Becoming addicted to using cell phones repeatedly affects students' lives negatively, so people should be more careful and wiser when it comes to using their cell phones. Parents should educate and inform their children of the consequences of texting, and they need to use appropriate measures to prevent these problems from happening. People should not neglect this problem and start dealing with it to lead to a better future. Imagine teenagers' lives without cell phones? Could teenagers be more productive and better functioning members of society?

## **How Nuclear Science Has Affected Medicine: The Benefits of Nuclear Medicine in Imaging**

*Salman Altamimi*  
*R/W 60*

### **Abstract**

Nuclear medicine is a modern technique in medical treatment that offers a painless procedure in treating patients. It employs a radioactive material that is commonly referred to as *radiopharmaceuticals*. This is useful as it enables the physicians to diagnose and treat the diseases with utmost accuracy. This procedure works when a small amount of *radiopharmaceuticals* is released in the human body mostly by means of injection. In certain instances, the patient is required to inhale or swallow the relative radiopharmaceutical substances. These are directed towards the body tissues and bones (Nuclear Medicine, n.d). The process is aided by a camera that is specially designed to be used in the procedure. This is referred to as gamma camera, SPECT or PET. It has special mechanisms that are sensitive to any radiopharmaceutical substance that may be in the body. Usually, it works by imaging the body tissue or bone on which the respected substance is bonded. When capturing the necessary image, the data collected runs an analysis to find out any abnormal things in the region that hints for the existence of a disease. Nuclear medicine evaluates images in terms of changes in the biological composition that provides accurate results compared to other imaging tests.

### **Nuclear Medicine**

Nuclear physics has had an enormous impact on modern medicine, beginning with the discovery of natural radioactivity and Madam Curie's contributions and leading up to today's advances. It was particularly useful in tumor therapy and was used in relative procedures before the discovery and development of ideal methods of radiation Ionization (Society of Nuclear Medicine, 2009). The nuclear medical field jumped forward with the appearance of the tracer technology, which led to an immediate rise of an entirely new field that specialized in the study of the in-vivo measure of different organ functions as well as the field of chemical-kinetics. There have been a multiple improvements in the applications of nuclear physics in medical treatments that have made procedures more accurate and safer, especially on account of the introduction of precise

tumor control and targeting. In essence, nuclear science has dramatically transformed medical procedures and the entire quality of medical services.

Nuclear medicine is a specialized branch of medical imaging and medicine that depends on radioactive decay in the diagnosis, management and treatment of diseases. It is also known as the "inside-out x-ray" because of its ability to record radiation that emits from an individual's body as different from the traditional x-ray and other techniques that register only radiation directed and reflected off a person's body (Grossman, 2006). Nuclear medicine operations are heavily reliant on radiopharmaceuticals (minute radioactive particles) to produce images of the anatomy. These particles are usually driven to particular bones, organs, tissues and cells. Effectively, the particles are introduced into the body of a patient by inhalation, swallowing or injection and as they pass through the body, radioactive radiation will be emitted.

Specialized cameras are then used to expose all emissions from the patient's body and output the image onto a computer monitor. This discipline is unique, not only because it gathers information about the functions of the tissues and organs, but it also provides the particular structure. Thus, this field of imaging and medicine allows doctors to see the physiological structure of organs, such as the bladder (Schneider, 2010). Coupled with radioactive decay, use of computer imaging strategies is instrumental in ensuring effective structure as well as functioning of every body organ. These specialized cameras have a popular usage in the following areas; tissue and bone imaging, bone scans, brain scans, cardiac-stress tests as well as lung scans among a couple of other procedures and functions.

