The Real Villain

There is no secret that it is dangerous to be around me. I am merciless and seafarers have nightmares of my unforgiving ways. One moment I am serene and calm, then without warning I flip a switch causing rough tides, rogue waves, whirlpools, and destruction (Unknown 3). There is little that is known about me and an abyss of secrets that will never be uncovered; I go on for miles, and take on endless forms. Constantly flowing and I have never been still. There are depths few creatures can reach in me.

Additionally, I could be depicted as evil: I swallow ships whole, take away life, and the preponderance of myself is complete darkness; there are chilling, gloomy, and intoxicating areas where shadows do not exist. Life can be lonely in the empty waters; with only the sounds of sloshing, and birds above flying make for repetitive, tedium days (Unknown 20-22). Traces of me have been found on other planets.

I have been a life support for thousands of years, yet I am abused by the supposed most intellectual creatures on this planet. They are most selfish, they pollute my sister, the air, they kill and wipeout populations, they start fires, and they leave waste in me: spoil and poison me, after all I have given them. The wind whistles that they are known as “man”. I used to be pristine, lively, and beautiful; now because of the abuse and lack of care I am murky, I have failing ecosystems, and debris floating through me. Man takes and fails to give back. Do they not understand I am finite?

They find me attractive as they build structures to look out over me. When man comes out in the open blue they can be easily turned around and lose their way, physically and mentally. The loneliness and hunger will overcome them and make them savage. Countless bodies of men have been left in the sea to rot or be eaten by the fish or passing birds. These bodies were thrown in because they have succumbed to Fate’s three threats (Unknown 69). Some are killed by their own “kinsman” (Unknown 25). Regardless of how the bodies got to me, they enter with different treasures and stories: some wear lustrous jewels, and others dirty rags. No less their bodies decay and become food. When the wind picks up from the north the creatures can sense the fear that grows in man, and they gather for their next meal.

I realized the paramount power of man and the disaster they created in me is in their hands to resolve. My survival is dependent on them and their survival is dependent on me. This correlation goes unrecognized by many men, and that is truly sinister. My darkest waters or my “heaves” do not compare to some of the twisted minds of man (Unknown 45). Resolving the issue and aiding me back to health again is not difficult; hopefully man can figure this out before history repeats itself and I am forced to find another planet to restart on. They can blame anything or everyone but themselves, but this only shows who the real villain is.
Arthurian Knighthood

Arthurian Knighthood

A central theme to the story “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” is the idea of Arthurian Romance. The author of this work uses different elements from this theme in order to draw in, entertain, and teach his audience. During the time this work was created Arthurian Romance was so popular because it captivated audiences with tales of bravery, magic, and heroic figures. The author uses visual imagery and archetypes in this story to support three elements of Arthurian romance, which include: magic, chivalry, and courageous heroes.

Magic is a major component of Arthurian Romance and plays a major role in the development of Sir Gawain’s journey. The first time the audience sees the motif of magic is when the Green Knight enters King Arthur’s hall during the celebration. After Gawain accepts the knight’s challenge and chops his head off, the knight is not dead, “for the head in his hand he holds right up;” (Boroff, 444). The author uses visual imagery to shock the reader. And it works. How many people can say they have seen someone hold up their own dismembered head? Clearly, this Green Knight is a magical being and is not human. This is important to a central theme of the story which is that humans are not perfect and must learn from their mistakes. When the Green Knight first enters the hall, everyone sees him as the perfect embodiment of what a knight should be. However, nobody is perfect, and since the knight is not fully human it is not fair to compare Sir Gawain or any other knight to this magical being. The Green Knight is symbolic of the unreasonable expectations that society has for knights, when, in reality, they are human and are bound to make mistakes.

Sir Gawain serves as the courageous hero that the audience is supposed to cheer for. Sir Gawain fits this role perfectly because he is a very likable character that follows the code of chivalry, which was a very important part of society at this time. Arthurian Romance always includes the theme of Chivalry because it was deemed to be the standard for virtuous behavior. There are many different aspects of chivalry, and Gawain follows this code for the most part. The main aspects of the code of chivalry are treating women respectfully, remaining zealous in one’s faith, and making moral decisions. Gawain is a kind man who tries to stick to this code of chivalry. The audience sees how he follows this code when he rejects the advances of the host’s wife. In this instance, Gawain is meant to serve as a model of character as he is respecting a woman and choosing the moral decision. In addition, Gawain fits the mold for a chivalrous man because he takes the sanctity of his faith very seriously. Throughout the story, there are many instances when Gawain prays to God for help, which reflects his morals which are deeply rooted in his faith. When Gawain is on his journey he looks to God for help as he says, “ I beseech of Thee, Lord, And Mary, thou mildest mother so dear” (Boroff, 753-754). Throughout most of the story Gawain stays true to the code of chivalry as the author wants the audience to look to him as an example of how to act virtuously. However, when he lies to the host about receiving the girdle from his wife, he breaks this code. The author uses this moment to juxtapose the idea of how Gawain should act with his actions in order to convey the message that even a virtuous knight is not perfect and that everyone can learn from their mistakes.

A third aspect of Arthurian Romance that is essential to this story is the courageous hero. The audience loves and respects Gawain because he is a knight that accepts a daunting challenge and goes on a precarious journey to fulfill his promise. If Gawain were a coward, the audience would not like him and they would not want to mimic their actions after his, which would defeat the author’s purpose of conveying a moral lesson. However, this is not the case as Gawain faces many trials along his journey. Along his journey he faces the unrelenting weather that seems an opponent to Gawain in itself. In addition, he fights wild bears and boars along his way to the Green Chapel. Finally, he faces the awesome Green Knight which is the final and ultimate test of courage. Through Gawain’s courage the author is able to successfully convey an important message by creating an admirable hero.

Sir Gawain represents the ideal knight of the time. He embodies the principles of knighthood and perfectly represents a hero from an Arthurian Romance story. His courage and morals stay true, and when they don’t he learns
a lesson and becomes a new man. The author's implementation of magic, chivalry, and a courageous hero all blend perfectly to create a cohesive story with an important message.
The Poor Have Time

Although we would like to see victory come soon, we are willing to wait. In this sense, time is our ally. We learned many years ago that the rich may have money, but the poor have time.” Cesar Chavez, one of the many great-but-forgotten Civil Rights leaders in American history, created a statement that resonates far deeper than he could have imagined in Maryknoll Magazine on April 28th, 1978. His overall essay remembers Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s works ten years after his death, while also calling for unity in Civil Rights. Though he never explicitly mentions or cites the rich as the aggressor, only the opposition, his final statement sends a loud and clear message to the working class that the fight will never be truly over for our right to live on our own terms.

Are you reading this essay right now? Chances are, you are part of the top 1% of the world. Since I needed a computer to write this, I’m also a part of the top 1%. If you don’t have to worry about where you’ll find your next meal, you’re in that top 1%. Imagine, even the single mothers who work three jobs to support their children are still most likely in the top 5%. Where’s the other 95%? Where are the other billions of men, women, and children, and what are their lives like?

Go to the slums of Rio de Janeiro. To the villages in Laos and Cambodia. To the ruins of towns and temples in Damascus. To the camps in China. To the miles of tunnels that stretch just under the surface of Las Vegas. There you will find that other 95%. There you will find the sick and poor. Those deemed unnecessary by society and cast aside like the fat off a steak, to be eaten alive by the rats and filth of the darkness in which they live. Walk among these people and you will feel the despair and anguish, for these people have realized a fact that many do not yet know: the rich have been here.

The rich fund the wars. But who fights in them? Will the wealthy socialite be drafted next to the young farmhand and sent to fight? The rich love war. They profit from it. It entertains them. They laugh and gossip as the millions working underneath them crawl in the mud and dirt, fighting for the ability to live another day as they fight other men who wish nothing more than to live another day. How many times have wars been fought to stop the soldiers directly, compared to how many times these young men have been slaughtered to overthrow the rich man pulling the strings above them. The last truly necessary war was World War II. The last soldiers who were brainwashed enough to become mindless vessels for fascist depravity were from World War II.

In the rich man’s sense, that is. Ask the poor in Vietnam, and the Americans will seem a lot less friendly. Ask any nation in Africa, and our European friends seem a lot less fair and liberating. Ask Ukraine, Belarus, Slovakia, the Czech Republic if the USSR was truly a communist utopia. In the rich man’s sense, communism failed because communism doesn’t work. In the poor man’s sense, communism doesn’t work because the rich man won’t let it work.

To make it clear, I am in no way endorsing communism. The system is like a rainy day: nice to watch from inside your warm house, but the minute you step outside in the cold you immediately want to go back inside. Socialism is the better of the two, but in a country with such a high amount of debt as the U.S., it would be bound to collapse unless we eliminated debt like Canada or Sweden, and the rich man would never allow that. Without endorsing communism, it is important to note how utterly sabotaged the system was from the start. Lenin and Trotsky's violent oppression of the masses they promised to serve certainly didn’t rub the West the right way. Stalin being Stalin worsened that.

But time after time, it was always the rich that ruined a communist country’s chance of surviving. Chairman Mao Zedong, though once part of the working class himself, lost any care for the poor as soon as he had the power he wanted, and led the country on his own accord, not the people’s. His personal tastes, including a hatred for birds, led to a famine that caused 50 million deaths. Cuba never had a chance; Castro’s mix of capitalist and socialist ideas went full-on authoritarian communist when America began attempting to meddle within the nation.
But if communism was left alone, among a commune of one hundred people, would it work? Yes. Think of a kindergarten class. They share snacks and toys and books easily with a gentle authority in the room. Take that authority out, and the children begin screaming and fighting for the things they want all to themselves. Humans always stay children in the sense of property and money, especially the rich. The rich donate to charity for tax cuts, not out of the kindness of their hearts. The main people volunteering at homeless shelters have once been there themselves. I cannot name a single time where I have seen someone making more than six figures down helping the poor. Money corrupts. I think the world has made it clear how evil money truly is. So evil that businesses like Apple and Nike run sweatshops in Southeast Asia, exploiting their workers for days on end just to save money on wages. And we benefit from it. The computers and phones we have come from these sweatshops. We choose to push away the thought of these sweatshops to enjoy the convenience of our phones. Money has corrupted us as well.

“The poor have time” is a beautifully simple statement. But the underlying meaning is so much more complex. Chavez is not only speaking to the poor of 1978. He is speaking to the poor of a thousand years in the past. He is speaking to the poor a thousand years in the future. Chavez speaks to the millions upon billions of masses who have suffered under the greasy and cold thumb of the upper class. The rich have money. They have more money than any of us could ever dream of. But as Chavez says, the poor have time. The workers have time. We have had time since the dawn of civilization. Since the first time a worker was exploited and abused by someone higher than them, the fight has been ongoing. The fight for the worker’s right is far from over. This terrifies the rich, just as communism had decades earlier. This fight won’t end in our lifetime. It won’t end in our children’s lifetimes. It won’t end in our children’s children’s lifetimes. But the poor have time. Each drop of blood spilled from the bodies of the working class struck dead by their masters drips into the massive hourglass that counts the rich’s days. And the hourglass is dripping. It will continue to drip and refill for the rest of time as we get closer and closer to our freedom as workers.

There will be a time when we can live life on our terms, not for the sake of money. There will be a time when the worker will not be exploited. There will be a time when the rich fall and the world can begin to heal from the thousands of centuries of injustice and exploitation. It may be a violent end. It may be peaceful. But the oppression will end. No matter how many hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries, or millennia that it takes, freedom will ring. The rich will try to stop it. They will continue to cheat, lie, abuse, steal, murder, torture. But they cannot win this fight, for there will be a day when the gentle laborer rises from their tomb and chooses that enough is enough. The suffering will continue for now, but hope still prevails. The poor have time.
The Morals of Gawain

Why is overconfidence looked down upon while bravery is seen as a virtue. They can be viewed as essentially the same thing. Bravery is having the courage to do something based on confidence. Moral courage, on the other hand, is doing something that one feels obligated that they must due to one's morals. Based off of these definitions, it would be logical to say that Sir Gawain showed moral courage throughout *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Sir Gawain shows moral courage throughout *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* because he has such high morals, thus ultimately proving that he is the hero of this story.

Unlike Sir Gawain, The Green Knight shows bravery, and so much, that it gets to the point of being excessively prideful. The green knight shows up to Arthur’s party in the beginning of the book proposing the challenge for someone to decapitate him (Borroff 260-265). This excessive pride foreshadows that the Green Knight is not the protagonist, but rather the antagonist. The Green Knight appears and immediately displays qualities of the antagonist of a story rather than a protagonist of a story. The Green Knight was also so overconfident that he brought no armor or weapon to Arthur’s party other than the axe that would be used to complete the challenge (Borroff 265-273). The Green Knight is blatantly telling the entire party that they could not harm him if they tried. He must have far too much arrogance to believe that he can take on an entire kingdom's worth of knights on his own. In total, The Green Knight proves to be a man with a little too much bravery, displaying he is not the hero of the story, but rather the enemy.

Sir Gawain is a man with much moral courage. When no one else would accept the Green Knight’s challenge, he stepped up to the plate so his uncle wouldn’t have to (Borroff 343). He showed moral courage since he felt obligated to be brave in order to prove to the Green Knight that Arthur’s men are indeed noble and worthy. This story told the message to those hearing it at the time that honoring the codes of chivalry is how one should live their life. The green knight always did what he thought to be in accordance with the codes of chivalry when he decided to go to the green chapel, did not fall for Morgan’s trap, and when he decided to kiss Morgan after she told him it would be the chivalrous thing to do (Borroff 540-545,1241-1252,1332-1333). The entirety of the story’s plot would not have unfolded without Gawain’s moral courage to go to face the Green Knight, and he would be dead had he not rejected Morgan or abided by her wish to kiss him and kissing her husband once he returned. The reason he didn’t leave the Green Chapel unscathed is because he decided to act against the codes. The entire story teaches the listener that it is best to abide by the codes of chivalry because it is more helpful in the end when you do. The one time Gawain slipped up, accepting the girdle, it cost him a cut, but most importantly, shame and regret (Borroff 1860-1862). The moral of the story here shows that acting against the codes of chivalry gets one in trouble and is highly immoral. On the other hand, Gawain, acting mostly based off of his moral courage, becomes the obvious hero of the story. The story shows how the codes of chivalry are conducive in making one a hero.

No one likes to be the villain. Everyone likes to imagine themselves being the hero. That’s the appeal to the hero’s journey, for the audience to immerse themselves in the tale and imagine themselves being the hero, hence why the hero is always so relatable. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is no different. It shows how the codes of chivalry are what make a hero, and villains are those who do not follow them. It teaches those who listen that they don't need to act like heroes verbatim. They just need to follow the codes.
Essay about The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

How do the events of The Lightning Thief affect Percy’s confidence throughout the book? In The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan, Percy Jackson seems to become more trusting of himself; he comes to believe that he is meant to be in this new world he is thrown into. Percy Jackson learns to have trust in himself throughout his quest because he overcomes the problems he faces in proving to himself a demigod.

The first example of Percy Jackson learning to have confidence in himself throughout his journey occurs when Percy throws his study book across the room and says that he will never remember all the things he needs to. "Words had started swimming off the page, circling my head, the letters doing one-eights as if they were riding skateboards. There was no way I was going to remember the difference between Chiron and Charon, or Polydictes and Polydeuces" (14). He is afraid that he’s going to disappoint and fail the only teacher to believe in him. This supports the thesis because it shows that, at the beginning of the book, Percy had very little trust of himself and his abilities.

Later on, Grover and Percy have a conversation about their quest. This is also when Grover tells Percy he’s good at reading emotions and can tell he cares about his father and what he thinks. "...Well maybe satyr emotions work differently than human emotions. Because you're wrong. I don't care what he thinks."(5) Percy denies that he’s doing this for his father and focuses on the fact that he has to. Percy has gone his whole life being kicked out of schools and failing at everything. He had his mother through it all and now that she’s gone, he has no support. Percy thinks that he isn’t good enough to live up to the role he’s been given. He doesn’t see himself worthy of being a demigod. All Percy has left is his father and the powers he’s been given. Grover knows this and tries to have Percy accept it.

The third time Percy shows having no trust in himself is when he is fighting Enchinda and she tells him to jump into the river and prove his bloodline. It is as follows,"You have no faith, You do not trust the gods. I cannot blame you... The gods are faithless. The poison is in your heart.'She was right: I was dying... Nobody could save me, not even the gods."(Chapter 13 page 14) After Enchinda saying that Percy has no faith, he confirms that she was right. This may be one of the closest points for him. However, after Percy gives a quick prayer to his father and takes a leap of faith into the river, he finds that he is able to control water and even breath when submerged in it. Percy takes advantage of this by getting his weapon back and going back on land to defeat Echinda.

In conclusion, Percy Jackson gains confidence in himself throughout his quest as he overcomes problems like fighting Enchinda after admitting that he has no faith in the gods or himself while not having any support from either of his parents. This is illustrated in the way that Percy had gone through his whole life thinking he wasn’t good enough and after his quest he had learned that he was worth more than his teachers, peers, and himself ever thought he was and by the end of his quest, he overcame everything and learned his worth. In the world today, many people struggle with confidence and like Percy Jackson, we learn our worth through the trials we go through in life.
Misplaced Obedience and Consequences of Vengeance

William Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet* features a diverse set of characters, each with a distinct purpose needed to advance the plot. Amongst this colorful cast is the titular character, Hamlet, the heir to the throne of Denmark, and son of the former king. There is also Laertes, the son of a powerful Danish nobleman, who acts as Hamlet’s foil. Hamlet’s goal is to avenge his father by killing his Uncle, King Claudius. Simultaneously, Laertes’ aim is to murder Hamlet so that he can avenge his father, who died due to Hamlet’s schemes. Unbeknownst to each other, both are manipulated to act in such a vengeful manner. Their conflicting goals lead to the demise of both, and prevent each from achieving their desired objectives. By making Hamlet and Laertes foils of one another, Shakespeare designs a narrative that illustrates the perils of misguided obedience and the pursuit of vengeance.

Hamlet’s blind obedience to the ghost of his father leads him on a quest of vengeance that comes to a head in his final duel with Laertes, culminating in the death of all parties involved, including King Claudius and Queen Gertrude. A man with strong opinions on traditions, loyalty, and proper behavior, Hamlet believes certain customs—such as his mother’s second marriage and the new king’s celebrations—to be sinful or embarrassing. In keeping with his traditionalist views, he is deeply loving and loyal to his father that greatly impacts how he thinks “My father’s spirit in arms! all is not well; I doubt some foul play: would the night were come!” (1.2.255). This fidelity is the driving force behind this tragedy, and the effects can fully be seen in the final scene of the play. His quest for revenge is so strong that he becomes the very thing he is trying to destroy; when he killed Polonius, Hamlet created someone who wanted revenge on him for the death of his father. It gives the reader a sense of irony that fully explores the danger of being ruled by vengeance. It is a very clear message that is told through Hamlet’s arc: If you blindly chase revenge, you will hurt someone and drive them to seek revenge on you, creating an endless cycle that can only in something negative. *Hamlet* is the titular character of the play and this message is most clearly stated through his narrative, but it is also mirrored in the character arcs of several others, such as Laertes and Fortinbras.

After the death of his father, Laertes is manipulated into incorrectly giving his allegiance to the king. This misplaced loyalty backfires in the final scene when he is poisoned and killed because of his involvement in the King’s scheme. After the Queen drinks the poisoned wine, and both he and Hamlet are struck with the poisoned blade, Laertes finally realizes what he has done, stating, “I am justly kill’d with mine own treachery” (5.2.307). Although Laertes shows immediate regret for his actions, it is too late to avoid his downfall. Laertes places his trust in someone who is treacherous, and continues to follow him without knowing the full story, even after he and Hamlet began to make amends. Laertes’ misplaced trust in his liege is what leads directly to the demise of everyone involved in the duel, and the change of power to Fortinbras. This story acts as a warning to those who follow others just because they are in power. Laertes, blinded by his quest to avenge his father, is taken advantage of and by the time he realizes his mistake, it is too late. Laertes follows someone who manipulates him to kill someone who threatened his power. The story arc of Laertes serves as a cautionary tale that shows the dangers of aligning with someone out of anger. He is unable to recognize that he is being manipulated by King Claudius because of his obedience to that king, and his commitment to his own rage, thus further developing the theme that revenge only leads to suffering.

“*Hamlet*” uses its character arcs to develop the theme that revenge is a force that will only backfire and lead to a clouded mind, leaving one unable to properly discern whom to offer obedience. Hamlet and Laertes are linked together as characters, with Laertes’ entire story arc being entirely reliant on Hamlet and his actions. Laertes exists solely to show Hamlet the error of his ways, which in turn makes the two character foils, as they exist to highlight each other’s flaws. The way they interact punctuates the message of the danger of misplaced obedience and the quest for revenge.
Norms and Struggles of "The Miller's Tale", by Geoffrey Chaucer

Throughout the 14th century, Geoffrey Chaucer portrays the social norms of the given time period throughout each of his writings in the “Canterbury Tales,” specifically highlighting the use of it in “The Miller’s Tale.” Through satire, Chaucer mocks these societal norms and issues, through the use of the narrator, the Miller, as well as the characters highlighted in the tale. The Miller begins his tale as he drunkenly interrupts the host (Chaucer 1), already displaying the common disruption of order that is desired by many of this time. Contradicting the other tales, the Miller mocks and portrays the negative outcomes of love and sexual tendencies, religion, the lower class & people of power, and more.

Introduced early in the tale, Alison had began an interest in a love affair with her husbands clerk, Nicholas, as she expresses, “Unless you will await me secretly,” (Chaucer 3). Rather than remaining loyal to her wedded carpenter, she allows these physical attractions and needs to get the best of her. Not only does this reverse the definition of love, it also objectifies women, as many men and people see them as use for their own pleasure, rather than the true meaning of love.

Throughout each tale, religion and corruption of the Church have become a motif of satire in Chaucer’s message he is attempting to portray. Absalom, the unlucky parish clerk desperate for love, is humiliated by Alison and Nicholas. A major turning point in this tale occurs as Absalom attempt to swing upon Alison, instead he leaned in and “with his mouth he kissed her naked arse” (Chaucer 7). In proper terms, this event represents the faulty of the Church (Absalom), as many individuals went against it (Alison), due to what they believed was right. Another example of religion is portrayed throughout the whole tale, as Nicholas and Alison trick the carpenter, mocking the story of Noah’s Ark and the great flood. Using these stories for sabotage and personal gain satirizes the way the Church believes its followers should respect it, yet its failed ideologies have been challenged by many.

Continuing on sabotaging the carpenter, his power has been mocked and taken advantage of. Alison marries him at a young age, due to his successes, although the narrator explains that a man should marry a woman of equal power and property, yet her youthful beauty got to the best of the carpenter (Chaucer 2). The carpenter fails to “control” Alison as his wife, and she contradicts the norm of women gaining power in marriage. The 14th century is a time of unsteadiness and constant change and judgement of class and religious outlooks. You are granted a certain amount of power based on your social status or your gender, which may still be highlighted today. Geoffrey Chaucer uses these writings to satirize these concepts, as he uses repetition and intertextuality to not directly state his feelings, yet leave it up to the readers to discover as they best see fit. Although this tale, and his many others, is twisted, he uses these conflicting characters as a way to subtly raise little victories that may be uncommon in this time period. Although Alison did betray her husband, she is recognized for her power and not belittled due to her class and gender. She is the victor of this tale, as she got what she wanted, while humiliating her husband, as well as the parish clerk.

The recurring theme of abuse of power remains prominent, and Alison takes a stand, as she goes against this norm of power over those considered to have less. In simplest terms, Alison is the karma for the carpenter and Absalom, as they represent abuse of power and the prominent role of the Church forced in society. Through the Miller himself, as well as his many other characters, Geoffrey Chaucer uses “The Miller’s Tale” as a way to satirize social norms and order being constantly construed and interrupted during the 14th century; the whole series of “The Canterbury Tales” mocks those of power and represents the ideas and lives of those living in the shadows.
Hamlet's Revenge

Shakespeare’s Revenge

Shakespeare’s five-part journey through Hamlet’s conflict with his ghostly father’s wish for vengeance and his own morality may give readers the impression of the importance of obedience; however, the foiling of similar characters in the story reveals that misplaced obedience and a quest for vengeance can be the cause of one’s downfall in any case. Through binary opposition and irony, Hamlet and Laertes are contrasted, but in the end are doomed to the same fate after their respective quests for revenge.

Hamlet and Laertes are similar in many ways, but are different in action. Both are young, of high social standing, and love their fathers. Hamlet, however, is much more of a thinker while Laertes is a do-er. After King Hamlet’s death, Hamlet is forlorn and even suicidal, “that the Everlasting had not fixed His canon gainst self-slaughter” (1.2.130). In contrast, Laertes, after learning of his fathers death, is angry without even knowing the culprit. He proclaims, “To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil…” (4.5.3002). The opposition in responses of these two characters is quite obvious until it comes to their revenge. After learning who murdered each of their fathers, both Hamlet and Laertes become enraged and wish to seek vengeance; but, each do so in very different ways.

Hamlet’s quest for revenge is a long one; many months pass before Hamlet finally takes action against Claudius. This is because Hamlet often gets distracted from his revenge, which is ironic; Hamlet is so consumed by his anger for Claudius, it drives him into madness, but he does not act on his anger when given the chance. He attempts to play mind games with Claudius before taking action, which is exemplified with his play depicting his father’s murder, “The play’s the thing Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the King” (2.2.363-364). Hamlet’s lack of action towards his revenge ends in act 4, when he finally kills the king. However, he is stabbed by Laertes’ poison blade. This is another example of irony, as Hamlet suffers the same fate as Claudius. This teaches the audience an important lesson: revenge does not go without equal consequences.

Laertes much more is forward in action. It only takes him a few days after coming back from France to duel with Hamlet, as he does not take a moment to hesitate. He is also all-consumed with anger, “Conscious and grace, to the profoundest pit! I dare damnation…” (4.5.150-151). Laertes throws his relationship with God to the wind. He doesn't care if he will be damned, quite unlike Hamlet, who hesitates to act because of his desire to go to heaven. When Laertes and Hamlet finally duel, he is struck by the poison of his own blade, and dies. This is another example of irony. Hamlet, Laertes, and Claudius all committed murder, and all die by the same poison. Again, this slaughter reveals Shakespeare’s true message to the reader about revenge.

Hamlet and Laertes may be different in action, but they are the same in fate. Shakespeare’s use of literary devices in Hamlet works to teach readers that revenge is not the solution to a problem. No matter what the approach, equal consequences will follow for those who act on vengeance.
Fear

Fear. What is it? To the Merriam - Webster Dictionary fear is an unpleasant often strong emotion cause by anticipation or awareness of danger. To David Henry Thoreau, “Nothing is so much to be feared as fear!” To me, fear is my life saver. Fear to me has two meanings. The first one is to forget everything and run, and the second meaning is face everything and rise. Fear helped me gain the knowledge I have today.

Sophomore year was the start of my fear. I feared letting people down. I felt like I had the weight of the world on my shoulders. I was seen as a star, getting unwanted attention and seeing that I would have to change who I was. Changing who I was wasn’t something I wanted to do, but I did it anyways. I was focusing on other things; straying away from my goals. My grades were slipping, I was becoming greedy, I was stressed. Summer comes along and I get my heart broken for the first time. Then a friend of mine starts too change. He begins belittling people including me and one of my friends. Then more people started getting into it. With all of this, my mind snapped. I couldn’t take this pain of letting people down. I started wondering if I mattered. This pain got so bad, I attempted to take my own life to make it stop, so I can feel a sense of not being sad, or at least know that I wouldn’t have to let people down anymore. I remember the day perfectly. I remember my thoughts during the time I was thinking I was at my end. The time I attempted it, the time I received a called from a friend. How I felt before and after the call. During these times, I struggled to get over my past. I would cry my self to sleep some nights, along with not being able to sleep at all. I cut myself off from everyone around me thinking about how I didn’t want to burden anyone else with my pain. These actions only made things worse. I would have moments of uncontrollable anger and rage. At some points, I didn’t know who I was. When I had finally decided to tell someone about my pain, I felt this pain and suffering being lifted a bit. Knowing that people are willing to help me through something as harsh and awful as depression. Every other week people would check up on me and make sure I was ok, and whenever I felt a lot of pain or sadness, I wouldn’t think twice about telling someone. Now a days I’m able to live life some what normal again. I still have outbreaks of anger; along with holding my feelings in, and crying at certain moments. But, I’m no longer afraid to speak out. I openly talk about how am feeling and what I could do to help me when my emotions get the better of me.

