

Christopher F. Thompson

ENGL 1010 - 046

Mid-Term Portfolio

03-20-2011

Christopher F. Thompson
ENGL 1010 - 046
Reflection Paper One
01-21-2011

REFLECTION ON THE PAST

Life can at times be overwhelmingly difficult or mundanely simple. It is within these complex and plain events that build or destroy the character of a person. In my life I have experienced only one, perhaps two events that have shaped who I am. The single most important time in my life, and the one that stands out the most, was the day I found out that my son Nicholas would soon join me.

It was a simple day in September of 2009. For a few months leading up to this day, my wife and I had been planning to have a child. Earlier in the week, a simple over the counter test told both of us that it was time to be ready for a precious gift. Now we were sitting in a medical office; small children, newborns and expecting mothers surrounded us. We already knew what the doctor was going to tell us. I suppose we just had a need for the confirmation.

Our name was called; a petite nurse summoning us to a clean and sterile examination room. The essential questions began as soon as the door shut behind us. The nurse was bubbly and very kind. She took my wife's vitals and offered her a snack of orange juice and graham crackers. Her pokes and prods came to completion and she exited the room with a congratulatory smile.

Neither one of us had much to say. Patiently we waited for the doctor. Sweat began to form between our hands as we gripped each other tightly; my wife became more and more nervous the longer we had to wait for the door to open. For some reason she began to have moments of fear and doubt. "What if there is something wrong with the baby?," she asked; the uncertainty in her voice was very clear. I calmed her that best way I knew how. Wrapping my arms around her, I assured her that this is a great moment for us; there is no reason to be afraid of things we have no control over. A short

rap at the door marked the appearance of our physician. The portal opened slowly, the doctor walked in, and he softly closed the door behind him.

Once again my wife was put through a necessary examination. The doctor was very gentle and considerate, he really made both of us feel quite comfortable. After a few minutes an ultrasound machine was pulled out for use. He pulled out this very cold and very slick jelly that was applied to my wife's belly. The magic ultrasound wand was applied to her midsection and within seconds the doctor confirmed what we already knew. Our precious gift became a real and very powerful presence almost instantly; a huge grin on my face and a tear of joy rolling down her cheek. To our astonishment the doctor was not done with the surprises.

Reaching into his bag of tricks the doctor pulled out what appeared to be two speakers the size of table coasters. Placing the speakers face down onto my wife's belly, he reached over to the ultrasound machine and began to turn a knob of sorts. As soon as I heard the sound emanating from the machine I understood that he was listening for a heartbeat. A brief moment passed while he located what he was searching for. As clear as day the rapid sounds of a tiny heartbeat filled my ears.

That was the exact moment I knew nothing, no matter how big or how small, was going to be the same. This was the time in my life that what I thought and what I wanted to do was going to take a back seat for a while. I instantly felt a responsibility like I have never felt before. A small life will forever rely on me and the choices I make. Talk about instant pressure; but I would not trade that feeling for anything in the world.

When we finished with the doctor and my wife was satisfied that everything was going to be ok, we went home. The instant we got to our vehicle the emotion and excitement took over. I honestly remember that we talked and planned for the next six hours straight. If I could live in that moment, I would live there forever.

I sat awake that night, my wife asleep next to me. I am not even sure if my wife knew this, but I talked to her belly for a little while. I was talking to my baby and I was so fulfilled in so many ways. I wrote my son a little poem that reflects the emotions I was experiencing at that moment:

***I can't wait for you to come out and play,
I can't wait for you to get your life underway.***

***I can't wait to feel and see you wiggle,
I can't wait to hear your little giggle.***

***I can't wait to touch your tender face,
I can't wait to see you crawl all over the place.***

***I can't wait to hear and see you cry,
I can't wait to kiss your damp cheek dry.***

***I can't wait to sing to you out of tune,
I can't wait to blow up your first balloon.***

***I can't wait to hold you close to my heart,
I can't wait for you to prove you're smart.***

***I am your father; I will love you every day,
Now hurry up and come out to play.***

Life can be overwhelmingly difficult or mundanely simple. I never mentioned that there is a myriad of stages in-between those difficult and simple times. Everyone will have a moment where their life will never be the same. Mine just happened to be a little boy named Nicholas...