Besides diagnosis, its usage for therapeutic purposes includes pain relief in case of bone cancers as well as treatment of hyperthyroidism. Technological advances created cameras are designed for the purpose of detecting radiopharmaceuticals that functions with greater effectiveness and sophistication. Usually, gamma cameras are used to work with the imaging systems designed for specific testing. The gamma camera is one of those specialized cameras "capable of detecting a radiotracer... [and] creates two-dimensional picture of the inside of the body from different angles" (Society of Nuclear Medicine, 2009). Further advancement in instrumentation introduced the digital scintillation camera that produces 3D image on the computer, which has been described as "a camera system in which the computer is an integral part of the system and used for processing the scintillation event." (Galt & Garcia, 2001, p. 43). These cameras are suitable with systems used for image processing including Single-Photon Emission-Computed Tomography (SPECT), Positron Emission Tomography (PET) and other upgraded versions of these systems such as CT-PET and MR-PET.

Effective understanding and appreciation of relative systems requires a clear description of wide ranging systems usually employed in the field of nuclear medicine such as the SPECT instrument which is "capable of detecting radiotracer and develops distinct and clear three-dimensional images representing the area under study." (Society of Nuclear Medicine, 2009). The SPECT system when fused with

computed tomography (CT) systems produces results with great accuracy. The PET device on the other hand uses a scanner that also requires the respective radiotracer to be injected in the patient's blood stream (Society of Nuclear Medicine, 2009). Similar to SPECT, PET system may also combine with extended systems such as CT to deliver "highly detailed views of the body... [that] provide[s] detail on both the anatomy and function of organs and tissues" (Society of Nuclear Medicine, 2009).

Nuclear medicine differs mainly from X-rays and MRIs, plus has both technical differences and has a better quality of the images produced, besides serving a further purpose of showing physiological function of body organs, tissues and cells. MRI scanning uses powerful magnetic forces to raise and attract hydrogen nuclei contained in the body's tissues. The excited nucleus then shows signals that can be found and encoded spatially into the image that the computer generates. MRI imaging is traditionally 2D and represents thin body slices, although modern equipment is capable of producing 3D images. An MRI does include ionization and therefore it does not involve long term health effects like x-rays but it comes with health risks because of the possibility of tissues heating as a result of exposure to strong magnetic forces. On top it all, MRI to include CT scanning tests are categorized as "anatomic imaging tools" which means that these systematic procedures can only produce the structure of the body for the physician's examination and interpretation, which to some extent may be breeding inaccuracies that result in misdiagnosis (Oilchange.com, n.d.).

Nuclear medicine is a sophisticated technique that functions beyond imaging. Its relative analytical feature aids physicians in a more accurate diagnosis as automated calculation is significantly precise in reading data as compared to humans. For example, PET system operates through a scanning procedure in which "a metabolic imaging tool is able to visualize biochemical changes caused by disease" (Oil Change, n.d.). Another advantage pertains to the system's ability to detect the Alzheimer's disease because of its sophisticated function to detect biochemical activity that is significant in the detection of the disease for any abnormal changes. Alzheimer cannot be detected by CT scans or MRI scan because the disease does not exhibit changes in the structural feature of the human body, of which limits the ability of MRI and CT scanning procedures.

Similar to MRI imaging, x-rays too have projection of external radiation into the body and the reflected rays are recorded by specialized cameras to create a reasonably high quality image of the body's internal structures. High energy x-rays could be used for therapeutic purposes especially in cancer treatment. The technique does, however, present a number of health and technical difficulties (Grossman, 2006). Exposure to x-rays leads a patient to a series of many complications and even increases the risk of cancer; so much so that in its study regarding the rates of cancer, The World Health Organization (WHO) undertook national surveys and basing on its results, it classifies x-rays as carcinogenic and they are responsible for almost 0.4% of all cancer patients in the United States (WHO 2011). The x-rays might likely cause cell mutations and then the

passing on of the negative health conditions to the next generations.

Further, Nuclear Medicine is at its infancy that requires further research suggesting more years to study before its full implementation. There is the danger of any known and/or unknown allergies of a patient going through the procedure that may cause detrimental effects, which had not yet been determined with certainty. In emergent study, it has been found out that obesity undermines the effectiveness of nuclear medicine in different ways. The study articulates that "The acquired images may be suboptimal because of artifacts due to soft-tissue attenuation and incomplete whole-body coverage, and quantification may be suboptimal, especially for PET." (Ghanem, Kazim & Elgazzar, 2011). Other challenges include the mechanical concerns pertaining to the weight limit of the table employed in imaging. In addition, the bore size the SPECT/CT or PET scanner can pose certain problems during the procedure. Also, more problems stem from the aspects of the duration of the entire process, protocol and distinct timing of the process (Ghanem et al, 2011). These challenges should be effectively resolved to enhance the quality of the nuclear medicine.

