The Lion's Pride, Vol. 16

LION'S PRIDE COMMITTEE OF LAKE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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Notes on This Publication:

Members of the Lion’s Pride committee may make minor edits to submissions in order to standardize spelling, grammar, punctuation, and formatting. However, committee members do not thoroughly edit submissions for students, and the committee’s general policy is to present work in close to its submitted form to preserve the integrity of each student’s voice. Students are encouraged to edit their own work carefully before submission and to get assistance from instructors and campus tutors.

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For information on how to submit your work for consideration, please visit the publication homepage: https://www.lwtech.edu/campus-life/lions-pride/

You may also contact wesley.mantooth@lwtech.edu if you have questions.

Lion’s Pride Committee:
Johnny Calavitta, English Department, Associate Professor
Cover Art: “Give me Your Tired, Your Poor, Your Huddled Masses Yearning to Be Free” by Graham Gale

Artist’s Statement:

I believe this country was built on the backs of immigrants. Here legally or not; slaves or slaves to the dream; the fortunate and the unfortunate. Most wanting to just make a better life for themselves.

I am an immigrant. I was married near this statue. It has a real place in my life. The process to become a citizen can be onerous, challenging, intimidating, and ultimately rewarding or heart-breaking.

Dark foreboding skies hover over the lady with the lamp but with hope for brighter days ahead.
Personal Statement

As someone familiar with caregiving, I have found it particularly difficult to explain the emotions that come with such work. I believe that poet Mary Oliver was able to achieve such a task though, and through this explication, I’m hoping I can share why I have so much fondness for “Oxygen.”

When used correctly, a poem’s vivid and contrasting imagery can bring to the surface hard-to-label emotions that paradoxically both conflict and blend with each other. One such poem that manages to provide such an experience is “Oxygen,” by Mary Oliver. In the poem, Oliver casts a display of warm flames that illuminate the melancholic scenario of a fading loved one being sustained by a “…merciful noisy machine” (Oliver, Line 3). When closely examining the poem, it becomes clear how Oliver uses concise diction to provide a warm tone that parallels the emotion of the speaker. The result is a love poem that not only warrants contentment with the temporary but also an appreciation for the oxygen that allows it.

The poem cleverly establishes the reliance on oxygen by making the title itself needed for a clearer understanding of the poem upon first read-through. Without the title “Oxygen,” the reader may be left to wonder what the beginning of the poem is referring to. The first two lines of the poem start the theme of thankfulness for oxygen, after all, “Everything needs it: bone, muscles, and even / while it calls the earth its home, the soul.” (1-2). Depending on the definition of the soul, by making the claim that the soul is reliant on oxygen, Oliver implies that oxygen is essentially life itself. Therefore, the simple act of breathing “…is a / beautiful sound” (12-13). But as
we know, breathing eventually comes to a permanent exhale. That's where the contrast of the natural beauty of life comes into play with the “...noisy machine” that provides oxygen to the narrator's loved one (3).

Despite the state of the loved one’s physical condition, the loud artificial sound of breathing means that the poet still has them. It is important to note that the poem is seen through the words of the poet, though, leaving only a partial look into the situation. One may safely assume that they are both content due to their love, but the state of happiness for the ill one is really left up to the interpretation of the reader. While they are technically alive, they are in fact living a sedentary and uncomfortable life, spending it “in [their] usual position, leaning on [their] // shoulder which aches” (9-10). Regardless though, the nature of the close relationship no doubt provides some comfort to the sick one. This desire for the narrator to keep their loved one is made all the more palpable when they profess: “your life, which is so close / to my own that I would not know // where to drop the knife of / separation...” (14-17). For the narrator, their lives are so close to each other, that they are one and the same. It seems that this ever-so-evident love towards the ailed one is what grew this appreciation for life, and thus an appreciation of oxygen.

When hearing the noise of the machine, the narrator “...[kneels] / before the fire, stirring...” it around, letting the logs burn, thanks to the air that makes it possible (5-6). Such imagery not only creates a warm atmosphere in the reading but also provides a parallel to life. The logs are prodded to keep the flame burning bright, using oxygen, much like how the machine works to keep the loved one breathing. The burning logs also provide an allusion to the narrator's love with how the “...fire rises / and offers a dozen, singing, deep red / roses of flame...” (19-21). In this case, comparing the flames to the conventional symbol of roses demonstrates a connection between life and the love that can manifest from it – all thanks to air.

But eventually, the comforting flames will start to die down. Those bright fiery logs will transition into glowing embers, and then into
ash leaving behind only memories of warmth. Yet, the fire still shows appreciation for the needed oxygen “as it feeds.../...upon the invisible gift: / our purest, sweet necessity: the air” (22-24). Mimicking the grateful attitude of the flames, the narrator shows an appreciation for life and the gift of air that allows it. The narrator seems content, simply glad to have had someone in their life, while also appreciating the remainder of their time on the earth with the person.

Something that may not initially be appreciated is how Oliver uses subtle rhythm and structure to keep the tone of the poem unified. For instance, with the subject of breathing being prominent, it makes sense that the loud and artificial sound of the sick one's breathing would be reflected in the stanzas themself. Every stanza is 3 lines long, breaking off at parts that serve as almost interruptions. This symmetry among stanzas doesn’t mean the poem comes off as robotic though. There are four lines in the first two stanzas that use nine syllables each. This helps establish an easier transition to the more sporadic rhythms that follow. The arrhythmic nature of the lines that follow is consistently interrupted with those stanza breaks which lend to a dynamic of natural and artificial. The poem also subtly makes use of internal half-rhymes to keep it whole, without it suffering from predictably strong rhyming conventions. Some instances of this at play are seen with “…bone...” and “…home...” (1-2). “…fire...” and “…iron...” (6-7). As well as a few other instances, such as with the title itself rhyming with “even” in the first line. So, while the nature of the poem isn't forcibly catchy, it does have that needed support for the stanzas to remain upright. There is an exception to this subtle rhyming scheme though. Oliver ties off the poem with the only stanza that contains a true rhyme, the internal feminine rhyme of “quietude” and “gratitude,” both of which reflect the appreciation of the air that supports both the flames as well as the life that brings warmth to the caretaker.

One of the reasons why I find this poem so touching is because it tackles the challenge of conveying a mood that is difficult to express, even when you know it so well. It’s a feeling brought on
by a situation where you have someone you care about who can no longer easily be themselves. A give and take of happiness punctuated with loss that cannot possibly be fully grieved over until they stop feeding on that “...invisible gift” of oxygen (23). Instead of painting this as a cold and dreary environment in the poem though, the poet seemingly teeters on the verge of being thankful for the opportunity to have such circumstances – since the process of losing something great means that you have something great to lose.

