



In Our Own Voices



A Collection of Essays



We proudly resurrect *In Our Own Voices*: a journal of essays that celebrates the voice of the English 99 student writer. In the past, editors have expressed the importance of this publication in offering students a platform to express a diverse range of beliefs, ideas, and experiences. This edition hopes to continue this significant tradition. We also hope to highlight the tremendous value of students' writing to students, faculty, and staff, showcasing their integral role in the academic community.

The essays nominated for publication have been deemed exceptional. To stay true to the nature and heart of this publication—the students—we let students define “excellence.” These powerful definitions, which contributed to our selection of essays, are emphasized on the cover of this publication.

To the readers, we openly invite you to hear the rich and dynamic voices of our writers. Congratulations to the published authors!

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As I sat down on a cold, rusty bench, laughter and gossip took hold of the atmosphere around me. However, I was alone, seemingly lost in my own world. I ate in silence, looking down upon the gum encrusted concrete and an endless, serpentine trail of ants rushing in worry. My attention was focused on the ground and my legs dangling lifelessly from my seat until the sound of rushing footsteps shattered the silence in my mind. I looked up, gazing into the eyes of friendly faces. Among them, a boy named Jordy rose and asked, “Hey Chris, you want to play soccer with us?” Shocked by the fact that someone actually invited me to join their inner circle, I nodded. As we played, my body adjusted itself naturally to the choreography of the game. The movements were graceful and natural. The sensation of scoring my first goal and working together with new-found friends filled me with emotions I had never experienced before. For the first time in my life, I experienced happiness and found a place in the world where I belonged.

Months passed as I continued to play and hang out with my friends in my last year of middle school. One day in the middle of summer vacation, I came home after hanging out with my friends. A blood-curdling scream reverberated along the walls from the banshee in the kitchen reading my report card. An ogre stormed down the stairs, crushing each step under his heel to dust and splinters, giving me a look of disgust. They told me if I did not change my act and work harder on my grades, I would have to change schools and be shut inside my room with no contact from the outer world. Changing my work habits and spending less time with my friends was something I perceived impossible. However, if the common caterpillar can undergo metamorphosis to fly, then I can change to exceed in life.

My biology teacher described metamorphosis as a period of biological change for an

animal's benefit. But in some cases, metamorphosis does not always have to be a biological change. It can be a change of personality or behavior. However, to change in order to get what one wants, one must sacrifice something of importance to him or her. These sacrifices could range from love, happiness, bonds between friends, or even one's social life. I knew that in due time, I would need to give up something of mine and embrace change for the better in order to abandon the worst outcome of my choices. I needed to make a choice between the most important things in my life, my friends or my future. It was clear that I needed to pay more attention to my grades in order to stay with my friends. I knew that I would need to sacrifice both my time and my social life in order to succeed in my future.

The first day of high school came around, and I was excited to see all of my friends. I wish I said the same for the hard work fate had in store for me. As I read through the syllabi, my mind drowned in an ocean of rules and regulations. My eyes grew weary reading about the future projects my classes had yet to assign. I grew overwhelmed as I learned what my new life would be like in high school. Several weeks passed as I spent endless nights in my room with my head deep in old tattered textbooks with a pen in hand. My hand took a life of its own and scribbled away endlessly on hundreds of sheets of paper. I slowly grew oblivious to the hours passing by as my mind focused itself on one task at a time. As I worked, locked away in my room, I grew more aware of my surroundings. Cobwebs occupied the corners of my room. Layers of dust blanketed the marble pages of the books I read as a child. The soft carpet massaged the soles of my feet as they strode over the surface like a water strider skating on a pure crystalline lake. By the second semester of my first year, geometric equations, theorems,

and postulates filled the void in my mind accompanied by the rules of grammar, geography, and the process of the production of amino acids.