The diagnostics, scanning and treatment of nuclear medicine is normally organ specific, but it could be the imaging of the whole body too. Further, nuclear medicine has the ability to identify disease processes through the metabolic differences (Taylor, Schuster & Naomi, 2003). Nuclear medicine therapy has only low power ionizing radiation that involves non-significant side effects; therefore, it makes it possible to be performed by outpatient hospital procedures, contrary to MRIs and x-rays which require specialized services. This not only enhances the efficiency of nuclear medicine, but also increases its suitability to vulnerable patients. If the ionizing radiation is not kept within limits, the side effects of the previous methods would be experienced.

One of the roles of nuclear medicine procedures is to analyze the function of the kidney, the heart's physiological function, as well as scanning lungs to identify blood flow and respiratory problems (Taylor et al., 2003). Other uses include determination of cancerous tissues, bowel bleeding, location of infections, and evaluation of fractures in bones and measurement of thyroid functions in order to find underactive thyroids.

Except for the injections that are intravenous, nuclear medical processes are largely non-invasive and do not include painful tests in order to help doctors in the diagnosis of illnesses. As an outcome of use of nuclear medicine on treatment and effective control of diseases, almost 16 million people in the United States alone have received nuclear medication in the year 2010, to treat or manage a variety of problems including cardiovascular illnesses, cancers, physiological and neurological complaints (Grossman, 2006). Furthermore, images that are related to nuclear medicine may be forced along with Computed Tomography or MRI images in order to generate especially insightful views. This gives unified images ensuring greater accuracy of diagnosis on the part of physicians.

At this point, it cannot be disputed that nuclear science has had dramatic effects on the field of medicine. Nuclear medicine has introduced a lot of changes to medicine through its efficient diagnostic abilities and the ability to help manage chronic illnesses including cancers (Grossman, 2006). It has cut back on the costs of providing medication to patients and helped doctors with decision support to treat the patients within the blink of an eye. This has culminated in the improvement of the quality of life of patients that require the procedures. Further, it has improved the performance of the medical practitioners. Most importantly, it has ensured that medical problems are addressed in a timely manner. The characteristic painless procedures are sustainable because of their ability to improve the health of the patients without inflicting them with pain. Seemingly, nuclear science has triggered various other medical inventions that are geared towards enhancing the holistic health of the patients. Undoubtedly, these benefits are growing better every day, especially with the improved technological devices in the same field.

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## The Causes of Car Accidents

Abdulrahman Aldossary

R/W 40

Cars have become a big part of life now. Car accident injuries are the most common type of personal injury suffered in daily life. Every day in life, there are a lot of accidents that happen, and a lot of lives are lost. In big cities, there are many highways and, also many cars which make it a crowded place, **and** a lot of young teenagers that like to go fast. As a result, they lose control of their cars, so they lose their lives. It is not a big deal in the small cities, because cars are not important and useful, and also there are not many highways, which makes it less dangerous than the big cities. Fast is a dangerous disease that teenagers are addicted to.

## The Effects of Learning to Speak a Second Language

André Baby

R/W 40

The beneficial effects of studying a second language are many. We currently live in a globalized world where economic iteration, political, social and geographical change are happening worldwide, so if you know at least one language fluently you have opportunities to act on global levels and no longer locally. Not only do you need to study a second language, but also learn about the culture that surrounds it. This will greatly assist learning. Communication with more people than those who speak his own tongue, could give many chances to work and even love in the world. I see today that not only speaking English, but also speaking the Spanish language is fundamental; both need at least two years of immersion to be fluent and more than five years of study in your country in a language school. However, it is easy to learn and not so easy to invest in another language; it requires high investments of time and money to become fluent. Yet if you study another language, you will have to access their level of understanding, writing, and speaking. In conclusion, the necessity of studying another language is increasingly important, but we have evaluate the costs and time investment that requires fluency.