Works Cited

Think About a Blue Wall

HOLLY CHAFFIN

Personal Statement

I made this painting as a draft cover for my final project in Art 104, Color for Creatives. Painting was a brand-new experience for me. I was surprised to learn about mixing colors and experimenting with brushwork. The class has given me new confidence as an artist.
My name is Ana Herrera, and I am an international student from Honduras. I am currently studying Computer Science at Lake Washington Institute of Technology. Since I was a kid, I’ve always wanted to study in the U.S. My aunt had this dream too, so I decided to explore more deeply her journey to achieve this goal because she has always been an inspiration to me.

For my literacy interview essay, I decided to interview my aunt because I always remember the time she told me how she started learning English with a dictionary and determination. This story always left me in awe and admiration for her. The interview was held face-to-face at home and in Spanish. Later, I translated everything into English in the essay. This essay is based on the questions I asked her about her journey with reading, writing, and subsequently learning English.

My aunt grew up in, Tegucigalpa, the capital city of Honduras. She lived with her mom, dad, brother, and sister. She attended different schools throughout her life, and all of them instructed classes in Spanish.

To start the interview, I asked my aunt what she read as a kid and how often she read. She told me that as a seven-year-old, she was fond of reading Condoritos—famous comic books from Argentina—her dad gave her. She would read them each night before going to sleep. On Saturdays, she would read the Bible out loud to her grandma. This was my aunt’s routine during the year until vacations when she would add to her reading selection books from Isabel Allende.
Throughout elementary school, my aunt was engaged in all kinds of activities regarding reading and writing in Spanish. She even won a contest for an acrostic she wrote for the word Honduras. She was assigned all kinds of reading during middle school, but the books that fascinated her the most were those that made her think beyond what was written such as Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky. This book is about an ex-student who’s convinced that there are justifiable reasons to commit a crime, but when he commits the crimes he feels so confused that he is no longer sure if the reasons he had were justifiable to the actions he did.

Even though my aunt loved writing and reading in Spanish, she wanted to go beyond it and learn a second language. None of the schools she attended taught all classes in English; however, once a week she had a single ESL (English as a Second Language) class. One day, she decided she would learn English one way or the other, even if more effort would be required from her. In ninth grade, she asked her ESL teacher how to start this journey. Her teacher told her to gather newspapers and translate the articles with a dictionary to start understanding some words in English. My aunt did this eagerly with each newspaper she could get. When she felt she needed various exercises to continue learning, she started translating Britney Spears’s songs into Spanish. Her ESL teacher would gladly check all her work to help her learn English.

When my aunt was 21 years old, she had learned enough English at home, so she decided to go further and enroll herself in English courses. The American School of Tegucigalpa is a bilingual school that offers ESL courses for adults who desire to learn English. Her learning at home was so efficient that when she completed the placement test she reached level 5—the maximum level the test could place someone.

During ESL courses, my aunt was challenged more than before to continue studying. She had to constantly participate in presentations, conversations, and even karaoke (she was the only one who enjoyed it). For one assignment, she had to read Journey to the Center of the Earth by Jules Verne and summarize the plot.
of the book. One thing she liked about this book was how a special type of lamp that could be lit below Earth was described. When she finished all the levels she turned out to have the highest grades in her class and was chosen to give a speech during their graduation, which was held in English.

After finishing the ESL courses, my aunt was 25 years old when she prepared herself for two different tests to earn her master’s degree in the U.S. She took the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and the GRE (Graduate Record Examinations). Her hard work allowed her to apply to colleges and she was accepted to Case Western Reserve University to earn her master’s degree in Finance; however, the work did not stop there.

In my aunt’s first year, she was told in her economics class that she needed to improve her writing because the class constantly required her to do essays related to macroeconomics or microeconomics. To improve her writing skills, she joined the university’s writing club. This group had a lot of support from Literature Ph.D. students who would check and give feedback on essays from other students in the club. If by any chance she didn’t have any homework from her classes to present, then the Ph.D. students would give her an assignment to practice her writing for them to check afterward.

After graduating, my aunt enrolled herself in an online Stanford English class to keep improving her writing and speaking skills at her job. The professor she had was always supportive and helped her check her reports for anything she might improve. Her boss at the time also helped her to continue improving by recommending her books since he had a degree in English Literature. He recommended many books, but the one she liked the most was Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut.

Besides reading her boss’ book recommendations, my aunt decided to read a book she had previously read in Spanish to compare and contrast the difference in English. The book was One Hundred Years of Solitude (100 Años de soledad) by Gabriel García Márquez. She told me that reading this book in both languages made
her realize how much she loved reading in Spanish because the English translation doesn't capture the vivid and colorful details she once read.

My experience with English is different compared to my aunt’s since I had the opportunity to attend a bilingual school and learn English when I was three years old until I graduated from high school. Just like her I enjoy reading. In fact, my aunt was the main influence on my reading habits as a kid. She would teach me how she would read the books and highlight specific words to look up in the dictionary. My aunt was always passionate about learning English and she never stopped working on her skills until she could achieve the goals she wanted to reach. She now works in the Finance Department at Microsoft. Learning English was a huge step that led her to where she is now and it’s thanks to her persistence and determination throughout her life. However, she says there’s still room for improvement. She actively seeks ways to improve, such as asking people what their favorite books are, so she could read them later. Even though she loves how books are written in Spanish, she will keep reading books in English to keep understanding the American style.
First Responders

VANESSA PEDROTTI

Personal Statement

My name is Vanessa Pedrotti and I am one of the students from the LWTECH Mortuary Program Cohort. I am pursuing a degree in mortuary science to continue to care, comfort, and help individuals plan during a difficult time. In my household, we have dedicated our entire lives to caring for the living and the recently deceased. My partner is a firefighter/EMT and I am a mortician. The level of attentiveness that is shown not only to me but to others from him, is immaculate. I decided to honor him and all of our first responders with this armature.
The French Angel

KATIE ANN BAUGHER

Personal Statement

When I started this program I knew I wanted to use Maurice Tillet to sculpt. I didn’t know then, or until I was well into the process just how much of a head he had. He was an amazingly intelligent and kind man in his life. Due to a pituitary disease, his features grew exponentially. Modeling his head posed many challenges and I had to adapt the form given to accommodate his extra large head. I learned so much during this process, not only about my abilities but about this man who I would have loved to meet.
The written work I have submitted is a literacy interview essay. For the essay, I interviewed my mother and her experiences growing up in Hiroshima, Japan, in the early 70s. I asked questions about her views and experiences with learning Japanese literacy, and English literacy, once she moved to America. She highlights many of the economic differences where she grew up and the difficulties she faced learning English in America.