I was never the person to work the extra mile. I would work hard, but I would never pushed myself to be more and to do more. Now I strive for my goals. I’m ok with the fear of failure. I embrace it. I no longer fear, fear, because when I fail I become stronger. I am a better person because I failed. My downfalls are my strengths. You can tell me no thousands of times. I’ll have become a thousand times better the next time you meet me. Fear is the greatest illusion in life, but once you get passed it, all of your goals can be seen and nothing can hold you back.
The Green Knight

The Green Knight

Walking confidently into a room of royal soldiers and heirs, ready to test anyone with the taste of power. With no fear or doubt I decide to enter a forbidden function uninvited with the expression of power and danger in my face. It was New Years Eve, and I have sat back long enough, observing men that claim to be powerful and almighty. The flaunting of their table will not be tolerated anymore, I decided that these people needed to be introduced to real power. So it was that cheerful night that I had a realization about the weak men that sit high on their thrones, knowing they are powerless just as anyone else. A new understanding that if the real people with power started to test those who claim hierarchy and dominance, knowing they have neither, maybe the world could change for the greater good.

I am the Green Knight, and I possess real power and I can prove it. On the night of New Year’s Eve, I walked through the sacred doors which led to King Arthur and his soldiers. I challenged any man to strike me with my axe, looking down on the table and the King (285-318). Everyone present was in shock as I stated the “Round Table Overwhelmed with a word of one man's speech, ’For all cower and quake, and no cut felt!'”(313-318). I could tell by the look of every living thing in the room, that no one was capable of matching my power. A knight who was respected by the king then gave a speech to his people and stated that “this melee may be mine” (343). I respected this man, as he was not the biggest nor strongest man sitting at the round table. He struck me and severed my head, which fell to the ground. The relief in the room when my head was slaughtered off, humored me. I then picked up my head animated and alive, and the “royal men and women” seemed shocked. The soldier Gawain reeked of fear as he now knows that in a year and a day to complete the challenge and go on a quest to find me. In this moment I have already manipulated these men into my game, testing their integrity, and presenting them with a power that they have never experienced before.

This man Sir Gawain later found me and I was in disguise as a helping hand, a man that was there for him when he was clinging to life. It made me realize that ordinary men are gullible and easily tricked when in desperation. I had my wife seduce him and offer him a supernatural “golden girdle” that possessed an omnipotent power that would help him defeat me. He was honest to me about my wife trying to be intimate with him, but shed no word about the girdle. This showed me how scared this man who claimed to be fearless and powerful was. I then confronted this man and let him know that he had been tricked, playing my game sense the night I walked into the New Year's Feast, and how I was the knight who helped him while he was in distress. I wanted him to understand my insight that the people you believe are powerful are as ordinary as yourself (2460-2470). That the people with real power tend not to show their power to the clueless. I did not kill Gawain, but “the nick on his neck” (2498) was my message to King Arthur and the knights of the Round table that the power they believe to have possession of, is neither great or similar to mine.

My overall realization and understanding of these people were that people with power tend to live in a different reality than the majority of people. We cannot judge them for not seeing past their bubble of fancy dinners, and joy. They will eventually experience a time of being powerless, and have a realization of their own. Was it my job to be the one to send a message to them? Probably not, but even a man as powerful as myself is weak, and exceeds our limit of patience. Maybe it takes more people to stand up to those who believe they’re untouchable, to make a difference. What makes me a coward at times is initiating a fight that I know I’ll win. Therefore, all people are weak, unstable, and clueless, no matter what we may believe. The reason for me sparing Gawain is solely for the reason of the understanding that I am no better than the man I despise.
Insanity Becomes Reality

After all this time of faking his insanity, Hamlet has finally snapped. The insanity has become a reality. After months of plotting, deceiving, and obsessing over his revenge, he is ordered to leave before he can accomplish his goal. As he is leaving for England in Act 4 and realizes that he has not avenged his father yet he becomes full of anger and frustration over his inability to fulfill his destiny. The soliloquy from Act 4 scene 4 depicts the rage and turmoil that Hamlet struggles with internally as he contemplates morality and his failings.

Through his demented manner, Hamlet expresses to the audience his disdain for people without a purpose. He metaphorically states that they are “a beast, no more” (4.4.37). His sudden insanity and rage in this moment is prompted by his interaction with Fortinbras. In this scene, Hamlet learns that their army is fighting for “a little patch of ground that hath in it no profit but the name” (4.4.19-20). He commends their ability to “go to their graves like beds” (4.4.65), as that shows their courage and ability to go to death with honor, whereas he himself is scared of dying. This interaction elicits Hamlet’s realization that thousands of men are willing to fight and die over something as meaningless as land, yet he has still not been successful in avenging his father’s death. He has become the “beast” that he disdains. He is about to leave on a ship to England, but this interaction inspires him and it is as if a fire has been lit within him. He has more determination than ever to exact his revenge on King Claudius. Promptly, he decides that from now on his “thoughts be bloody, or nothing be worth!” (4.4.69). He is no longer weary of going against God and sinning. Hamlet is out for blood. He is willing to accept the consequences, whatever they may be, and do what it takes to seek his revenge.

This soliloquy plays a significant role in the plot as it reveals to the audience Hamlet’s internal struggles and the imminent chaos to ensue. He has been contemplating for so long how to exact his revenge on his uncle, and finally, after his interaction with Fortinbras, he is enraged by his past misfires. It drives him crazy to think that the soldiers are willing to die over a small plot of land yet he isn’t willing to die in order to avenge his father. His own blood. He begins to contemplate the meaning of morality and death. Finally, he decides that he will no longer be as cautious in his actions, but have blood on his mind. It is time for revenge. No matter what it takes.

In this soliloquy, his language is filled with anger, frustration, and exaggeration. This exasperation emphasizes the insanity growing within him. Insanity that is fueled by his frustration. Furthermore, this soliloquy foreshadows the death and violence that will occur in the future as Hamlet’s insanity has taken a turn for the worse. Hamlet is vengeful.
"Hamlet Timed Write"

Some readers view that Hamlet’s plot’s five-part structure moves forward through the character of the ghost and the complications his command to obedience evokes; however, the foiling of William Shakespeare’s paired characters often better reveals the devastating effect of misplaced obedience and a call to vengeance via Hamlet and Laertes’ first introduction, their separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated resolution of each of these foiled characters.

Driven by vengeance, Hamlet and Laertes partake in similar quests as the result of their fathers murders. Throughout their quests, readers can derive and perceive distinct traits of the two young men. For example, both characters possess attributes of obedience to their kin and motivation to seek justice for them after they have passed. However, in contrast to Hamlets’ brooding and overheating, Laertes is quick to take action. His immediate determination brings to light Hamlet’s lack of self discipline and disregard to his emotions. As a foil to Hamlet, Laertes introduces the notion that the path of vengeance is messy and can take a toll on oneself.

Hamlet begins to seek vengeance as the spiritual presence of his father approaches him. Conversing with his son, King Hamlet’s ghost talks about how “a villain poured poison into his ear—the very villain who now wears his crown, Claudius” (1.40). This statement validates Hamlet’s suspicions on Claudius. Furthermore, a vast majority of the play then resides on Hamlet’s continuous attempt to get revenge on his uncle and fathers murderer. His second attempt results in his personal climax as he accidentally, yet brutally murders Laertes’ father, Polonius. From this, a lesson on obedience and vengeance can be discerned: obedience and vengeance can lead to negativity and inability to think or act for oneself. In Hamlet’s case, obeying his fathers ghost and request for revenge not only led to the death of an innocent man, but also contributed to Hamlet’s death himself.

The turning point in Laertes’ life can be denoted when he is made aware of his fathers death and killer and he starts to plot his revenge. Seeking guidance from Claudius, Laertes is told by the king that “Revenge should have no bounds” (4.7.131). Together, the two scheme up a plan to poison Hamlet and end his life in a duel. As the fight takes place, both Hamlet and Laertes are poisoned and fall to their deaths. Similarly to Hamlet, Laertes’ call to obedience and desire for vengeance results negatively. As he fell to his death, Laertes admits that he is “justly kill’d with my own treachery” (5.2.318). Lesson learned: two wrongs do not make a right; all that resulted was more deaths.

Neither Hamlet nor Laertes resolved their problems, instead they inadvertently killed themselves as a result of wrongful obedience and vengeance. Hamlet remained obedient to his father, even after he was murdered, and was tempted to seek revenge. His indecisiveness left him on edge and resulted in the accidental killing of Polonius. Because he decided to obey his father over his own intuition, he became a murderer and tempted Laertes to become one as well. Laertes, first obedient to his father, became even more obedient to Claudius as they plotted to kill Hamlet once and for all. In both situations, the characters fell into negative behavior as a way to please others. Such behaviors left them both dead and without purpose. Readers gain insight on the negative effects that can encounter when people do not listen to their own, good conscience. Furthermore, the audience can identify ways in which conflict should not be solved. Violence is never the answer.

William Shakespeare’s Hamlet exemplifies themes of misplaced obedience and vengeance. Such attributes are portrayed by Hamlet and Laertes as they become entangled in a life full of deaths. As the characters are foiled, readers are able to identify their mistakes and ineffective ways to problem solve; thus, noting that people should stay true to themselves and their beliefs and that violence and revenge only makes matters worse.
Foils of Hamlet

Death, obedience, betrayal, love, vengeance, religion, and family present themselves as themes in *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare. Characters within the story foil each other and these differences create many problems for two ill-fated families, the royal family and the family of their advisor Polonius, in specific. The major themes of obedience and vengeance weave throughout the story and are crucial to the actions of all characters. Some readers view that *Hamlet’s* plot’s five-part structure moves forward through the character of the ghost and the complications his command to obedience evokes. Others see that the royal family’s actions, most notably Claudius’s decisions, possibly directly or simply inadvertently lead to the events of their downfall. However, the foiling of William Shakespeare’s paired characters often better reveals the devastating effect of misplaced obedience and a call to vengeance via Laertes and Hamlet’s first introduction, their separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated resolution of each of these foiled characters.

From the beginning of the story, Hamlet and Laertes share many similarities, but also are portrayed with opposing scenarios when it comes to both vengeance and obedience. Hamlet and Laertes are both students, however Hamlet is asked to stay home and not return to school by Gertrude. Although he wants to return to school, Hamlet tells his mother that he will “best obey” her. (1.2.124) Just prior to this, Polonius and Claudius had allowed Laertes to return to school and Hamlet probably was in the room to witness this. This most likely worsened the animosity and jealousy that already existed between Hamlet and Laertes. Both characters seemingly obey their parents. Hamlet and Laertes both receive strict instructions from their fathers, that do not play out immediately, however are calls to obedience. Polonius, before Laertes leaves to return to France, tells him to watch his “character,” to stay away from “quarrel[s]” “[a]nd Borrowing,” and to be “true” to himself. (1.3.65,72,83, 84) Hamlet’s father’s ghost visited Hamlet, informed him of the nature of his death, and asked Hamlet for revenge against Claudius. This is the first time that vengeance appears in the play, but it is not the last and it is not acted upon for a long time. Laertes and Hamlet’s final similarity in the opening is their love for Ophelia. Both love Ophelia in different ways, with Laertes showing brotherly love and Hamlet demonstrating a romantic interest. Laertes directly states that he lacks trust for Hamlet and warns her about Hamlet when he tells her to carefully “weigh” Hamlet’s advances in relation to the “loss [of her] honor.” (1.3.33) Both Hamlet and Laertes treat Ophelia better than any of the other characters and neither are shown being truly kind or trusting of her. Laertes’s disdain for Hamlet may stem from distrust of him around his sister.

Since Hamlet has not acted yet, he demonstrates neither obedience nor vengeance to those who are alive, or dead. Throughout the play, Hamlet plans what he is going to do and confirms that Claudius has killed his father. Through the acting company, Hamlet puts on a play that mirrors his father’s possible death as told by the ghost. After Claudius loses control of his emotions during the killing scene, Hamlet decides that his father’s ghost’s words were truthful and even points out to Horatio that it was “the poisoning” that sparked a reaction. (3.2.315) In his attempts to catch his uncle, he disrespects his mother and Ophelia and pushes them away. Through his inaction, Hamlet causes trouble, but if he were to act, he also would bring about many problems for himself. Hamlet’s dilemma provides no way for a harm free solution.

Hamlet, after failing to think thoroughly, kills “a rat” (Polonius) erratically and describes the father of his girlfriend as being both greedy and not worth “a ducat.” (3.4.29) In one of Hamlet’s first non-thought out actions, he starts Laertes’s quest for vengeance and Ophelia’s downward spiral. Ophelia’s eventual death leads to multiple fights between Hamlet and Laertes that leads both of them into their seemingly unavoidable deaths.

Although Laertes is gone during most of the play, he continues to show obedience and is given a reason for vengeance, which he pursues. Polonius does not trust Laertes for some reason, so he sends his servant, Reynaldo, to “inquire/ Of his behavior.” (2.1.4-5) This interaction is the only that Reynaldo has in the play, so it can be assumed
that either Laertes was obedient to his father’s wishes or Reynaldo was not able to return before Polonius’s untimely death. The former is more likely though because Laertes is obedient throughout the whole play and characters come and go before Polonius dies. The next time Laertes appears, he returns to seek vengeance for his father’s death. Laertes threatens Claudius’s life, so Claudius tells him that it was actually Hamlet. Claudius provides a plan to kill Hamlet and Laertes says that he will do anything, even “cut his throat i’ th’ church.” (4.7.144) Laertes again shows obedience to an authority figure, when Claudius gives him their revenge plan against Hamlet. Laertes is portrayed as the most loyal character in the play, but especially towards authority figures. As aforementioned, Hamlet and Laertes fight each other at Ophelia’s funeral to show who loves Ophelia the most. This shows the differences in their most major similarity: the love of Ophelia.

The journeys of Hamlet and Laertes in the play are quite similar, however each event, other than their vengeance, has an opposite outcome for each of the characters. In the end both Laertes and Hamlet succeed in their vengeance, however both die in the same way while chasing their vengeance for their fathers’ deaths. Hamlet forces Claudius to “Drink … this potion” and kills him. (5.2.357) It is ironic that Claudius was killed by his own cup and poisoned forcefully just like his brother. Laertes also notified Hamlet of the plot to kill him which led to the tides turning against Claudius. Hamlet’s lack of obedience that was shown throughout most of the play corrects itself and he returns to respecting his mother and to fulfilling his father’s wishes. Laertes as he is dying asks that he and Hamlet “Exchange forgiveness” with each other. (5.2.361) Laertes shows a different part of his character when he forgives Hamlet and helps him in achieving his vengeance against Claudius. The characters had fairly obvious results from obedience. Both characters, by being obedient, avoid trouble and seem to receive some level of benefit. Oppositely, disobedience leads to issues and predicaments both with other characters and in their own journeys.

The themes of vengeance and obedience within Hamlet by William Shakespeare lead the story along and point towards the lessons. The foiled characters of Laertes and Hamlet demonstrate this greatly. Each is provided with opportunities for vengeance and obedience and handle them differently with varying levels of success. Although it may have caused some unhappiness, for both characters, obedience led to limited problems and showed their positive character traits of loyalty, respect, and trustworthiness. A lack of obedience brought about dilemmas and stirred up conflict. Vengeance brought about death, not only intended, but also unintended people caught in the crossfire. Some people believe that the ghost and his message impact the play the most, but the foiled characters of Laertes and Hamlet demonstrate the ruinous effects of vengeance and improper obedience, which has an even stronger effect in the play’s message and progression.
HAM, WILLIAM

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Category: Critical Essay

Obedience and Vengeance

Obedience and vengeance are two omnipresent themes in William Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Some readers analyze these themes in different characters and pick up on them differently. Other readers view that Hamlet’s plot’s five-part structure moves forward through the character of the ghost and the complications his command to obedience evokes; however, the foiling of William Shakespeare’s paired characters often better reveals the devastating effect of misplaced obedience and a call to vengeance via Claudius and Hamlet's first introduction in act 1 scene 2 of the play, their separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated resolution of each of these foiled characters.

The character Hamlet in this play is a beautiful depiction of the underlying themes of vengeance and obedience, Hamlet longs for the day he can avenge his father; not only does this idea contain a theme of vengeance, it also portrays a theme of obedience by Hamlet to the ghost. Specifically at the climax of the play, “My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!”(4.4.65), he undoubtedly commits to his quest of avenging his father which is a deadly one. Unfortunately for Hamlet obedience and vengeance have their consequences. These vengeful thoughts and obedient behavior overwhelm him and they ruin his personality and demeanor. An example of this can be seen after he kills Polonius while also showing no sympathy despite not meaning to kill him, “Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell. I took thee for thy better.”(3.4.32-33). To put it all into perspective Hamlet’s vengeance and obedience causes him and others more trouble than he had intended.

When examining the character and personality of Claudius at the beginning of the play he seems genuine and thoughtful in his actions. It is not until Hamlet’s quest of vengeance that it is revealed that Claudius is a much darker person than originally perceived. Claudius plays a very different role in this theme of vengeance and obedience because there is no need for him to be vengeful or obedient. His role in all of this is being the foil of Hamlet and which is truly the driving force of the play. Ultimately his goal is to annoy Hamlet and deceive him all together, “and think of us As of a father. (1.2.107-108). Claudius is just trying to make Hamlet believe that everything is sunshine and rainbows as well as Claudius is basically Hamlet’s new father. Hamlet despises Claudius and is successful in his goal of avenging his father “Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damnèd Dane, Follow my mother.” (5.2.320-321,323). The moral here is that being cocky will only cause you to make mistakes and these mistakes will be your downfall when someone is out to kill you out of vengeance.

The resolution of these characters is not a pretty one but it is a necessary one. In addition, it proves that being obedient and vengeful have dire consequences when taken to extreme heights as Hamlet did. However if done in the right way, being obedient and vengeful can be good qualities in someone's character. This is shown in Hamlet’s resolution as he ends up fulfilling the ghost’s wish by being obedient and vengeful. Unfortunately for Claudius he learns the hard way that these qualities are very powerful and can overpower many. It doesn’t matter how powerful or rich you are, if there is a will there is a way.

Conclusively, the themes of vengeance and obedience are a huge part of the play and are truly the most present in the characters of Hamlet and Claudius. These two characters are foils of each other based on their qualities and persona. It is self-evident in their first meeting the tensions between the two which is the driving force of the play. Adding on, the lessons learned in this play by analyzing the relationship between the two foils are apparent. Moreover these lessons not only apply to the play but also in the real world and can have different meanings for different people, just like how they applied differently to Claudius and Hamlet. After it was all said and done, obedience and vengeance can be used wisely but if used uncontrollably the consequences could be disastrous.
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The consequences of vengeance in Hamlet

Vengeance in Hamlet

Vengeance, with moderation, can sometimes be a good thing as it is a way to convey emotion, enabling one to stand up for what they believe is right. Vengeance in the wrong hands, however, causes irreparable damage to those caught in the crossfire. Some readers view that Hamlet’s plot’s five-part structure moves forward through the character of the ghost and the complications his command to obedience evokes; however, the foiling of William Shakespeare’s paired characters often better reveals the devastating effect of a call to vengeance via Hamlet and Laertes’ first introduction, their separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated resolution of each of these foiled characters.

From the first introduction of each character, an obvious opposition between Hamlet and Laertes is established. Although both men demonstrate high intelligence, strong love, and a hunger for revenge, the way that Hamlet and Laertes act on their emotions is very different. Yearning to avenge his father, Hamlet puts much thought into Claudius’ murder, even after recognizing the probability of his own death. From the start, he “put(s) an antic disposition on” (1.5.174), to conceal his true motives and distract from his obsession with revenge. Willing to have those around him believe he’s gone mad, Hamlet’s introspective planning and thoughtfulness allows for him to refrain from acting rashly in an attempt to save vengeance for the right moment. Serving as a foil, Laertes’ impulsiveness and hasty decision making hampers him from weighing the consequences of his actions. After learning of his father’s death, while speaking to Claudius, Laertes determines that he will “cut his throat i’ th’ church” (4.7.123). Contrary to Hamlet, Laertes jumps on his emotions with little thought. Displaying authority, his headstrong judgement leads him to openly demand vengeance from the start. Nonetheless, both of these rival characters exhibit similar intentions, yet go about their actions in very contradicting ways.

The climax of Hamlet’s character in Act 3 reveals the calamitous effects of a call to vengeance, as the excuses for postponing Claudius’ murder become unconvincing. In the beginning, although Hamlet is anxious for revenge, he is portrayed as a victim of tragedy who must deal with his own depressive state before fulfilling his oath of murder. However, Hamlet’s disposition shifts after he proves Claudius’ wrongdoing, and begins to treat his mother and Ophelia cruelly due to his own rage. When speaking to Ophelia in a bitter state, he calls to her, “get thee to a nunnery” (3.1.120), inferring that she is an unloveable whore. Furthermore, Gertrude begs Hamlet to stop as he throws hurtful insults at her by saying, “these words like daggers enter in my ears” (3.4.196). His increased animosity leads his call to vengeance to take priority over every valuable relationship he possesses. In a hurt state, Hamlet’s call to avenge his father replaces empathy with disdain. Additionally, when Claudius prays alone, Hamlet gives up a chance to kill for a moment where “his soul may be damned and black” (3.3.95). By waiting to kill Claudius instead of murdering him when the first opportunity struck, many other untimely deaths occur. Because of Hamlet’s thirst for revenge and need to confirm Claudius’ final destination in hell, harm and tragedy awaits the people he endears. Becoming a more antagonistic figure, his vindictive state causes torment to loved ones, and diminishes any sympathy felt towards Hamlet’s situation.

Similarly, Laertes’ climax uncovers his aggressive mindset with lust for revenge, where previously he is depicted as a levelheaded and intelligent character. Acting in retaliation to his father’s murder, Laertes’ emotions get the best of him as he demands vengeance against Hamlet. While speaking to Claudius in Act 4, Laertes says, “I’ll get my revenge” (4.7.29), after describing the deaths of his father and sister. Tragic events expose a new side of Laertes. His importunate conflicts with his previously sensible character. Furthermore, Laertes desires to bring honor to his family through revenge, seeming offended when Claudius implies he isn’t a man of his word in saying that Laertes must “show yourself indeed your father’s son” (4.7.122). In response to this, a passionate inclination to vengeance is uncovered. Needing retribution, Laertes’ quality of reason becomes clouded, leading him to participate in murder, an act with detrimental consequences. At this turning point, it seems as if Laertes doesn’t understand the significance of
life and death, with vengeance trumping all else. Previously depicted as a protagonist, Laertes’ character is questioned at this significant moment in time.

Essentially, Hamlet and Laertes suffer the same consequence at the expense of their callings to vengeance. Although Hamlet weighed the consequences of his actions and Laertes acted on emotion without thought, both characters live by the same unfortunate philosophy: an eye for an eye. Ironically, each character’s hunger for revenge ends with the same tragic result. While they schemed for revenge and murder, they too faced death, leaving both men unable to celebrate their successful plots to kill. Moments from death, Laertes calls out to, “exchange forgiveness” (5.2.324) with Hamlet. Ultimately, the juxtaposed characters recognize their flaws and establish regret. Both men realize the substance of life and the burden of death as their actions result in a mass murder. From the beginning of the play, impending doom awaits Hamlet, Laertes, and their loved ones as a result of malice. Vengeance plays the role of a silent killer.

Consequently, vengeance appears to be part of human nature. Recognizing the consequences of one’s actions is a significant factor in determining whether revenge is worth it or not. Laertes and Hamlet experienced this the hard way, learning this essential lesson too late. Displayed in Hamlet, William Shakespeare conveys the tragic effects of vengeance through the foiling of Hamlet and Laertes, the significance of their turning points, and the lessons learned in the final moments of life of each character.
Respect and Honor

Arthurian Romance is a very powerful genre of writing. There are many different aspects to this form of writing that have helped it to be so influential. Some of these elements include the gravity of chivalry, a noble hero, women being held to a high standard, imagination, mystery, and repetition of the magical numbers 3 and 7. One of the most famous examples of Arthurian Romance is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The theme of Arthurian/ Chivalric Romance is extremely prevalent in every section of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and helps to further the lesson and theme of the text.

Gawain lives during the time of King Arthur in this story and lives in his court. When Gawain encounters the colossal Green Knight for the first time he says to Arthur, "'Would you grant me the grace,' said Gawain to the king,/ 'To be gone from this bench and stand by you there,/ If without discourtesy might quit this board./ And if my liege lady mistimed it not" (Author 8). At this moment the Green Knight has entered the celebration and Arthur is about to accept the challenge. Instead, Gawain takes his place. This shows how Gawain is both a hero and follows the code of honor. Both of these aspects are very important in Arthurian Romance and proves that this is a major theme in this story.

In this story, Gawain is a noble knight who always follows his code of honor. This leads him to be seen as a hero by his peers. As Gawain was about to set off on his journey to his demise “They let down the drawbridge and duly went forth/ And kneeled down on their knees on the naked earth/ To welcome this warrior as best they were able” (Author 18). The people tried to show their love for Gawain at this moment. This proves how his people look up to and respect him as a hero.

When Gawain sets off on his journey, he encounters a Lord that lets him stay in his castle. During this time Gawain is tested by the Lord’s wife who implied the fallacy that she wanted to be with Gawain instead of her husband. Her attempts were futile. “'In Good faith,’ said Gawain, 'my gain is the greater,/ Though I am not he of whom you have heard’” (Author 26). This shows how Gawain is showing deep respect for this lady, the Lord who is giving him hospitality, and how dedicated he is to follow the code of chivalry.

These aspects of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* show just how important Arthurian Romance is to the development of this story and the lesson that is shown. Gawain was faced with a challenge and proceeded to go through the hero’s journey. He faced many challenges that taught him the importance of telling the truth and following his code. With learning this, Gawain returned to Arthur’s court a better man than when he left.
Vengeance and Obedience in Shakespeare’s Hamlet

Some readers view that Hamlet’s plot’s five-part structure moves forward through the character of the ghost and the complications his command to obedience evokes; however, the foiling of William Shakespeare’s paired character often better reveals the devastating effect of misplaced obedience and a call to vengeance via X and Y’s first introduction, their separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated resolution of each of these foiled characters.

Laertes and Ophelia’s speculated brother and sister relationship takes on madness that brings Hamlet in between the overly protected brother involved. Obedience shown by Ophelia by abiding to her father’s wishes against meeting Hamlet. For example, “I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth, Have you so slander any leisure moment, As to give words or talk with the lord Hamlet. Look to’t, I charge you: come your ways” (1.3.85). The tension between listening to both her father and brother had her mindset towards Hamlet even more. This led to believe that Ophelia may or may not have wanted a future of her own in this case.