Near the end of the year I saw my friends once again, hoping that they would let me hang out with them. However, they did not welcome me so warmly. Their faces scowled at the sight of me. Fear and confusion froze my body as my friends struck me with looks of anger. “Where have you been, Chris? Been too busy to hang out with your best friends? Or are we not good enough for you?” Jordy inquired. His words were bitter to my ears. A lump cultivated in my throat, leaving me speechless to his questions. I wanted to tell them my situation. I wanted to tell them how my parents wanted me to concentrate on my work and how I needed to raise my grades in order to stay in the same school with them. But they left without another word. My vision grew blurry as tears spawned from my eyes. Feelings of loneliness and abandonment returned only to spit in my face, proving that I was never meant to have friends. Sadness hid in my shadow no longer and embraced me as all the happiness I had in my heart left me. My mind and soul once again bore heavy shackles chained to painful memories of alienation. The bane of the memories of my friends crushed my heart in its clutches as I grew frustrated with myself. I realized that changing my habits to solely focus on education alone and completely ignoring my friends was wrong, and that I should have made enough time to spare for them and their needs. However, it was too late for me to do all of this.

In the end, my stage of metamorphosis left me only in despair. I possessed all the knowledge I could produce with a simple thought. My parents were proud of my grades and the work I did. But in the end, change made me sacrifice more than I could handle. As the

caterpillar gives up its simple gluttonous life for beauty and the ability to fly, I sacrificed companionship for the pursuit of knowledge and pride from my parents without overseeing the consequences of my decisions. In the end, I learned that change is good for many things, but you must pay an equivalent price for what you truly desire.

Living in a huge mansion, where the beautiful beach is nearby, is perhaps a dream for many. The ability to attain this desired lifestyle is not possible for most, particularly in these challenging economic times. However, almost anything becomes possible in the virtual world, which is a world created by users on the Internet. There are many social networks and virtual worlds online today. Over 350 million people are now using Facebook, according to founder Mark Zuckerberg (www.facebook.com, 2 December 2009, “An Open Letter from Facebook Founder Mark Zuckerberg”). The popularity of Facebook is one example that shows the extent of just how many people are using the Internet these days—many, by habit, getting addicted to these virtual worlds. Many people in our society are looking for a “virtual world” or a “fantasy world” to release their stress from the real world. Therefore, there are many opportunities for people to get obsessed to these virtual worlds. This addiction to virtual communities reflects society in a variety of ways.

Social networks and virtual worlds on the Internet, including Facebook, MySpace, and Second Life are becoming very popular among a wide variety of age groups. One major reason for these virtual communities’ popularity is the ease with which people can instantly talk to others around the world. Additionally, there are a myriad of applications users can access to play games with friends and engage with each other in unique and entertaining ways. Since numerous people are starting to use social networks, these networks are also becoming a news source where the state of the economy, current events, and societal issues of the real world are shared and discussed. Thus, social networks can teach people society’s ongoings and changes. These influences of virtual communities on people’s daily lives allow for users to release the

stress from their everyday reality.

Signing on to social networks and talking to others is addicting for many users, since it is an easy and quick way to make contact with friends and strangers alike. However, there are people who have taken this too far, enveloping themselves in these virtual communities and spending most of their day on social networks. For example, in the article “Addicted to Twitter” (Snyder, Laurel, 15 August 2009, www.salon.com), author Laurel Snyder discusses her addiction to Twitter, and how her life had become unmanageable. She became addicted to this online community because she thought her friends cared about her “tweets.” In her article, she also informs readers that she used Twitter as an escape tool from her real life: “Internet is a magic tunnel from my diaper-filled cave into the world of adults.” Unfortunately, this type of addiction is becoming too common in our society, and illustrates how people are trying to use virtual worlds as an outlet from everyday stress. In a society that is becoming much more dependent on technology and social networks than before, using online communities as an escape mechanism is becoming widespread.

In digital game worlds such as Second Life or Sims, people have the opportunity to build their own dream life. Oftentimes, people who play virtual world games portray what they actually desire in real life. In order to do this, users must pay money to create their dream world in the virtual world. For example, users who play Second Life must pay money in order to buy a dream house to live a rich and luxurious life. It costs \$9.95 to create an avatar in Second Life, and the smallest lot can be bought for \$9.95 every month. The fact that people are willing to pay money to build a fake world and identity shows how far people are willing to go to have an

escape from their real lives, while creating and enmeshing themselves in fantasy worlds. The name of the game “Second Life” clearly portrays this as well: having a “second,” separate life and identity. The game, and many others similar to it, therefore act as an escape to fantasy from people’s “first,” actual lives. Also, the author of the article “Why a Bad Economy Will Help Social Networks” explains that many people tend to use social networks and computer games even when they are living in poor economic times, since people can find jobs easily on social networks and escape from their reality by playing computer games (Catone, Josh, 4 February 2009, Sitepoint). This argument shows how strongly people are addicted to social networks and computer games.