Lululemon, a multibillion-dollar clothing brand, was founded in Canada in 1998 by a guy named Chip Wilson. Unknown to most of their customers, the founder, Chip Wilson, stated he created the name because he thought the inability of Japanese people to pronounce Ls was comedic. I honestly had a lot of trouble deciding whom I wanted to interview for this essay until I learned about the origin of Lululemon’s name. My mother, Junko Nakashima, was born in Japan and this story reminded me of her struggle to learn English literacy. My sister worked at Lululemon for some time, and I recall how difficult it was for my mom to pronounce that word. Literacy has been a very large part of my life, and as I grow older, the more I realize how little I know about my parents and their younger years. Therefore, for this essay, I decided to choose my mom to interview. There has always been an unusual aspect of a language barrier between us. We are very close, but I have never been told much about her younger years at all. My mother was born in Hiroshima, Japan, in the early 1970s, and her mother and father had moved to Hiroshima just a few years before her birth. She grew up with an older brother and a younger sister and describes her life as well off compared to the people she grew up around. After the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the communities...
were devastated for decades. Although she grew up in Hiroshima twenty years after the bombing, the effects on each family lasted for generations and resulted in a very impoverished community. Her parents both worked, and her father was balancing two jobs. She describes how everyone in Hiroshima had a very different living situation. Most people had divorced parents and were often raised by a single mom or dad. My mother described how her financial situation, compared to the common financial situation was very fortunate, and how it enabled her to not have such a difficult life.

Although her life was not difficult in terms of financial stability, we went into very small detail about her family life and school which brought difficulty to her life. I believe my mom was one of the best people I could have asked to answer this prompt. It has given me a lot of insight into her life and the culture I feel somewhat disconnected from. Unfortunately, there is still a very distinct language barrier between my mom and me. I am mostly fluent in Japanese and can understand her speech most of the time but discussing sophisticated topics or below-the-surface questions, there are a lot of dialects I am unfamiliar with. I tried my best to capture her responses to my questions in a matter of details and ideas rather than quotes. Romaji is the Romanized version of Japanese writing, in which you write Japanese words out in English lettering. It is very difficult to keep up with and I believe Japanese to English translation does not bring justice to certain descriptions of some words, which is why I decided to structure the responses this way. I began the interview by asking her what her childhood was like, where she had grown up, her financial situation, family, etc, to get an idea of how it could impact her experiences with literacy.

“What was your childhood like growing up in Japan?”

She was born in Hiroshima Japan just a few years after her older brother, An-chan, and her younger sister was born a few years later. Throughout her whole childhood, she had moved eleven times in all in Japan. She was the second child in her family, and her father thought it important to move into bigger households as the family grew bigger and older. She had to move throughout elementary
school many times and wouldn't stay at one school for more than a couple of years. She had gone to three different elementary schools by the time she was in fourth grade. From then on, her family would still move, but she stayed in the same school and didn't switch schools after that. Where she grew up, she was considered significantly more well off financially compared to everyone else where she lived. She describes it as upper middle class in an area where most people were poor. She grew up in Hiroshima twenty or so years after the nuclear bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. She describes people being very impoverished and many families being affected for decades. Neither her parents nor herself knew the true effect of the bombing on the population because they had moved to Hiroshima, but she did know it had catastrophic effects on the citizens who returned.

“What was it like learning Japanese in a Japanese schooling system? How is it different than the American Education System?”

When she was growing up going to school in Japan, she describes it as very strict. Compared to America, the school week was Monday through Saturday and they only had around forty days of summer break. Japanese teachers adopted a very serious and strict pedagogy. Course loads were very heavy even in elementary school, and days lasted from around 7 am until after 3 pm. The first elementary school she went to was a Christian school led by foreign American teachers. She explained that the “sisters” were very strict, and they would learn English and Japanese. After my mother moved, the focus on English was not the same and the coursework for Japanese became immense. Japan technically had four main languages that they use. Children in Japanese schools would learn Hiragana, Katakana, and Romanji at a young age. They would then begin learning several Kanji every day throughout school. There was new Kanji to learn every day, and the experience was very rigorous and meticulous. She recalls being tested multiple times a week on new and past Kanji even in elementary school. My mother explains that school was never hard for her, but also not easy. Her view
on the education system was never negative, but she also didn’t particularly fiend over it.

“How did your financial situation affect your ability to learn? Did you observe how it affected other people in your school?”

My mother describes her view of school and education in general: “Japanese is very large. There are 3 different main languages and a lot of things to learn just for Japanese literacy. We had to learn things about every single aspect of the Japanese language. Japanese schooling was only required up until junior high school. If you wanted to continue going to school, you needed to pass tests to be admitted to public high schools and college. I think because everyone had a very different living situation, some people couldn’t always spend time studying. Many people in tough living or financial situations didn’t have an opportunity to go to high school or college. Their fate was decided essentially the minute they were born. My mom always pressured me and my siblings about going to college, I knew I could get into college, but I didn’t want to try extremely hard in school either. I feel like my financial situation didn’t push me to exceed my abilities like other people because I took it for granted. I was still able to go to college, but it was never a significant accomplishment”.

“How compelled did you feel to learn literacy as a child?”

She said she never really felt pressured or specifically interested in learning Japanese. Japanese was everywhere, and it just came around. She learned it and put in the required effort, but never felt compelled to pursue increased amounts of dedication. However, she was always fond of music and biology. She never had to study or try very hard, and she was always at the top of the class getting A’s and perfect scores. She feels that subjects like English and Japanese are very subjective to where you are born. If you are exposed to an environment that is predominantly Japanese, you will learn it one way or another and it doesn’t compel you to exceed in it. Especially if you do not have to worry financially and have a stable and safe life.

“Did anyone have a major effect on that interest or non-interest?”
“I recall this one time during my younger years of schooling, either elementary or junior high but I am not sure which. Anyways, I think one of my teachers told us that if we read a lot, we could become better at everything. My friends and I liked that idea, and we would go to the library every day. I would read hundreds of pages a day and I was reading all the time. Sometimes I would check out a book and return it the next day. After a while, this immense desire to read began to dry up as I had to put more time into studying.”

“What was your experience like learning English?”