In addition to this, vengeance had conjectured on both Laertes against his father. The death of Laertes and Ophelia’s father brought in guilt and seeking for vengeance. Polonius’s death wasn’t bareable for both Ophelia and Laertes. This brought in distrust with loyalty and leading off to a blame towards Polonius’s death. The climax between these two characters had led a path by obedience and vengeance. Hamlet’s reaction towards Ophelia’s death being dealt through his emotional pain shows madness. Laertes seems to not notice the pain that Hamlet is seeking through by his explanations. For example, “What is he whose grief bears such an emphasis?—whose phrase of sorrow conjectures the wand’ring stars and makes them stand like wonder-wounded hearers” (5.1.95). The pain was inevitable yet tremendously tormenting. In addition, the explanation made by Hamlet had him wonder his feelings towards the sweet Ophelia. The way her funeral could have been including the singing angels of chorus. Vengeance on Laertes’s end increased the tension between him and Hamlet. They are both caught up in a fight over the death of Ophelia. From Act five scence two, forgiveness was taken into consideration towards Laertes made by Hamlet. This soon led to a tension between accepting the faults that Hamlet and Laertes came through.

Vengeance and obedience are brought upon pain and breaking relationships. Both in Ophelia and Laertes’ case led pain upon the death of Ophelia and her father for Laertes to handle. This affects both the mind and the body as those around the environment interact either negatively or positively. It can bring out peace between both relationships and the family tensions that are also brought up into it. Vengeance and obedience have imapcted the sequence Hamlet.
Complicity or Solidarity: Dichotomous Interactions of the Asian and Black Communities

“Whites love us because we’re not black.”
—Frank Chin, Asian-American writer

On May 25, 2020, two atrocities occurred—one known, one unknown. The first was the brutal killing of George Floyd, choked under the knee of a white cop, unable to move, unable to do anything but cry out the shaken words, “I can’t breathe”. The second, however, was the overlooked actions of a bystander who, despite having the power to end this horror, chose instead to turn a blind eye.

Tou Thao, an Asian-American police officer, stood just a few feet away while his partner kneeled on the neck of a dying Floyd. Silent, unmoving, and complicit for the remaining 8 minutes and 46 seconds, Thao made no efforts to intervene and, later, no efforts to retrieve medical help. This refusal to act was a staggering choice alone, yet it also represented a hidden and pervasive reality that exists regardless of conscious recognition. Far from unique, the racist principles of colorism are deeply entrenched in the Asian minority, particularly with regards to Black-Americans. The sole difference between Thao and the larger ethnic community is that only the prior has been held accountable, a crisis and injustice which requires confrontation.

Today, many Asian-Americans are at odds with their Black peers, perceiving them as dangerous, untrustworthy, or any other stereotypical description. Even amidst the national protests, a great number of Asians dismissed the prospect of educating themselves or allying with Black-Americans, some going as far as to claim that they had “brought it upon themselves”. Across the nation, select minds rejected any involvement with the issue of racism, defending their inaction through the reasoning that there simply wasn’t anything to act upon and that, even if there was, Black-Americans had done nothing to merit such support. From all standpoints, there’s an undeniable phenomenon of hate and hostility in the Asian psyche. The question soon becomes: why?

It seems incomprehensible that two minority groups would find themselves so divided in cause, especially given their shared non-majority status; the only rational explanation, then, seems to indicate a dark subtext of intolerance. However, if we view this matter through the lens of history rather than ideology, an entirely new discussion comes to light. Instead of a cultural issue of anti-Black sentiment, it’s revealed that the race relations of Asian and Black Americans are a narrative shaped by white supremacy and systemic oppression. The far-reaching roots of a prejudicial past remain intertwined in the affairs of today, a result of the racial wedge formed within the last few decades. Only by confronting these experiences—the hard lines of history—can the Asian community truly stand in solidarity with its Black brothers and sisters.

Stretching back to the mid-1800s, the Asian-American existence has been more definitively one of reliance than independence. White systems of dominance posed the impossible question of assimilation or persecution, an ultimatum which came with a secondary implication: silence or complicity. Adopting the majority’s beliefs and, by extension, their way of life became a necessity for survival in America, fostered by the trauma of circumstance and hegemonic thinking. The days of antiquity simply allowed for no right answer in the trade of one’s own life for that of another. Invariably, this does not justify the actions of the present nor is it intended to. It does, however, provide some keen insight into overcoming historically tenuous interactions.
During the California Gold Rush and the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, the U.S. imported thousands of Chinese workers in an effort to exploit cheap labor. The white majority began to feel threatened by the influx of immigrants, taking to the streets in protest of their presence. Racial vilification was soon underway, propagandists perpetuating the distorted message that those of Asian descent were dangerous, uncivilized, and otherwise undesirable. On a national scale, immigrants were received with opposition and, in some instances, violence. The 1871 Chinese Massacre, considered among the worst lynchings in American history, ended with twenty three dead at the hands of a five-hundred-person mob. Eventually, in a spurt of fanatical hatred, white lawmakers were emboldened to pass the first immigration ban outlawing a single ethnic group: the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This xenophobic demonstration of ill-founded power provided just enough fuel for outright acts of cruelty to break out, more fervently than before.

The following decades would be characterized by persecution and discrimination, white mobs, like that of the 1871 Massacre, assaulting Chinese migrants and burning Chinatowns. In time, this escalated to larger acts of racial prejudice. On September 2, 1885, a fight broke out between white and Chinese miners in Rock Springs, Oregon. Twenty-eight Chinese were killed, and every home in the town was looted and burned; bodies lay mangled in the streets, many in pieces or hacked to bits. The same story was told in 1887, thirty-four Chinese workers found dead at the Hells Canyons Massacre. Altogether worse, however, was that this inhumane treatment extended far beyond those of Chinese descent, inequity and contempt remaining at-large amongst other ethnic groups of Asia.

When the Philippines were a colony of the U.S., many Americans denounced Filipinos for their “supposedly unclean and uncivilized bodies” (De Leon). During World War II, Japanese internment camps were established, forcibly relocating around 120,000 Japanese-Americans and requisitioning the majority of their property. By the time the Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943, the Asian population had already endured decades of maltreatment, trauma, and intolerance. It comes as no surprise, then, that when offered acceptance, Asian-Americans weren’t in any position to say otherwise, socially or politically. They could either be complicit “with white people in a country built on white supremacy” (Nguyen) or they could be an enemy of that very same group; move up the hierarchy and gain equal status to whites or continue to be a victim of prejudicial beliefs and bigoted ways of life. Truly, the impossible decision of white association marked the birth of the racial wedge.

In the coming decades, Asians were cast as a “law-abiding, peace-loving, [and] courteous people” (Tang). Favorable stereotypes of academic affinity and honest character soon gained momentum, a complete shift in the previous narrative. However, with each emblematic role pinned upon the Asian-American people, the relations between the greater Asian and Black communities grew increasingly tenuous, a product of the wedge’s divisive objective: to pit minorities against one another. In an attempt to deny entrenched institutional racism, the white populace had cultivated the notion of “Asian success” and, by extension, “Black failure”; it posed the rationale of meritocracy, that if Asians were able to “achieve” the American Dream, other non-white minorities should be able to do the same. Though intrinsically wrong on multiple levels, these marked ploys exacerbated negative sentiments and reinforced reductive conflict between the two groups. Rightful outrage towards white systems of oppression were, instead, pinned upon fellow victims, a pointless yet enduring act. As an existing tool of white hegemony, the racial wedge has driven monolithic barriers of enmity, breeding internal biases and, in the case of Asians, outright resentment towards the Black community.

Historically, whenever confronted with the Black-white racial divide, Asian immigrants have chosen to side with the dominant populace; solidarity with the Black community would equate a revocation of the so-called American virtues and a return to systematic persecution. As such, complicity with the white tyranny became the default avenue, a tradition passed down from generation to generation even after it ceased to be necessary. Over time, this has led to distinct anti-Blackness and colorism in the Asian community, completely separate from the instigation of prior centuries, though heavily rooted in past ideologies. To make matters worse, Asian-Black interactions have only grown more hostile in nature, a crisis that obligates attention in the pursuit of social equality.

Consider, for example, the Los Angeles Riots of 1992. Sparked by the brutal assault of Rodney King, the Riots led to the looting and destruction of over 2,200 Korean-owned businesses, costing an estimated $400 million. 35-40% of all such damages were directed at Korean property, a clear indicator of race relations. This sentiment hasn’t waned upon entering the 21st century, a 2014 lawsuit against Harvard University revealing that interracial conflict remains a poignant issue. Of particular concern was the underlying subtext of the Harvard case, Asian-American students arguing that affirmative action “discriminated against Asian applicants in favor of Black… candidates” (Pan). Such a clash of animosity has taken national headlines more than once, in many forms, and with both sides as
the aggressor, a powerful fuel of the ever-widening racial fissure. In 2014, Chinese-American officer Peter Liang shot a 28-year-old unarmed Black man, Akai Gurley, while performing a routine patrol. Liang was later sentenced to 5 years of parole though many in the Asian community felt that he was being scapegoated in the prevalence of police brutality. Protests soon erupted, Chinese-held signs of “Peter Liang Deserves Justice Too” standing opposite to that of “Black Lives Matter”. The symbolism couldn’t be any clearer.

As history dictates, the reality of the racial wedge was imposed by a system of oppression yet now survives in the absence of true solidarity. Still, let it be known that division isn’t the entire story nor is it the only possibility moving forward. Though the past may illustrate a long framework of interracial conflict, it equally displays a path of unity.

Black freedom fighters and Asian-American activists have routinely found themselves on the same side of history, offering camaraderie to one another in times of sweeping injustice. Despite the racial wedge, reciprocated gestures of decency continue to persevere. Yuri Kochiyama and Grace Lee Boggs were two notable bridges of human rights, having applied Black Power rallying techniques in the fight for Asian-American liberation. Similarly, Martin Luther King Jr. took direct inspiration from Ghandian nonviolence, expressing this philosophy at the basis of his protests. Richard Aoki, Japanese-American ally of the Black Panther Party; Bayard Rustin, African-American advocate of civil rights and founder of the Free India Committee; Ram Manohar Lohia, Indian parliament member who opposed the Jim Crow laws; Sue Bailey Thurman, Black author and pioneer of the Pilgrimage of Friendship; and Larry Itliong, Filipino-American labor organizer who launched the first Delano Grape Strike in protest of poor working conditions—these are the names and stories that define the crossroads of today. From the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to the Immigration and Nationality Act, Asian-Americans have long benefitted from Black advocacy, and, for years, Black leaders have stood boldly at the helm of reform. Now, for the first time in decades, the Asian community is being asked to do the same.

A question has been thrust upon the Asian-American people, either to stand in solidarity or fall in complicity. As it is, history informs our current path of neglect. Yet, history is simply that—history. The future remains uncertain, untold, and unwritten; the decision to fight gross humanitarian injustice remains in the hands of the Asian-American people. I can only hope that, this time, we make the right choice, following in the legacy of change. Perhaps then, a new chapter in history may begin.

“Being Asian-American means wearing many layers of identity. At first glance, a man of Asian ancestry. At first spoken word, an American. At deeper reflection, a person of color in America. At the core, a person who seeks peace and social justice.”

—Eddie Wong, Executive Director of Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation
**Pardoner’s Poverties (villain college essay)**

Justin Hughes  
Mrs. Houston  
English 4H, Period 2  
14 December 2020

Pardoner’s POV (Pardoner’s Tale, Prompt 3)

Power, the ability to obtain what is most desired. To take from others and build your own foundation for a better life for yourself. Growing up I always knew what I wanted and that was the ability to never be beneath another, but to rise and be more than average. To do this I came across many challenges, especially ones that questioned my morals. To help one in need, be kind, honest, or thoughtful were all distractions and I learned that through seeing many religious believers throw their lives away by trying to “becoming more like god”. To me looking out for another person is pointless, when you don’t have your best interests of being successful at heart.

A problem that came to mind was how to obtain this power, and become someone of high status. The answer was quite simple when I stepped back and realized how the church gained so many followers and was looked at so highly. Money was the only answer. If I can get the best clothes and have the best items many would fear and envy my wealth. “And thus I preach against the very vice I make my living out of -- avarice. And yet however guilty of that sin Myself, with others I have power to win Them from it…” (Chaucer 5-9) I have become a pardoner who sells “relics” and items of christianity to believers of god. I create my own destiny and stray away from god covered in what is called “sin” to create my own fantasy and gain power through my wealth and wit.

Many don’t understand and get caught under the false reality of serving a god that takes from you. I am willing to serve their desires and give them false security, while taking their money and using it to fulfill my needs. When thinking of the power of greed through fortune I occasionally visit a tale that replays itself in my head. In this story, three rioters fighting for gold and fortune take turns acting selfishly and ultimately end up killing each other due to their greed for more. “Lord, to think I might Have all that treasure to myself alone! Could there be anyone beneath the throne Of God so happy as I then should be?” (Chaucer 234-237) This young man is the embodiment of my teachings, he was willing to kill his two other friends to obtain a fortune for himself. I commonly revisit this story because it causes me to have a great internal conflict. Whether greedy nature will always end up in despair, or the thrill of pursuing what matters most to you is a gift of its own.

Misunderstood, is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to my emotions. I will continue to make myself happy, because at the end of the day you go to sleep as yourself. I am a greedy, selfish, and dishonest pardoner. I steal and bite off more than I can chew, but at least I can say that money will never be a problem in my life.
Revenge and Justice

The Count of Monte Cristo and And Then There Were None are two different books, yet they are both about bringing justice upon others. While the Count gets revenge on people who have wrongly put him into prison for years, Wargrave brings justice to random people who he figures out have gotten away with crimes. We find ourselves in a much smaller version of the Count’s situation, because we like getting back at people who have done something wrong to us. On the other hand, we choose not to put ourselves in Wargrave’s position, because it could be problematic.

Wargrave’s motivation was to do something useful before he died, while the Count’s was to make himself feel better by planning an entire scheme to bring his enemies down. Both the Count and Wargrave could be considered “good” because of their intentions, even though they are torturing and killing people. This is especially true for the Count, because he planned revenge on Danglars, Villefort, and Fernand, but also helped others such as Valentine, Maximilien, Mercedes, and Albert.

Revenge clouds your thoughts, and it is very risky to act on this because you are overwhelmed by negative emotions. A real life example of this is when someone makes a hurtful joke about you, and you want your revenge. Getting revenge wouldn’t be a good idea, since anger clouds your thoughts, and you would make irrational decisions such as saying the wrong things or making the wrong actions and decisions. The negative consequences that can come from this still don’t prevent humans from restraining themselves when they want revenge.

Seeking justice against those who have escaped punishment might sound like a good idea at first, but on the contrary, it would also cause lots of chaos if not controlled. Allowing everyone to decide the punishment for any level of crime would ensure that guilty people are getting punished more often, but others might mistakenly punish innocent people. Compared to this idea, our court system makes it fair, because it gives the defender a chance to explain themselves in the potential case that they might be innocent. This prevents the chance of an unjust punishment towards an innocent person.

Our perspectives on the two main characters in The Count of Monte Cristo and And Then There Were None reveal how we relate to their ideas. We tend to see Wargrave as the antagonist in the story, while we like the Count for what he does. On the contrary, what we think is quite the opposite, since we know that what Wargrave does is morally good, while what the Count does is not an example we should follow. We relate to their ideas, because we prefer not to get involved with other people’s criminal actions. This is why we don’t enjoy it when Wargrave brings justice upon others compared to the Count’s evil schemes. However, getting revenge is something humans do often, and that is why we like to read about the Count getting his revenge.
**The Benefits of Historical Fiction**

America today is facing an alarming problem: According to the National Literacy Trust in 2019, only about 26% of children under the age of 18 spend time reading every day, and according to Forbes magazine, only about 15% of 8th graders scored proficient or above in U.S. history. While there are many ways that this problem could be resolved, one good solution would be to introduce more historical fiction to people.

History is essentially a constant worldwide social experiment where our goal is to learn from past people’s actions and find the best methods for living and coexisting. Learning history is important because we learn about different times and study previous people’s actions and consequences. Everyone’s goal is to make good judgments, regardless of scale, and in theory, history provides a database from which we can take experiences and apply them to our own lives. However, in reality, it is quite difficult to relate to the struggles of someone from a different time period who lived in different circumstances than we do now, and it takes time and effort to be able to take those people’s struggles and read between the lines to find out what can be learned from their actions and the consequences. Better understanding history allows people to take an abstract lesson from what happened in a certain time period and apply that lesson to their own lives.

Historical fiction makes it easier for many students to learn those abstract concepts because they can relate to the characters and their decisions and see those abstract concepts in action instead of just in theory. Historical fiction also makes learning about historical events more engaging, so it is less likely for people to just skim over the text and move on, and it is also more likely for people to go and research history for themselves after reading something to learn about the actual history behind the book. Because historical fiction is still fiction, the story would focus more on people’s motivations more than their actions and so you have a deeper understanding of what people went through and their reaction to events during the time of the story; this also helps us make sense of our own lives and draw connections between the key issues we have now and those that the character experienced in that time period.

Reading historical fiction can also serve to personify important historical figures, often making them seem more like real people and therefore a more believable and convincing role model (or, in some cases, someone to steer clear of becoming.) Being interested in the story and relating to the characters allows people to more easily see the essential problems and lessons found within the story and within the time period and apply the lessons to their own lives, and it also allows them to more easily see the parallels between this current time period and certain historical problems or events. Overall, by making learning about history easier and more interesting, historical fiction books allow students to have a deeper understanding of history and the concept behind each story, and they will be closer to identifying and applying those concepts to their own lives in the future.

Reading fiction books is beneficial because you are able to learn how the choices of characters that might act differently from us could affect the other people in their lives and apply those lessons to our own lives. This genre requires imagination and often creativity to both read and write these stories, as writers often create fantastical new worlds for readers to explore and picture in their mind’s eye. By providing a wide range of styles and common themes that appeal to all sorts of different people, fiction stories are able to keep people reading to understand why certain things happen in the story and how it will end. By looking at life through a different lens, it is also easier for people to question certain morals and motives and to also compare what was normal in the story to what is considered normal in their own lives and current time period. This can be valuable in our decision-making, because it gives more examples and scenarios that help us form a do and don’t list of what to do in situations that reflect the story. Just like in history, the goal of fiction stories is to learn abstract concepts about how to act and apply them to ourselves.
While fiction keeps people entertained and allows people to find common patterns between the story and real life, historical fiction brings out these qualities in a story and ties them to historical events, which is beneficial because it is easier for people to relate to the character and the often more realistic scenarios that the protagonist goes through. The combination of interest in the story and the realistic (and historically accurate) setting and characters of a historical fiction book can help people learn how to understand the perspective of different people in both fiction and real life. While plain fiction can work to keep someone engaged and learn simpler lessons (say, don’t talk to strangers or the value of kindness), historical fiction allows readers to learn and apply more complex lessons to the rest of their lives and can even encourage readers to pursue knowledge of history on their own.

In conclusion, historical fiction is a much more beneficial tool for both learning history and discovering the recurring patterns and lessons in history because it is more engaging than a common textbook and makes the material and people more relatable. While the main goal of history is to show us patterns and abstract lessons that we can apply to our lives, fiction can do what while also making it easier to understand those lessons and spot scenarios in which we can use those lessons. Historical fiction combines properties of these two and allows for both abstract lessons and interest in the story, which can also influence readers to seek more knowledge of the historical context of the book on their own, thus teaching them more about history and allowing them to retain more information because it’s of their own accord.
Throughout Shakespeare’s, “Hamlet”, characters like Hamlet and King Claudius convey the antithesis and foiling through obedience and vengeance by representation in their similarities and differences over the play. Seemingly, when being portrayed, these characters first meet in the castle, that of Hamlet and Claudius. The son of the dead king, having such disregard for his uncle while perhaps Claudius tries to ally with Hamlet, “Ham: A little more than kin, and less than kind” (Shakespeare 31). The bitter prince utters this with regard to the idea that Claudius was not substantial. Hatred can ponder. Moreover, Prince Hamlet and King Claudius are alike in ways of manipulation for power within obedience and vengeance. Likeness presents a threat. Hamlet uses his emotions to establish the idea that he suffers from a craziness disease, while the current King exploits other individuals to gain supreme control; “King: Go, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends; And let them know, both what we mean to do, And what's untimely done”(Shakespeare 77-79). Both of these characters foil with one another because of a family dynamic as well as a manipulative dynamic; In perspective, Prince Hamlet’s power is used by King Claudius but that influence still resides within the Prince, so, therefore, he uses the dynasty as a device to control using his emotions. Control gains popularity. Shakespeare uses the King to suggest the antithesis prescribed through proclamation, that some Kingly figures, obscure the idea of leadership and in return produces the toxic circumstances of commanding with an iron fist, one may say. As well as the studied topic from this is that one can be seen as a great authoritative figure, but behind closed doors, an individual differs from the concept of others towards misplaced conformity. A king is not always the best. From Hamlet’s perspective, the audience can condone that dear Hamlet is a bit of a mouthful within sarcasm, “Ham: I am but mad north-north-west”. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw”(Shakespeare 46). This confuses Guildenstern, but purposely, Shakespeare depicts the antithesis to which the prince calls his friend, Guildenstern, the enemy. The lesson that learned was that of reprisal, to which, in that person’s eyes, will see a certain construct that does meet the criteria. Overall, the most prominent idea discovered was that overwhelming obedience can lead to complicated vengeance. Formally, when arriving at the climax the readers see a tragedy that is upheld throughout the whole play, yet to only be revealed now. The ending for these characters consists of Prince Hamlet piercing King Claudius with a poisonous sword; “Ham: The point Envenom’d too! Then, venom, to thy work. Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damnèd Dane, Follow my mother”(Shakespeare 115-117). Substantially, Claudius understood at that moment the lesson of vengeance and how Hamlet’s generation would catch up with him, the lesson being that of debt, if a person’s family cannot pay the debt, the newer offspring will suffer that burden, as did from the transference of Hamlet to Claudius. Love is not always the right kind. Therefore, this downfall would lead to the next. Obedience became a perspective to Claudius when he asks Hamlet to join in for a drink and to settle down but his wife Queen Gertrude calms down and drinks the poisonous drink and for once Claudius came to the conclusion that when you force someone to constantly serve and bend to their will, one feels tired and wants to have amusement for a moment; “Queen: I have, my lord; I pray you, pardon me. King: It is the poison’d cup; it is too late”(Shakespeare 105-106). Moreover, Hamlet suffers the same fate when Laertes pierces Hamlet with the poisonous sword; “Ham: Come, for the third, Laer: You do but dally; I pray you, pass with your best violence; I am afeard you make a wanton of me. Laer: Say you so? come on”(Shakespeare 108-110). Obedience and Vengeance are learned through the topics of realization. This contention of obedience became transcribed to the fact that became learned when Hamlet obeys the ghost of his father, in return protrudes the lesson of a curse will follow through, and commitment is a must. Revenge becomes witnessed when Hamlet kills Claudius, in return the lesson to fall suit is that one can feel ease in death when a certain task is completed. Darkness will fall.

In Shakespeare’s, “Hamlet”, antithesis and foiling through obedience and vengeance are bestowed through
characters like Hamlet and Claudius. The lessons within vengeance and obedience lie within the idealism of truth and justice. Shakespeare uses Claudius and Hamlet to depict lessons like frenemies, controllingness, new generation tasks, and evil acts catching up. Creatively, Shakespeare shares the problems of human activity and displays repercussions. The lessons determine fate.
Hamlet: Cultural Hegemony over the Human Condition

Some readers view that Hamlet's plot's five-part structure moves forward through the character of the ghost and the complications his command to obedience evokes; however, the foiling of William Shakespeare's paired characters often better reveals the devastating effect of misplaced obedience and a call to vengeance as seen in Gertrude and Ophelia's as well as Laertes and Hamlet's first introduction, their separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated resolution of each of these foil characters.

The foiling of Ophelia and Gertrude from their first interactions with Hamlet, Claudius, Laertes, and Polonius reveals their obedience to the standards that men and their society have implemented to dominate their lives and foretells how their obedience drives their character development throughout the play. Gertrude and Ophelia's lives are framed by the men that have control over them. The revelation of Gertrude's remarriage is proclaimed by Claudius, and its advantages are initially shown from the male, patriarchal perspective. Claudius exposes his marriage with Gertrude, saying that his "sometime sister now...queen" judiciously accepts his marriage proposal in the midst of her late husband's funeral (1.2.8,9). Claudius performs this intentional monologue; and it is obvious that he coerces and manipulates Gertrude into conceding her power to him. He proclaims and celebrates the marriage, while Gertrude merely endorses it. Persuading her into obedience, Claudius instigates an awareness in Gertrude that politically, religiously, and emotionally their union is most beneficial for the kingdom. Manipulation of his new wife furthers a motif of male domination over women that is seen not only in the relationship of Claudius and Gertrude but in the relationship of Laertes and Polonius towards Ophelia. Similarly, the audience is exposed to Ophelia and her dilemmas from the viewpoints of Ophelia's father and brother. Their words reflect the inherent patriarchal and misogynistic society that women endured. Polonius states that Hamlet is trying to “trifle... and... wreck thee (2.1.113.)” and Laertes bolsters this point with his own commentary. Laertes and Polonius inherently believe that Ophelia is a commodity, and Claudius thinks similarly of Gertrude. These women are commodities sold on the market of power and wealth by men whose true intentions are disguised as love to delude women into surrendering themselves. Both women are slaves to societal expectations and hegemony, and their obedience holds them captive. Vengeance that is initially hidden within Gertrude and Ophelia because of their social circumstances eventually unleashes as a result of the patriarchal standard they live under, and reveals unexpected consequences due to their misplaced obedience.

Hamlet and Laertes' character foiling in their first interactions with each other justifies their concept of obedience to their different views of morality and establishes the basis for their revenge. The foil between Hamlet and Laertes is obvious when Claudius replies, "Take thy fair hour" in response to Laertes' request to travel abroad but to Hamlet's request Claudius replies, "we beseech you" essentially denying Hamlet's request to study abroad. (1.2. 62,115). Comparisons and contrasts are made between the two characters as the story's exposition unfolds. Claudius gives Laertes the opportunity to move quickly and travel, while forcing Hamlet to stay in Denmark for a long time, despite Hamlet's desire to leave. This juxtaposition is a defining feature of the foil between Hamlet and Laertes. Hamlet is slow to act upon his initiatives, but his mind is overwhelmed by the philosophical causes and outcomes of possible actions, while Laertes is quick to act and slow to understand the possible consequences of his actions. Furthermore, throughout Act 1, Hamlet challenges his obedience towards his 'father-figure' uncle when both his uncle and mother beg that Hamlet change his demeanor and that his dark clothes be removed, to which he is defiant and obstinate. Contrastingly, as Polonius bids his son safe travel and advises him on proper cordiality, propriety, and etiquette while in France, Laertes is receptive and respectful to his father's wishes. Both Hamlet's and Laertes' understanding of morality dictates their expressions of obedience and vengeance.

In Gertrude’s climactic moment, Gertrude breaks her bond of misplaced obedience to Claudius and aligns herself
with the covenant made between her and her late husband: to love her son Hamlet and protect him as much as she is able. She promises Hamlet, “thou be assured”, that she aligns with her son and promises to keep his intentions secret; and no longer “let the...king tempt” her, or allow him to manipulate her for his own gain and pleasure (3.4.186,201). At this moment, Gertrude understands and acknowledges the gravity of her decision to marry Claudius and the political security that it provides for the safety of her country, however, she does not have to be submissive to her king nor answer his every request. Hamlet acts as the catalyst to her redefined obedience. Her obedience shifts to Hamlet. This shift, while it expresses character development as Gertrude begins disobeying an oppressive force in order to obey a less oppressive force, does not entirely redefine her societal obligation to obedience. Ironically, Gertrude, even at her climax, is unable to escape the patriarchal standards that govern her life. Even as Claudius sends Hamlet to England for persecution, Gertrude is left defenseless and watches cluelessly as Hamlet is sent away to his possible execution, because once again her choice to retain power through remarrying at her late husband’s death was not her fate, but her choice. It is her choice that not only endangers Hamlet but is the cause of her own demise. Her decision influences her life and ultimately forces her to forfeit her power and give her obedience to Claudius.