Additionally, because of the soaring popularity of online communities, there are many ways to profit from these online businesses. For example, the users of Second Life earn money by working and selling goods in Second Life. The author of “Welcome to Your Second Life” (Stafford, Joe, 23 January 2005, www.austin360.com) discusses the famous designer Munchflower Zaius in the world of Second Life, and how she earns real money by selling gothic clothes and making tattoos for other avatars. The designer’s success shows how new technology also comes with profitability. Zaius’ success also represents the desires and escape from her real life, since she is spending more time on Second Life, perhaps to release her stress from the real world and to have a dream job. Moreover, it clearly represents her investment in the virtual world—she is earning money by working in and playing Second Life all of the time.

Online social networks are very useful, since users can contact others whenever they want as long as they have Internet connection. Therefore, it becomes easy for people to spend

much of their time in the virtual world, as opposed to the real world. Virtual communities such as Second Life provide an outlet for people to temporarily get away from the stress of their everyday “real” life and create new, imagined identities, while social networks such as Facebook and MySpace allow for people across the globe to connect on a continual basis. Also, there are people who have started profitable businesses on Internet networks and are now earning enough money to live off of their success. The creators of a digital or virtual world typically earn more money the more users exist, since users tend to spend more money when their businesses are going well. This cycle shows how much people in current society are dependent on virtual communities and technology in general—how, for some, the omnipresence of online communities has now become a necessity to make a living and maintain a certain lifestyle. Ironically, perhaps some of these successful business ventures started as an escape from the real world, and now has become a means to live in the real world. It reflects a society very closely tied to virtual worlds. Virtual worlds and social networks are filled with people’s desires, powerfully illustrating and reflecting the society that people live in.

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The first time listening to the song “I Dreamed a Dream” by Susan Boyle in *Britain’s Got Talent*, a tear fell down, and my heart was touched deeply by the emotional performance. I saw her desirable dream expressed in a single word of the song. The professional vocals and emotions of Susan Boyle make the song live again 16 years after the performance of Aretha Franklin in Clinton’s Inauguration. In 1993, Aretha sang the song “I Dreamed a Dream” in a big national event, and she represented the minorities to express their dream about a greater society. Even though Aretha and Susan performed the same song, the meaning of the song was totally changed in each performance. Aretha Franklin sang the song with her social dream about a better life for Americans, including minorities; and Susan Boyle, one more time, expressed her personal dream about being a professional singer in that song in 2009.

Aretha Franklin and Susan Boyle come from different countries and have different backgrounds. Aretha is famous for Rock 'n' Roll. She is called “The Queen of Soul” because of her regal style and remarkable voice. Aretha Franklin was an activist for the civil rights movement in the 1960’s; she fought to desegregate in buses, work places, and public places for blacks. Thus, Aretha was an African-American icon of civil rights for the minorities and women in the 1960’s. Aretha often appears in royal clothes in the big national events. The audience loves her soulful music and gospel voice. Aretha has many social experiences from her life, being a colored woman in the United States. She faces discrimination, poverty, and is close to the working class, so Aretha understands and has sympathy for minorities. Therefore, most of her performances aimed to an equal social life for every American, especially fellow African Americans. Aretha chooses the song “I Dreamed a Dream” and cleverly expresses her

society for minorities through the song. On the other hand, Susan Boyle does not face the social problems as Franklin, but she experiences family and personal problems. Susan Boyle is a simple and genuine woman. She lives in poverty, adversity and had learning difficulties in her early life. Susan is so busy with taking care of her mother that Susan forgets about her own life. She has never gone on a date, and Susan is still single at the age of 53. Like other women, Susan has her own ambition and dreams. She loves singing and hopes to be a professional singer someday. Susan experienced a difficult life, a life that seemed to be unfair to her, so Susan desires a beautiful life with a good career and a happy family for her own. All these facts motivate Susan to choose the song “I Dreamed a Dream” for her performance in *Britain’s Got Talent*. This song helps Susan to say out loudly her dream about being a professional singer.