## The Causes of Car Accidents in Venezuela

Mariajose Suarez

R/W 40

Why are car accidents common in Venezuela? There are several causes of car accidents in Venezuela. This is considered a huge problem because this happens all of the time. One of the most common reasons is people talking on cell phones; this distracts them so they can have a wreck. Another important cause is drunk people driving on the street. It is extremely dangerous for people who are riding on the streets. The last but not the least important is neither streets nor avenues

are in good conditions; most of them are broken. Clearly, in Venezuela there are many factors that cause car accidents.

## **The Importance of Recycling**

*Juan Sebastian Useche*

*R/W 40*

Have you heard about recycling? Recycling is not only the processing of waste materials to make these reusable, but also it is a good way to care for natural resources. There are some important effects of recycling. Perhaps the most common effect is that recycling that reduces pollution. People could prevent both water pollution, and global warming because recycling reduces the amount of waste in the oceans. Another effect is to reduce the greenhouse emissions for the reason that recycling keeps the waste out of the landfills, and on the other hand, reducing the need to use natural resources for the production of new products. Finally, there are a lot of good reasons for the importance of recycling: unfortunately, people prefer act blind in a time when they need to save the planet.

## **A Spot on Arabs' Hospitality**

*Ashwag Alqahtany*

*R/W 52*

Have you ever heard about Arab hospitality? Can you imagine that a person left his wife and children hungry taking the only meal they could have that day and presenting it to his guest? Could you imagine that in the past, during tribes' war, if any person visited another who is originally his enemy, that opponent should perform his duty of showing hospitality and generosity to his guest until he leaves his house? Moreover if that person asks his guest to protect him from anyone, for example escaping from a tribe or a person who wants to kill him, that guest would die to protect him from being killed in his house which is considered a shame for him and his tribe. With that complicated culture of appreciating guests in the Arabian Peninsula, visiting an Arabian (originally Bedouin) could be an adventure to any foreigner who doesn't understand their ritual ceremony or habits.

First of all, Arabs are not like Americans in the importance of making a previous appointment before visiting people. If a person would like to visit another one, all he has to do is head directly to the house of the host. On the other the other hand, people there are used to be ready to such a sudden visit. Every day, at least coffee should be ready in the guestroom and it is favorable to leave the door of the house open in case a passerby would like to enter and have a coffee. It is not necessary to find the host in the house, a person can enter the guest room which is usually be close to the front door and enjoy a cup of coffee. Therefore, leaving a door opened could be a sign of generosity. However a guest should knock on the door three times before he comes in to avoid seeing women without their hijab. Anyway, guests to Arabs make them feel happy and have much confidence in themselves, especially in

such society where people respect the person who is used to having many guests.

Arabian hosts must appreciate their guests with different ways. A host should raise his voice saying welcome to his guest, and it is common to hear the host saying that many times during the visit. Greeting could be in a form of shaking hands and kissing each other quickly on the lips as an expression of friendship. When it comes to old people kissing over the head and hand is recommended. The top place of the room should be left to the old and wise one. Therefore, a person would leave that place if another person older or wiser than him enters the room. A host should mention the reason of the invitation when he serves the food for guests as a sign of honoring them. Actually, Arabs in general give great recognition to invitation etiquette.