When she was in kindergarten, she learned how to learn English for about two years at a Christian American school. They would learn simple pronunciation and some simple words. In first grade, she began learning the alphabet and more English words. She describes how she never really had the senses for a foreign language and that it was very difficult to pronounce the different dialects. Growing up primarily speaking Japanese, she didn't develop the ability to use certain vowels in the English dialect and she was embarrassed by her pronunciation. She explains that her senses and ears were unable to process English and it made it extremely difficult to listen and speak. She explains how her dentist told her about how she has a “Japanese Tongue” which is an instance where Japanese speakers do not develop the tongue muscles or techniques to use certain aspects of English pronunciation like R’s, L’s, and vowels. She never really developed the fluency to speak like typical English people, therefore it was extremely intimidating and difficult. Every time she would try to speak, she would become very nervous, and people were unable to understand. In her mind, she would think she is speaking fine, but people insisted they couldn’t understand, and it caused a great deal of trauma. She didn't try to speak as much and would just listen, but she still couldn't understand. The communication was so difficult and so intimidating she got to a point where she just hated English and didn’t want anything to do with it. She recalls that some people were very rude about how they couldn’t understand her English when she first came to America, and it affected her desire to continue practicing English.
“What has the communication layer been like trying to speak both Japanese and English in America?”

Because she couldn't communicate and was nervous about speaking English, she would try to speak as little English as possible. For a long period, my dad would just communicate in English for her. When her first daughter was born, she would just let her daughter communicate for her. She tried very hard to learn English in ESL classes in libraries. But she was even ridiculed by her teachers who said very inconsiderate things about how they thought her speaking mannerisms were not normal. She gave up on trying to learn English for a long time. But eventually became dedicated again so she could get a job. Several years ago, my mother enrolled in LWTECH to learn English. My mother described her English teacher as very compelling and reassuring. She put in a lot of effort and tremendously increased her confidence in speaking. She doesn't feel like she learned a lot in that class, but it revolutionized her confidence to speak and revitalized English importance for her. Her teacher recommended that she start taking harder English classes and took CNA English American classes. The class was very inconsiderate and rude once again. Most of the students were a lot younger than her and would speak about how she didn't understand anything and how she shouldn't be there. My mother ignored the crude remarks and passed the test first try. Ironically, most of those students in her class did not pass the first time.

This essay provided a lot of insight for me on a much deeper level than I expected. I went into the interview assuming that I would only learn about my mom and her experience with literacy on a Japanese and foreign level. But instead, it has highlighted ideas on many different parts of society and how differences in financial situation or origin have such great effects on people. I relate to a lot of her general experiences with people and learning foreign languages. Becoming so exposed to the persistence and pursuit of English literacy, it has made it increasingly difficult to adopt Japanese literacy despite my exposure to it. My experience
compared to my mom’s is exactly the opposite in terms of subjects, but inherently the same below the surface level. I have always felt the same embarrassment and shy nature when I speak, because of insecurities about my pronunciation and vocabulary. I always thought my experience of learning a language would be so different compared to my mom’s because of what I assumed is a difference. Literacy is an essential aspect of life, and I think it indirectly highlights details of everyone’s life in certain ways. An individual’s ability to pronounce the name “Lululemon” instantly allows you to know where someone is from. It highlights differences and inabilities in a subject so full of difference and variety. Some argue that the name is insensitive and racist, although I think those are very serious allegations and are quite possibly true. I think the name brings up the idea that no matter how different you might think you are from someone, your experiences may be exactly alike.
Muscle Head Model

KATIE ANN BAUGHHER

Personal Statement

I love that in the Funeral Services program we are able to learn in a variety of ways. It was very beneficial for me getting to create each muscle by name and learn by doing. I am very thankful that the professors gave us this learning tool. I had a wonderful time creating my facial muscle head.
Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free

GRAHAM GALE

Personal Statement

I believe this country was built on the backs of immigrants. Here legally or not; slaves or slaves to the dream; the fortunate and the unfortunate. Most wanting to just make a better life for themselves. I am an immigrant. I was married near this statue. It has a real place in my life. The process to become a citizen can be onerous, challenging, intimidating, and ultimately rewarding or heart-breaking. Dark foreboding skies hover over the lady with the lamp but with hope for brighter days ahead.
A mother's love knows no color nor bounds, Her heart beats strong
for her precious son, Yet in today's world, fear tightly surrounds, As
a mother of a black child, her worry's begun.

Her son, a gift from the heavens above, A beautiful boy with brown
skin, But with each passing day, her heart's love Is mixed with fear,
for the world we live in.

For she knows the dangers her son may face, The prejudice, the
hatred, the ignorance too, All the horrors that could take his rightful
place, And all the unjust actions that could befall him anew.

She prays for his safety, each night and day, For her love for him
knows no bounds or end, She prays that the world will see him for
who he is, one day, A beautiful soul, her precious beloved black son.

–For my sons Alijah & Alaric

Author Statement

My name is Zandria, I'm a returning student to LW tech and
also a single mom of a beautiful, blended family. I have five kiddos
still at home with three of them being under the age of six. This
includes my two bio sons, my two nieces, and my nephew who I
have been raising for the past three years. I wrote “He Matters” as an
assignment for my Diversity & Social Justice course though I am not
a very artsy person I dug deep down into myself to put into words
my worries and above all my love.
Personal Statement

I am a current public health student at Lake Washington Institute of Technology. My purpose for developing this research paper is to bring awareness to the advantages and challenges of implementing a universal health coverage system in the United States. Despite the challenges, change is possible and recommended to improve health equity and increase general productivity among residents and communities. As a future public health professional, I aim to advocate for health reform in the state of Washington so that health care is accessible and affordable to all populations. Health care is a basic human right, not a privilege.

Abstract

This paper aims to address how universal health coverage (UHC) could impact the quality of life for middle- to low-income households in the United States. The approaches to addressing this issue include gathering empirical data from credible sources and providing successful examples from other countries that utilize this type of system. Information on the advantages and challenges of UHC implementation in the U.S. have been collected and will be discussed. A few examples of advantages include health equity, improved quality of life for all, and decreased financial burdens for vulnerable populations. With the implementation of a UHC system in the U.S., it could foster a more productive society.
As one of the wealthiest nations in the world, the United States and its government should be able to provide Americans with universal health coverage (UHC). Many countries have successfully implemented some form of UHC and have statistically spent less money on health care services compared to the U.S. (McGough et al., 2023, para. 2). Universal health care has many benefits that could drastically transform and save lives. Based on evidence from comparably wealthy countries, once established, UHC in the U.S. would provide improved quality of life and health equity, preventive health care, affordable and cost-effective medical coverage, protection against future outbreaks and preventable deaths, and a better health care system. Quality health care should be easily accessible by all residents of the U.S.