The first factor that makes the meaning of the song change is the different vocals of Aretha Franklin and Susan Boyle. Aretha mixes her rock voice and impassioned gospel-tinged vocals when she performs “I Dreamed a Dream.” Her strong vocals go up and down, high and low through the song. Aretha prolongs and presses her voice in a few parts of the song to express her dream about a better society. These expressions show the audience Aretha’s strong desire for a better society. Aretha screams at the end of the song to show the audience that the life has killed people’s dreams; the society has killed the equality and happiness in some people. However, the song does not sound to be pessimistic; it is full of hope and optimism in the future. Aretha’s soulful voice seems to demand a better society for the future, and her dream comes true in 2009 when Obama becomes President of the United States. Aretha’s social dream about a greater society flies high and far. While Aretha’s voice is strong and true

to rock. Susan's voice is soft, clear and high. Susan sings the song "I Dreamed a Dream" in *Britain's Got Talent* with the same dream for a better life, but this time the dream is for her own life and not for society. When the music is turned on, Susan's high and clear voice surprises the audience. None of the viewers can believe that this amazing voice comes from an amateur. Susan's soft voice, as thunder, strikes the listeners' hearts; some people cry when they hear her singing. Susan's operatic voice touches the soul of the audience. The listeners can feel her dream resounding inside them. Susan's high, soft voice wakes up the listeners' hearts to listen to her dream, a dream of being a professional singer. Susan's voice seems to climb up a hill. The soft and low part at the beginning of the song expresses her simple and tiny dream, and the strong and high part at the end of the song rises up Susan's strong demand for a happy life. The different vocal styles of Susan Boyle makes the meaning of the song "I Dreamed a Dream" sung by Aretha Franklin change. Aretha's version seems to be geared toward a greater society, while Susan's version is more personally based.

Moreover, the lyrics of the song stands out in these two performances. Aretha Franklin almost keeps the same original version of the song. In Franklin's song, she has a dream about her young ages, freedom, and liberty. Aretha dreams about the days that every American can enjoy the happiness and safety: "There was no ransom to be paid, no song unsung, no wine untasted." At the beginning of the song, "Lady Soul" keeps saying "I have a dream." She seems to remind the audience about the famous speech "I Have a Dream" of Martin Luther King, Jr. King dreams about an equal society and a better life for the minorities. At the end of the song, Aretha sings "Now life has killed the dream that we dreamed" instead of "Now life

has killed the dream I dreamed.” The dream is not Aretha’s own dream anymore; now it is Americans’ dream, especially minorities’ dream. Aretha represents the minorities to express their social dream. In Susan Boyle’s song, the dream is zoomed in a personal dream. Susan impresses the audience when she sings the line “And they turn your dream to shame.” The people at the audience laugh at Susan and think that she is crazy when Susan tells the audience that she wants to be a professional singer. People think that Susan’s dream will never come true. Susan dreams that someday the miracle will happen to her: a better life and a position in a singing career. The lyrics express her strong desire for being successful in singing. The different lifestyles of these two women make them perform the song in different ways. Susan and Franklin emphasize different parts of the song to express the most of their desires and dreams. The lyrics make the different feelings and different dreams of Aretha Franklin and Susan Boyle bold. Aretha has a big dream about an equal society, but Susan only has a small dream about being a professional singer.