Drinking and serving coffee reflect a very cumulative culture that could be difficult to understand to some people. Coffee, or *kahawah* is not just a drink, especially among the Bedouins. Tea is for every day, but coffee is a ceremony for visitors, guests, and the sharing of news. Drinking coffee together is a symbol of harmony. The person who is responsible for serving coffee should hold the coffee pot in his left hand, holding cups with the other, and handling only with the right hand. He should never fill the cups to the person, otherwise this would be considered as an insult to guests and a sign of boredom from serving them. He should watch his guests' cup carefully in order to pour another one to them as soon as they finish. Shaking cups by the guest means no more coffee. On the other hand, if a guest refuses to drink his coffee that would be understood as a problem. The guest here indicates that he may be mad at something. As a result the host would feel offended wanting to know why that is? He may directly try to ask the guest and solve the problem. Therefore, the emotional condition of the guest according to his gestures should be given attention by the host

Finally, this kind of rich culture needs to be understood not only by foreigners, but also by the new generation who may be careless about following these pure original traditions. Appreciating and understanding traditions of people is definitely the way to being accepted in their society.

## **Love at First Webcall? No, Thank You!**

*Martina Scaletta*

*R/W 60*

In the last ten years the beginning and the development of romantic relationships has been negatively affected by the use of Skype. Modern couples have stopped meeting each other. They have stopped to live their feelings in the real world. What should they do to solve this problem? It is easy! Modern couples should avoid using Skype to meet, to argue and even to break up.

Soon, by the use of Skype, the expression "love at first sight" will disappear. In fact, there is a big difference between meeting someone for the first time behind a webcam and meeting someone for the first time face to face. A real meeting allows the people involved to have a true feeling about the other



person. Once a friend of mine added a man on Skype. Actually, she has chosen him because he had a really funny name. The first time that they “met” each other on Skype she had a fantastic impression about him. He seemed self-confident and funny. The catastrophe was their first true meeting. He was really embarrassed and he started to sweat. She described their date with one simple word: AWFUL!

How much it would be different if they have met each other face to face for the first time! My father felt in love with my mother just watching her while she was looking outside the window of her house. A “webcam conversation” will never substitute the feeling of looking someone in the eyes for the first time.

By the use of Skype, maybe it will be impossible to live a “relieved” argument with partners. To solve problems, couples sometimes need to argue. Arguing with the partner in front of a webcam could be not enough. Many people think that argue by using Skype could be useful because whenever the argument becomes too hard it is possible to close the conversation and to leave the partner going over his/her anger. That’s not true! Being a couple means that problems have to be solved together. It means also that both of the members of a couple should not be left alone. A real argument, without webcams, can end with a simple hug.

What about the end of a relationship? Nowadays, many people break up with partners by calling them on Skype. It could be said that break up with the partner on Skype is less hurtful, but again that’s not true and that’s totally disrespectful for the feelings of the other person. This new and awful way of breaking up is just easier. It shows the absolute lack of braveness. A relationship deserves respect even when it is ended. Closing a relationship by Skype means that nothing was true in that relation just like the last “webcall”.

Modern couples need to discover the pleasure of the small and simple things in life. They need to see each other, to stay in the same room and to eat together. They need to share their lives in the real world without the filter of a webcam. Do something special today: switch off your Skype phone and ask to your partner to go out for a real, magic and romantic date.

## **My American Life (freewriting)**

*Wenjiao Zhou*

*R/W 4*

My American life started in September, 2010. The first thing that shocked me was that I couldn't find any room-temperature water or even water without ice! Also, the temperature in indoor public areas was so low that I had to wear long-sleeve shirts even during the hot late summer and early fall months. However, after one month, I gradually got used to these things. I decided that when in America, do as the Americans do, just as in Rome, do as the Romans do. So I live every day in the U.S. as the Americans do. I feel I have become stronger than before and I have been amazed by the human ability to adjust to the environment.

The next thing I want to mention is the American people. Since I haven't been to many places in America, I can

only judge the American people by the people in Gainesville. I think the people I have met in Gainesville are really nice, warmhearted and well-educated. They have helped me a lot throughout the time I have been here.

## **One of the Greatest Inventions Ever**

*Salman Altamimi*

*R/W 60*

Contributions to the manufacture of early 1900 cars were made possible by several men. Two brothers, Charles E. and James Duryea completed the first manufacture and successful gasoline-powered cars. James Duryea completed the first Duryea cars in 1893, in Springfield, Massachusetts, working with his brother’s design. In 1895, the brothers established the first American cars manufacturing company (Early 1900s Cars, n.d.). Thanks to the brothers, people are able to do a lot of things in a short period of time, they could travel, export and import goods across the countries. Because of that, cars are the greatest invention before 1900s.