In the climactic moment of breaking her blind obedience to Hamlet, Ophelia pursues her own self-preservation, despite Hamlet’s constant verbal and emotional abuse. Until her climax in the play, Polonius, Laertes, Hamlet, and the patriarchal society as a whole conditions Ophelia to be a naive, faithful woman and partner. In the play within a play, Ophelia completely dedicates herself to Hamlet and accepts his insensitive, brutal comments as a mere jest. During the play, there is speculation that Hamlet and Ophelia explore their changing relationship and possible marriage. If their relationship is more serious than both of their parents assume, then Ophelia’s obligation to remain obedient and dedicated to Hamlet proves inevitable. Ophelia’s obligation provides the basis for her assertions over Hamlet and her shifting obedience towards him. Throughout the scene, Hamlet belittles her in his statement, “get thee to a nunnery” and her responses to his sly, misogynistic comments “No, my lord” and “I think nothing” assert her boundaries (3.1,2.139,103,107). She tolerates his deranged thoughts about his father and allows it to be an excuse for his harsh words and lack of propriety when interacting with her. This scene portrays the evolution of her mind and her character. Ophelia no longer wants to endure suffering and abuse from Hamlet and she establishes that she is not just his plaything. She acknowledges her feelings and values. Her relationship with Hamlet is not so political as it is of, supposedly, genuine love; and by that definition, Ophelia is not afraid to wound him or herself in establishing her boundary.

At Hamlet’s climax, he forsakes obedience to his mother, going against his late father’s wishes to which Hamlet Sr. reappears to Hamlet commanding “Do not forget,” and perseverates over his desire to avenge his father’s death through plotting and taking revenge on his uncle Claudius (3.4.111). Shifting obedience from his parents to his inner ego leads Hamlet to accidentally or intentionally take the lives of Polonius, Guildenstern, and Rosencranz. His sudden impetuous, heedless acts of murder mark a shift in his character and his morality. A willingness to commit murder coupled with his lack of restraint juxtaposes his resolute religious beliefs of the value of human life. Hamlet begins to devalue human life, especially his own. With the death of his father, he sees life as a meaningless ordeal and believes that the only thing life perpetuates is sin and those who commit it. Lacking motivation to continue his existence erodes his sense of humanity and self. He believes he has nothing to lose. This realization catalyzes his thoughts of revenge into action. His revelation is significant because up until Hamlet’s climax, he is unable to take the necessary steps to fulfill his late father’s requests. Obedience to his father grows stronger in his climax. As his madness deepens, he is unable to see a world where he allows his uncle to continue taking advantage of Gertrude and the kingdom. In the Elizabethan time period, it was treasonous to kill a king no matter how despotic the king may be. Hamlet disobeys not only his mother but his king and country as well in his pursuit of vengeance.

Similarly, Laertes’ climax portrays the obedient son, turned malicious murderer, in his pursuit of revenge on Hamlet for committing his father’s murder. Laertes’ obedience remains steadfast to his family which is seen throughout the play. However, at his climax, the audience’s assumptions about Laertes’ morality and character are tested when he begins plotting Hamlet’s demise. Initially, Laertes is a good-humored, respectable young man who acts judiciously and kindly in his interactions with others, whereas Hamlet seems to be a brutal, brooding, and defiant son who is often sharp and impertinent in his conversations with others. Additionally, Laertes’ morals do not align with theology, as Hamlet’s do, but with his father’s morality based on familial obligation. Laertes regards religion as frivolous and this is seen through his profession, “To cut his throat / th’ church. (4.7.123).” As a result of his father’s death and his sister’s insanity, Laertes drives himself to desperate means to restore justice in the name of his family as a result of social tradition and cultural hegemony. Unlike Hamlet, he does not debate murder before he commits it and he does not hesitate on matters of avenging his father’s death when familial loyalty is in question. He is dedicated, calculated, and divisive, ready to commit to his revenge against Hamlet with the help of Claudius, who Laertes disregards at the beginning of the play. Furthermore, throughout the play Hamlet is unwilling to let even his most trusted friend know how he will commit his revenge or why, but Laertes is more than willing to enlist the help of a known foe of Hamlet.
in his spiteful crime. The foiling of Gertrude and Ophelia within their resolutions reveal that the lesson of revenge and obedience within *Hamlet* is that vengeance and spite only bring about chaos and destruction and that obedience makes one a slave to one’s master, prohibiting one’s ability think and act freely, which eradicates mental, spiritual, and corporal freedom. Ophelia and Gertrude are slaves to the men that control their lives and the men that dominate their society, which define and limit their opportunities for success and prosperity. However, some key differences that influence their resolutions include: the age and maturity differences between the two women, the power and means of attaining and manipulating power, their spheres of influence, and their life experiences create a foil between the two characters, but also align their resolutions to produce the same lessons. In Gertrude’s resolution, it is seen that Gertrude is able to retain her sanity throughout the whole play despite some of the major tragedies that befall her. This juxtaposes her to both Ophelia and even Hamlet. However, her sanity speaks to her role as queen. Gertrude, in order to ensure the prosperity of the kingdom needs to be the seat of reason, rationality, and diplomacy. As queen of Denmark, her position of power is the only means to which she could retain her sanity as well as control. Polonius’ death gravely affects Ophelia because she exists in a lower social class than Gertrude. She is reliant on both her brother and father to set diplomatic ties between men she could possibly wed, and with her primary caretaker gone, and her possible future husband the murderer, her world is devastated. Her madness comes as a lesson of personal disobedience. Whether intentional or not, Ophelia breaks away from the societal demands that prescribe what a lady of her status should do. She is unable to marry because she is mad, and her death is the ultimate revenge of a woman against a vengeful family and a prejudicial society. Similarly, it is unknown whether Gertrude knowingly drinks from the poisoned cup, but in the last few moments of her life, she defies Claudius saying “I will” drink from the cup, in celebration of her son (5.2.287). Gertrude’s mindful disobedience to Claudius in this dramatic and deadly scene ultimately rewrites her lesson on misplaced obedience. Discovering within herself her own identity, Gertrude acknowledges her bond to Hamlet to be stronger than hers to Claudius, and her love and obedience are shed to Hamlet. Ultimately, the death of both Gertrude and Ophelia are lessons of the consequences of vengeance and its massively destructive nature, and that the disobedience of women to the social constructs that bind them to the will of others leads women to the liberation of mind, body, and soul.

The resolution of Laertes and Hamlet solidifies the devastating effects of vengeance on humankind and demonstrates through the foil of these characters a deviation of obedience to established social constructs and ultimately elicits a philosophical questioning of morality. It was common for a noble son during Elizabethan times to acknowledge an obligation to avenge their father’s wrongful death. Hamlet, unlike Laertes, struggles with the understanding of this hegemonic obligation to revenge versus the morality of this act. Throughout the whole play, his intellectual mind debates the morality of revenge, and whether it is justifiable to right a wrong with another wrongdoing. The delay of revenge is anti-climatic when Hamlet finally commits the murderous act against Claudius. Hamlet enacts a vengeful murder, but not for the reasons intended. As Hamlet finally commits to revenge, he is intending to commit to the promise he made with his father in order to be reunited with his father in Heaven. However, as the events of Act five unfold, his murder of Claudius is a self-righteous act of protection, done in anger for the murder plot Claudius committed against Hamlet. Hamlet does not kill Claudius with the calculated intent that he originally vows. Ironically, Laertes’ plan with Claudius becomes the murder plot that backfires, not Hamlet’s plot to kill Claudius. Possessing a reflective, intellectual, philosophical nature, Hamlet profusely questions his obligation to avenge his father’s death, whereas Laertes never questions this obligation. Ultimately, Hamlet’s subconscious undergoes the battle and lesson that runs through the entire play. Vengeance only brings about destruction, and obedience to vengeance is a dug grave waiting for the avenger.

While the ghost of Hamlet’s father is an illusive, mystifying element of the dramatic, philosophical, inspiring Shakespearean play, the forthright message of the play is marvelously portrayed through the foiling of William Shakespeare’s paired characters. The foiling of these characters reveals lessons of the devastating effects of misplaced obedience and a call to vengeance as seen in Gertrude and Ophelia’s as well as Laertes and Hamlet’s first introduction, their separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated resolution of each of these foiled characters.
The Human Experience: Guided by Reason Destroyed by Complexity

The three primary factors that make horror films alluring are tension (generated by suspense, mystery, terror, shock, and gore), relevance (that may relate to personal relevance, cultural meaningfulness, the fear of death, etc.), and (somewhat paradoxically given the second factor) unreality (Walters). It is almost as if the human mind is inherently curious about the more sinister nuances of life and death, or heaven and hell. Despite the current popularity of horror films, Dante’s Inferno, for the past seven-hundred years, has been capturing the human mind and senses in a whirlwind of horror and punishment that is sure to elicit self-reflection in even the most pious of souls. In The Divine Comedy: Inferno, Dante utilizes binary opposition, a theme of mutual antagonism, and religious symbolism within his descriptions of hellish punishment for three sinners in Circles Three and Four illustrate how the sinners of Gluttony, Hoarding and Wasting, and the wrathful Sullen receive a punishment that is both just and symbolic in the perspective of the Christian belief system.

In Circle Three of Dante’s Inferno, the punishment of the Gluttons is just because of the binary opposition and antithesis of their punishments to correct their sins committed during their lifetime. Dante’s conversation with Ciacco further provides insight into the suffering and desires of the sinners in the higher levels of hell and foreshadows the plight of the sinners below circle three. Gluttony is defined as over-indulgence and over-consumption of food, drink, or wealth items, particularly as status symbols. As the gluttons focused on the immediate gratification of their needs and wants, without consideration of the needs and wants of others, they allowed themselves to make no higher use of their abilities or gifts and produced only garbage. Their punishments are just because as human bile and waste fall from the ceiling they are forced to bathe and rot in the sludge, which equates to the filth they created (Dante VI). The pelting rain and snow is a binary opposition to the comfort and pleasure of the sensual act of eating and is, therefore, a just punishment of their overindulgence. Cerberus is a fitting guardian for the circle of the Gluttons because as he gnaws and bites at the sinners, he resembles the way they ravished their food and drink with an insatiable hunger during their lives. While in Circle Three, Dante’s conversation with Ciacco reveals one of the few solaces found in an eternity of agonizing suffering is to be remembered as portrayed in his words, “recall me, if thou canst”(Dante VI). Many sinners that committed less significant transgressions are eager to share their names with Dante because being remembered establishes their place in the world and acts as a comfort in their anguish.

Conversely, as Dante travels deeper into hell and becomes aware of more significant and heinous sins, those who have committed them are often nameless and faceless or avoid having their name be known and their shame recorded as their legacy.

The punishments that the Gluttons receive are religiously symbolic because the sinners placed the pleasure of eating and imbibing copious amounts of food and drink in excess over God. Their sin became a false god that they worshipped, and by doing so, they broke God’s first commandment: that shall not have false gods before me. Furthermore, the sinners act as physical symbols of pigs who roll around in their own filth and mud. Cerberus drooling over them acts as a symbol of their actions on earth towards their food. The cold rain and slush made of waste, and excrement is a symbol of how gluttony is a sin of excess and abuses the earth’s natural resources. The glutton’s selfishness and narcissism refute their ability to acknowledge the needs of others and be stewards of God’s creation. Their symbolic retribution is being forced to eat disgusting black sludge and that they will remain forever hungry because they turned away from the goodness and generosity of God.

Dante utilizes binary oppositions to dichotomize the sinners that hoard and waste in order to create a just punishment that creates an equilibrium between two extremes. Souls belonging to Hoarders and Wasters are forced to pull gigantic weights back and forth to eventually meet in the middle of a battleground where they flog their weights at the opposing sinner. As the sinners shout "Why keepest?" and, "Why squanderest thou?" they are forced to acknowledge each other and punish one another for committing crimes against prudence and temperance (Dante VII). Together,
the Hoarders and Wasters symbolize mutual antagonism. Symbolically, Dante has placed these sinners below the gluttons because he believes that being wasteful of man-made, limited possessions is a more heinous act because it disgraces the dignity of man’s creation. Despite being a pagan reference, “Fortune” has biblical allusion and religious symbolism in the context of Dante’s Inferno Circle Four. Fortune is told through mythology as one of God’s chosen ministers, who distributes luck and misfortune in a preordained manner (Dante VII). The Hoarders and Wasters, however, believed that they could control their luck or misfortune and so they believed that they could control God. While remaining in Circle Four, Dante comes across the wrathful, which are broken up into three types: the actively wrathful, the sullen, and the vindictive. The actively and vindictive wrathful sinners are punished by unleashing their violent, active wrath on one another for eternity. This is justified because, during their lives, they never felt the wrath and pain they inflicted upon others. In Hell, their punishments are a continuation of Dante’s theme of mutual antagonism as a method to establish justice and provide a balance between the forces of righteousness and sinfulness. Mutual antagonism provides the justification that those who have sinned against their neighbor shall be punished by their sin from their neighbor. Strangely, those who are labeled as Sullen, are also placed in the same Circle as the Wrathful. Their punishment is that they choke and gurgle on the filth of Styx, a symbol of their debilitating rage, and are unable to express themselves. They are blinded and surrounded by darkness, and are forced to sing hymns of praise to a God they never appreciated. They choke on their own rage during their lives, taking for granted the inherent goodness of God’s creation. They are blinded by darkness to justify their unwillingness to acknowledge the inherent beauty of life and the human condition. Binary opposition in “sweet air, which by the sun is gladdened,” and “hymn do they keep gurgling in their throats” portrays the justice of their punishment (Dante VII). The sweet hymn they are forced to sing is a song of praise that they would have sung in the heavens, but ironically they are in hell and will despise God for eternity. The punishment of the Sullen is religiously symbolic because it antagonizes the sullen through a mocking, degrading punishment of having to sing angelic songs to God. Their punishment juxtaposes them to angels and symbolically labels them as demons.

Through Dante’s utilization of binary oppositions, a theme of mutual antagonism, and religious symbolism, the sinners of Gluttony, Hoarding, Wasting, and Sullen, have received punishments that correlate to their past existences; punishing them for abusing the blessings found within the human experience. Through their sentences, they receive a symbolic punishment justifiable for their crimes. The price must be paid.
The Necessity of Civil Virtue

The most important gift humans have received is the gift of virtue. Genesis speaks of this gift in the story of Adam and Eve having been banned from the Garden of Eden. In the story, Eve eats the apple from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—in other words, the tree that provides knowledge of morality. When humans attain knowledge of morality by eating of the tree, they are cast out of the Garden. Although this seems negative, it is actually the moment at which human beings are no longer animals living in nature but truly human, God-like, or “made in the image of God.” At this moment humans become capable of not only free will but of making moral decisions, the only decisions that make us akin to God Himself. Thus, virtue is the most important and defining characteristic of a human; it is that which sets us apart from other animals. It is in the service of inspiring such virtue on which civilization is and ought to be based, and for which civilization has been created. However, civilization sometimes goes astray, requiring that its citizens be beholden to an unjust law. Here, civil discourse is necessary. I will argue that civil discourse—the discussion that occurs within and about the state—requires the act of civil disobedience—the disobeying of the state’s immoral laws—in order for humans to maintain the virtue that defines us.

There is a significant relationship between the terms “civil,” a reference to the state, and “civil,” polite or appropriate behavior. “Civilization” is when humans no longer act as animals; thus civility, the behavior expected of a virtuous person, only occurs within civilization. In a civilization, we act as humans, with morality and rationality. Our rules and laws, therefore, should be moral and rational. The most defining human action we can take is the pursuit of morality, but by following an unjust law, we are no longer behaving as humans. Thus, there is nothing more human than to break an unjust law in the pursuit of virtue. There is nothing more human than to act.

Though “discourse” is generally defined as the written or spoken word, there are times when words aren’t enough. Famous American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau illustrates the necessity of civil disobedience nicely. In 1846, Thoreau refused to pay the poll tax as a protest against slavery and the Mexican-American War. Consequently, he spent a night in jail. Later, Thoreau wrote, “I will not disregard my humanity for the law” in his famous essay On the Duty of Civil Disobedience. Thoreau maintains that the most important human characteristic is our virtue, but simply speaking about an unjust law does not put an end to it, nor does it keep us from sacrificing our humanity. Only action in direct opposition to the law can keep our humanity intact; only action is an appropriate response to injustice. The spoken or written word, as powerful as it may be, cannot do the job. Thus Thoreau: if a law “is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law.” Here, Thoreau reminds us that virtue is of greater importance than our duty to our government, particularly if that government is unjust. Direct action, he says, is the only reasonable moral response.

It’s for this reason that disobedient behavior must remain part of civil discourse, a fact upon which American independence is founded. The Stamp Act Riots were a direct response to the unjust Stamp and Sugar Acts, which forced colonists to pay a tax when purchasing specially stamped paper and sugar. Unsurprisingly, the colonists saw the Stamp Act of 1765 as an unjust law. They began rioting violently, burning houses, hanging effigies, and protesting in the streets. As a direct response to the colonists’ civil disobedience, both the Stamp and Sugar Act of 1764 were repealed by the British Parliament. This example clearly shows how important civil disobedience is in civil discourse. Merely distributing pamphlets and engaging in debates about what should be done did not achieve the colonists’ goals of justice; action was required.

The gift of virtue, given to us by Adam and Eve, has allowed us to be human. Without it, we would have remained in the Garden, wholly animals. This gift of humanity is the most precious of all; unfortunately, however, it sometimes requires that we fight for it. When an unjust government acts against our humanity, we have an obligation to act in response. Thus, civil disobedience is an essential part of civil discourse and, at times, the only response that allows us to retain our greatest gift: our humanity.
On the Case of the Electoral College

In discussions of the recent 2020 Presidential Election, a controversial matter has been the topic of the Electoral College. Since its founding in 1787, the Electoral College has been a matter of debate in the United States, a debate that heated up after the 2000 Bush v. Gore election and the 2016 Clinton v. Trump election. In both of these elections, the candidate who received the majority of electoral votes, actually did not win the popular vote. According to the Federal Elections Commission, during the 2000 election, Former Vice President Al Gore received a little over 540,000 more votes than Former President George W. Bush (“Federal Elections 2000”). While in 2016, former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton received almost 3 million more votes than current President Donald Trump (“Federal Elections 2016”). As a bit of background, the National Archives explains that the Electoral College was established “[…] as a compromise between the election of the president by a vote in Congress and election of the president by a popular vote of qualified citizens” (“What is the Electoral College?”). The college currently consists of 538 electors. To be elected president, candidates need at least 270 of those electoral votes; each state has the same number of electors as it does members in its Congressional delegation (“What is the Electoral College?”). It is important to note that according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of the United States at the time of the 1790 census was about 3.9 million people across only 13 colonies (“POP Culture: 1790”). Currently, the Census Bureau estimates the population to be about 330 million across 50 states. (“United States of America: People and Population”). I mention this fact to illustrate that when the Electoral College was founded, our country was in its infancy with 3.9 million people; however, today’s Electoral College represents 330 million Americans.

After spending time researching the institution of the Electoral College, the history, and what it means, I found two opinions that stood out. The first being that the Electoral College should be abolished and replaced with a popular vote by either amending the constitution or having each state make their electors vote for whoever won the popular vote. Between the arguments of keeping the Electoral College and eradicating it, the latter is favored by Americans. In fact, according to a recent poll conducted by Gallup, 61% of U.S adults favor the use of the popular vote instead of the Electoral College (“61% of Americans Support Abolishing the Electoral College”). In the words of Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren, a main proponent of this view, “Everyone’s vote should count equally — in every election — no matter where they live […] But the way it works right now, come general election time, presidential candidates don’t travel to every state. They zero in on just a few battleground states […] But your power in our democracy shouldn’t be determined by where you live. Everybody running for president ought to have to come and ask for your vote” (“Get Rid of the Electoral College”). According to this view, the Electoral College makes it so that presidential candidates only focus on swing states, making other areas seem unimportant. This view also argues that with the current system in place, the people of America don’t get their voices heard, as at times, the Electoral College does not vote in line with the popular vote. These arguments are some of this position’s main reasons for abolishing the Electoral College.

The opposing view is that the Electoral College should not be abolished. According to a recent Gallup poll, this argument is the less popular of the two, with only 38% of Americans in favor of keeping the current system (“61% of Americans Support Abolishing the Electoral College”). Maria Lynn McCollester is a political scientist and adjunct professor at Carnegie Mellon University. Ms. McCollester, a proponent of keeping the Electoral College, and wrote a piece in the International Social Science Review stating that,

There are three key reasons to support the continuation of the Electoral College. First, to support the continuation of ‘balanced federalism’ […] Second, the elimination of the Electoral College would destroy the two-party system that has evolved from it […] Third, though many might argue that the Electoral College is outdated and that the Founding Fathers could never have imagined the expansive nature of the United States, it has survived and thrived since 1787, adapting to the ever changing physical and political landscapes of the United States” (“Counterpoint: Preserving the Electoral College”).
According to this view, the Electoral College is a key structure in the U.S. government, and, by abolishing it, many things would go down with it. This argument is an important view, and is similar to the other arguments surrounding the abolishment of the current system.

My view is that we should get rid of the Electoral College. However, I do concede that it would be extremely difficult to amend the constitution and could lead to a constitutional crisis. Because of this, I support the idea of the National Popular Vote. The National Popular Vote is an agreement that according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, “[...] seeks to ensure that the presidential candidate who wins the most popular votes nationwide is elected president. When a state passes legislation to join the National Popular Vote Compact, it pledges that all of that state’s electoral votes will be given to whichever presidential candidate wins the popular vote nationwide, rather than the candidate who won the vote in just that state” (“National Popular Vote”). I support this idea because it will eliminate many issues with the Electoral College, while not having to deal with the process of amending the constitution. Though I concede that this process could affect federalism because the Electoral College is essential to the balance of American government, I maintain that getting rid of this outdated establishment is more important to our current society. Although some argue that Democrats just want to get rid of the Electoral College because it cost their candidate the 2016 election, I argue that this is simply not true because there have been calls to eradicate the Electoral College before the 2016 election even happened.

In conclusion, the issue of the Electoral College is extremely important because it affects everyone in the United States. As Americans, we should not keep a process that has proven to not represent the opinion of the majority of voters. The Electoral College is clearly outdated and unfit for our democracy, meaning that something needs to be done, and soon. Americans should not allow their leader to be chosen by a 250-year-old institution that has clearly outlasted its usefulness.
Analytical Essay

Hamlet vs. Claudius

When reading through the play Hamlet and Claudius prove to act more similar than initially thought. Not only do they share the same motives, they give false representations of themselves by manipulating the people around them. The main conflict in the play arises when the similarities and differences between Hamlet and Claudius prevail. Shakespeare used the tension between the antagonist and protagonists to move the story along to a tragic ending that results in the death of almost everyone in the play. Throughout Hamlet, many key aspects of Claudius and Hamlet’s personalities make them more alike than Hamlet thought. Shakespeare acknowledges that when he uses foil and reveals a tragic, yet important life lesson later on.

The personality changes of the characters slowly prevail from the beginning to the end of the momentous play when they seek power and revenge. At first glance, Hamlet acts as the innocent son who lost his father, however this quickly changes when the truth about his father’s death remains hidden. When Claudius speaks to Hamlet saying “Tis sweet and commendable in your nature” (Shakespeare 1.2.87), Hamlet’s character change clearly stands out once the play concludes. This sweet and innocent Hamlet mourning his dead father quickly changes when he starts acting mad towards the people that he cares the most about. Along with Hamlet, Claudius experiences a shift in the way he perceives the other characters. Claudius too pushes away the people that he knows in many instances. The main two points demonstrate themselves when he kills his own brother for power and then marries his wife, and when he sends Hamlet away for execution. Once Claudius finds out that Hamlet knows that he killed his father, he acts completely different towards him and wants him dead so that the truth will never come uncovered. Shakespeare used the strengths of both the antagonist, Claudius, and the protagonist, Hamlet, to move the play forward with many climatic moments.

When writing Hamlet, Shakespeare designed the two characters, Hamlet and Claudius, in a way so that they contrast each other. The way that Claudius and Hamlet manipulate the people that they know shows how their personalities differ. Claudius manipulates people by acting nice and getting on their good side to get what he wants. When Claudius tries to comfort Hamlet because he lost his father he says “But to persevere in obstinate condolence is a course of impious stubbornness. ‘Tis unmanly grief. It shows a will most incorrect to heaven, a heart unfortified, a mind impatient, an understanding simple and unschooled” (Shakespeare 1.2.95-100). Claudius tries to get the death of his brother off the mind of Hamlet so as not to bring up any suspicion that Cladius did actually kill the King. The differences in the two characters show because Hamlet manipulates people in a way that turns them against him. When trying to reveal the truth about his father and make his mother feel guilty for marrying so quickly, Hamlet says “Mother, you have my father much offended “ (Shakespeare 3.4.13). Gertrude later goes on to cry and accuse Hamlet of trying to kill her because he acted insane to get what he really wanted out of her, the truth. While they differ in the ways that they manipulate people, they act in some of the same ways which makes them similar.

When looking at Claudius and Hamlet immediately they seem very different and polar opposites, however, they share many of the same traits. The personalities, ambition, and willingness to kill of Hamlet and Claudius make them more alike than ever. To get the power and revenge that they so desire, they will do whatever it takes as displayed throughout Hamlet. This goes to show that they want to reach the goals that they most desire because of their ambition. Hamlet puts on many different facades and persists on getting revenge by murder which ultimately brings up the question, how much better can Hamlet really be? When trying to get the revenge that he so desperately wants, Hamlet’s true colors reveal that he remains on the same level as Claudius.

Hamlet and Claudius prove that they foil each other numerous times throughout the play. The characters show their main differences in the way that they manipulate the people around them. Proven time and time again, they act very similar in the way that they go after what they want and they will both do whatever it takes to get what they want.
want, even if that means killing the people closest to them. Shakespeare highlighted this throughout the play along with the hidden lesson of revenge.
Investigation of Racial Values

Investigation of Racial Values

Sparking a discussion amongst critics around the world, the controversy exhibited in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn reaches classrooms and people of all ages. Since the book’s publication in 1855, it has received a medley of responses, resulting in an ongoing ban and reinstatement cycle. Society’s value of the novel has contributed to the many changing arguments that discuss whether the storyline and the characters emanate racist attitudes; the dimensions of the novel are worth investigating to add to the argument. Many critics argue that the satirical purpose of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn negates criticisms that regard the novel as racist; however, the childlike depiction of Jim as a low-comedy character proves that the novel perpetuates racist tendencies.

Portrayed as a foolish man, Jim allows his naivete to continuously lead him into the deceitful hands of the children, Huck and Tom. Immediately after Jim and Huck lose each other in the heavy fog that settled on the islands, the reader is first introduced to Jim’s ignorant qualities. Taking advantage of these qualities, Huck convinced Jim that they never lost each other nor was there any fog to begin with; Huck falsely accused him of creating the delusion on his own. This newly painted version of reality led Jim to admit “[he] did dream it,” willingly opposing his instincts (Twain 98). He sets aside what he knows as truth and not only positions a child’s word above his own but also believes it entirely. Discredited within this scene, Jim’s authority shapes him into a man incapable of differing between dreams and reality to the audience. Likewise, the ending chapters of the novel elevate Jim’s childlike innocence as the tricks played by Huck and Tom transform into torment. While instructing him to house spiders and rats, they explain to Jim that “a prisoners got to have some kind of dumb pet,” a notion completely unrelated to Jim’s escape (Twain 238). When Jim tries to question the boys’ intent, Tom tells him to stop “act[ing] foolish,” attempting to further ease Jim’s valid concerns. Accepting this belittlement, Jim trusts the lies that Tom feeds him and believes that Tom’s way is his only chance to obtain freedom; in doing so, Jim degrades his individual values, thus degrading himself as a person. One may ask himself/herself: if Jim doubts himself as well as the things he knows to be true in the novel, what might prevent any reader from discrediting him in the same way? The answer is simple: nothing. Because the novel very quickly degrades Jim into an absolute fool who submits to the apparent fraudulence of Tom and Huck, the overall image of the slave narrative illuminates in a derogatory light.