Besides the vocals and the lyrics, the beat of the song is another factor that makes the listeners have different feelings. Susan Boyle sings the song with a slow and smooth beat, and the melody seems to whisper her small dream to the listeners. The beat of the song is simple, but the music touches the audience’s feeling. The soft and slow beats seem to represent Susan’s simple and tiny dream. A dream that Susan can achieve someday if she tries hard and never gives up. The beat keeps going faster and higher at the end of the song. The change in the beat is as same as the change in Susan’s desire. Now Susan’s dream is surged and stronger. Aretha Franklin performs “I Dreamed a Dream” with a different melody. The beat keeps changing

throughout the song; the music goes slowly at the beginning of the song and goes faster at the end. The beat is strong and seems to strike Aretha's dream about an equal society into the listeners' ears. The beat mixes with Aretha's voice to speak out her social dream for all Americans. The strong and fast melody at the end of the song catches more attention of the listeners, and that part is the most meaningful of the song. At the beginning of the song, Aretha's dream is implicit, but at the end that dream is explicit to the audience. The fast and strong beat at the end helps highlight Aretha's social dream. The melody of the song just changes a little, but the different melodies create the different emotions toward the song. People can easily see Susan's dream about being a professional singer and Aretha's dream about an equal society.

The last factor that stands out in the song is the instrumental sounds. In Aretha Franklin's performance, the main instruments are drums, clarinets, trumpets, and violins which were key instruments in the historical progression of African American music. The sounds of these instruments are not strange to Americans, especially the working class. These simple instruments seem to represent the black voice's desirable society. All these sounds are mixed together and follow Aretha's voice up and down. The instrumental sound supports Aretha to perform the song with her best feeling. Aretha feels fellow minorities are surrounding her and following her to demand an equal society. The instrumental sound makes the audience more dynamic. Susan Boyle sings this song with digital music. There is not a live musical band on the stage, but the sound effect does not have less quality than Aretha's performance. The instrumental sounds are more clear and limpid. The digital music takes away the rough notes of

the song. The music creates a smooth wave during the performance. The smooth sound is symbolic for Susan's life: a simple and peaceful life without aggressiveness and big turns.

The song "I Dreamed a Dream" does not change, but the meaning changes after many years. All the differences in the vocals, the lyrics, the beat, the instruments, and the different feelings of the singers make the song have different meanings. Aretha Franklin performs with a social dream about a better life for everyone; after sixteen years, Susan Boyle sings the same song to express her own dream, being a professional singer. These two singers make the great song "I Dreamed a Dream" more meaningful for the listeners. Both Aretha and Susan are successful in expressing their feelings and dreams to the audience through the song "I Dreamed a Dream."

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Almost every single kid in America has seen at least one Disney movie because most parents believe that they teach children good morals. Disney movies are very educational for a young child. Movies like *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Snow White*, *Aladdin*, and other Disney stories are movies little girls and boys love to copy. They enjoy running around dressed like the characters and singing all the songs. *Finding Nemo* is also a very educational movie. It makes the facts that are told throughout the movie stick in one's head through comedy. Good manners, teaching kids to talk, and cleanliness are just a few lessons these Disney movies teach to children. Disney movies are educational and preach good morals to all those who watch them.

The Little Mermaid, *The Beauty and the Beast*, and *Peter Pan* are just a few of the inspiring princess and prince Disney movies. These movies are informative in many ways, such as teaching little kids by making the princes and princesses good role models. Little children are constantly running around dressed up like their favorite characters from the movies. Being able to dress up like a princess or a prince makes children feel special and good about themselves. The little boys and girls see how everyone admires the Disney characters, so naturally kids want to be just like these princes and princesses. They also teach children good manners by how the characters behave in the movies. They learn basic etiquette like saying "please" and "thank you", to clean up after themselves, and to respect others' differences. Every girl has wished she was a princess some point in her life. For example, when I was in elementary school, I dressed up as a different Disney princess every year for Halloween. The girls are able to put on pretty dresses and be like *Cinderella* or *Snow white*. Disney plays a very big role in the lives of

children up to the age of thirteen or fourteen, but these are not the only type of Disney movies that educate young children.

Good manners are a thing we do not see a great deal of these days; they seem to not matter to most people anymore. Children think that disrespecting people is a commonplace but really they are not being taught proper manners. Disney movies teach all sorts of good manners by making all the princes and princesses very polite. They say “please” and “thank you” and do not say inappropriate words or phrases. Disney movies also teach table manners. For example, in the movie *The Beauty and the Beast*, it teaches good manners by showing scenes of them at the dinner table. Some table manners that this movie teaches are how to set the table, to sit up straight, and that the napkin is to be placed on the lap. For example, while Belle is eating dinner, the candlestick and all the plates sing to her about putting her napkin on top of her lap. Mrs. Potts, a tea pot, sings about how each plate and cup should be spotless. Mrs. Potts and Chip show good table manners through exciting songs. Mrs. Potts has a motherly voice which makes children more eager to learn from her. Table manners should be taught to everyone starting at a young age, and Disney movies do this.