Christopher F. Thompson
ENGL 1010 - 046
Notebook Entry: Political Cartoon
02-10-2011

http://www.time.com/time/cartoonsoftheweek/0,29489,2045021_2231316,00.html

NOTEBOOK ENTRY: POLITICAL CARTOON REVISION "SPUTNIK MOMENT"

I chose a political cartoon that was cleverly titled 'Sputnik Moment.' Upon my initial inspection I find President Barack Obama standing next to an old fashion green chalk board; a piece of chalk resting in his grip. Next, I notice a young child sitting at a grade school desk, red hat on his head, and the expressions "Gulp!" floating in a cloud above him. On top of this grade school desk is a math and a science text book; a plump apple adorning the stack of knowledge. The focal point of this cartoon is what the President has scribed on the chalk board: ***"Are You Smarter Than 45 Million Chinese & Indian 5th Graders?"***

'Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader' is a popular game show that pits adults against a small group of actual 5th graders. Answer a sufficient number of questions correctly and you win cash prizes. At first glance I found it difficult trying to relate this game show to the meaning inside this political cartoon. After a little thought and a little research the cartoon began to become clearer.

During the 2011 State of the Union Address, presented by President Obama, the 'Sputnik Moment' was used to inspire Republicans to co-operate in order to "win the future." Nearly 50 years ago the former Soviet Union beat the United States into space with the launch of a Satellite named Sputnik. This moment in history was a huge milestone in US history. The US began to question their place in the pecking order of technologically advanced countries. Through government investments into better research and education the United States was not only able to surpass the Soviets by landing on the moon, they were able to support innovation that led to entirely new industries and millions of new jobs. President Obama is trying to inspire our government to "win the future" by creating a 'Sputnik

Moment' for our generation; requiring government investments in research, infrastructure and education.

Why would we need to create a 'Sputnik Moment?' It has been widely shown that countries such as China and India have begun to surpass the US economic power and global influence. This political cartoon coyly expresses this fact as it relates to education. I am constantly exposed to the idea of STEM. This acronym stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. The majority of articles I read point out that the United States is falling behind in these four specific areas; more specifically in elementary school. This is shown in the cartoon with the math and science books sitting on the desk with, what I assume is a 5th grader.

The artist who created this cartoon was able to bring current popular culture and politics together in order to convey a simple message. The United States is losing their superiority to countries such as China and India. We are falling behind at the most basic level; our children. Our future begins with them and I must agree with President Obama. The United States must have a 'Sputnik Moment' in order to inspire this generation to exceed expectations. Let me ask you a question: ***"Are You Smarter Than 45 Million Chinese & Indian 5th Graders?"***

Christopher F. Thompson
ENGL 1010 - 046
Reflection Paper Social issue
03-03-2011

OVERTHROW OF THE SOUL

Life can at times be overwhelmingly difficult or mundanely simple. It is within these complex and plain events that build or destroy the character of a person. In my life I have experienced triumph and defeat. It is with a heavy heart that I must cover the latter. The topic I have in mind is an issue that covers all spectrums of race, geographical location and even age; I have chosen to discuss divorce.

Over the past few weeks we have been asked to write about personal experiences; to reflect on parts of our past. I rightfully chose to express the moment I found out I was going to have a child. In two separate reflections of this event I was able to drive home the point that finding out my son was going to join this world was one of the best moments of my life. I never knew that there would be a flipside to the great joy I felt that day. Unfortunately I must confess that I have experienced one of those 'this can never happen to me,' instants.

Nearly three months ago, shortly after Christmas, my wife had a real sad demeanor for well over a week. Initially I thought it could have been a holiday hangover; we all seem to get one of those. It was becoming obvious that my relationship, over the past year, was becoming strained. Things had become more and more difficult as the days slowly crept by.

In fall of 2009 I made a conscious effort to return to school. With the birth of my son in 2008 and the birth of my daughter in 2010, I knew that I needed to do something. I needed to make sure I was securing their future. When I returned to school I had no clue the sacrifices of time I would have to make. The sacrifices to my family became an acceptable decision; simply because I knew that I was doing the right thing for their future. Little did I know that the choice to better myself and my family would come back to haunt me.

I knew that I had to get down to the bottom of the spell my wife seemed to be under. We sat down and she unloaded the bombshell that would change not only my life but the life of my children forever. She simply stated that she was no longer in love with me and no longer wanted to be with me. I really do not wish to share the great heartache and pain she caused me that day. I will tell you that to this day I have not yet found a way to cope properly.

After asking more questions she revealed that she felt I was not spending enough time with her and our children. Like I mentioned before the acceptable sacrifices turned out to be not so acceptable to her. This whole time I was under the impression that I was doing the right thing. She took my absence as a sign of selfishness. She wholeheartedly felt that I was going to school for myself. I always felt that I was doing it for my kids and my family. In order to be objective you must always remember that there is two sides to a story and the truth generally lies somewhere in the middle.