Throughout the novel, the severe circumstances concerning Jim and his imprisonment evolve into facetious amusement enabled by Huck and Tom. Constantly at the mercy of the two boys, Jim’s humanity wastes away while he blindly trusts what life he has left in their absent-minded hands. He entrusts them with the most precious humanitarian gift:, his freedom; yet, Huck and Tom continue to regard the man as “this creature who bleeds ink and feels no pain,” blatantly mistaking him for “something less than human” (Marx 295). Again and again, Jim becomes the subject of a game, writing notes in his blood to perform his comedic character that the novel establishes. Undoubtedly, Huck and Tom mistreat Jim and yet he remains oblivious, without question, to the antics that Tom labels as plans for Jim’s simulated escape. At no time do the boys concern themselves with Jim’s well-being during his journey to independence; they instead center their efforts in carrying out Tom’s superfluous plan to its entirety. The most crucial line in the last few chapters emerges when Tom admits that the exploitation he exposes Jim to was simply because “[Tom] wanted the adventure of it” (Twain 260). From sleeping with snakes to spending every waking moment carving another set of mournful declarations on the wall, Jim endured the torment that befell him, hoping to earn salvation he so desperately deserved, only to discover that his constitutionally given right was merely an instrument for Tom’s enjoyment. Tom did not intend to free Jim from a life of hatred and captivity; he intended to only have a good laugh. His actions can closely compare to those of an unfeeling slave owner, who owns slaves for their own benefit. The novel poorly depicts Jim, a slave who itched for liberty, as a clown and devalues the slave’s liberty, a privilege to all.
The opposing view would argue that any racist nature displayed in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* satirical, a masterpiece of the novel’s design used with intent. The satire presented in the novel “is directed against a system at large” as the slave hunt throughout the plot portrays worldly views (Bercovitch 336). Validating the deception and foolishness of Jim’s character, the text’s satirical purpose intends to humor the audience. The book executes this successfully through the combined narratives of humor in which the book challenges cultural boundaries. Humorous tales, “a vehicle of deceit, [are] directed against the audience” while the storyline remains “constantly entertaining, often amusing, [and] sometimes hilarious;” they develop “a wonderful time,” defining values of social groups while inviting the reader to “[laugh] through it all” (Bercovitch 335). Huck’s response to Tom’s plan is an exaggeration that the ending further expands; the plot and its ending means to challenge society and the slave narrative itself. Because the narrative is considerably ironic, any literal interpretation remains unjustifiable. The “sufficiently sophisticate” audience, responsible for recognizing the “good kind of discrimination” embedded in the plot, welcomes the puzzle the novel provides and the critiques of the “world [it] portrays” (Arac 451). Achieving its comedic purpose, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has the intention of inspiring a mature audience to question societal values, making the reader laugh along the way.

The supposed purpose of the novel as satire does not effectively execute humor but instead undermines Jim and his efforts to gain independence. In arguing the novel’s satirical purpose, the reader’s perspective becomes limited to one way of comprehension. The audience may subject themselves to form a stance against the novel, validated in the plot’s failure to effectively execute a satire modern audiences understand, as they are too distant from the time period; therefore, “it is offensive for cultural authorities,” such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* “to grant legitimacy to only a single way of reading” (Arac 451). Inevitably, varied interpretations have resulted from the ongoing controversy, despite the opposing stance claiming the novel to uphold satire. Jim and his heart-breaking journey became an object of comedy, intended to degrade his fight for liberty and reveal Jim’s childlike attributes. The focus of the plot strays from “the most serious motive in the novel, Jim’s freedom,” and interprets it as “an object of nonsense” (Marx 294). Instead of highlighting the struggles Jim experienced nor the sacrifices he made, the novel fixates on Huck’s journey, Huck’s problems, and Huck’s opinions, hence the title of the book. Thus, the text cannot claim to execute a satirical take on the slave narrative and a hypocritical society when the plot does not make an effort to develop the slave Jim and his suffering.

Painted as a joke and a child, Jim could not comprehend Huck and Tom’s deceit while his enslavement never received the respect it deserved. Unknowingly, he was the victim of harassment and yet, the novel toys with his humanity in a process that shames slavery. Although many critics mask this racial prejudice behind a satirical approach that claims its legitimacy, throughout *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* the readers view Jim in a derogatory manner while Huck and Tom devalued his opinions and truth. His comedic depiction proves Tom’s plan uses Jim as a ploy in their adventure not as a man of equal value or worth.
Shamefully, Minorities Self-Deceive

Since the installation of the First Amendment brought by the Bill of Rights in 1759, Americans have been utilizing “free speech” to express their views on an array of subjects that their neighbors might otherwise find controversial. Whether it be via words flowing from the mouth or inscribed inside the cover of a book, Americans feel obligated to express their dissatisfaction in the name of bettering themselves, their family, or even their country. In Frederick Douglass’ "The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" and John Steinbeck’s "The Chrysanthemums," the narrators express disillusionment towards the treatment of women and African Americans; though these minorities’ difficulties differ both physically and physiologically, they remain united in their quest after the often self-deceptive American Dream.

In “The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass,” Douglass is a descent-based slave who believes in the equality of man, the inevitability of human development, and that the American Dream is achieved by a strong work ethic; demonstrated by his self-teaching of how to read and write, he deceives himself to believe that education is enough to get him ahead in life. At a young age, Douglass is jealous of the “white children” and says “The white children could tell their age” (Douglass 1). He equates the knowledge of one’s own birth date with being human and sees knowledge of such markers, when taken cumulatively, as a sign of being bright. Ironically, around the age of twelve, Douglass begins to befriend all the poor white boys by bringing them bread. He reflects within his autobiography that “As many as these I [Douglas] could, I converted into teachers” (Douglass 33). As a result, he learns that just because the “white children” are free and able to read, they still are vulnerable to the poverty and starvation that illiterate slaves experience. Slowly, Douglas realizes that he may be deceiving himself when he convinces himself that all he needs is an education to liberate himself from the slavery of his birth. Once it becomes clear that education is not the only variable necessary to elevate a man out of poverty, especially a man born into slavery, he also disproves the notion that the American Dream is achievable by independence and education alone, rather than through a strong work ethic.

In the “The Chrysanthemums” by John Steinbeck, the narrator’s gender symbolism and ambiguity convey the feminist realization that women during the 1930s suffer emotionally due to a lack of fulfilling educational and work opportunities, yet delude themselves into believing that the American Dream is equally attainable by them. Elisa, the protagonist, is a childless housewife who is denied active input in the running of their farm, or a social life that frequently takes her into the town where she might interact with other females in her position. Growing chrysanthemums that have bug-free stems, as well as working in men’s shoes and a hat, give evidence that not only she is not afraid to get dirty like a contemporary man, but that she may have insights to improve the production of the family’s orchard—insights ignored by her husband. Moreover, the narrator says that Elia’s “…face was lean and strong" to reinforce her strength of intellect and work ethic (Steinbeck 1). Nonetheless, for ambiguous reasons, she is reduced to keeping a clean house and to conversing with a wandering tinker, rather than working alongside her husband. Although his household and garden’s organization proves that she is capable of being an industrious partner on the farm, she still deludes herself into thinking that the growing of bug-free stems is a fulfilling pastime for a 1930s American woman. These flowers serve a symbolic replacement for her absence of children. In fact, it may be inferred that even if she were raising bug-free children, the wife in the story would find herself equally uninspired by the achievement. Her husband, Henry, symbolises the stable 1930’s life that Elisa has and is supposed to appreciate. He works so that she does not have to do so. Conversely, the arrival of the traveling tinker draws to Elisa’s attention that there may be a more adventurous life out there, and that is why she flirts with him. The Tinker, compared to Alisa’s husband, is an adventurer who lives spontaneously. He is not restricted by the goals of American polite society—money, home, spouse, and children. More importantly, he symbolises the unknown life that Alisa desires, her American Dream. To deceive Alisa into giving him business, the Tinker manipulates her by sharing a confidence regarding another woman whose pastime is gardening. She “Got nearly every kind of flower but no chrysanthemums.
Last time I was mending a copper-bottom washtub for her…, she said to me, 'If you ever run across (sic) some nice chrysanthemums...get me a few seeds.' That's what she told me." (Steinbeck 5). The tinker’s offer to deliver the chrysanthemums seeds to a woman whose life shares much in common with hers encourages Alisa to give him her business. The chrysanthemum seeds symbolize Alisa’s untapped potential. But in planting them and passing them onto another woman through this con man, she abandons the pursuit of her American Dream, one of outward exploration and change to self-deception. The Tinker leaves, and Alisa is in high spirits until she sees a black spot on the road into town. At that moment, she realizes that she has been deceived by the tinker and her own unrealistic dreams for adventure. These abandoned seeds on the symbolic road away from the farm that traps her--even if her escape from the farm is for but one night--crush not only her mood, but her illusions regarding the piece of the American Dream that are attainable by a woman such as herself. On the surface of the story, readers feel bad for Alisa and even blame the Tinker for ending her chance at a more adventurous life. Moreover, readers assume that Steinbeck’s frustration is directed toward the treatment of women during the 1930s. On the contrary, the disillusionment is Steinbeck’s frustration with the culture that women themselves self-impose on themselves—and those of their gender—by relying on others besides themselves to initiate good fortune. In this case, Alisa ultimately puts her hope for a more adventurous life, her American Dream, in the hands of her husband, after placing it futilely in the back of a tinker’s wagon; instead, she should have verbalized her need for a more active participation in the farm’s productivity, but does there is little evidence that the 1930’s woman possess the vocabulary and the self-interest, let alone the boldness.

In Frederick Douglass’ “The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" and John Steinbeck’s "The Chrysanthemums," the narrators express disillusionment towards the treatment of women and African Americans. As minorities, both protagonists experience difficulties that are tied to their own ignorance. While Alisa’s self-deception runs parallel to the enslaved Douglas, she believes that she will gain freedom through the actions of others; similarly, Douglas believes that the American Dream is equally achievable for a hard-working black man, once he is educated and liberated. In the end, both are stripped of their delusions, though it is unclear if either is made happier by their enlightenment.
How Vengeance Wars Morality

In William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, both Laertes and Hamlet are loyal constituents to their fathers and seek to avenge their murders with more bloodshed. Blinded by a sense of obligation to their departed fathers, they disregard the ramifications of their actions while pursuing justice. Even as they take different avenues towards revenge, they find their deaths intertwined and by the same poisonous blade. Some readers view that Hamlet’s plot’s five-part structure moves forward through the character of the ghost and the complications his command to obedience evokes; however, the foiling of William Shakespeare’s paired characters often better reveals the devastating effect of misplaced obedience and a call to vengeance via Laertes and Hamlet’s first introduction, their separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated resolution of each of these foiled characters.

Laertes and Hamlet are first foiled in the second Scene of Act one, when Laertes is granted a return to school abroad and Hamlet is not. Additionally, Laertes and Hamlet foil each other in whom they show obedience. Before returning to school, Laertes asks Claudius for his “leave and favour” (1.2.16) to leave for France. This obedience is merely due to Claudius being King, and done by the request of Polonius. The insincerity of this gesture is later showcased when Laertes aggressively demands answers for his father’s death from Claudius. Contrastingly, Hamlet seems to disregard the opinion of Claudius, until Gertrude asks him to stay. Hamlet obediently agrees to his mother’s pleas by responding, “I shall in all my best obey you, madam” (1.2.58). Instead of simply agreeing, Hamlet makes an effort to single out his obedience to only her wishes. He makes it known that Claudius does not have his respect. Both find themselves being indirectly obedient to the king at the request of their kin.

Laertes’s climax occurs once he returns home due to news of his father’s murder. He immediately disregards the King’s title and interrogates him. Without his father to instruct him into showing obedience, he lashes out and shows him little respect. Once Laertes discovers it was Hamlet who killed his father, he impulsively commits himself to vengeance and begins plotting Hamlet’s death. He wastes no time and tells Claudius of a poisonous concoction that he plans to “dip a knife in” (4.4.74) in order to kill Hamlet. Unlike Hamlet, who broods over how he will seek vengeance, Laertes hatches a plan immediately. Laertes lack of contemplation reveals how easily thoughts of revenge can cloud one’s judgement.

Similarly, Hamlet’s climax is centered on the murder of Polonius. Polonius is the first innocent person to be slain in the name of revenge. Once Hamlet discovers who he has murdered he disappointedly pauses to call him a “rash, intruding fool” (3.3.87). It is clear that Hamlet did not intend to kill Polonius; however, the limited effect this has on his conscious, reveals how how his morals have been compromised in the pursuit of vengeance. Instead of processing what he has done, he instantly tries to implement it into his grand plan. His moral obligation to avenge his father makes him believe that his actions are justified.

Driven by an obligation to their fathers, both Laertes and Hamlet achieve vengeance that coincides with their deaths. Once they have both been poisoned, and Laertes has avenged his father, he realizes that his “foul practice Hath turn’d itself on me,” (5.3.77) and he has brought upon his own death. Once he has achieved revenge he realizes that the destructive repercussions were not worth it. In retrospect, Laertes realizes what his impulsive decision caused, and before he dies he asks for forgiveness. Even though Hamlet methodically planned his revenge, he faired no better. Their deaths illustrate how even with the noblest of motives, the path of vengeance is one with destructive repercussions such as the loss of innocent lives.

In William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Laertes and Hamlet feel morally obligated to avenge their fathers. They allow revenge to take control of their lives, and cloud their judgement. Their misplaced obedience and commitment towards revenge causes them to act irrationally, leading to many unnecessary deaths. Some people may argue that Hamlet’s plot’s five-part structure primarily progresses through the ghost and the problems his command to obedience evokes; however, the foiling of William Shakespeare’s paired characters often better reveals the destructive effect of misplaced obedience and a call to vengeance via Laertes and Hamlet’s first introduction, their
separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated demise of each of these foiled characters.
Hamlet

Some readers view that Hamlet’s plot’s five-part structure moves forward through the character of the ghost and the complications his command to obedience evokes; however, the foiling of William Shakespeare’s paired characters often better reveals the devastating effect of misplaced obedience and a call to vengeance via Hamlet and Laertes first introduction, their separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated resolution of each of these foiled characters. Hamlet and Leartes are called to obedience and vengeance in the beginning of the story. Hamlet is called to both obedience and vengeance when his father’s ghost appears to him. The ghost asks him to take revenge on Claudius and Gertrude because they were the cause of his death. The ghost told Hamlet “Let not the royal bed of Denmark be A couch for luxury and damned incest” (1.5. 117) and to assure him there will be vengeance. Laertes is only called to obedience when his father sends him to school away for college. Both are called to obedience by their fathers which they will later learn will cost them a lot. The lesson on obedience or vengeance for Laertes is that he probably should’ve obeyed his father and not come back to Denmark.

In Hamlet’s climax we start to see that the call to obedience and vengeance from his father has started to have dramatic and serious effects. The call to obedience and vengeance took over Hamlet’s life and in his climax we start to see the vile cruelties and behaviors he committed. The climax for Hamlet is in the third Act. He kills Polonius thinking it was Claudius, he basically abuses and almost kills his mother for marrying Claudius so fast after his father died, he treats Ophelia horribly, and he publicly humiliates himself during the play scene. Hamlet almost gets his chance for revenge unto Claudius, which he already knows is guilty but something stops him, which calls into question if Hamlet was thinking if revenge is justified or needed in this situation. This shows how immature Hamlet is and how he might not even be acting insane at this point. His whole plan to trick the royals and then take his time to kill Claudius ultimately brought his mental state to the point of not even caring about life or death. The crumbling mental state of Hamlet is starting to show when he starts his long monologue “To be, or not to be, that is the question” (3.1. 23) which is him pondering suicide. Hamlet’s inability to act and indecisiveness are the results of the destruction of everyone around him. Because Hamlet couldn’t act fast and decisively, Denmark fell. If Hamlet had taken his first chance to kill the King, no one else would’ve died and his father’s honor restored. The longer he dragged out his plan more and more people got involved and in the end, died.

In Laertes’ climax he starts to fulfill his act of revenge which will have deadly consequences. The climax for Laertes is in Act 4 when he comes back from college abroad. He claims he came back to avenge his father’s death and that he is the one who deserves the throne. He marches in with an army almost like he is ready to fight. He accepts to fight Hamlet because Claudius has tricked him that everything is Hamlet’s fault. This shows how trusting the wrong person has irrevocable mistakes. Him conspiring with Claudius leads to the death of Gertrude as she mistakenly drinks the poisoned wine. His obsessive call to obedience to his father and his family honor is what will bring his downfall and ultimately his death. It is obvious that he is very short tempered, as Claudius was easily able to persuade him to fight Hamlet. If Laertes wasn’t so quick to anger and settled down and thought the situation through, he would have realized that everything was just Claudius’ trick.

In the end the resolution for both characters is tragic because they die. Before Laertes dies him and Hamlet make up and forgive each other. This proves how vengeance can blind one and cause harm to someone innocent. Laertes wasn’t guilty of anything but as soon as he came back from college and demanded revenge on Hamlet by the tricks of Claudius, he brought his death upon him. Laertes realized his mistake in trusting Claudius and feels guilty as he’s the reason why the entire royal family will die. This shows that the truth always comes out in the end and the liars will be punished. Hamlet let’s his indecisiveness and his inaction get the best of him. Him shying away from everyone is what started the rotten core of Denmark to spread like a virus. In the end Hamlet is praised like a hero for his bravery against the King.
Contrary to popular belief, Hamlet's plot's five-part structure does not move forward through the character of the ghost and the complications his command to obedience evokes; Instead in William Shakespeare's Hamlet, the foiled characters of Hamlet and Laertes exhibit the devastating effect of misplaced obedience and call to vengeance, as indicated in their separate introductions, separate climaxes, and their disastrous resolutions; They both learn that being too slow and too quick to action have it downsides. Their obsessiveness with revenge and obedience is what gets everyone around them killed. They are both obsessed with avenging their fathers and taking revenge on those who killed them. Their inability to comprehend what is real and not leads to their poor decisions and in the end they both end up dead. The play defines how complicated revenge and justice really are and the effects they have on people.
An Obedience for Vengeance

Some readers view that Hamlet’s plot’s five-part structure moves forward through the character of the ghost and the complications his command to obedience evokes; however, the foiling of William Shakespeare’s paired characters often better reveals the devastating effect of misplaced obedience and a call to vengeance via Hamlet and Claudius’s first introduction, their separate climaxes, and the seemingly fated resolution of each of these foiled characters.

Opening the play, readers are immediately introduced to a structured society with individuals ranking of different classes: primarily, Prince Hamlet is presented as above as others come to him for assistance in demonstration of obedience; furthermore, Claudius first interacts with Hamlet criticizing his mourning for his deceased father. This brief interaction sets the tone for the play and introduces an apparent conflict between the two. Claudius and Hamlet stand on common ground with their love for Gertrude, Hamlet’s mother and Claudius’s new wife. This extends throughout the play with the exception of Hamlet’s wavering. In addition to their love, both characters share obvious attributes as being dominant male figures that possess potent power, thus explaining the phallic symbols. Key differences become apparent when their relationship with the past king is observed. Hamlet’s father is deeply venerated by Hamlet and stands as a critical figure in his development; however, Claudius, the brother to the king, holds internal resentment as seen in his actions of murder against the king. The foiling of these two characters elaborates on the lesson of vengeance and obedience.

The indecisive Hamlet reaches his climax when he acts on his thoughts and accidentally kills Polonius in an act of obedience. In this moment Hamlet blindly murders the servant with the thought and intention of it being Claudius. This serves as a turning point for this is the first time readers see Hamlet execute a plan. Hamlet attempts to fulfill his dead fathers request to kill Claudius as an outward sign of obedience; furthermore, Hamlet obeys his father by sparing Gertrude and leaving her no harm. When Hamlet blindly thrusts his swords into the tapestry Gertrude exclaims, “O me, what hast thou done?” To which Hamlet responds, “Nay, I know not. Is it the king?” (3.4.7). By saying nay I know not, Hamlet proves a negative theme of obedience. The aforementioned scene is filled with emotions as Hamlet acts not on thoughts but through irrational instinct. Through this readers learn that deep into Hamlet's subconscious he wanted to kill Claudius and that it is his rational thinking that has prevented him in the past.

King Claudius meets his climax upon his death at the hand of Hamlet when vengeance is fully achieved. The king attempts to poison Hamlet with tainted wine but is treated with death in front of all. Hamlet who has taken a sip of the poison runs his poisoned sword through Claudius, fulfilling his purpose. The king’s attempt at murder is an act of vengeance to rid himself of suspicion and do put his soul at rest. While the king is not granted his vengeance the readers are gifted with the death of the “antagonist”, enthralled the audience. The living Laertes explains the intent of the king by stating, “He is justly served. It is a poison tempered by himself. Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. Mine and my father’s death come not upon thee, Nor thine on me.” (5.2.325). This negative vengeance serves as a reflection for the evil within Claudius. Justice is achieved when the King dies but also for Hamlet's death as he killed the innocent Polonius. While Hamlets climax demonstrates obedience, Claudius’s climax is filled with murder and vengeance.

Following the active death of Claudius, the resolution for both foiled characters is stated in Hamlet’s dying words as acts of vengeance and obedience are fulfilled. He states, “Heaven make thee free of it. I follow thee./I am dead, But let it be./Horatio, I am dead. Thou livest. Report me and my cause a'right/To the unsatisfied.” (5.2.330-335). Negative obedience and vengeance is brought forth to the audience in Hamlet's dying words. The aforementioned quote from Hamlet attempts to right out the play and tie a knot over the previous conflicts. Shakespeare rids the play of conflict along with the characters as to bring awareness to the human emotion involved in the conflict. It is human nature that brings forth vengeance and obedience and allows it to become such a prominent theme. The readers learn
that obedience can be crucial in one's development and can drive a character into separation with reality. Vengeance teaches the lesson that raw emotion is often wrong in its delivery and only ends in poor decisions. Both of which inherently end in tragedy, a trademark of Shakespeare.

In William Shakespeare’s Hamlet, foiled characters such as Hamlet and Claudius drive the plot’s five-part structure along with the development of the lesson that obedience is crucial in character development and vengeance is pure evil.
Bravery and Moral Courage

Throughout the middle ages, King Arthur and his roundtable knights were the standard for the ideal male. At the time, there was a lot of importance placed on honor and bravery. The knight's honor was based on their morals and standards, and their bravery was the ability to be strong and confident even in immediate danger. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight exemplifies the balancing act between bravery and moral courage that those knights took part in. The relationship between bravery and moral courage is illustrated through symbolism and situational irony in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, exemplifying how bravery and moral courage are both characteristics of the ideal man.

The knights are tested multiple times through the story. Almost immediately, the green knight challenges the men to a game, and nobody steps up but King Arthur. In an effort to protect his king from any harm, Sir Gawain steps up and accepts the challenge on behalf of his king. This is the first moment where his actions are symbolic of bravery and moral courage. He had to have enough moral courage to want to protect his king, and he had to be brave enough to accept the possibility of his head being cut off. At this moment, Sir Gawain is the embodiment of bravery and moral courage, but when the green knight picks up his own head, Sir Gawain becomes startled and somewhat unbridled. He would have to journey to the green castle and face the green knight, or risk going back on his word, violating his moral code, and showing a lack of bravery. The latter was not an option, so in a year's time he set off for the green castle. Once he arrives, he is immediately being tested by the lord's wife. Sir Gawain accepts a green girdle that is supposed to save his life, but he lies to the lord when asked about it. This moment represents Gawain's lapse in judgement, moral courage, and bravery. He had to lie to the lord which broke his moral courage, and he could not face the green knight without the promise that he would live which shows his lapse in bravery. When caught, the green knight leaves a cut on Gawain's neck symbolizing his cessation from his honor and moral code.

After receiving his punishment, Sir Gawain rides back to the castle with his head held low. He knows that he broke his honor and word, and that he would have to tell Arthur what happened. After hearing what happened, Arthur decides to completely forgive Gawain. He recognized how Gawain told the truth about what happened to him even though it was embarrassing. Gawain could have easily lied and nobody would've known, but by telling the truth he showed that he learned the lesson that the Green Knight was trying to teach him. Always stick to your morals and honor even if it puts your bravery to the test. From that moment on, Arthur made all the knights of the roundtable wear a green patch as a symbol of bravery, a strong moral code, and honesty.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a test of bravery and moral courage. Sir Gawain breaks his moral code, but in the end he redeems himself by being honest. The author is illustrating how bravery and moral courage are both important parts of the ideal man. Also, instead of being in conflict, they work together to make a truly honest and good person. Finally, when a person breaks their moral code, even an infinitesimal infraction, they must own their mistake and work to fix it. That is truly the mark of a good man.


**Just Punishment**

Within the American criminal justice system, the longest sentence given in United States history is thirty-thousand years (EXPRESS News). Is this punishment too excessive? What crime did the accused commit? Charles Scott Robinson is convicted of sexually assaulting six children. As a result, the jurors find it just to charge Robinson with five thousand years per victim. Throughout the history of the United States, the legal system has essentially determined punishments or sentences on the basis of justifications in court trials proving retribution and reason are complementary. In Dante Alighieri’s *Dante’s Inferno*, the narrator implements symbolism, as well as Biblical and moral grounds, to assert that punishment and justice go hand-in-hand.

Throughout *Dante’s Inferno*, the narrator accentuates the perspective that punishment and justification intertwine through the emblematic, Biblical, and moral grounds of Dante’s redemption. After straying from a righteous life, Dante arrives at the Dark Woods of Error where he possibly faces punishment. However, as Minos, a judge in the underworld, questions Dante’s path, Virgil reveals it is the will of God, as well as “his fate… to enter every door” (Alighieri 125). Instead of facing punishment, Virgil asserts that God has given Dante an opportunity at redemption. “Only by leaving ‘home’ and traveling to his real home, can he find his real self” and fix this deviation from the “right” path (Foster 89). In other words, only by guiding his path of life back to a righteous one can Dante escape hell towards redemption. Ultimately, Dante avoids punishment simply because it was God’s will to deem it just to gift him this opportunity at redemption. Within Dan’s epic poem, the connection between justification and punishment are emphasized through the symbolic, Biblical, and moral representations of Dante’s redemption.

Dante Alighieri’s epic poem further highlights the concept that retribution and reasoning share a common ground through the symbolism and the moral grounds of the carnal sinner Francesca da Rimini. Within literature, the stereotypical symbolism for love is typically represented through portrayals of innocence and naivety. However, the innocence of love in this case is overshadowed by the sin of lust: “Innocence, then its loss” (Foster 31). Unlike Dante and his redemption, Francesca da Rimini faces punishment for the sin of lust: she committed adultery with her brother-in-law for “love”. Dwelling within the Second Circle of Hell in which sinners are continually thrown by a violent, perpetual storm without “hope to comfort them,” Francesca faces never-ending torture simply because her life is based on the principles of emotions and love, thus deeming her uncontrollable (Alighieri 126). The punishment of being thrown uncontrollably and violently reflects Francesca’s uncontrollable life of love; for instance, instead of reaching a peaceful ending, Francesca da Rimini has to accept her death and hellish punishment without settling with Paolo. *Dante Inferno*’s concept of just retribution is indubitably established through Dante’s use of the symbolism and moral grounds of Francesca da Rimini.