Finding Nemo is not only a funny, family oriented movie, but it also teaches good facts and morals. It educates children about how marine animals live. For example, there is a scene in *Finding Nemo* when Nemo is asked where he lives. He proceeds to say “in an anemone” but he cannot pronounce it correctly. This teaches children where clown fish live, and it also teaches children to not give up. These movies are funny and repetitive, which makes children remember the facts more easily. Another fact this movie teaches about sea animals is that

whales do not have teeth. Instead, their teeth look more like the bottom of a broom. This fact is taught when Dory and Marlin are swimming around looking for Nemo, and they run into a whale in the middle of the ocean. The whale eats them, and this shows what his teeth truly look like. *Finding Nemo* is full of many different facts and most of the time we do not even realize we are learning. It also teaches us about family connection and how to treat our family members. It shows that we are supposed to be close with our family and show our love towards each other because one day it could all end. For instance, when Nemo gets taken away from his dad, it shows that life could change in an instance. This movie also shows the fish going to school. This lets children know that going to school is what is proper. While watching the movie, we may not think it is teaching us the positive sides of attending school, but after we think about it, we realize that fish learn a lot from school. *Finding Nemo* is a comedy with many lessons we can all learn from.

Disney movies not only teach children small words, but also how to form sentences. Children are in love with Disney movies so much that they watch them over and over. When something is repeated many times it tends to stick in people's heads. This is what happens with children and these movies. They watch them hundreds of times and begin to start learning more words. They learn new definitions, and they broaden their vocabulary. Children at this young of age tend to repeat what they hear or see. Disney movies are some of the only things parents approve hearing their kids repeat. These days, teaching kids good morals are difficult especially because what they are exposed to in the real world.

While walking around the streets, children may see all different types of people ranging

from business people to homeless people. Children hear and see couples fighting everywhere. Disney movies show kids the positive side of these things. Disney characters have good hygiene and dress to impress. For example, in *Sleeping Beauty*, Princess Aurora is in a beautiful dress even though she is sleeping. Princes and princesses will never be seen walking around dressed like they have not showered in days. These movies show kids how we should look on a daily basis. Couples fight every day, and it makes kids think that there is no happiness in a relationship. Nowadays, parents are separating more than ever. Children see their parents as role models. When kids watch their parents fight everyday it shows them that there may not be someone out there for everyone. Disney movies show that no matter what we look like, what our race is, or how we dress there is always someone out there for all of us. These movies show us what life really should be compared to rather than what we see on the streets.

Disney movies are not always what they seem to be. There are some parts of Disney movies that are not for children's eyes. In many Disney movies, there are parts that have their own subliminal message. Despite this, they are unnoticeable unless they are being looked for. A young child is not going to be rewinding the movie to look for these messages when they do not know what half of the words mean. Subliminal messages are not for children's eyes but most kids between the ages of newborn and thirteen or fourteen are not going to be looking for the hidden messages.

Disney movies are not only entertaining for all who watch them, but they are also very educational. Disney movies such as *Cinderella*, *Aladdin*, *Snow White*, and many other stories promote high self-esteem. Other movies like *Finding Nemo* teach how fish live compared to

humans. These movies also teach children proper manners, new words, and good hygiene.

Disney movies are not only just for our entertainment but also for educational purposes.

Movies, music, television shows, and books all have something in common: entertainment. All these types of media have a huge effect on children's thoughts and the way they act. However, there are positive types of entertainment like comic books. Children need something positive that will help them in many ways. Comic books like *Superman* and *Spiderman* are known all over the world and have helped children in many useful ways. Comic books are mostly read by boys, and most of the time, young children begin to read comic books at a young age and never stop reading them. They are very beneficial and allow them to fantasize that they are in another world. As children get older and mature into adults, comic books not only become something they had valued as a kid but also something that becomes a prized possession. Comic books are beneficial to children in a variety of ways like giving children someone to look up to, as well as teaching children life lessons.