**Quality of Life and Health Equity Improvements**

A common statement that many people believe, and others should acknowledge, is this: health care is a basic human right, not a privilege. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), universal health care is “ensuring that all people have access to needed health services (including prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation) of sufficient quality to be effective while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user [to] financial hardship” (Zieff et al., 2020, para. 2). Developing a UHC system in the U.S. would improve quality of life by eliminating medical costs incurred by uninsured and vulnerable populations. Additionally, a UHC system provides flexibility for people to pursue better employment as they are not tied to employer-provided insurance. A substantial portion of the U.S. population receives medical insurance through their employers and can thus face substantial hardships when losing employment. This is especially true among vulnerable populations that tend to have lower employment percentages. By providing UHC, health equity may be improved by narrowing the income-related disparities inherent in the U.S. (Schneider et al. 2021, para. 23). The quality of life for Americans can be improved by preventive care, which can
diagnose and treat diseases before they become life-threatening (Galvani et al., 2020, para 19).

**Advantages of Sustaining Preventive Health Care**

One of the most important impacts of UHC is preventive care through access to healthcare services among middle- and low-income populations who cannot currently pay for medical costs. Patients who are at risk for developing chronic diseases and illnesses can address them at regular doctor visits and screenings. According to Zieff et al. (2020), “Accessible, affordable healthcare may enable earlier intervention to prevent—or limit risk associated with—non-communicable chronic diseases, improve the overall public health of the U.S., and decrease the economic strain associated with an unhealthy low-SES [socioeconomic status]” (para. 8). With the current costs of private insurance and unreliable employer-based health care, vulnerable populations are often underinsured or uninsured. This results in certain populations becoming unhealthy and less productive. Some examples of benefits that would be managed under UHC include behavioral and mental-health disorders, substance-use disorders, communicable diseases, and non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer (American Academy, n.d., Benefits section). Routine preventive care can foster an environment for patients to receive ongoing care and screenings as they age, including mammograms and prostate exams. With preventive care, patients with non-communicable diseases can receive laboratory and diagnostic testing to prevent emergency room visits. Supporting this approach, Zieff et al. (2020) report that “the uninsured diabetic population is responsible for 55% more emergency room visits each year than their insured diabetic counterparts” (para. 8). If the U.S. government adopted a UHC system, these conditions could be prevented or treated without any financial burdens associated with medical costs.

**Affordable and Cost-Effective Medical Coverage**

Americans who are against the implementation of UHC in the U.S. claim that the financial costs do not outweigh the benefits. On
the contrary, Galvani et al. (2020) state, “we predict that a single-payer healthcare system would require $3.034 trillion annually, $458 billion less than current national healthcare expenditure” (para. 12). This translates into a savings of ~$1,400 per person annually. Additionally, the existing U.S. healthcare system already spends a disproportionate amount of gross domestic product (GDP) on medical care compared to economically comparable nations. A study that analyzed the U.S. healthcare costs per GDP found that “health spending per person in the U.S. was $12,914 in 2021, which was over $5,000 more than any other high-income nation” (McGough et al., 2023, para. 4)(see Figure 1). The U.S. is spending approximately 17% of its GDP on health care compared to 8 to 12% among 10 other wealthy nations, yet the care in the U.S. is substantially worse (Schneider et al., 2021, Exhibit 4). The one aspect of the current U.S. healthcare system that is working well is the “rates of mammography screening and influenza vaccination as well as the percentage of adults who [spoke] with their provider about nutrition, smoking, and alcohol use” (Schneider et al., 2021, para. 19). When advocating for the implementation of UHC in the U.S., it will be important to preserve this aspect that is currently working well.

Further objections to the UHC system are often made by shareholders of insurance companies whose primary focus is to drive up the price value of shares. Due to the insurance companies’ fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders combined with the private insurance model that has transiently enrolled patients, long-term care is not a priority. Instead, by limiting primary care, they reduce short-term costs (Galvani et al., 2020, para. 19). Under the UHC model, “a single-payer system would be financially responsible for healthcare throughout the lifespan of all Americans, [and thus] it becomes efficient to incur a small cost in the present with the purpose of avoiding more serious and costly health conditions in the future” (Galvani et al., 2020, para. 19). Associated costs with administrative, medical-service, and other health-care fees would decrease, and can balance the initial financial burden of establishing
such a system. Along these lines, vulnerable groups would be able to access primary care and potentially save their lives.

**Protection Against Future Outbreaks and Preventable Deaths**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Americans had insufficient access to medical coverage, which led to high mortality rates. Galvani et al. (2022) calculated that about 338,954 preventable deaths associated with the COVID-19 pandemic could have been averted with a UHC system (para. 11). For instance, if the uninsured populations had medical coverage and had been able to maintain health issues, it would have lowered their risk of comorbidities and death during the pandemic. According to the policy statement from the APHA, the existing employer-sponsored health insurance is subject to downturns in the economy and was predicted to cause 10 million Americans to lose their insurance from being laid off during the Covid-19 pandemic (American Public Health Association [APHA], 2020, para. 7). As a result, many Americans and family members enrolled into Medicaid/Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), further straining state and federal budgets (APHA, 2020, para. 5)(see Figure 2).

When Americans lose their access to health care, they can become vulnerable to mortality due to outbreaks as their diseases and illnesses go untreated. It is unsurprising that the tragic result of the Covid-19 pandemic in the U.S. was, in the estimation of Galvani et al (2020), that “the number of lives that could have been saved in 2020 by universal healthcare from both non-COVID conditions and COVID-19 would be 211,897” (para. 12). The American Public Health Association (APHA) (2020) describes the pandemic as “a watershed moment where we can reconstruct a fractured health insurance system into a system of universal health care” (Problem Statement section, para. 15). In the words of Wesley Mantooth, a professor and department chair at Lake Washington Institute of Technology, “in terms of communicable diseases, it seems like [the case for implementing UHC] is a good argument to persuade people that all of society would be safer if currently vulnerable members had better care” (Mantooth, personal communication, March 8th, 2023).
To address this issue of inequity in the U.S. healthcare system, many people advocate for a transition to UHC. For example, Senator Bernie Sanders supports the Medicare for All Act (MAA), which would lower maternal deaths, increase the rate of survival for newborns, and increase the longevity of all people in the U.S. who are currently dying without comprehensive medical care (Galvani et al., 2020, Introduction section). Unfortunately, the reform in the U.S. healthcare system is slow to evolve and is often mired in political misinformation.

**Successful Coverage Among Other Comparably Wealthy Countries**

Despite being one of the highest income countries, the U.S. ranks among the lowest in healthcare approaches compared to countries with UHC. A 2021 study compared healthcare systems in 11 wealthy nations: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.S. According to Schneider et al. (2021), the key differences can be summarized below:

Four features distinguish top-performing countries from the United States: 1) they provide for universal coverage and remove cost barriers; 2) they invest in primary care systems to ensure that high-value services are equitably available in all communities to all people; 3) they reduce administrative burdens that divert time, efforts, and spending from health improvement efforts; and 4) they invest in social services, especially for children and working-age adults. (para. 5)

For the U.S. to reach equal standards of care, these four features must be addressed:

1. Providing affordable, universal coverage helps with three subcategories of care. First, patients would be less likely to report that insurance companies denied their claims. Secondly, patients would have fewer burdens in paying for their care. Lastly, there would be better access to same-day care as well as after-hours care. Currently, the U.S. ranks last when
compared to 10 other wealthy nations in providing affordable coverage (Schneider et al., 2021, para. 14).