Within this epic poem, Dante Alighieri continually conveys that punishment and justification parallel each other through the symbolic actions, morals, and Biblical representations of the treacherous sinner Count Ugolino. Dwelling in the Ninth Circle of Hell in which he eats the head of Archbishop Ruggieri for the sin of betrayal, Count Ugolino had betrayed the Italian city of Pisa in its disputes against other Italian cities. In this scenario, Dante “employs the figure of the vampire as an emblem of the way [famine and sorrow]… battens on and consumes its victims” (Foster 15). Ironically, Count Ugolino is consumed by famine and “[chews himself] for hunger,” as well as sorrow, which can never be satisfied (Alighieri 132). His famine and sorrow are driven by the Tower of Hunger, along with the unjust punishment of his sons, while his consumption of Archbishop Ruggieri’s head symbolizes an act of revenge for this unjust punishment of his sons. Ironically enough, his revenge can never satiate his famine or sorrow. Dante’s use of a treacherous sinner Ugolino—his actions, morals, and Biblical representations—highlights that retribution and reason intertwine.
In *Dante’s Inferno*, Dante Alighieri reinforces the concept that punishment and justification go hand-in-hand through the use of symbolism and the acknowledgement of Biblical and moral grounds. Dante’s focus on just punishment accentuates the order and rights nations or states must uphold and enforce. Ultimately, Dante reflects upon fictitious, Biblical references in order to highlight the true connection between retribution and reasoning; his assertions of justification and punishment shed light on the disparity between sinners and the innocent.
Transcendentalism in Prejudice America

In today's society, protected by the Constitution of the United States, approximately ninety to ninety-five percent of people still hold some sort of prejudiced views (UW News). For perspective, prejudice exists among nine out of every ten Americans or about three hundred five million Americans in total. Throughout the history of the United States, the pervasive roots of prejudice have essentially determined social life and norms in society, especially during the Progressive Era. Ironically, the Progressive Era was a period of widespread social activism and reform across the United States advocating to break away from the societal norms of prejudice. E.L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* accentuates the theme of transcendentalism and individuality during the Progressive Era of the prejudice America through symbolism, a bildungsroman, and voice development through structural and narrative choices.

Throughout *Ragtime*, E.L. Doctorow emphasizes the themes of nonconformity and individuality through the symbolism of Tateh’s silhouette portraits, the escapes of Harry Houdini, and the Pyramid of wealth and power. Undoubtedly, transcendentalism and individualism began to prosper during the period of widespread social activism as Tateh’s “art of silhouette [flourished] on the streets of the New World” (Doctorow 71). As a Jewish immigrant, Tateh’s silhouette art symbolizes the eradication of prejudice against immigrants and the attempt to break away from societal norms and social stratifications, even reflected through the portrayal of other characters used to represent the wealthy elite. For instance, Evelyn Nesbit continually returns to have her silhouette done by Tateh in order to meet with his unnamed daughter. Not only does this show how Evelyn disregards their differences in class, but it signifies her attempts to distinguish herself from the other stereotypical wealthy elite class, similar to how each of Tateh’s silhouette pieces of her symbolizes individuality. Irrefutably, Harry Houdini was unparalleled as an escape artist, however, there was one ultimate bondage he could never escape: “he was a Jew” (Doctorow 67). As a Jewish-Hungarian immigrant, Houdini faced mistreatment and prejudice in all facets of his life and career. Similarly, the systematic discrimination he faced as a result of his religious association and immigrant status was metaphorically represented through his infamous escape from the Warden’s jail. Houdini’s attempt and success in escaping the bounds of Murderer’s Row, not only highlighted his exceptional success and talent, but also paralleled his struggle to escape the prison of an oppressive, anti-Semitic society. Essentially, his continual bold actions demonstrated his attempts to gain individuality and break away from societal norms within a prejudiced society, reflecting his artistry as an “escape” from the society in which he felt trapped. His freedom is driven by oppression. Dominating the social structure, J.P. Morgan reasoned that “individuation may be compared to a pyramid in that it is only achieved by the placement of the top stone” (Doctorow 263). Undeniably, the Pyramid, the most secret and exclusive club, further emphasized the disparity between the elite and lower classes of America. Not only did the Pyramid symbolize the separation and prejudice among the classes and immigrants, but it also paralleled America’s social ‘pyramid’ to the social structure of ancient Egypt and its infamous buildings. History reflects the long-lasting social hierarchies. Doctorow’s use of symbols—the Ford Model T, the escapes of Harry Houdini, and the Pyramid of wealth and power—highlight the theme of transcendentalism and individuality during the Progressive Era.

In E.L. Doctorow’s *Ragtime*, the bildungsroman novel accentuates the theme of transcendentalism and individuality through the coming of age of Evelyn Nesbit. As the novel progresses, Evelyn Nesbit, a dynamic character, transitions from the wealthy elite to the lower class of the immigrants. During her coming of age, Evelyn signifies the bond between the upper class and the lower class, the immigrants, by breaking down the barriers that prejudice has placed up. In an attempt to take down the barriers of prejudice within the society of the Progressive Era, “Evelyn Nesbit had… fallen into obscurity” (Doctorow 571). Similar to the treatment of the immigrants at the time, which is portrayed in the novel primarily through Tateh and the little girl, Evelyn Nesbit symbolizes nonconformity and the resistance against societal standards. She is the gateway between social classes. Evelyn’s transition from life at the
summit of the social pyramid to a life of an inferior immigrant is her coming of age. E.L. Doctorow’s bildungsroman novel accentuates the theme of transcendentalism and individuality through Evenlyn Nesbit’s coming of age.

In *Ragtime*, E.L. Doctorow’s voice development through structural and narrative choices establishes the themes of seeking nonconformity and individuality during the prejudiced Progressive Era. Ragtime, music commonly characterized by a syncopated melodic line, was evolved and altered by African American musicians during the 1890s (Britannica); this type of music reflects the E.L. Doctorow ‘syncopated’ writing style. The musical rhythm and beats in Ragtime fluctuate, which parallel E.L. Doctorow’s writing as his writing changes between a multitude of perspectives. Doctorow’s “dialogue or polyphonic fiction is… restorative of neglected unheard voices in [American history and] culture” (Parks 455). Although his perspectives change from character to character, Doctorow maintains the pattern of using personal life experiences and characteristics to shape the characters in his writing. Ragtime music parallels Doctorow’s voice. Similarly to Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Poisonwood Bible*, Doctorow used personal life experiences within his novels to further develop their characters. Furthermore, Doctorow’s status as a second generation Russian Jewish immigrant strongly influenced his choice of characters: Harry Houdini, a second generation Hungarian Jewish immigrant; Tateh and the little girl, both Jewish immigrants. Through his writing, Doctorow was able to give his marginalized minority characters a voice and “spotlighted history’s outsiders, [particularly] immigrants” (NY Times). Doctorow even delved into more socio-economic topics and conflicts by referencing and acknowledging the Jungle, by Upton Sinclair, as historical evidence. This intertextuality emphasizes the unwarranted and unfair exploitation of and prejudice against immigrants (Sinclair). *Ragtime’s* theme of transcendentalism and individuality is indubitably established through E.L. Doctorow’s voice development through structural and narrative choices.

In *Ragtime*, E.L. Doctorow reinforces the themes of transcendentalism and individuality during the era of widespread social activism in prejudice America through symbolism, a bildungsroman, and voice development through structural and narrative choices. Doctorow’s focus on social movements emphasizes the pride for his immigrant status, while his use of life experiences in shaping and developing his characters and their journeys in unbalanced social stratifications makes his novel more personal. Ultimately, Doctorow reflects upon American history to accentuate the once prejudiced American society; his assertions of transcendentalism and individuality shed light on the stark disparity between the elite and lower classes.
**Lessons of Truth**

The Millers Tale

Chaucer creates a humorous and ironic environment when the Miller presents his tale. He also uses satire to address societal problems in the 14th century. He very well represents the relationship between women and men during that time period and teaches a lesson about fidelity as well. His use of satire strikes at the flaws of marriage in the 14th century and presents the reader with a humorous way of looking at the roles of women and men back in that time period.

One of the main societal problems of the 14th century was the role that men and women played in a relationship. In the Miller's tale there is an undeniable flaw in the characters' relationship, which is jealousy. The carpenter that is married to his, “fair and youthful wife” (Chaucer pg. 1), carries an extreme amount of jealousy of his woman because she was, “wild and young, and he was old and deemed himself as like to be cuckold” (Chaucer pg. 1). Chaucer mentions multiple times throughout the tale how his wife wants to cheat on John, the carpenter, but she is too afraid. Here, Chaucer shows the role that women typically played in a relationship with a man. They were extremely submissive and, in a sense, scared of their husbands. Chaucer illustrates this fear that the carpenter's wife has by saying, “unless you will await me secretly, I know I’m just as good as dead”(Chaucer pg. 2). On the flip side, Chaucer demonstrates the feelings that wives may have had towards their husbands, showing that the carpenter’s wife was willing to cheat on her husband. The relationship clearly isn’t centered with love seeing as John runs off of jealousy while Alisoun isn’t a faithful wife. Neither one has intentions of being together out of love which Chaucer makes explicitly through the entrance of Nicholas’ character.

Another aspect that Chaucer points out in the Miller's Tale is fidelity. The main theme of the story is brought about because Nicholas wants the wife of a married man. This idea of being loyal was a foreign idea in the mind of Nicholas. This shows the correlation between men not caring about who a woman belongs to and women not caring about their husbands. In the tale Nicholas says, “Indeed, unless I have my will, For secret love of you, sweetheart I’life spill” (Chaucer pg. 1). Nicholas has no intentions of caring about his relationship with John, he simply is focused on what he wants. In this way women are viewed as more of objects or prizes rather than people with true feelings. Chaucer again teaches the lesson that cheating on your lover is wrong yet, he writes the tale in such a way that makes it seem like a normal thing. In the end all the characters get what they deserve because of the poor decisions they’ve made. For Nicholas he got it, “right in the arse”(Chaucer pg. 3). Chaucer is showing that cheating is immoral and shouldn’t be done or else the consequences will follow you after and they won't be positive.

It is undeniable that Chaucer has a magnificent way of using literary devices to present his thoughts. His use of humor and irony shines throughout the Miller’s Tale. He shows how much of a fool John is when he falls for the plan that Nicholas had set up. Chaucer is able to show how idiotic and gullible men were during those times and he lets the jealousy of the carpenter represent the ignorance of a man. He then ties the whole story together through the use of irony. In the end, no one was short of the karma they got. Absalom, full of ignorance, “with his mouth he kissed her naked arse”(Chaucer pg. 6). Nicholas, after getting burned by the rod in the arse began to, “like on mad he started in to cry”(Chaucer pg. 6). Then finally, the jealousy of John had gotten to him, “For in the falling he has smashed his arm, He had to suffer, too”(Chaucer pg. 7). Nicholas and Alisoun had also told everyone that he was mad. Chaucer uses irony to pull together all the bad prons of society and laughs at them so that maybe people would make a change.

Through the Miller’s Tale, Caucher striked at the flaws of society, men and women, 14th century relationships, and fidelity. Along with this he got his point across in such a way that was humorous and intriguing. He made his ideas stick out in the Miller’s Tale because it was clear as day that all the characters had committed some wrong. His use of satire was a valid way in which the reader was able to understand the role that women and men played in a relationship and also understand the problems of 14th century marriage.
Critical Essay

Critical Essay – Persuasive Essay
(This is A Persuasive Essay I wrote that is Intended to drive people to buy a stress relief product)
Is stress invading your everyday life? Are you fearful of the long-term effects of stress on your body and immune system? Have you tried other modern methods to no avail? Look no further than Tuono Blu's Adrenal Support for Women. Stop letting stress affect your health and reduce your immune system. Specifically formulated to help you handle the stress you may encounter but cannot diffuse our Adrenal Support has ingredients proven to aid in stress relief and immune health so your stress does have the chance to affect your bodies everyday function.
Let's break it down starting with Tuono Blu's Adrenal Support's main ingredient. Vitamin C! Possibly the most popular vitamin in the family, vitamin C has shown a correlation of stress relieving benefits and immune system supporting properties.
Psychology Today states, “Those who got vitamin C reported that they felt less stressed when they got the vitamin. The researchers believe that vitamin C should be considered an essential part of stress management. Earlier studies showed that vitamin C abolished secretion of cortisol in animals that had been subjected to repeated stress.”
Analyzing the results of the study through Psychology Today, we can infer that because the main ingredient in Tuono Blu’s stress relief supplement is vitamin C, the supplement can positively help reduce your stress levels.
So, beyond Vitamin C how can Tuono Blu help? Well that would be the many other ingredients that help result in a less stressful lifestyle.
Here are some other ingredients in Tuono Blu’s Adrenal Support & their benefits:
Firstly, Vitamin B6 has been shown to reduce symptoms of depression and naturally lower stress levels. Secondly, Ashwagandha Root has shown to reduce cortisol levels in some studies, and in that respect may help reduce the symptoms of stress. Lastly, L-Tyrosine, an amino acid has been proven to regulate stress levels by aiding in the production of dopamine.
People tend to lean towards supplements like Tuono Blu’s Adrenal Support when looking for a natural solution backed by scientific studies to improve stress levels. Also due to its dietary benefits such as: Non-Dairy, Gluten-Free, Paleo-Friendly, Keto-Friendly, and Non-GMO. Tuono Blu’s Adrenal Support is packed with ingredients that reduce stress. An additional benefit to making the choice for Tuono Blu’s Adrenal Support is transparency. The product isn’t packed with extra ingredients that don’t need to be there. Tuono Blu’s Adrenal Support does not contain any artificial colors, flavors, or sweeteners. This stress relief supplement doesn't include any preservatives, sugar or starch. Every ingredient in Tuono Blu’s Adrenal Support has a good purpose so you know what you’re putting in your body and why. When you choose Tuono Blu’s Adrenal support 100% made in one of America’s FDA certified facility, you are gaining serenity, health, energy, and peace of mind. With just two pills a day you can be on the way to a calmer, healthier, future.

Work Cited

Publication: Psychology Today
Going Against Humanity’s Coin Toss

Many marvel at the seemingly impossible idea of being able to choose the sex of an unborn child, but this concept has actually been made possible and is a controversial issue among parents and health professionals. Sex selection refers to the use of medical techniques to choose the sex of offspring. New technology makes it more accessible and prevalent in society, even as its harmful implications are being analyzed. While sex selection is an astounding feat of science and has beneficial qualities, it raises many concerns regarding legal measures, son preference, and discrimination. Sex selection perpetuates discrimination of women and should only be used for medical purposes when paired with effective action to redress institutional injustices against women.

Sex selection is done for medical reasons, family balancing, and sex preference. There are two ways to select the sex of a baby. The first method is preimplantation genetic screening (PGS), which is a type of genetic testing that is commonly used during IVF; it is the most reliable method. In vitro fertilization or IVF is the process of fertilization by extracting eggs, retrieving a sperm sample, and then manually combining the two in a laboratory dish. IVF is used to treat infertility, such as patients with damaged fallopian tubes or complications with sperm (“In Vitro Fertilization”). As technology improves, preimplantation genetic screening or PGS is being used to improve the rate of successful cycles. PGS is a type of genetic testing used during IVF before the embryo is implanted into the uterus of the mother. The purpose of it is to check for chromosomal abnormalities in an embryo because too many or too little chromosomes can disrupt the IVF treatment and cause miscarriages. However, the PGS treatment also detects if the embryo is a male or female so doctors can choose a healthy embryo for implantation and prevent the baby from having a sex-linked genetic disease, which is passed down through families through one of the X or Y sex chromosomes (“Pre-Implantation Genetic Screening”). The second sex selection method is called prenatal genetic testing or sex-selective abortion, which is done after a natural pregnancy, meaning without IVF. It employs an ultrasound to determine the sex of a fetus, and if it is not the desired sex, doctors terminate the pregnancy (“Gender and Genetics”).

The subject of sex selection through IVF has multiple different views, but some perspectives fail to consider both the harmful and beneficial implications of this method. Some suggest sex selection should be prohibited for any reason, but others argue it’s acceptable for family balancing. Contrarily, many believe sex selection should be used for medical purposes and detection of sex-linked genetic disorders only. In fact, Dr. Robert Gustofson, medical director of the Colorado Center for Reproductive Medicine, says his clinic does not normally engage in the practice of gender selection, but an exception would be if a couple were at risk of having a child with a genetic disorder linked to a particular gender. Gustofson says, “It’s a slippery slope: If we start selecting for gender, people could start requesting a certain eye or hair color, or height.” Sex selection and IVF can cost more than $20,000 and is used far more in developed countries. Furthermore, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine Ethics Committee endorses the use of PGS and sex selection for medical reasons, but initiating it in fertile patients is discouraged (Lieman and Breborowicz). Claims about sex selection and PGS need to be qualified to consider both pros and cons.

Additionally, there is debate over whether sex-selective abortion should be banned or not. In less developed countries, sex-selective abortion is more common and is done with ultrasonography, which is the most widely used detection method. According to the World Health Organization, “Since the early 1980s, the availability of ultrasound and other diagnostic technologies which can detect the sex of a fetus has in some parts of the world led to an accelerated increase in sex-ratio imbalances at birth” (1). Sex-ratio imbalances are problematic since there are more males than females; families and communities may pressure women to have sons or encourage abortion of female fetuses. However, if sex-selective abortion is banned, women may resort to illegal or clandestine abortions, that risks their health. According to Bonnie Steinbock, “There might be better ways to prevent the abortion of female fetuses, including measures to change sexist cultures through public education on sexual equality, the promotion of female...
literacy, and in general the empowerment of women.” Bans on sex-selective abortion paired with women empowerment can tackle the multiple issues of sex selection. With or without bans, sex-selective abortion can have adverse impacts.

Moreover, some critics and governments believe all sex selection practices including pre-screening for sex determination should be banned entirely. However, these bans can be harmful and prevent these countries from reaching their full potential in terms of medical care. Five countries have taken legal measures against sex selection for any reason, whether medical or not. China, India, Nepal, the Republic of Korea, and Vietnam put legal restrictions on the use of technology for sex selection purposes for sex determination and abortion. According to the journal, “Gender Ratio” by Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser, “India introduced the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PNDT) in 1994 which prohibited sex selection practices, including pre-screening to determine the sex of a fetus. In the decade which followed the introduction of the act, the sex ratio at birth did not improve.” Similarly, in China the sex ratio at birth of males to females was 114:100 in 1993. After the ban and in the early 2000s, this number rose to 118:100 (Ritchie and Roser).

However, the journal continues, “Without a ban the sex ratio might have increased even further. Some studies have argued that bans were effective in preventing a worsening of gender imbalance, even if they didn’t reduce it.” Regulations and bans have been effective, but bans should only be on non-medical sex selection practices because pre-screening for sex determination can detect genetic disorders and ensure the embryo is healthy. Sex selection to prevent the transmission of serious sex-linked diseases should not be prohibited because families should have a right to a healthy offspring. The sex selection bans imposed by China, India, Nepal, the Republic of Korea, and Vietnam put these countries at a disadvantage in comparison of medical care to other countries with sex detection technology that prevent genetic disorders and abnormalities. Thus, sex selection should not be banned entirely because it is not all harmful and can be very beneficial.

While sex selection can have positive effects, it also raises major concerns in countries with strong preferences for sons. In many cultures, sons are more valued than daughters because they carry the family name and are expected to financially care for their parents. Unfortunately, these centuries old ideologies are still prevalent in society and the medical field. Furthermore, a statement issued by UNICEF in 2011 states, “Sex selection in favour of boys is a symptom of pervasive social, cultural, political and economic injustices against women, and a manifest violation of women’s human rights.” Sex selection is an instrument for discrimination against women and girls. There is ongoing pressure in some families to produce sons, which preserves the sexist idea that girls have a lower status than boys. These beliefs are increasingly expressed through sex selection and continue to inhibit women’s rights.

One of the most concerning issues in all of this is violence and injustice as a result of sex ratio imbalance. Over decades, sex selection has caused a sex-ratio imbalance in many countries particularly in South Asia, East Asia and Central Asia. For example, the 2018 Global Gender Gap Report, published by the World Economic Forum states, “China has the world’s most skewed sex ratio at birth, with about 115 boys born for every 100 girls” (Zhou). The skewed ratio points out the alarming disappearance of millions of unborn girls because of son preference. The masculinization of births fuels a culture of sexism and violence as it can lead to trafficking women into forced marriages. According to UNICEF, “The lack of women available for marriage in some areas may lead to the trafficking of women for forced marriages from other regions or the sharing of brides among brothers.” This practice is extremely inhumane and brutal. The Human Rights Watch organization followed issues on bride-trafficking from Myanmar to China in which they described the horrifying process:

Traffickers prey on vulnerable women and girls, offering jobs in, and transport to, China. Then they sell them, for around $3,000 to $13,000, to Chinese families struggling to find brides for their sons. Once purchased, women and girls are typically locked in a room and raped repeatedly, with the goal of getting them pregnant quickly so they can provide a baby for the family. After giving birth, some are allowed to escape—but forced to leave their children behind. (“World Report 2019”)

Bride-trafficking is a cruel example of how women are treated as objects in society, especially in places with more males than females. Hence, sex-ratio imbalances lead to violence and injustices against women because men are more valued in many countries.

Furthermore, in an interagency statement titled Preventing gender-biased sex selection by OHCHR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO, it is stated, “The rise in sex-ratio imbalances and normalization of the use of sex selection is caused by deeply embedded discrimination against women within institutions such as marriage systems, family formation and property inheritance laws” (1). These negative attitudes towards women directly impact their reproductive decisions and pressures them to have sons because they are seen as superior to girls. When a country with a strong patriarchal society is given access to sex selection practices, it takes a step back in the fight for gender equality.

On the other hand, some argue sex selection for family balancing is ethical in the United States because there is not a strong preference for sons like in other countries. Family balancing is when “couples choose to have a child of
one sex because they already have one or more children of the other sex” (“Gender and Genetics”). Family balancing supporter Dr. Geoffrey Sher states, “Given that in the United States most couples do not care about the gender of their offspring, and only a minority are interested in selecting the sex of their children there is currently no risk that IVF sex-selection will impact the population gender balance.” Supporters of family balancing argue that it poses no threat to places where sons are not favored over daughters and is ethical because it does not lead to discrimination.

However, family balancing is damaging in less direct ways. Though there might not be strong sex bias in the United States and other more developed countries, the Western world has large immigrant populations that carry on cultural preferences for sons (Oommen and Ganatra 187). Family balancing aims to create variety of sex distribution in a family, but these concerns are insufficient and do not justify medical sex selection procedures because the welfare of the family is not endangered. Parents tend to treat children of different sexes differently or unfairly, whether they are cognizant of it or not, which can strengthen sexist ideologies. Family balancing is damaging because it entrenches the idea of two sexes, each with specific behaviors and roles in society; those who want sex selection for family balancing recognize and desire stereotypical qualities of a certain sex. Family balancing invokes heteronormativity which is “the belief that the sex-gender-sexuality binary is real, immutable, and definitive of human beings and their relationships” (Shahvisi). It is passively sexist, transphobic, and homophobic. Therefore, sex selection for family balancing should be prohibited because it risks perpetuating discrimination and sexist stereotypes.

Instead, sex selection should only be used for medical reasons like detecting sex-linked genetic disorders rather than sex preference. It also needs to be regulated by qualified individuals. Sex selection for family balancing or preference should be prohibited. However, bans alone are not enough. Along with these measures, countries should strive to improve attitudes and eliminate inequality towards women and girls in different aspects of life. Undoubtedly, sex selection technology has led to an accelerated increase in sex-ratio imbalances at birth, but the root of the problem of sex selection lies in the social, cultural, political, and economic injustices against women done through institutions. Negative attitudes towards girls and women directly affect their reproductive decisions, so effective action needs to be done to address the deeply embedded discrimination against women. Such efforts can prevent sex-selective abortion and illegal or clandestine procedures. Support for women’s rights through government, society, and media advocacy is necessary to achieve gender equality and lessen the sexist impacts of sex selection.

Overall, discrimination through sex selection is an ongoing and prevalent issue in the medical field. Sex selection perpetuates son preference and the idea that women have a lower status than men because it leads to male-biased sex ratios. These sexist beliefs are further ingrained in society with the use of sex selection for non-medical reasons like family balancing and sex preference. Sex selection should only be used to ensure unborn children and mothers are healthy; however, it must be paired with worldwide efforts to empower women. Ultimately, as healthcare and research improves, it is crucial that ethical concerns and societal implications are analyzed. If large-scale legal and social actions are taken against discrimination through sex selection, the world can reduce the impact of sexism and achieve greater gender equality.
Immunization and the Safety of the General Public

In recent years, vaccine refusal rates have been rising at an alarming rate, which could mean an increase in disease transmission. Since the 18th century, immunization has dramatically decreased the prevalence of some of the most deadly diseases of mankind (JPHMP). In short, immunization is the use of vaccines to stimulate one’s immune system through antibody production, allowing a person to build immunity to certain diseases without actually being infected. The new wave of “anti-vaxx” ideas and sources has prompted much debate, but the science put into the creation of vaccines is irrefutable. To ensure the safety of the general public, medical professionals should encourage U.S. citizens to make the choice to immunize their families since vaccines save lives, they’re reliable, and much of the doubt surrounding them is a result of misinformation.

Vaccines are often thought of as the “greatest contribution to global health,” having eradicated two diseases (smallpox and rinderpest) and significantly decreased the infection and mortality of numerous others. Live vaccines are made of a weakened version of the bacteria or virus of a disease. Some are made from dead forms of the organisms, which are denatured in a way to preserve their ability to induce an immune response. When a vaccine is given, the immune system detects the dead or weakened antigens and produces antibodies. These antibodies remain in the body and react when real antigens enter (“How do Vaccines Work?”). Beginning from the time of Edward Jenner, the creator of the first vaccine, the process of immunization has saved countless lives. An article published by the NCBI states, “It has been estimated that for each U.S. birth cohort receiving recommended childhood immunizations, around 20 million illnesses, and more than 40,000 deaths are prevented, resulting in $70 billion in savings” (Ventola). Thus, immunization not only protects individuals and saves money, but it also protects the general public. This is called herd immunity, which is the resistance to the spread of a contagious disease due to mass immunization. According to osteopathic family physician Paul Ehrmann, “Some diseases, like measles, require as much as 95 percent of the population to be vaccinated in order to achieve herd immunity” (“45 Percent”). If the majority of a community is vaccinated against a disease, it is unlikely that an outbreak would occur even if a few people cannot get vaccinations due to allergy, economic, or insurance reasons.

Before a vaccine is released to the public, it goes through a meticulous testing process that is heavily monitored by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Once a vaccine is officially licensed, the FDA, CDC, NIH, and other federal agencies track its effects on the public. Fortunately, the article “Preventing and Managing Adverse Reactions” states, “[Allergic] reactions are uncommon and anaphylaxis following vaccines is rare, occurring at a rate of approximately one per million doses for many vaccines” (CDC). Through proper research, testing, and analysis from medical professionals, any vaccine approved by the FDA is reliable for use among U.S. citizens.

Contrary to popular belief, most proponents of vaccine refusal are not uneducated individuals from the lower-income spectrum. Rather, they come from all types of backgrounds and have all done extensive research. A study presented in a journal article by Melissa L. Carrion concludes that there are three cues to why some mothers refuse to vaccinate their children: “perceived adverse reactions, endorsements from health care professionals, and perceived contradiction among expert-endorsed messages” (“An Ounce of Prevention”).