Many of the elderly believe that cars are not helpful. They do not believe that we are benefiting from using cars. They think that it is better for us if we walk from one place to another; they think that it is much healthier to walk than to drive. What they do not realize is that when we use cars we save a lot of time. Instead of walking and taking two hours to get to where we want to go, it’s better if we drive and take twenty minutes. Moreover, if we use cars it will help us rest; they are less tiring than walking.

A lot of grandparents think that cars pollute the air with their gas. They think if we use cars all the time we will affect the environment. In their opinion, they think that walking is better because if they walk they do not affect the environment. Isn’t that just closed minded? If we use them on a regular basis and only if we want to travel, we will not affect anything. Besides, cars do not pollute the environment as much as fires and factories. Car gas usually goes in the air and disappears in a few minutes if we use pure gas. Furthermore, when people walk instead of driving, they could be affecting the environment because they could be throwing dirt’s on the ground, which will stay there for weeks and someone could burn them and turn them into fire which will cause air pollution. Not only air pollution, but they also could affect the soil when walking on the grass.

Some of the elderly think that we are wasting a lot of money for the gas and car reparation. They believe that if we walk we could save money for our children and family. If people walk everywhere and travel by foot they would lose all of their energy, and they will be tired. As they see it, is that money is more important than health. Can they imagine if people walked from one country to another? Car gas and reparation does not take a lot of money. Besides, the money that we spend on the gas is worth our health. If people get to choose between spending money and being rested while traveling, people would choose rest, because health is more important than money.

Cars are the greatest invention because in the past the elderly used to walk from one place to another, and it used to take them along time to get to where they want to be. It was very tiring for them, because sometimes it would take days to get to their target place. "People used to use horse drawn carriage as a way to travel from one place to another" (Transportation & Technology, n.d.). Now, with cars, we could go anywhere we want. It would not take us any efforts. We could go from Kuwait to Bahrain within blink of an eye, with all of our energy.

With cars, we could easily import and export goods across countries. Traders could benefit of cars in a lot of different ways. They could go to other countries and start trading with them without any difficulties. We also could export goods from other countries. We could export food from other countries, which would be faster and more convenient. In that case, the food would be more fresh and new, because with cars it is faster and takes less time than walking or exporting them by ships across the ocean.

One of the reasons that cars are the greatest inventions is that they are more safe and secure. Instead of walking from one place to another and be in danger, cars can provide safety and security, because drivers will be inside the car, with doors locked and windows closed. When the elderly used to walk in the past, they could have been in danger of being attacked by an animal or a criminal, but now with cars, people do not have to worry about these things because drivers can be inside the car covered with steel.

Because of cars, people are able to run errands without worrying about the time or being late. If it was not for cars, we would be suffering from tiredness and lack of time. "Living without a car can be tough, especially in some countries where public transportation is frequently lacking" (WikiHow, n.d.). Could you imagine people's lives without cars? How long does it take to go to the grocery store and get back?

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## Divorce and Children

### *Anonymous*

It was as if it all started in a blink of an eye; my brothers sister and I were sitting in the room playing and talking as we usually do in the afternoons, when we started to hear loud noises, shouts and screams of hatred and anger. At that time, me being the youngest of my siblings, was scared and looked for comfort in my older brother.

He too seemed confused and scared, like he wanted to protect us from something none of us understood. Now, when I

look back at it, I can see that he too didn't understand what to do with the situation at hand. He stood up, told us to wait while he checked things out to see if everything was ok. When he came back, his face and eyes red, he told us all one thing: "From now on, we take care of each other, we don't let anyone or anything effect us, we become the great people we are meant to be" . . . our parents were getting a divorce.