2. The next feature is equitably available primary care, which is currently unbalanced in the U.S., with high-income patients reporting easier access to primary care, while low-income communities struggle to meet their needs. When comparing the income gap to access of care of these same 10 wealthy nations, it becomes clear that not only would low-income communities benefit from UHC, but also wealthier ones, as 27% of high-income U.S residents still report access problems (Schneider et al., 2021, Exhibit 7) (see Figure 3). To clarify, this means that even wealthy communities would gain ground with the transition to UHC.

3. In the pursuit of improving administrative efficiencies, the U.S. stands to benefit from UHC implementation, as the U.S. ranks last in this category as well. Administrative efficiency is a measure of how burdensome documentation and bureaucratic tasks are that impose difficulties for patients and doctors to pursue care. Since insurance in the U.S. is so fragmented, patients can experience roadblocks to medication or treatment because their insurance does not cover it, or because a specialty clinic is out-of-network. By eliminating these inefficiencies with the implementation of UHC, the U.S. can reduce the cost of care and manage primary care efficiently and effectively.

4. The final category that these other wealthy countries currently outpace the U.S. in is their investment in social services. These services include “access to nutrition, education, child care, community safety, housing, transportation, and worker benefits” (Schneider et al., 2021, Discussion section). The benefits of these services contribute to one critical aspect of health care: a healthier population that lessens the burden on health services. A metaphor can be used to illustrate this concept, where the “reduce” feature of the “reduce, re-use, and recycle” program motto aims to prevent the use of
materials before they enter the production cycle. Similarly, reducing hospital and emergency room visits by promoting healthier and more equitable communities in the first place can save money and resources. In a country where a large part of the GDP is already spent on health care, saving costs by moving to UHC would benefit the whole populace. It is important that all Americans can afford medical care to achieve the best health possible.

**Conclusion**

Health care in the U.S. is lacking and should reform to universal coverage as successfully shown in other comparable countries. Although universal health coverage has its advantages and disadvantages, the disadvantages of the initial financial costs would eventually balance out over time. Many advantages include access to health care for all, prevention of chronic diseases and illnesses, reduced medical bills, and protection against future national emergencies. Universal coverage provides access to health care for those without means to currently afford the costs. It would improve the health of the general population by providing routine care, preventive care, treatment, and support and resources to maintain their current conditions. Additionally, with the elimination of financial burdens from medical fees, middle- to low-income households would be able to provide their families with basic needs such as food and housing, among other things. Eliminating employer-sponsored health coverage would allow companies to divert their insurance payments to the paychecks of their workers. While workers would need to adjust to higher taxes to cover UHC, they would still save an expected $1,400 annually, per person, which may then be used to further stimulate the economy. This change could bring about better health and better economic growth.

**References**


Appendix

Note. This figure demonstrates the higher cost-related access
problems among low- and high-income populations in the U.S. compared to other high-income countries.

**Figure 1.** U.S. Health Care Costs per GDP Compared to Other High-Income Nations

Note. This figure shows a comparison of health-care costs per GDP between the U.S. and other high-income nations.

**Figure 2.** Medicaid/Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Enrollment (A, B), Excess Death (C), and Years of Life Lost (D) During Covid-19 Pandemic

**Figure 3.** Higher Rates of Cost-Related Access Problems in the United States
U.S. Compared to other High-Income Nations

Note. This figure demonstrates the higher cost-related access problems among low- and high-income populations in the U.S. compared to other high-income countries.

Keywords: universal health care; universal health coverage; health care; health care systems; health care debate; health care costs; health equity; universal health care benefits; universal health care advantages; access to health care
**Personal Statement**

As an aspiring animator, I've never really done much painting before. So, I was a bit uneasy when I learned that Jason Sobottka’s Color for Creatives class would involve painting projects. Despite this uneasiness, I gave it my all and ended up with work I’m rather proud of. Sharing my creative works is something that has always made me nervous, but if I can push through my uneasiness and learn to paint, why not also push through my uneasiness to share it with others?
Personal Statement

This was my first assignment so I instantly thought of my father (who passed from cancer in 2010) and his eclectic wardrobe from all over the world. He was in the Air Force and traveled to many places. I am looking forward to visiting many different places and hopefully taking more photographs.
My Journey of Learning Painting and Dedicating Love

POLLY ZHANG

**Personal Statement**

Hello, my name is Polly Zhang. This work is an assignment I did from my English 101 course at LWTech, it is about my perception of dedicating love to people in need because of painting, and a precious journey in my life. My instructor is Wesley Mantooth who encourages me to submit the writing to our school’s “student showcase” magazine.

For the last decade, I have often been called a “literary young female” by my friends—like reading, painting, photography, and Chinese opera. The enlightenment of these hobbies is all because of my mother—she can sing Chinese opera and write calligraphy (traditional Chinese calligraphy), and she is often invited to participate in exhibitions of Chinese opera and calligraphy.

I remembered that when I was around four or five years old, my mother bought me a lot of children’s pictorials—simple storylines with corresponding pictures. I really liked reading such books. At that time, I didn't know how to read, so I just looked at different pictures to guess plots of stories and told the stories to my doll without hesitation. After a couple of months, my mother was happy to buy more books for me. There were children's serial story periodicals, poetry collections, and arts newspapers. In the book corner of the kindergarten, there was 30 minutes of reading time every afternoon. It was often when we were ready to leave school. Many times I burst into tears because I couldn't bear to put down a pictorial. My mother always coaxed me home with embarrassment. Maybe at that time, there was a seed in my heart that I liked to paint and was looking forward to sprouting, but it was never discovered, because I was too young to hold a pen.
I started drawing simple outlines of animals and flowers in my notebooks when I learned how to hold a pen and write in elementary school. I like to choose some themes for my depictions—I named the depictions of a big tree and rabbit “a rabbit under the big tree”, and I named the depictions of a river and turtle “a turtle in the water”, etc. I made those notebooks my secret garden, where I could slowly draw pictures with clumsy brushstrokes that I found lovely. I had many of these notebooks— they filled my teenage years, and the pictures depicted ranged from simple outlines of animals and flowers to detailed Japanese cartoon characters. My drawing was still immature but I really enjoyed the process of it. This secret had been with me until I was admitted to high school.