The study conducted interviews with fifty mothers who share why they have stopped vaccinations for their family or why they cast doubt on vaccines. For some of the mothers, one of their family members had severe negative effects after vaccination, and they attributed the questionable ingredients found in vaccines as the cause. In other cases where family members received adverse reactions, doctors did not directly confirm whether or not vaccines were the cause. Therefore, mothers used thorough research and their maternal instincts to come up with their own answers. Additionally, many experts and government websites contradict themselves. For example, one mother found an expert source that said that the MMR vaccine is safe to use for breastfeeding mothers. Another expert source claimed that the virus could be spread to breast-fed infants. Deciding that vaccines are not worth the risk, these mothers halted vaccinations for their families altogether. According to a different article by Carrion, “Participants
called upon an increasingly widespread lack of trust in [the vaccine] industry, as well as arguments that are legitimated in many other academic and activist communities” (“‘Do your research’”). These mothers consider the socio-political nature of science and suggest that the vaccine industry has certain economic interests that make their studies, research, and testing subjective entities. They are not given concrete answers to their immunization questions, and there are so many online sources that perpetuate the idea of vaccines being dangerous. Therefore, they give rational explanations to support their views.

While “anti-vaxxers” state reasonable arguments, the root cause of vaccine refusal is the miscommunication of medical professionals, starting with obscure patient and doctor interactions to the unclear information posted online. First, doctors must reassure patients about the ingredients found in vaccines. The main cause of vaccine hesitancy is the misconception that they result in many harmful side effects. It is true that vaccines contain additives and other ingredients that may seem questionable. However, every ingredient in today’s vaccines serves a specific purpose. These ingredients include preservatives, adjuvants, stabilizers, and residual by-products.

When used in vaccines, preservatives such as mercury-based thimerosal may seem daunting. However, thimerosal is made of ethylmercury, which is a different type of mercury than the kind that causes mercury poisoning, which is methylmercury. According to the CDC, “It’s safe to use ethylmercury in vaccines because it’s processed differently in the body and it’s less likely to build up in the body — and because it’s used in tiny amounts” (“What’s in Vaccines?”). Therefore, thimerosal is substantially less hazardous in comparison to its toxic counterpart, and the amount that is used in vaccines is not a health risk. In fact, the role of thimerosal in vaccines is to prevent contamination, and most vaccines don’t contain any in them. Moreover, adjuvants such as aluminum are present in some vaccines to improve the body’s immune response to the vaccine. In fact, healthy infants can rapidly get rid of aluminum in their bodies. Babies receive more aluminum from formula or breast milk than vaccines in the first six months of their lives (Jackson). Additionally, stabilizers such as sugar and gelatin are used in some vaccines. Stabilizers are substances that prevent degradation in foods and paints. In vaccines, they are used to protect the active ingredients and keep them effective after manufacture (WHO). Stabilizers are made from food products that are already included in one’s diet.

Furthermore, there are many residual by-products used in vaccines. Residual cell culture materials such as egg proteins are found in several vaccines, such as the influenza and yellow fever ones. They are used to grow enough of the virus or bacteria to create the vaccine. The CDC states that “there are two new flu vaccines now available for people with egg allergies. People who have severe egg allergies should be vaccinated in a medical setting and be supervised by a healthcare professional who can recognize and manage severe allergic conditions” (“What’s in Vaccines?”). Fortunately, this means that more people can immunize themselves than before. Another residual by-product used in vaccines is residual inactivating ingredients. An example of this is formaldehyde, which is a colorless pungent gas that is classified as a carcinogen. It’s diluted, but residual quantities of it still end up in vaccines to kill viruses and inactivate toxins during the manufacturing process. While this chemical is dangerous in large quantities, the concentration of formaldehyde present in vaccines is very minuscule compared to the amount that naturally occurs in the body. In addition, residual antibiotics like neomycin are used to prevent contamination by bacteria during the manufacturing process. The antibiotics that many people are likely to be allergic to, such as penicillin, are not used in vaccines (“What’s in Vaccines?”).

Moreover, one of the most used arguments against the immunization regulations for children is that certain vaccines have never been tested together before, yet they are given as “cocktail” or combination shots to infants. Currently, there are fourteen scheduled vaccines that are recommended to children in a span of two years. Each vaccine is spaced out over time, and many vaccines require more than one dose to boost immunity. Some contend that infant immune systems cannot take so many vaccines in such a short amount of time and that combination shots are unreliable. This misconception correlates to complete unawareness of the physiology of infants. In fact, “based on the number of antibodies present in the blood, a baby would theoretically have the ability to respond to around 10,000 vaccines at one time. Even if all 14 scheduled vaccines were given at once, it would only use up slightly more than 0.1% of a baby’s immune capacity” (Abraham). Infant immune systems are stronger than one may think, and combination shots are not lethal in any means. Any vaccines given together are scientifically safe to use, and even so, they are still tested in laboratories and licensed after approval by multiple medical agencies.

Thus, vaccination is a very safe practice. The “faulty” ingredients that many people worry about are generated in such small concentrations that the body produces more of them. It is the responsibility of medical professionals to relay this information to their patients, especially the ones who are still unsure of the reliability of vaccines. As for the few mothers whose family member has experienced an adverse event following immunization, they should not halt vaccination for the rest of their family. It only means that their doctors should be notified, and tests should be run before allowing a vaccine exemption. Exemptions fall into three categories: medical, religious, and philosophical. Since adverse events rarely occur, medical exemptions remain at a minimum. By definition, an adverse event is a health problem that happens after vaccination, whereas a side effect is when the health complication is proved to be
linked to vaccination. Most of the time, problems occurring after immunization are not a result of the vaccine, and the only main side effects related to vaccines are minor, such as a mild fever or sores (“Vaccine Side Effects”). Additionally, there are very few religions that are against vaccines. Immunization does not go against the religious texts and beliefs of Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus (Vincent). Many states allow religious exemptions but deny philosophical (personal) exemptions. Therefore, it is critical for doctors to explain what does or doesn’t count as a religious exemption in order to prevent people from abusing the system. Essentially, there needs to be more clear communication between doctors and their patients, whether it be in person or online.

In addition, the results of inadequate vaccination rates have caused the reemergence of many dangerous diseases. In 2002, measles was declared eradicated in the United States, but in 2014, there were over 600 reported cases. This outbreak made headlines across the nation because of its origin at a popular tourist attraction, its high rate of transmission, and its immense prevalence. Measles is a highly contagious disease. The chance of contracting measles when face-to-face with an infected individual is 90% (Ward et al.). Vaccine refusal downplays the severity of many vaccine-preventable diseases. The likelihood of dying from one of these diseases is extremely higher than the chance of experiencing an adverse event from vaccination. Children are exposed to bacteria and viruses every day, and rather than risk catching a disease that could be prevented, vaccination is a much less precarious alternative.

Overall, the immunization debate is an ongoing issue that is fueled by a multitude of online resources from both sides. Nonetheless, the anti-vaccine perspective disregards the meticulous research done by medical professionals in the past 200 years. Vaccines have repeatedly proved their efficiency, as the cases of potentially deadly diseases have decreased dramatically throughout the years. As more people refuse to vaccinate, herd immunity is compromised and diseases that were supposedly under control can reemerge and devastate many communities. Vaccines are reliable; research, testing, and continual monitoring have proved that. Medical professionals must relay this information to their patients in a clear manner, whether it be in person or through articles online. It must be well known that the risk of getting infected by a vaccine-preventable disease is much higher than the chance of facing an adverse event following vaccination. Through increased immunization rates, the United States will be able to see a healthier and more prosperous society.
Obsessive Vengeance

Some readers believe that Hamlet’s five act structure moves forward through Hamlet and his struggle with honor; however, the foiling of Shakespeare’s paired characters truly reveals the catastrophic effects of obsessive vengeance through foils between Hamlet and Claudius’s introduction, climax, and eventual resolution.

Hamlet and Claudius are first foiled in act 1. Claudius is having a gathering at his court while Horatio and Hamlet patiently wait to see the ghost of Hamlet’s father. Hamlet then says, “oft it chances in particular men the stamp of one defect his virtues else be they as pure as grace shall in the general censure take corruption from that particular fault” (1.4.25, 38). This is where the audience can begin to notice the difference between Claudius and Hamlet. Hamlet is giving a deep, thoughtful monologue on the corruption of faults to one’s character; emphasizing how Hamlet does have an intellectual side despite his impulsivity. Meanwhile, Claudius is only concerned with drinking and having fun. Hamlet’s monologue also foreshadows the corruption of his own “fault”, vengeance. Through foiling, Shakespeare conveys that a life of simple pleasures will never lead to vengeance, while a life spent in virtue could lead down a path of vengeance, thereby ruining one’s reputation and character.

As Hamlet approaches his climax in act 3, Shakespeare further reveals the consequences of vengeance. When Hamlet slays Polonius and confronts the queen, he declares, “A bloody deed? Almost as bad, good mother as kill a king and marry his brother” (3.4.29, 30). Gertrude proceeds to ask Hamlet what he is talking bout, and this is because Gertrude truly didn’t have anything to do with the murder of the Hamlet’s father. Hamlet is completely clouded by his vengeance. Hamlet believes that simply because Gertrude married Claudius so quickly she is an accomplice to his fathers murder. Due to his clouded judgement, Hamlet fails to consider that Gertrude marrying quickly was simply what was expected of her; at the time whenever a royal wife was left a widow, she would quickly be arranged to marry the next patriarch. The author highlights that not only can vengeance ruins one's character, but also completely cloud one's judgement.

Claudius’s own climax is as catastrophic as Hamlet’s. Right after the duel between Hamlet and Laertes, Hamlet proceeds to wound Claudius. When Hamlet does this the crowd cries out, “Treason! Treason!” (5.2.318). Despite the fact that the readers and Hamlet understand Claudius is the true traitor, the crowd will never be able to know the truth due to Hamlet’s clouded judgement. Granted, in some ways Hamlet did the right thing, he avenged his father. However, because Hamlet didn’t provide evidence to the people, Hamlet will forever be seen as the traitor, effectively ruining his legacy.

When the resolution arrives Hamlet himself acknowledges his ruined legacy. Yet, Shakespeare shows the audience that Hamlet isn’t completely ruined by vengeance. As Laertes is dying, he utters, “Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. Mine and my father’s death come not upon thee, Nor thine on me” (5.2.324, 326). Hamlet then hopefully declares that he will follow Laertes into heaven. Despite the emphasis on the tragic effect of vengeance, Shakespeare gives a caveat: an act of vengeance can always be forgiven. Even though Hamlet’s legacy is ruined, in his last moments he found his own sense of peace and justice.

In Shakespeare’s Hamlet the foiling of paired characters truly reveals the catastrophic effects of obsessive vengeance. Throughout the play foils between Hamlet and Claudius display how vengeance can alienate, reshape, and consume a person. The consequences of obsessive vengeance are catastrophic, however no matter the consequences people can always be forgiven.
Arthurian Literature Timed Write

Arthurian Romance

The unknown author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight demonstrates Arthurian romance through his classic storyline involving a temptress, well-known knightly characteristics, and finally, the chivalry that is so heavily used in the world of Arthurian literature. Through these key elements, the reader gains an understanding of life expectations and growth, mainly of the young knight learning more about his commitment to knighthood.

Of course, a quest cannot be easy in any story, let alone an Arthurian romance. There is a sense of romance between Sir Gawain and the noble lady, but it should not be mistaken for a way to bring literal love into the story. Her tempting actions such as “laughing sweet,/Sink[ing] down at his side, and salut[ing] him with a kiss” (Gawain 1758-59), introduces a predicament to the main character, and whether he should stick to his ground as a knight facing a serious request, or to pleasure himself to a beautiful woman. This scene not only brings a hard decision to make for the character, but it reveals a stereotype of the current times. Would a young man truly stay to his word of work even with a woman standing in his way? One may even ask, “Why would a woman flaunt so much of herself to a stranger entering her home?” It should be noted that while thinking about these questions, the theme of pride can easily be brought up. A young man with such a timely task would never take the time for a woman, especially one that is purposefully taking up his precious time. But while “His heart swelled swiftly with surging joys…” the reader begins to notice characteristics that may be viewed as egotistical, or even stereotypical for a squire to take such a daunting adventure not so serious (Gawain 1763-4). This has a purpose, as the author is proving against the idea of knighthood in this case, and revealing that no young man will accomplish his request with ease.

On the other hand, even with moments of temptation, a knight is still viewed as this unsurpassed, incredible man who is willing to take time for his community. The simple bravery of accepting the challenge from King Arthur, a king known from all forms of literature, is a characteristic of knighthood. The words of acceptance of the Green Knight’s challenge should be taken into consideration, as Gawain states, “Gawain am I /Whose bufet befalls you…” (Gawain 382). These simple words are elegant, and properly follow the willingness of a knight that all should pertain. It should be noted as well that this line specifically pertains to when the young knight is first introduced, which proves how first impressions of chivalry are key in this society. Continuing on, the reader should have quickly acknowledged that Gawain quickly had to gain confidence in order to prove himself to the Green Knight. The entire scene demonstrates not only bravery, but the growth of a young man in chivalry. Through these scenes in particular, the unknown author of this book demonstrates the high stature that was consistently presented to the community, as well as the steps necessary in order to accomplish this.

Arthurian Romance tells a tale of up and downs, all that would reveal more characteristic, a theme of knighthood and stereotypes, and of course, a classic tale of a journey of a squire.
As Chaucer was writing Canterbury Tales, he wanted to make the message of sin towards God needs to be repented for. There is sin present throughout the entire compilation of tales, but specifically in “The Miller’s Tale” he reflects how the sin of adultery is a very ugly fault that someone can endure. Although Chaucer tries to voice how these sins should be repented to God in all of the tales, “The Miller’s Tale” specifically does not focus so much on the biblical aspect of faults, but how they can hurt a fellow sinner.

Being unloyal to a spouse is still relevant in the 21st century as it was represented during this tale in the 14th century. The carpenter in “The Miller’s Tale” “…had lately wed a wife” of only “eighteen years of age” (Chaucer 2). Whether it was because she knew her worth, or because she was very naive because of her young age, she fell short of being loyal to her carpenter husband. After a very clever and sly character by the name of Nicholas was introduced, the world came crashing down. As said earlier, the sin seen throughout the other tales of Chaucer’s has been led down a very biblical path, but as for this tale, the sin went somewhere else. Along with Nicholas came Absalom, another man interested in the carpenter’s young wife. When a love triangle is created amongst these three, some foil occurs. Nicholas and Absalom are in a race with each other because of their love for Alisoun. This is the downfall of the faulty sin Alisoun acts upon. By creating a numerous amount of ridiculous events, Chaucer upholds the idea of how bad this type of sin is, yet he does not grab on to the concept of how this sin is needed to be repentant towards God.

With every story of sin comes a very valuable lesson buried within. Chaucer’s point he was trying to get across is to always do the right thing. It is honestly not hard to do the right thing and because of this, good always comes out of it. Yes, Alisoun was young and naive, but loyalty to your spouse, friend, or family should never be replaced with some object of sin. Along with this lesson is the lesson that sin does not always hurt the sinner, but the people involved. In this case, Alisoun fell for Nicholas’s tricky ways and Absalom fell hard for the young Alisoun. Alisoun’s misconduct with Nicholas brought herself, Nicholas, and Absalom down with her. After the incident where Absalom unknowingly kissed Alisoun’s behind and “was ready with his iron hot” to poke Nicholas’s behind, their downfall came (Chaucer 7). Nicholas’s ridiculous hoax of a realization made the craziness show through even more. This group became the laughingstock of the town all because of Alisoun’s sin being carried by these two men.

When Chaucer introduces the sin in “The Miller’s Tale”, he does not represent it as the type of sin that needs repenting, but the type that falls on fellow people involved. Sin of this nature was just as prevalent during the 14th century as it is during the time period the world is living through currently. With every fault of sin comes a lesson. The lesson expressed during this tale of Chaucer’s is that the right thing must always be done because sin does not always hurt the sinner, but those around as well.
The Bad and The Worse

Through the five-part journey given by Shakespeare, it is shown that there is a huge conflict between the ghost of Hamlet’s father, who wishes for vengeance and wants to teach the readers a valuable lesson on obedience without them even knowing it; however, the foiling of homogeneous characters in the story, are revealing the truth of the effect of disobedience and a bad call for vengeance, through Hamlet and Claudius. This results in the downfall of particular characters in the plot. With irony in play, it is sought that Hamlet and Claudius are met with the same fate. This is due to them wanting revenge, but having it backfire on them meeting their same fates. For their hunger for vengeance and power, they are meeting the same fate, they gave one another.

With the thirst for vengeance and power, Claudius and Hamlet have set their fate from their very first encounter after the death of Hamlet’s father. Learning from the ghost of his father that he was murdered by his own brother, King Claudius, in their conversation when King Hamlet said to Hamlet “The serpent that did sting thy father’s life. Now wears his crown.” (1.5.109) from this point on Hamlet has set his eyes and kept his goal of getting revenge on his uncle. King Claudius wanted power and thirst for it, so he had his brother killed, but after learning that Hamlet knows the truth he is out to get Hamlet, “Under the moon, can save the thing from death” this was said by Laertes to King Claudius. (4.1.46) These two are after the same goal, to get revenge, but what they do not know is that their actions can have an affect on them and the people around the. With Hamlet going to set out revenge on Claudius and Claudius to do the same with Hamlet, these two homogenous characters are setting their plan for the downfall of one another.

The hate in Hamlet’s heart has evolved over the time period and has made him crazy due to his father always calling him to set his revenge on his uncle. With all the loathing in his now cold heart, Hamlet has now acted out more than ever especially when he killed Laertes in the sword battle, “Hath turn’d itself on me; lo, here I lie, Never to rise again,” said by Laertes (5.3.79) All his power to set revenge has taken over, leaving him with no control over it, and having killed Laertes without even knowing how he did. His sanity was uncontrollable after his mother died due to the same fate he was supposed to meet. The true time he felt relieved was seeing that he finally was able to get his revenge on his uncle by poisoning him “It is the poison’d cup; it is too late.” said by King Claudius (5.3.74) During that time, he finally realized that it did not matter that he did his part because they were not coming back, and all his hard work resulted in nothing.

Plotting and scheming does not get anyone anywhere, because it will always backfire on themselves to make them truly realize the reality of the world, this is what King Claudius should know. Knowing that Hamlet has found out the truth, King Claudius’ true colors are revealed and though it is not shown to everyone, there are some out there that know his true meaning. Once he faces the reality of his plan, he is shown the result of nothing because it was foreshadowed in the very beginning. When he faces death when Hamlet kills him,”It isposion’d cup; it is too late.” (5.3.74) he truly understands that all his hard work and hunger for power results with him having nothing. King Claudius’ plan for everything, does not reward him in the end, but ends his life as his reward.

All hate results in nothing, learning from these two characters shows how cold hearted they are and what hatred can do to a person. These two characters have let their abhorrence get the best of them, leaving them with no control of their actions and revealing them to be stubborn and disobedient. In the end, these two meet the same fate given by one another, with King Claudius killed by Hamlet and Hamlet committing suicide “give me the cup: let go; by heaven, I'll have it.” (5.3.79) these two resulted in nothing leaving them empty. Their heads and hearts have gone so far off their body, that in the end they make a realization that no one will remember them for the good they did, but will remember them for the bad. Hamlet’s realization of disobedience and vengeance against Claudius, they both want to now end up with silence and peace “The rest is silence.” (5.3.81) Their deaths make a great impact on what living with hatred looks like.
In Shakespeare’s story of Hamlet, there are two lessons being taught, obedience and vengeance, by Hamlet and King Claudius. All their hard work trying to plot against each other, turns into failure because they let their ego get the best of them. Their signs of obedience left them with little reward, but their vengeance for each other ended with death because with all the actions, attitude, and rude encounters they show each other, they are left desolated. This is to show the readers that always obey to do good because doing good always results in having good be done to them, but having a heart for revenge that can lead to a worse type of effect. Hamlet and King Claudius have met their fate, and they want to present to the readers that all their actions come with consequence and to never allow resentment to take the best of them.
Hamlet and Claudius

Both Claudius and Hamlet seek to protect themselves and gain satisfaction through betraying moral principles and utilizing others for their own personal benefit. As Claudius stands before his courtiers, devastation sweeps over Hamlet like a cold breath of wind, as he realizes the ambitious and lustful Claudius will marry his mother Gertrude, promptly. This sends Hamlet into a whirlwind of emotions as his honest and submissive traits are being questioned. Furthermore, Hamlet is stripped of his power as he must surrender to Claudius's manipulation, infidelity, and deception. Subsequently, this causes Hamlet to crave revenge and satisfaction for himself and the deceased Hamlet Sr. In addition, both Claudius and Hamlet use their ambition, manipulation, and tenacity to obtain their deepest desires. To further explain, Hamlet and Claudius use their lack of remorse, selfishness, and wrath to covet their wishes of retribution. Some readers view that Hamlet represents a story of gruesome tragedy, heartbreak, and loss as Hamlet struggles to piece his life back together after his father's death; however, the foiling of William Shakespeare's paired characters highlights the tragic effect of deception regarding obedience and a race to vengeance via Hamlet and Claudius’s first introduction, their separate climaxes, and the hopeless, dreadful resolution of these foiled characters.

Through becoming a slave to his father’s wishes and actively seeking harm against Claudius, Hamlet loses his sense of self restraint and slowly his values and morals begin to dissipate, leading to his downfall. The ghost of Hamlet Sr. wastes no time avenging his death as he spots Hamlet and recalls, “the serpent that did sting” or in other words, poison him, “wears his crown” (1.5.46-47). The poison within this story may symbolize hardship, deception, and deceitfulness. Shocked and in disbelief, Hamlet promises an act of obedience in hopes of avenging his father’s death. Throughout his mission to seek revenge on Claudius, Hamlet begins to grow more clever, sneaky, and quite frankly paranoid. Hamlet mistakenly stabs Polonius thinking it was Claudius hidden under a curtain. This may be symbolic of a hidden truth or a story of twisted lies or perhaps Hamlet’s commitment to violence. As Claudius continues to uphold his power, Hamlet is slowly becoming the person he was most afraid of. A once honest, truthful, noble man has transformed himself into a sheepish yet raging follower who is seeking revenge. Through following the Ghost of Hamlet Sr. ’s wishes, Hamlet is slowly going insane as he continues to delve into a world of chaos, letting his anger take control of his life. Furthermore, Hamlet’s obsession with death and vengeance is seen as he speaks about his father’s “solid flesh” and the fact that it would “resolve itself” (1.2.129-30). Although he originally planned to act insane as a ploy to kill Claudius, it can be said that throughout the play he truly did lose himself and his sense of reality. Hamlet is determined to get what he wants, leading to the death of innocent men and women including Polonius, Laertes, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and eventually Claudius. Furthermore, revenge and obedience are quite deadly and are ultimately what killed Hamlet.

The villainous nature of Claudius starts a spiral of hatred, anger, and retaliation as he begins to fear for his own life, while continuing to fulfill his dreams of being a king. Claudius obeyed his deepest, darkest desires that rested within his sinful heart. Through the killing of King Hamlet, Claudius gained the power he craved but as his own expense. Because of his skills of manipulation, managing others, cunningness, and an overall lack of apathy, Claudius fits the role of a king quite nicely. As Claudius and Laertes anticipate and plan Hamlet’s death, he teases the news from England, stating, “you shortly shall hear more” (4.7.145) Furthermore, this proves Claudius is the true villain within this story due to his careless acts of selfishness in order to gain power and a position within society. One of these includes knowingly allowing Gertrude to drink the poison wine in hopes of saving himself. Ultimately, Claudius is a corrupt king who although obtains the skills to rule Denmark, lacks a sense of humanity.

As Hamlet ragefully sinks the sword into Claudius's skin and forces him to drink the poisoned wine, he gains a sense of achievement and relief. This is seen as he refers to the act of killing Claudius’s body a “ hire and salary, not revenge” (3.3.74-97) Furthermore, he claims he hopes “his soul may be damned” (3.3.74-97) However, this feeling
is only temporary as Laertes stabs Hamlet soon after. The question stays floating in the air, did Hamlet or Claudius die angry and sinful or did they learn a lesson in the end? The lesson of obedience and vengeance is quite prominent from the reader’s point of view. Acting out of spite and with hatred will lead one down a path of irreversible tragedy. In addition, blindly following the will of another is inefficient. Hamlet allowed for the anger of his father to fuel him to commit acts of violence rather than morally take back his position of king. Furthermore, Claudius’s pure evil intentions allowed him to act carelessly, shamelessly, and ultimately caused his own death. Overall, lies, manipulation, vengeance, and obedience leads to a suffering of the conscience and a lack of moral forgiveness.

Throughout Hamlet, Claudius uses his devious and manipulative skills to take advantage of Hamlet’s somewhat clean and innocent conscience. Shakespeare has written this play beautifully to highlight the consequences of obeying a soul filled with hatred. With Claudius’s help, Hamlet’s life is turned upside down and his fate is soon decided. Furthermore, as Hamlet begins to seek a violent revenge, he plummets to his moral and physical downfall leading to despair and tragedy. Ultimately, his goal of killing Claudius was achieved; however, his position of king is empty, his life is swept away with the wind, and Hamlet has lost all of his friends and family.
To Live or Die

A son experiences the torment of knowing the cause of his father’s untimely death. Hamlet is distraught as his situation has quickly become the acme of all tragedies. Not only must he face the death of his father, but he will also cope with his mother’s sudden marriage. The compound of these two situations have left Hamlet in a state of complete shock and disarray. Looking upon this situation, one may perhaps confuse such feelings for insanity, but they are simply reactions to grief. The young prince expresses his grief in his “To be or not to be” soliloquy through the use of repetition, rhetorical questions, and personification.

Hamlet purposefully utilizes repetition in his soliloquy to truly emphasize the similarities between death and sleep. A prime example of this can be seen as he continuously states, “To die, to sleep” (3.1.65). As Hamlet compares the two, he critically analyzes how death is simply an extended sleep. If he were to be completely insane, his words would lose meaning; however, his statements are more than comprehensible and extremely complex. If anything, continuously repeating this phase truly demonstrates how depressed and suicidal Hamlet is, as he cannot stop comparing a definitive death with a temporary sleep. Hamlet also uses rhetorical questions that cause one to debate the meaning of life. In the opening statement he starts with “To be, or not to be? That is the question” (3.1.56). In this, he asks whether it is better to be alive or dead. A mad man would not look deeply into this question, for if he wanted to kill himself, he would have. Instead, he considers the repercussions to actions, and eventually decides that it is best to stay alive at that point in time. In this passage, the prince clearly displays signs of a grieving man, as he is overcome with sadness and questions the purpose of life. Finally, Hamlet uses personification in order to emphasize his distress. For he states “Thus conscience does make cowards of us all”(3.1.84). He personifies his conscience and claims it is the reason why he is too cowardly to end his life. Hamlet continues to debate the consequences of death, and decides that it is his own fault he cannot die. He blames his cowardliness as he states that humans only stay alive and endure the troubles of life because they are too afraid of the unknown. Such self deprecation is a direct sign of depression.

All in all, Hamlet wisely uses these literary devices in order to convey his message. A mad man would not possess enough cognitive strength to put together such debates and analysis. In his To be or Not to be soliloquy, Hamlet demonstrates immense amounts of knowledge and critical inquiry. It is safe for the readers to assume that his mind is still extremely sharp and that his being is only hindered by his feelings of sadness. Grief does not equal insanity. Hamlet is simply trying to cope.
Let Them Eat Cake

Before I start this essay, there is one thing that I must clarify. Personally, I do not particularly care for cake. It is generally devoid of any notable flavor except the perpetually disappointing taste of sugar liberally applied to mask staleness. Despite how underwhelming it is, cake enjoys its place on the list of most prominent foods, partially owed to that whole Marie Antoinette debacle. And now, two hundred years later, another controversy has sparked; a debate so heated that we might as well whip out the guillotine again.