After that, things went by really fast, it was as if my parents were never married, a war had begun and we are all in the middle. Some situations in life define a person's path; some people get so affected with what happens around them, they tend to act out with anger, some with self pity and wallowing, and others look for acceptance in other people. I guess it's only natural, parents are busy fighting all the time, each one has things to say about the other, never putting into consideration what the children have to say. If I want to put it in a nutshell, no matter what situations happen around us, it comes down to two choices, either we choose self pity and regret, or we choose to challenge, strive and become the stars we are meant to be, I choose to become one of the great. We have examples to follow, people to guide us, on whichever path we choose to walk on.

I have come a long way, sleepless nights and marathons to reach the point where I am now. To me, this isn't the end, this is just the beginning of my journey. Life can sometimes fall apart and shatter to pieces all around you, like what happened with my family, but we all chose to gather them up, and make the best of what was left of it. I grew up with love, support and great brothers and sister, an amazing mother who guided me, taught me, that it's fine to be scared or afraid, but not let that fear cripple me.

I have come now, to this place, to begin my journey, to extend my loving family, a place where I belong, I place where I can give my full support. This quote means a lot to me. I've gained some of my characteristics and principles from this quote:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Marianne Williamson.

Even though my parents' divorce affected me, it encouraged me to become who I am today and to strive to achieve my goals. I know somewhere deep down that if there were no dark, we'd never know what light is. I have chosen my

path, and I will continue on, no matter how many obstacles I face.

## **The Crazy GPS and the Horrible Trip**

*Jaafar Abdulridha Jabar*

*R/W 40*

This is really not a joke! This trip was very disturbing to me. My friend invited me to visit him in Orlando and Winter Haven, so I decided to take a driving trip to Winter Haven. It was the first trip for me in US. I did not know about my GPS how to work exactly because I didn't use it in another city; this GPS made many problems in all these place I visited: Ocala Station, Orlando, and the highway to Miami.

First, we left Gainesville in the morning at 8 o'clock to go to Winter Haven. This was the first trip for me and my family in the United State. We were very excited to see a new city and the views were very interesting; there were a lot of orange trees on the way, and the oranges on the ground. It was really interesting. After I drove 20 miles, I needed some gas to fill my gas tank, so I left the highway and went to a gas station in Ocala. After that I entered the highway again, my GPS didn't say anything, but I doubted the way and my wife said you are in the wrong side then I found myself on the opposite side of Gainesville, then I left and returned back to Orlando.

Next, I kept driving straight on the highway. When I saw a toll station on the way, I asked the woman who was working in this station about the right way to Orlando. She said you can keep right, but my GPS said keep left. I took the advice of my GPS and went left, but it led me to another highway and I saw many toll stations. I paid to all of these toll stations because my friend advised me to pay money when I see a toll station. Otherwise, I would get a big fine. For this reason, I was paying my money. Finally, I knew I had lost my money and my way!!

Then my GPS lead me south to the Miami highway. At this moment, I was sure I had lost my way, but what could I do? I didn't have a map or another GPS. However, I kept driving for ten miles, and then I was able to leave this way to go to Orlando. I asked another old man who was working in the toll station, and he directed me and advised me to, "Ignore the GPS and listen to my directions." I took his advice and turned it off. On the other hand, my friend Ahmed was calling me every five minutes and directing me on the right way. I think he felt regret because he had invited me!

Finally, I arrived in Orlando and Winter Haven after four hours of driving. It was not only a tiring trip, because I faced many hard situations, but it was also useful for me and really challenging to me to discover new cities and new toll stations!

### **Thanks from the Editor**

Thank you for sharing your writing with everyone. I hope you enjoy reading your fellow students' writing. Also thanks to Megan Forbes and the University of Florida Bookstore for arranging the gift certificates, to Todd Allen for publicizing this issue of *Student Voices*, to the Reading/Writing instructors for supporting their students in their writing, and to Valentina Komaniacka, Todd Allen, Daryl Bish, Cheikh Thiam, Tom Ratican for reading and evaluating the entries. Thanks everyone! Steve Flocks



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