Our relationship is not reparable and my 'this can never happen to me' moment is in full swing. We are taking the steps necessary to be divorced before the year is over. Allow me to take a few moments to present the facts concerning divorce as provided by <http://www.utahmarriage.org>:

1. The median age for divorce in Utah:
 - a. Husband: 31
 - b. Wife: 29
 - i. **That is completely ironic because I just happen to be 32.**
2. 10,600 – The number of children involved in a divorce in Utah during the year 2000.
 - i. **Unfortunately I have to involve my two babies in this mess.**
3. 18% of divorces in Utah occur in the first year of marriage.
4. 50% of divorces in Utah occur within the first five years of marriage.
 - i. **This demographic is where I fit; this year would have been our fifth anniversary.**

5. 70% of divorces in Utah occur within the first ten years of marriage.
6. For comparison, In the United States, roughly 20% of first marriages end within the first five years, and approximately 33% end within the first ten years.

**Reference: <http://www.utahmarriage.org> – Abstracted by David Schramm
Utah State University, Department of Family and Human Development**

After looking into divorce and what the simple facts would be, my heart is broken. Utah seems to have a statistical margin that is much larger than the national average. I did not want to give statistics on why marriages fail because I feel exhausted by the subject. I have to live this reality every day. If you are truly interested in finding out more information I recommend the above link.

Life can at times be overwhelmingly difficult or mundanely simple. It is within these complex and plain events that build or destroy the character of a person. In my life I have experienced triumph and defeat. It is my whole hearted belief that divorce is an overthrow of the soul. It will never be a pleasant experience finding out that you have become a statistic; it kind of takes the uniqueness out of being human.

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Notebook Rhetorical Analysis
03-10-2011

NOTEBOOK RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

I chose to read and summarize “The Collapse of Big Media: The Young and the Restless.” This particular article is a summary of how our current society is losing interest in print and television media. I must agree that paper and television media is in decline. With the proliferation of technology the classic delivery of print and television are quickly losing their appeal.

The author of this particular piece set on a quest to find out why print and television media show a marked decline when compared with certain age groups. A few of the age groups discussed are young kids, 18-to-22-year-olds, and the average thirty something adult. Over the next few paragraphs I hope to summarize the points presented by the author.

When discussing the youth audience, a very important point was brought to life. The author is quick to point out that fewer of today’s kids are growing up in households with a newspaper influence. This in turns leads to kids having less of an interest in printed media as compared to the youth of the 1940s thru the 1960s. In my opinion this trend makes perfect sense; children will learn what they are exposed to in their home environment. No true exposure to newspapers as children can easily translate into lack of interest in newspapers when those children become an 18-to-22-year-old. When digging for information about television media and the youth, the author was able to determine that the youth are obviously not going to tune into a nightly news program, but prefer to tune into the latest “reality” TV trend.

In today’s world the 18-to-22-year-old age demographic is the golden key. They are the motivated and highly opinionated segment of our society. Every newspaper and television executive will forever pine over the young adults. The author was able to show that in the 1970s nearly half of young

adults had a daily newspaper habit; today's young adults have a newspaper fix of less than half. When television becomes involved, during the 1960s nearly 80 percent of young adults would tune into an evening newscast. In today's flood of television choices, it is obvious that young adults tune into a nightly newscast at close to half of the 1960s percentage.

Now let me discuss the thirty something age bracket. The first mention in this article of this thirty something crowd, is the following: in the 1970s nearly 75 percent of the 34-to-37 age group read a daily newspaper, and in today's world that number has dropped to a shocking 33 percent. The author never truly touched on the decline, if any, of television viewership that relates to this particular demographic.

The author provides many ideas as to why and how but I found much of this information to be too statistical for my taste. I find it easier to pull from my own experiences and opinions. In today's society I will agree with the author that interest in politics and news in general has shown a dramatic decline. The author continued to offer ideas that today's society is become less informed then our predecessors. This is one of the major things I have an issue with. It is my opinion that today's society is far more informed as a whole. In the past it was really easy to focus on just a small number of topics. In today's society there is a huge amount of topics from which a young kid, young adult, and a thirty something can choose from. We may not be informed and focused on a few simple select subjects, we are overall informed on numerous diverse and complicated topics that our predecessors did not have access to.

With the advent of PCs, iPods, and iPads, access to news media has become so simple that we no longer need print or television media. We live in a world where information overload is a way of life. Instant gratification is the name of the game and we are all addicts. It is easy to see why we have a decline in print and television media. One thing that the author did not mention is a simple and understated concept; perhaps we no longer want print media because of the possible impact it can

cause on the environment. We all have a desire to be “green” and we no longer showing a need for products that can possibly waste and deteriorate our natural environment.