Comic books benefit children by giving them someone to look up to. For example, Spiderman, a man who has "spidy senses" and is able to climb walls and swing from building to building, is known as a hero. He helps fight crime and takes care of his city. When something is going wrong in the city, everyone looks around for Spiderman. And in seconds, he comes out of nowhere and defeats the bad guy to save his town once again. Children who see or read about Spiderman saving his town are amazed and want to be just like him. They run around playing with their friends and stick their arm out as if they are shooting a web out of their hand and fighting the bad guys as Spiderman would do. Another hero who is very well known is Superman. He is a man who is from another planet and has ultra strength and super powers. He is able to lift heavy things such as airplanes and fly all around town. He also protects his town

and Lois Lane, a lady who works with him with whom he is in love. Children look up to him as a hero. They run around with both of their arms in front of them with a sheet tied around their neck as if they were flying through the air. Both of these super heroes give children someone to look up to. This allows children to follow something positive instead of following something that will lead them in the wrong direction.

There is always a lesson to be taught in a story of a comic book. Heroes teach children how to be kind to others, not talk to strangers, and even something as simple as to recycle or turn off the water. For example, in the comic book *Spiderman*, Spiderman takes care of his grandmother. This teaches children to take care of others, like family members and even friends. It also teaches children responsibility and kindness. Most children who read these comic books often act as they would in comic books. They read kindness in a comic book and act it out in real life by helping others. Many younger boys think of Spiderman as a hero and try to act just like him. Another life lesson told in most comic books is, “Don’t do the crime if you can’t do the time.” This lesson is very popular in comic books. It teaches children to think about their actions before they actually make a decision. Most superheroes demonstrate this while they are fighting the bad guys. It shows the consequences that the bad guys have to face because they made a cruel decision. Comic books are filled with many extremely important life lessons that children need to know in life.

Comic books are also beneficial because they are filled with words. Having to read the book allows children to expand their vocabulary, while at the same time providing enjoyment. They are able to develop a stronger variety of words by reading the story, and if they do not

know a word, they are able to figure out what it means by the rest of the context or even by glancing at the pictures. Reading also helps their critical thinking and their imagination. Children are able to think of what they are reading and imagine it in their minds. Like Superman flying in the sky or even Spiderman saving the town. This also teaches children how to become creative and also how to become better readers and writers.

Learning is always very important. In comic books, children learn about the world and their environment. For instance, in all comic books, there are the good guys versus the bad guys. This teaches children that several of people in this world are not all good and that most people need help. For instance, the world needs police officers to keep crime from arising. Also, it teaches children to help out their community, as easily as just recycling, “keep our world clean.”

Most people may say that comic books contain violence and that children do not need to know about violence, however, I disagree. Children need to know what the world contains. They do not need to be sheltered their whole life because when the day comes that the children face violence, they will not know how to handle the situation. They need to be able to know that violence is out there, and it does happen. It is part of reality, and as long as children know the difference between right and wrong, they need to know about what happens in the world.

In many ways comic books help children face daily problems. Comic books are incredibly beneficial in a variety of ways and even though it may contain violence, it is a part of life and children need to know what is going on in the real world. Comic books also help them expand their vocabulary and imagination, give them someone to look up to, and teach them

about the world. These types of books are almost like a survival guide to children to teach them good morals and values that most children need to know as they grow. The most valuable thing that children are taught through comic book is the difference between right and wrong, as well as learning life lessons that are very useful in life. It is tremendously important that they understand the difference between wrong and right. Comic books teach children this difficult subject easily through a story of entertainment. The magnificent parts about comic books are children enjoy reading the books not only because they are interesting but also because they are having fun learning without even knowing it.

Music is often used to comment on society. This is usually about how the government is corrupt and the ways everyday citizens can help out. This is represented in everything from The Beatles song “Revolution” to Nickelback’s song “If Everyone Cared” and in “For What It’s Worth” by Buffalo Springfield. In the song “Where is the love?” by Black Eyed Peas and Justin Timberlake, the group decries the hypocrisy of modern American society.