One afternoon in the fall of 2002 my mother asked me before sending me off to boarding school: “Your school supplies are ready now. What else do you need? Let me know.”
“If I really need it, it’s a sketchbook,” I said.
“Why? You don’t need that, you just need to learn in school.”
“Mom, I—”
I didn’t complete my request, because typical Chinese parents believed that the most important thing was to study the courses well that were required in school, not spent time and money developing hobbies. People were increasing their salaries in the 2000s with the development of the economy but wanting to spend $2500 or more to learn how to draw was obviously expensive, which
meant my parents would have difficulty to afford to pay it. Meanwhile, my passion for painting could not be stopped, I told myself “I can continue to draw in notebooks”.

The fate-changing moment came just in time. I was selected as the head of the propaganda department of the student council because I held the same position in middle school—organized students to complete the posters for New Year’s party every year and designed the classroom’s theme blackboard (typesetting, drawing, and writing on a large blackboard by colored chalk) every quarter. It happened near the opening ceremony of a sports meeting in my first year of high school, we, the propaganda department of the student council, made amazing posters and won the school’s reward. I caught my art teacher, Mr. Qiu's eyes—he saw my painting and recommended me to a studio with teaching qualifications. My tuition was $1500, which saved $1000 because it was recommended by the school. After my parents knew that I had been secretly drawing in notebooks for several years, they prepared my painting tuition and sent it to the studio the next day. From then on, I would go to the studio every weekend with my drawing board, a bucket of drawing paper, and a paint box: to learn the theory of painting, understand sketching and oil painting, practice drawing three-dimensional triangular cones, and finally sketch plaster figures. It took me a whole year to practice the plaster cast of David. That’s when I really started learning to draw professionally.
In 2005, I was in my third year of high school. This was a critical and stressful academic year—preparing for the Gaokao (national college entrance examination, similar to SAT exam in the US. In China, there is only one chance to take the exam. If they fail, students only can apply for the next year’s). I discussed with my parents about applying study to at a university, they really supported me to take the art design major. In order to be admitted as an undergraduate, I spent the most time on study and drawing. After the Gaokao, I got my wish and received an offer letter from one of my favorite universities—Nanjing University of Finance & Economics. When I was in college, I participated as a volunteer—helping some students who loved painting but whose families couldn’t support tuition to guide painting and explain the basic theory of painting. This experience gave me a deeper understanding that it is not easy to pursue dreams and that I should cherish every opportunity if I could. When I was in college, I participated as a volunteer—helping some students who loved painting but whose families couldn't support tuition to guide painting and explain the basic theory of painting. This experience gave me a deeper understanding that it is not easy to pursue dreams and that I should cherish every opportunity if I could.

I was facing making a decision about my career path after I graduated from college in 2009. I followed my mother’s suggestion and became a high school teacher. Fortunately, I was an art teacher. I enjoyed working at school because in this way I inspired many
students’ painting interests and supported them to pursue what they love to do. I applied for a bigger classroom as a painting studio from my dean of school academy, and welcomed every student who wanted to draw; I shared with them about my painting learning experience and told them to cherish the support from parents, school, and society, those were priceless treasures.

Through the communication with my parents, they supported me to try a meaningful attempt: I organized the students who joined the school painting club as volunteers to the Jiabainong Orphanage in Pudong, Shanghai once a month. This orphanage was founded in 2011 by Christians. It mainly takes in abandoned children suffering from diseases. Some of them suffer from congenital heart disease or disabilities. My students brought pictorials to the orphanage to tell stories to the children, taught them to hold pencils to draw, and played games together. We prepared fruits to share with the children, and we also blessed the adopted children. Laughter and love filled the orphanage. How meaningful and beautiful this is—it will leave a deep impression on our lives for a long time. We need to remember to help people in need because this is the transmission of love. I love painting and learned and taught students to paint. Through painting to convey our love to society. Our hearts would be filled with joy while we spread love. This is the beautiful appearance of the world that I am looking forward to.

Polly organized students to volunteer in an orphanage in 2013
Her

MADELYN VICTORIA RICHARDSON

Personal Statement

Hello! My name is Madelyn and this is my piece for the Lion’s Pride! I’ve always been bad when it comes to anything scary so I tried writing horror as a way to build up immunity to it, and here’s an example of some of that! This is a short story about a painter losing his grip on reality as his obsession with perfection begins to take its toll on him and the people he encounters. I hope you enjoy it!

I am the envy of those around me, I am the talk of the town, I have been called the second coming of Michelangelo. My art is beauty, my brush a treasure to this world. I have but one goal on my mind, to strive ever further to perfection. To feel like art is not enough, the subjects I paint must be real as flesh.

So I paint more. I paint more.

Today has been eventful. I was asked to draw a banquet, to spare no detail on the food and wine. My work takes me late into the night as always. The smell of paint is overwhelming as always. My art is a treasure, as always. Everything is captured, every scrap of meat, every crumb of bread. It all looks so real you see. So real, it seems I can even smell the aroma of the feast.

My client is happy with the painting, of course he is. I have made something so beautiful, but I still feel I can perfect my craft even further. So I paint. I paint more.

No clients today. That’s fine. It gives me more time to paint on my own project, to work on her. I stay in my studio, I smell the fumes of the wet paint. The pigments today are so vibrant, so beautiful. A good step, but not enough. She must be perfect. I will accept no less. So I paint. I paint more.

I have a new client today, a man asking me to paint the family dog that had passed on. He gives me a description of the dog, and
so, my work begins. My studio is small, but I like it that way, less distractions to deal with. I've even sewn shut my curtains and bolted shut my windows so the outside world will never bother me. Here, I paint ever further, further. The smell of the paint makes me gag, but I ignore it. I keep painting. I must must must keep painting. I have not achieved perfection yet, but it's improving. I can hear the dogs barking outside as I paint.

My client seems happy. Of course he is. I have given him the gift of my work. Oh how generous I am. I return to my studio to work on my project. She's beautiful. Her smile widens by the day. She must be perfect as I when she's done. I keep painting.

I have no clients today. I take the time to go into town to pick up supplies. The people in town are so awestruck when they see me. They just can't stop staring at me as I walk past. Even a cat crossing my path stops to look at me. Ah, I'm just too good. I return to my little studio. I must keep working on her. She must be perfect. I take care to make my own pigment if I can for her. For red today, I have a rock I found at the market. It's heavy, really more of a small boulder, but it has a small blotch of a beautiful shade of red I can make paint from. So I paint. I paint more.

Actually, when did I pick up this stone?