The days are gone when Mr. Johnson would wake up, walk out to his porch, and wave to the newspaper delivery boy as a perfectly tossed newspaper landed at his feet. No longer are the days of Mrs. Johnson eagerly waiting to get her hands around the shopping section of that same newspaper in order to clip coupons for her afternoon trip to the market. Little Johnny is no longer in a hurry to bug his father for the cartoons hidden within the numerous pages of that printed newspaper. I must agree that paper and television media is in decline. With the proliferation of technology the classic delivery of print and television are quickly losing their appeal.

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ENGL 1010 - 046
Rhetorical Rationale
03-20-2011

RHETORICAL RATIONALE

I use to really enjoy the process of writing a poem, report, or a simple love letter. The moments during which I enjoyed this process occurred during High School. I have been personally removed from High School for 15 years. Once I began the college experience, English was the last subject I had any interest in.

I truly dread the thought of having to place my thoughts on a sheet of paper. I have come to a realization that the majority of people can write better than they can carry a conversation. I think I am the exact opposite. I feel my strength has been in being able to articulate my thoughts out loud versus placing them on paper. Oral communication is an art form just as much as written communication can be.

With all of my thoughts and opinions now on this sheet, I hope that I have overcome my irrational fear of dreading to write. I have been informed that in order to succeed at a professional level I must tackle the written word. Perhaps my enjoyment of such things will return; perhaps not. I will do my best with every assignment that presents itself regardless of my personal fear; now on to the actual assignment.

1. WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE IN EACH OF THE 3 REVISED PIECES?

During the writing process I chose to revise Reflection 1, Analysis 1, and Reflection 2. Allow me to address each revision in turn:

- a. Reflection 1 – The target audience for this paper was the soon to be parent; more specifically the soon to be father. I chose this target audience simply because of my experience and time spent within my own target audience.
- b. Analysis 1 – The target audience for this piece was geared towards those who have an interest in STEM; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. The political cartoon I chose to review really covered this particular subject with a tight connection to today’s political landscape.
- c. Reflection 2 – The target audience for this reflection is the unfortunate adult who has had to experience loss through divorce. Much like Reflection 1, I chose this target audience because I happen to be part of the adult populace who is right in the middle of a divorce.

2. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH (WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE) IN EACH OF THE 3 REVISED PIECES?

I only hoped to accomplish a quality piece of work for each assignment I was expected to complete. Allow me to address each paper individually:

- a. Reflection 1 – For this paper I was really only looking to express the nervousness and happiness that is part of finding out you will become a parent in a short brief amount of time.
- b. Analysis 1 – This paper was a simple description of a political cartoon. I was trying to describe a visual medium so that the reader of my analysis would be able to know and understand the actual cartoon without having to see it for themselves.
- c. Reflection 2 – I had no real motive for this particular paper. I was simply trying to inform the reader that divorce is a real event that occurs more that it should.

3. DESCRIBE THE REVISIONS YOU MADE FROM THE FIRST TO FINAL DRAFTS AND WHY YOU MADE THOSE REVISIONS.

The revision process was the same for all three of my papers. I really took to heart the peer reviews I received from my classmates. The vast majority of the suggestions all had the same thing to say: The paper was great and really did not need any improvements. I really had a problem with the peer review process as a whole. The feedback I had to work with was of very little substance and did not help to correct any issues my papers may have had. With that in mind I took each paper and began from the ground up. I would read each paper for a second time with an introspective attitude. It was simple to correct simple grammatical errors using a word processor. I would look at the flow and make sure that each paper had the main points in order they should appear for clarity. I would correct anything that seemed to be over complicated, correct sentence structures, and clarify anything that appeared off topic.

4. DESCRIBE YOUR ENGAGEMENT IN PEER REVIEW.

I made every effort to provide a constructive criticism for each work I read. I would follow the template provided by our class text and our class instructor. I made it a point to find something that needed to be corrected or that could genuinely use a revision. I would always stay positive with criticism and feedback. I just hoped that the comment and opinions that I provided were not taken to heart and were viewed as constructive and not destructive.

5. DISCUSS ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE READERS OF YOUR PORTFOLIO TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR WRITING OR ABOUT YOURSELF AS A WRITER.

My only hope as a writer is to be able to convey a message that is easily understood by any reader. I have every intention to become an engineer. I bring this up because I have come to

notice something very important about the engineering profession; the few engineers I have worked with have noticeably weak written and oral skills. I will avoid this at all costs. I want to become an exceptional engineer and having sharp communication skills will be how I become unique. All of this coming from a student who has no real love for communication skills in general. In conclusion I can only hope that the writings I produce will be of the highest possible quality I am capable of.