The song has many elements that go along with it. One of the most noticeable is its rhyme. An example of it is “I think the whole world is addicted to the drama/ only attracted to things that’ll bring you trauma/ overseas, yeah, we try to stop terrorism/ but we still got terrorism here livin’.” In this section of the song the words drama and trauma and rhyme as well as terrorism and livin’, which are slant rhyme. Throughout the rest of the song the artist uses the same method in a rhyme scheme. This makes the song more memorable and easier to listen to.

Hypocrisy is what makes this song. The artist points out many times that the United States is not perfect even though it is portrayed to be. For example, they relate the CIA with The Bloods, The Crips, and the KKK. The CIA is not supposed to be corrupt but the artist claims that they are by associating them with gangs and supremacists groups. Rhyme is also used to connect the word “CIA” with the word “KKK.”

The song title itself is what starts the hypocrisy. It mentions in the chorus to “practice what you preach,” but in reality it is asking questions of the government. Do they “practice what we preach” or do they “turn the other cheek?” Both of these phrases are related to the idea of being good and righteous, but since they are questioning the government they are

implying that the government is neither good nor righteous. Later the chorus goes on to say “Father, Father, Father help us/ send some guidance from above” the father they are referring to is God. This is a play on religion, bringing in the preaching and the looking up to God for guidance but not following through with what would be the right thing to do. In the last verse the artists uses the line “gotta keep the faith alive till the love is found.” The word faith again ties back into religion. The artist believes that if you have the belief in religion, then miracles can happen as long as the belief is still there.

The whole song is in the first person. It uses “I,” “me,” and “I’m” to create a selfish feel. This selfishness is stemming from the chorus “cause people got me, questionin’/ where is the love.” It always has to be about me and not the rest of the world. This selfishness does give the song the ability to relate to others, making the same problem partly their fault and creating the need to fix the problem so that they will not feel guilty about it.

The corruption of society is one of the most upsetting themes that this song has. The reason behind that is corruption is horrible especially when it is in the minds of our youth. The corruption that is mentioned is making people emotionally dead: “ I feel the weight of the world on my shoulder/ as I’m getting’ older, ya’ll people get colder.” People have seen a tremendous number of horrible acts on TV, videogames, and in movies. These acts make them numb to what they should feel. Emotions are part of being human. Once you start to overcharge them to the point they cannot be used, then the person becomes numb to the situation. The song points out that the government lies to the people by telling them part of the story and not the part that matters, which leads to them telling the same lie over and over again. The lies build up

to the point that people stop listening to what is going on because they have heard it before.

A theme of word association is brought up in many stanzas of the song. In the sixth line of the first verse the artist's use the words discriminate and hate together to infer that discrimination leads to hate which then leads to being irate. Later they go back and use the word "anger" and imply that the anger is from the hate that they are talking about from the discrimination. In the next line they say "man, you gotta have love just to set it straight." The association goes from hating and discriminating to love and the fact that you need love to cover up all the bad that has taken over the country. The love is to set you at ease, even though you know what is happening is corrupt. The more corrupt it gets the more people think that it is all right to have it and not try to fix it.

The thought of war and how it is making the world insane is another theme that this song takes on. "Nations droppin' bombs/ chemical gases fillin' lungs of little ones/ with ongoin' sufferin' as the youth die young": this section of the song is pointed more toward the third world countries and how children are being brought into war where they shouldn't be. The youth are the future, so do not kill them off before they have the chance to make an impact. Also the children being in the line of fire in the first place says something about their schooling. They do not have any or very little because of the conditions of the country that they are living in. Since the education is limited in the war-torn country, the children are then taught to use weapons and forced to fight in the wars.

This song offers an interesting look on life in the United States: looking at all the hypocrisy that has people fearing to stand up for themselves and change the country for the

better. The song ranges from the belief in a higher being in religion to the selfishness of people that lead up to the corruption of society and the state of being emotionally dead from all the sadness in the world. The media does not help either, by telling us half truths that the government feeds them, they do not give us the chance to think for ourselves and make our own decisions. War and the violence rages in the underdeveloped countries that we could be helping, but we (the United States) are too corrupt to see what is right from wrong. This song puts all the social ills into one and tells us that this needs to be fixed. The question is can we fix it.