No clients again today. That's fine. More time to work on her. Something smells awful in the studio today, but soon the smell of my paint overpowers it. She's beautiful today as well. The red paint I made really makes her cheeks so rosy. Yes, she's getting more and more beautiful each day, but she's not perfect, not yet. So I paint. I paint more.

I have a client today, the same one who I painted the banquet for. He's so funny. It's only been a few days, but he talks to me like it's been so long since we last spoke. He seems hesitant, but asks me for a portrait of his wife. An easy feat for someone of my skill, he need not be nervous about it.

She comes to see me later that same day in my studio. She's so well behaved. She never once moves. She never says a word to me, but I prefer it like that. I can't bother with conversation in the
middle of my work after all, and work I do. I capture every detail. Her beautiful golden hair, her gray skin, her hazy eyes. I didn't notice it before, but with the exception of her hair, she's actually quite horrid looking. Goes to show how wonderful I am at my craft though, If I can see a person past who they are at a glance. I'm amazing am I not?

It's so strange then, that I never got to deliver this painting.

My client was nowhere to be found when I was done. I went to his house, but found no one was home. Rather rude of him to leave without telling me anything first, especially seeing I wasted so much time on this portrait. What a slob. His daughter must be following her fathers example. The window was still shattered, her fault no doubt.

I just returned to my studio in a huff. That stench from before is here again, worse than before. Perhaps it's from my paint? I can see that some must've spilt on the floor, as a green-ish bile colored liquid is splattered on the ground. What a horrid shade, and it smells awful as well.

When did I even buy it?

I go to the market. It's overrun with rats. Apparently the local mouser cat was killed, head smashed in with a rock. Poor thing. I do feel sorry for it, but I pity myself right now as well. I get I am a wonderful painter, but the people of this market seem almost afraid of me. Price I pay for fame I suppose.

I'm back at my studio. I'm sitting on my stool, brush in hand. I'm looking at her. I've been working on her. She's so beautiful. Her hair looks perfect now. Long flowing golden locks, so life-like, so beautiful. She's getting there, she'll be perfect soon enough. I must keep working. I must keep painting. I must I must I must.

I receive a letter by mail. It's a painting request. It's strange, why would a client not want to meet with me? I, in my endless generosity, decide to give them the benefit of the doubt. Maybe they're sick or something. They have requested a landscape portrait, one of a sunset. The letter speaks of how they enjoy watching sunsets through the trees by their house. I know of a village near
here that makes its trade in lumber, I assume that's where my client lives then.

I'm by a river. A portrait is in front of me. It shows a man fishing in the river. Strange, no one is here with me. How long have I been here? I seem to have been just so engrossed in my work that I let the hours slip by. How clumsy of me. I look back to the picture I've made. It's beautiful, of course. I run my hand over the canvas, I can feel the rocks by the shore, I can even peel them out of the painting itself. They rest in my palm. I smile to myself. Small white pebbles. A beautiful color; they'll suit her well. I slip them into my pocket.

I jolt up. I'm in my studio. I look at her. She hasn't changed. I then became aware of the foul racket that woke me in the first place. Someone's pounding on my door. I understand all want a painting by me, but what a rude way of getting my attention. I open the door, surprised to see a policeman at my door. I don't think he's a client. He tells me that my previous client and his daughter have been found dead in his own house. They tell me someone appears to have broken and crawled through a window. Do they think me a suspect? I balk at the notion.

I tell the truth, that the wife did come by for her portrait, but that I hadn't seen any of them since.

I run my tongue over my teeth. My teeth feel strange, almost decayed.

He nods, but looks at me strangely. He tells me that the wife has been missing for months now. His eyes are a beautiful green shade.

She's ethereal now, so beautiful I can hardly stand it. Her golden hair, her white pearls, her red rosy cheeks, her green eyes, I could just kiss her now. I paint. I paint more. I must see her to completion. I love her so much it hurts. My hands ache. Blisters dot my skin as stars do a night sky. I keep painting. When did I get all these blisters anyways? Why do I keep forgetting things like this?

What's going on with me? My head hurts from all the paint I've been breathing in. I realize my body hurts. I can't remember when I ate last. I look back at my hands, or what remains of them. They're boney, skinny, my skin hugs my skeleton. Several blisters have
popped, fresh pus leaking from the open wounds. It’s the same color used for shading on her skin. When did I-?

I’m looking at my mail. I never got around to finishing that picture for the one client, the one in the forest. Did he ever send me a follow-up? I go through my letters. Unopened envelopes with nothing inside, a newspaper talking about a fisherman found drowned and without teeth, a missing person poster for a policeman. I eventually found the letter from my client, seeing that oddly enough, he never gave a name. The letter was different from how I remembered it. The paper was creased, and covered in several strange yellow marks. The handwriting was similar to my own, but it was scratchy, messy, desperate. Who wrote this? Who wrote this? Who? Who?

Who?!

I turn to her. I scream at her.

“What is this?! What’s happening?!” I look at my shaking hands. My flesh looks like it’s rotting off my bones.

She looks at me. She smiles at me.

“You’ve been here a while.” She says to me, “You, my beautiful artist, gave me life. How I adore you for it.”

I blink. I laugh. She speaks.

She speaks!

She’s real as flesh!

I can’t contain my laughter. I scream uproariously. My throat rips apart in cheer. I fall to the floor. My feeble knees snap on contact. Hands brush against my neck.

“You’re beautiful. So beautiful.”

She smiles at me. A gentle beautiful smile.

BREAKING NEWS!

Local artist Jean Martin was found dead in his studio, starved and strangled. He had been deceased for several days before authorities found him after reports of foul smells were reported coming from his studio. The studio itself was in disarray, several paintings were half finished and of horrid quality, most disturbingly being a massive painting of what appeared to be a corpse too grotesque for words.
Horrifyingly, this painting had several traces of human body parts, including teeth, hair, eyeballs, blood, pus, vomit, and other such horrors. The terrors don’t end there though, as human remains were found being chewed on by stray dogs by Jean's studio. Tests are still being done to determine the identity of the remains. The artist was known to be egotistical, but harmless, however according to townspeople, he began acting strange once he moved into his studio. Many reports that he began losing unhealthy amounts of weight, according to many, he resembled that of a skeleton when going into town. This is your reminder to all that when using paint to please open a window, the fumes can harm your mind and cause gaps in memory according to recent studies.
Restorative Wax Model

ALICIA BAANRUD

Personal Statement

I am a current student in the Funeral Service Education program at LWTech. I am hoping to graduate in March of 2023 from the program. I have wanted to get into the funeral industry for many years now after my first real encounter with a death of a loved one 13 years ago. I have two wonderfully crazy boys that keep me on my toes. Now that they are getting older I have finally decided to pursue my dream and being there for people in a way that not many others can be.