What could possibly be as dramatic as the French Revolution, you ask? The answer is gay people, and their right to buy goods on the free market. Before jumping into the arguments, let me paint the scene. It is 2012. Charlie Craig and his fiance David Mullins have returned to Colorado to buy a cake for their wedding in Massachusetts; at the time, Colorado had not legalized gay marriage. They decided to go to Masterpiece Cakeshop, but the owner, Jack Phillips, refused to make them a cake because his Christian religious beliefs denounce homosexual relationships. In the end, Craig and Mullins bought a cake from another bakery and filed a complaint to the Colorado Civil Rights Commission on the basis of the state's Anti Discrimination Act (Parloff), which notably prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation (Johnson). This, in turn, spawned a lawsuit that was the catalyst for raucous discourse on whether religion is reason enough to discriminate against a certain type of person. Eventually, the commotion reached the Supreme Court, which ruled that making cakes would be considered "compelled speech," and therefore Phillips would not be legally required to bake anything for gay couples (de Vogue).

The main parties with the most at stake in this decision are 1) Religious people who oppose gay marriage, 2) people who believe no one should be denied service based on something they cannot change, and 3) people who believe freedom is of utmost importance, including the freedom to deny service. As for my opinion, I firmly believe that, despite my profound respect for theistic beliefs, they have no place in the judicial system and therefore Phillips' religious defense is completely hollow.

While many people have dismissed this particular lawsuit as being asinine, it is actually a key case which sets a precedent for social justice in the future. The question of the day is whether an individual’s right to religion encroaches on another’s right to be treated fairly. See, the inherently vague nature of religion means that it is widely interpretable by the believer, and a great many people have used it to justify unequal treatment. Let me draw a parallel to a similar situation, but between straight couples instead.

Until 1978, the Mormon church of Latter-Day Saints had banned African-Americans from their temples, meaning that they could not be sealed in marriage (Harris). Sealing in the Mormon church refers to a ritual that supposedly allows relationships to continue in the afterlife ("Marriage"). This was because of an entirely unfounded reason: at the time, many Mormons believed that black skin was the Biblical "mark of Cain", which denotes evil and inferiority. Additionally, Brigham Young, the second president of the LDS, refused to allow blacks to marry whites in the church because of this (Haynes). And while you’d think that modern Mormons would completely denounce this blatant racism, according to the Next Mormons Survey, a whopping 62.5% of them either "think" or "know" that the temple ban was God's will, as of June 2018 (Riess).

As you can see, the notion of “God's will” can and does pose a threat to marginalized identities. At the Supreme Court Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission meeting, a commissioner is quoted saying: “Phillips can believe ‘what he wants to believe,’ but cannot act on his religious beliefs ‘if he decides to do business in the state' (Chemerinsky). Another commissioner added, “Freedom of religion and religion has been used to justify all kinds of discrimination throughout history, whether it be slavery, whether it be the Holocaust [...] we can list
hundreds of situations where freedom of religion has been used to justify discrimination.” (Chemerinsky)

I agree wholeheartedly with these commissioner's statements. While refusing to sell a wedding cake to a couple is certainly less severe than refusing to let that couple marry, for example, its roots are the same and stem from seeing same-sex relationships as bad, or sinful, or less than others. It's impossible to completely eradicate homophobic thoughts, and I don't think that we should try to, since that would entail telling people what not to think. But homophobic actions are different. When you put yourself out into the public and interact with other people, you are no longer only being hateful within the sanctuary of your own mind - you are forcing others to suffer your toxic views. Therefore, the government can and should intervene. Religious basis or not, legally allowing Americans to act on their bigoted tendencies is government-supported discrimination.

My next objection to the ruling is with the language utilized. The Supreme Court decided that the process of creating a cake for a relationship that went against Phillips' moral principles would constitute compelled speech, which is illegal (Chemerinsky). Compelled speech is defined as when someone is forced to "articulate, advocate, or adhere to the government’s approved messages" (Hudson). This decision was based on the assumption that making a cake is considered art, and through that art, the creator's "voice" is heard. However, the Supreme Court utilizes quite a double standard. According to them, cake-making is art, but makeup is not. Therefore, a makeup artist would not be allowed to refuse gay clientele, even though makeup is also a craft that takes time, hard work, and creativity ("Masterpiece Cakeshop Supreme Court Transcript"). Makeup artistry even arguably has more of a "voice" than baking, since makeup is meant to be admired and appreciated, whereas the main purpose of baking is to create a tasty product. And yet, when we flip open a Vogue magazine, we still have no idea what the personal or religious views of the models' makeup artist is.

In the same vein, as pretty or meticulous as a cake may be, it does not speak. It does not "communicate" anything, which is the criteria that the Court has used to decide whether a certain medium should be protected or not. As Supreme Court Judge Sotomayer said, "The primary purpose of a food of any kind is to be eaten," not to express opinions on the validity of a marriage ("Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission Transcript"). Baking a cake for someone does not mean you support or denounce any aspect of them; therefore, Jack Phillips' personal stance on gay relationships is completely irrelevant. With that clearly established, it's hard to not see the Court ruling as a thinly-veiled excuse to allow homemophobes to legally continue practicing homophobia.

Additionally, I assert that there has already been a precedent for this kind of case before and that we should follow in that ruling's footsteps. That precedent is the lawsuit of Newman v. Piggie Park Enterprises As ridiculous as the latter name may sound, it was actually a rather depressing situation. Piggie Park Enterprises was a fast-food BBQ chain founded by Maurice Bessinger, who was notably the head of the National Association for the Preservation of White People (Firestone). As you might expect from such a beacon of morality, he did not allow African-Americans to eat at his establishment (Monk). Things came to a head when, one day in 1964, he refused to let the wife of a black minister into his restaurant, as his religious beliefs compelled him to "oppose any integration of the races whatever" (Felder). Long story short, when the lawsuit against his chain reached the Supreme Court, he was unceremoniously shut down and told that his freedom of religion did not permit him to deny black people or interracial couples entry (Newman v. Piggie Park Enterprises390, 400). I see no reason as to why the Masterpiece Cakeshop lawsuit, essentially a rebranding of the same issue, should garner a different response from the Supreme Court.

My final and most concrete piece of evidence is the Belief-Conduct distinction. According to the Supreme Court, the Free Exercise clause denotes that while the freedom to believe in a religion is "absolute", the freedom to act because of those beliefs "cannot be" so (qtd. in Cantwell v. Connecticut). Essentially, the Supreme Court has already decreed that while religious beliefs are not within their jurisdiction to control, religious practices absolutely are (qtd. in Reynolds v. United States). I will leave you with this final quote from Supreme Court Justice Stephen J. Field: "Crime is not the less odious because sanctioned by what any particular sect may designate as 'religion.'" (qtd. in Davis v. Beason). And systematic discrimination against marginalized minorities is certainly a crime in Connecticut (Johnson).

Ultimately, it would serve us all well to remember that one of the duties our legal system is charged with is to protect minorities, per the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Johnson). It does not matter where that discrimination is coming from, or what fuels it. I affirm that any reason one may have to discriminate is a bad reason, even if it comes from a place of deeply-held faith. Considering the separation between church and state, religious belief cannot and should
not affect any of the existing laws fighting against bigotry. Religion, as important as it may be to individuals, is not a
valid excuse for homophobic actions, and I am disappointed that the Supreme Court seems to be biased in favor of
it. In the end, if I could say one thing to Jack Phillips, it would be this: I respect your Christian beliefs. I'm Christian
myself. But for God's sake, let it go and let the gays eat their cake.
Character Analysis for Inferno

The journey in “Dante’s Inferno” takes the reader to visit the personal hell and punishments of many characters. Every punishment being delivered is symbolic. All punishments of the characters revolve around how they lived on earth, there were specific rings in hell for specific types of sins. If you were guilty of gluttony you would be placed into the ring for gluttons. The deeper the ring of hell, the worse your sin was, therefore the worse your punishment is set to be. There are some characters who I believe did not truly deserve the punishment they received. There are some who simply did not have the chance to redeem themselves and there are some who I believe did not get punished enough.

Of all the prisoners trapped in their respective ring of hell, there were two sinners suffering for the same thing that I believe they did not deserve. The story of Paolo and Francesca. The two lovers trapped in the ring reserved for those guilty of adultery. Francesca was married to Paolo’s brother but her true love was Paolo. The two of them were caught in the act of cheating by her husband, he was so furious with them he killed them both on the spot. Francesca states that “we are in one hell…” (line 99) meaning that not being able to love who you love openly was a terrible hell, just as they are in hell now together. The thing that makes adultery so interesting is that it is a sin based upon a person’s ethics or moral code. It has to do with the fact that you have a chance after the damage is done to try and redeem yourself, ask forgiveness and repent for your actions. Unfortunately this was not an option for Paolo and Francesca. Because they were killed while in the act, neither one of them were given the chance to beg or plead for forgiveness. While living, Francesca was happy with her lover, but when she died her love became her hell. The two of them should be judged based on if they would have begged for forgiveness and been sorry for their actions, not just because they were adulterers. One cannot choose who they love, you can not control your feelings. If Francesca loved Paolo then she could not change that. However if she was not apologetic for cheating on her husband then that would be something worth punishing.

Count Ugolino was trapped and punished in hell for cannibalism of his children. And he deserved it. He and his children were locked in a dungeon to starve to death. The sounds of his own sons screaming and crying that they were in so much pain due to the lack of food they were forced to endure. His sons said to their father at one point that “it would give us...” (line 50). However at the time Count Ugoilo could not bring himself to do it as he loved them too much. He watched all of his kids die one by one. He was the last to die surrounded by the starved bodies of his sons, when something overcame him and he could not take the fasting any longer, as he started to eat flesh and bodies of his lifeless children. Count Ugolino deserved the punishment he received in full, he was a traitor to his country along with the man who locked them up. It was his fault his children died. He was sentenced to be trapped in ice with only his head free and to eat the brain of Archbishop Ruggieri who had thrown them in the dungeon. The punishment is symbolic and justified, as it is a reminder of what he did to his sons. That he was weak by giving in to temptation. He ate the bodies of his children because he could no longer endure the same pain his children did that came with starving.

The one character that I believed deserved more of a punishment than he got was Archbishop Ruggieri. His actions of betraying Count Ugolino and then throwing him and his sons into a dungeon to starve should be met with a more actionable punishment than he received. Trapped in ice with Count Ugolino gnawing on his head is not enough. He killed innocent children because of the actions done by their father, it seemed like the punishment was more of a reminder to Count Ugolino of his actions than anything else. The Archbishop did have to starve like he forced the family in his dungeon too, but it almost seems like he was let off easy. Like he did not get enough suffering to match the suffering he caused.

When being judged for your sins committed on earth, all factors must be taken into account. As the reader I am judging based on my own beliefs and standards, and there are some characters that truly got what they deserved but there are others who should have to suffer much worse than they did. A punishment should make the sinner feel sorry
and think about the bad choices they made. If hell is about delivering those punishments, then it should be done right and to the fullest extent.
The Criminal Justice System in America

In Dr. Bryan Stevenson’s Speech about the need to reform the criminal justice system he talks about so many problems and injustices that it was hard to keep everything straight. Just the statistics alone were enough to make my eyes go wide. That 31% of the black population in Selma, Alabama have lost their right to vote, because they have been convicted of a felony. That in the 20th century, ⅓ of male black babies are expected to go to jail or prison in their lifetime. These facts alone are what truly appalled me of how corrupt and our criminal justice system is. Dr. Stevenson brought up four points that can help us create a better criminal justice system.

The first thing was proximity. Not enough people in america are aware of how bad the prison system is and how unfair the court rulings can be to underage children. We all have the ability to educate ourselves on these types of matters, he said “proximity can change a lot, we have to get close to something to make it work”. By saying this he is bringing attention to the fact that we can not change or help a problem if we do not know what the problem truly is. The second point was that we need to change the narrative behind our justice system. We see young boys being given life sentences even before the age of 17. In America when a young black or brown boy commits a crime, our justice system considers them to be “super predators”. We allow young brown and black boys all over our country to be classified with a name that dehumanizes them because of the color of their skin and a stereotype. Dr. Stevenson told a story of a real case he had and took back to court, about a young boy and his mother in a domestic abuse case. Thinking that the mother’s boyfriend hit his mother so hard that she cracked her skull open and died, the young 13 year old boy shot the boyfriend. The boy who was not even in high school yet was sentenced to life in jail because the abusive boyfriend was a deputy sheriff. The system is so corrupt that they looked past the mother being hit so hard she was bleeding out from her head and the abuse both her and her son had suffered, and decided to try the boy as an adult in a court of law. Three days in prison and the boy had already been assaulted multiple times and raped by men that were three times his age. Our justice system and our prison system condemned a 13 year old boy to a life of misery, because he was trying to protect his mother.

The third thing that Dr, Bryan Stevenson said that we need to do in order to have a better justice system is to be hopeful. He said that if you go into a trial or anything for that matter with no hope, you have already lost. Sometimes the problem seems too big and too impossible and we lose hope, but because it is big and it seems impossible, that is the reason why we must have hope. The final point is that we need to commit ourselves to do the uncomfortable things that most people don't want to do. We need to help those people who had unfair trials and essentially were doomed from the start because the people and the judge already decided that that person was guilty. In the time between 2009 and 2011, the state of Alabama had executed 17 people in less than 3 years. This alone made Alabama the state with the highest execution rate in the country. Of those 17, was a man that was very mentally unstable and showed visible signs of it. His lawyer was offered a chance for his client to plead out and take a deal for 20 years, instead of a death sentence. The lawyer never presented the deal to his client. The lawyer never even had the man be interviewed by a psychologist to see if he was mentally stable and fit for a trial, nor did the lawyer have his client take an insanity plea. If at least one of those things had been done, the trial could have ended differently, with him maybe being alive in a mental institution when he would be getting the help he needed, not dead because of an unfair trial.

The system we have to live with and use daily is so unfair and corrupt that in the state of Alabama you can not even use DNA evidence to try and appeal a court sentence. You would have to rely solely on new witnesses or some other form of evidence. Research even shows that 75% of false convictions come from false eyewitnesses statements, meaning that around 100 innocent people can be falsely convicted every year. Things like this along with mass incarceration and the statistics surrounding it, and the issues that come with voting rights and the impact it has on minorities. I mentioned in the beginning that ⅝ of black male babies are expected to go to prison or jail in their lifetime, well it is very similar for young hispanic boys. ⅝ hispanic boys are expected to go to prison or jail in their
lifetime, compared to the statistic of one in 17 young white boys. As of today the largest growing population of incarceration is in female prisons. Nearly 25% percent of the world’s prison population is made up by the U.S. Since 1970 the incarcerated population in America has grown by 700%, making more people in prison than there are with the population and crime growth. One of the biggest issues with mass incarceration is that there are so many people that could be innocent are sitting in jail awaiting their trial. They sit in jail or a prison and within that time of waiting, they could be attacked, sexually assaulted, raped or killed, all while maybe being innocent and awaiting a hearing, trial or even a jury decision. And even after they have served their sentence and have been released from prison, men and women struggle to get jobs because they have a criminal record, making it even harder for them to adjust back into the world. Another problem is private prisons, which essentially make money from the government by having more and more people in their prison, we as americans should not be making money off of locking people in cells.

I mentioned early on that in Selma, Alabama, 31% of the black population has lost their right to vote after being in a federal prison. Meaning that only 69% of the black population has a voice in city, state and presidential elections. This is a problem all over our country. In 11 states you lose your right to vote entirely, in 21 states you lose your right to vote while incarcerated and for a period of time afterwards. In 16 states and the District of Columbia you lose your right to vote only while incarcerated and are then able to vote again as soon as you are released, and in Maine and Vermont felons never lose their voting rights. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, was a piece of federal legislation that allows all minorities the ability to vote, it even prohibits certain jurisdictions from changing this to discriminate against minorities. Since then, there have been changes to this legislation that add certain drawbacks to this that affect minority populations ability to vote. Because this legislation was created in 1965 during the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, the court decided in 2013 with Shelby County v. Holder that this was no longer needed because blatant racism is not a problem anymore. Just by looking at the news today, you can tell that racism is just as strong as ever.

For a free country, we do not govern free enough. How are you free if you can not even vote, after going to prison for a crime you may or may not have even committed. With a jury that may not have been fair, a lawyer that did not offer you every option you had. And with a system that calls young black and brown boys that can not even drive yet, a “super predator”. As Dr. Stevenson said, “we have a criminal justice system that cares more if you are rich and guilty, than if you are innocent and poor”. For it being called the “criminal justice system” it doesn’t seem like much justice is being done for any criminal, guilty or innocent.
Feminism In Ragtime

Singer Ani DiFranco said, “every woman has the right to become herself and do whatever she needs to do”. Similarly E.L. Doctorow makes that very clear with his theme of women and the rise of feminism in the early 1900s. Women using their bodies and fending for themselves is a prime example of females taking matters into their own hands and forging their own way in the world. E.L. Doctorow uses both fictional and non-fictional characters along with influential historical figures such as Evelyn Nesbit and Emma Goldman to portray his themes of feminism and the growth of women in the 1900’s by unapologetically embracing their bodies and sexuality, alongside the struggles women endured in this time while fighting for gender equality.

It is not a secret that in the early 1900’s women were not seen as equal to men. They were expected to cook, clean, take care of the house, and have babies. Female characters in the book *Ragtime* challenge that. Emma Goldman is a picture perfect example of this. She challenges the stereotypical beliefs that women are inferior to men. Emma Goldman was described as “not a physically impressive woman” (Doctorow 52), however she made up for it in the way she spoke about women’s rights. Goldman was known around New York as a women’s rights activist, some even called her an anarchist. She brings to attention at one point in her public addressing of the lack of women’s rights asking the question, “Is there no connection between the institution of marriage and the institution of a brothel” (Doctorow 53). Addressing the truth that women even in a committed relationship with a man are still only ever used for their bodies. Emma Goldman, an independent women rights activist goes on and calls out the men in the audience who believe that women are worth nothing more than baby makers. In one thought provoking quote she brings to attention many issues at the time regarding the rights of women or rather the lack of. “women may not vote, they may not love whom they want, they may not develop their minds and their spirits, they may not commit their lives to the spiritual adventure of life… is our genius only in our wombs?” (Doctorow 53-54). This statement brings focus to different injustices to women at the time. The law against women being able to vote, the social norm that women are told who to love by their parents, adding to the cultural norm of arranged marriages for money. The normality of women being told what to think and believe not being able to have a separate opinion to their husbands. And that women are not allowed to do anything but cook, clean, and take care of a house. This was the initial movement for women rights, many years later in 1967 they had eight goals for Congress, which were all met, one being that women “demanded that the EEOC enforce the law banning sex discrimination with the same vigor that it enforced banning racial discrimination” (Rolando, Paragraph 2). This is truly just the beginning of women rights and feminism in the early 1900s.

Another influential female character in *Ragtime* is Evelyn Nesbit. Evelyn Nesbit was a famous actress in the early 1900s. She was best known as a symbol for sex that used her body to her advantage. In the book she is right in the middle of a murder case and court trial concerning her husband Harry Thaw, who is being tried for the murder of Evelyn’s ex-husband Stanford White. Evelyn Nesbit essentially made her fortune “from prostituting herself to wealthy male capitalists or exploiting the capitalistic system with her sexuality” (Jones 19). She is basically everything that Emma Goldman goes against. Yet she is still a large symbol of the idea that women in this time period are viewed as nothing more than an object. Harry Thaw is being tried for the murder of Stanford White, who had also drugged Evelyn and then raped her while unconscious. The morning after she was drugged Evelyn woke up to find “the effulgence of White’s manhood lay over her thighs like a baker’s glaze” (Doctorow 22). This exact situation proves the point that women, no matter what, were treated poorly. An American History article speaks about women and the types of jobs that they were allowed to have in the 1900s. “Women in urban areas could be found as inn and tavern keepers, laundresses and domestic workers, nursemaids, prostitutes, and merchants” (Newman, Paragraph 4). Evelyn Nesbit was a prostitute, a high end one to be exact. However, just because she sold her body for a living does not mean that she is a toy for a man to drug, rape and then leave her like a rag doll. In the early 1900s prostitution was a common profession, it was not one of the most respectable of jobs but it was still one that was
common among most women. When Harry Thaw heard word of the rape he made a plan to take Evelyn away from Stanford. They ran to Austria together. Once they got there Harry immediately started treating Evelyn like an object he can just use to satisfy his needs. “He pulled off her robe, threw her across the bed and applied a dog whip to her buttocks and the backs of her thighs. Her shrieks echoed down the corridors” (Doctorow 23). The actions that were done to Evelyn in Ragtime were a big setback for Doctorow’s theme of women in the book. By writing Evelyn as an extremely sexual character, he does not help the case for women having more freedom and rights in the time period, nor does it show any progress in the fight for gender equality.

One woman in the book that really steps up and makes her own rules is Mother. Her husband, Father, goes on an expedition to the North Pole, leaving Mother to her own devices. She makes changes around the house as she pleases and even takes in a young African-American girl with a baby. Along with making changes around the home, she too changes. “Not as vigorously modest as she’s been” (Doctorow 125). Mother and her behavior is pushed “to new forms of self realization” (Jones 20) Mother finds herself having to run the family business while Father is away along with running an entire household. She also started looking into more feminist literature and reading. She also starts to become more intune and open with her sexuality. Before Father left she was quite shy towards the idea of sex, but after he left she was starting to discover her body more and more. Betty Friedan once said, “no woman ever gets an orgasm from shining a kitchen floor”.

A paper written by assistant professor María Ferrández San Miguel at the University of Zaragoza specifically speaks on some of the feminist impulses in the novel. Mainly that the book exposes “the oppression, and, at times, violence that women faced at the turn of the century which intersects with racial and class discrimination.” (San Miguel 6-7). Sarah, the girl the Mother brings in, is at the absolute bottom of the class system she is a woman of color, a mother, unemployed, unmarried, and until mother takes her in, is homeless. Sarah even tries to kill her baby for the sole reason that she is all alone and has no way of taking care of the baby. When Mother finds the baby she knows that it is Sarah’s and takes them both into help care for them. A similar situation where women are discriminated against not only for their gender but also for their race. Mameh is a poor immigrant from Latvia that is struggling to make ends meet. “Hardships of her life as a working class immigrant are notably accentuated by her condition as a woman in deep patriarchal culture” (Miguel 7). She is forced to succumb to the sexual advances of her employer just to make a little extra money for her family. “He counted out the money, adding a dollar more than she deserved. This he explained because she was such a good-looking woman…he touched Mameh’s breasts. Mameh fled taking the dollar… She became accustomed to the hands of her employer”(Doctorow 15). Women are used for their bodies regardless of the circumstances in the day and age of this book. When Mameh’s husband finds out about the abuse he casts her out to the street when she has no other choice but to become a prostitute. He does not take into consideration the fact that the family needed the money and that she was sacrificing not only her body, but her dignity, her self respect, her self worth, every single one of her morals and everything she must have stood for was thrown out the window so that she can bring in more money for the family.

Evelyn Nesbit and Emma Goldman were only two of the women E.L. Doctorow used to portray the oppressed and degraded women in the early 1900s. Women like Sarah, Mameh and even Mother truly represent every woman breaking from the man's hold on her and making her own way and her own rules. Women faced not only violence but they were often underestimated and dismissed by the male population at the start of the century. Really the only woman who came out on top of all the others, was Emma Goldman. That can only really be attributed to the fact that she defied the societial norms to get married and have kids. Instead she forged her own path rather than surrendering to the male chauvinists of the century.
The Temptress, The Fake, and The Trickster

There are many archetypes in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Some characters even play multiple roles in the story. The idea of *unparalleled* importance in this story is that you should never be afraid to do the right thing no matter the consequences. In this story there are many archetypes that portray the idea of perseverance and loyalty through the code of knighthood.

One of the first archetypes noted in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is the Green Knight as the trickster archetype. This is evident through the first Duel when the Green Knight challenges Gawain to cut off his head. Gawain cut off the Green Knight’s head, yet he got up and walked again. This was a pivotal moment in the story because it showed the great presence of the supernatural. The *gravity* of this situation changed how we see the Green Knight throughout the story. The reader can’t tell what is real and what is not because he cannot be trusted to convey his true colors.

Next the most obvious archetype was the Lady of the House as the temptress. She along with her Husband the Green Knight devised a plan to test the loyalty of Gawain, and he passed all of them. He never betrayed the Green Knight’s loyalty by having sex with the Green Knight’s wife. He passed the test every time and out of respect to the Lord of the house he kept his knightly honor. This situation is a *momentous* event because if Gawain betrays the trust of the Lord of the House he will not only fail the test of loyalty, but it might also change the complexion of the whole story. If the temptress is convincing enough to change Gawain’s mind the whole story could be different. The Lady of the House is an interesting character because she brings out a sense of pride in Gawain for not succumbing to temptation. She not only tests him, but also empowers him to do what is right.

Lastly, the archetype of the hero is somewhat controversial. Some would say that Gawain is the hero for sticking to his word. However, the hero archetype could also be conveyed as the Green Knight for putting Gawain through the trials and tribulations. This series of events allowed us to see Gawain develop as a person all thanks to the Green Knight. Without his tests, Gawain might not have followed through with the agreement. He would not have kept his knightly honor, yet it seems that the Green Knight is the catalyst for the change within Gawain. The tests made the plot of the story possible, yet without the Green Knight the tests would not have happened. Overall, the Green Knight helped Gawain develop into the Knight that he was destined to be. Not to mention, sparing Gawain’s life because Gawain was an honorable man that showed great propensity to change.

In conclusion, the way that this story can be portrayed is very different in people’s eyes. It brings up many interesting themes not only applicable to this story, but to our everyday lives. Honor, greed, and loyalty that society tries to be on the correct side of. Whether it be the catalysts for change in the Green Knight or the temptress in the Lady of the house, this story conveys themes that transcend literature. Without these archetypes the themes would be unknown, and the meaning of the story lost.
Revenge Takes Its Toll

William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* progresses through a five part structure that captures the evident repercussions of internalized vengeance through Hamlet and Laertes’ first acquaintance as well as the capstone of their interactions, followed by the inevitable doom they meet; all provoked by wraths they carry.

Both Hamlet and Laertes fixate on the tragedies that have occurred in their lives that enable them to relate to each other, but instead it elicits an ambition for vengeance in both of them. These foiled characters are first introduced in the King’s Court when Claudius married Gertrude, but they’re already familiar since Hamlet courts Laertes’ sister, Ophelia. As the story forges ahead, these two foils end up sharing the same traumatic experience of losing their father unjustly, and consequently, creating an inner desperation to avenge the loss. Unknowingly, and one before the other, they set themselves on a path determined to bring death to whomever was at fault for the death of their father; Hamlet seeking Claudius’ death (in a timed out and meticulous fashion) and Laertes seeking Hamlet’s death (in an immediate and impatient fashion). Fueled by mourning rage, Hamlet asserts in a soliloquy “A villain kill[ed] my father; and for that,/ I, his sole/ son, do this same villain/ send/ To/ heaven” (3.3.1). Laertes, who’s rage is first misdirected at Claudius, is rerouted to his father’s true killer, and in conversation with Claudius he wishes that “The devil take thy soul!” (5.1.235) Furthermore, the alleged suicide of Ophelia only adds fuel to the fire of Laertes’ mission to kill Hamlet. Vengeance reigns heavy in both of these characters’ hearts, overcoming their common humanity and outshining the bigger threat at hand: Norway’s approaching invasion. Their key differences and similarities demonstrate to the reader how vengeance creeps in and spreads like an uncontrollable wildfire of emotion. The feelings of pain, shock, and betrayal are characteristics to both of their plights; Hamlet and Laertes define human nature in their goal to seek revenge on those who killed someone who mattered to them, especially when the killer is someone they trusted: an uncle and a friend.

The climax reached by both Hamlet and Laertes happens at the same time and with each other present, revealing that in the end, in trying to seek vengeance for other deaths, even more lives were lost. The ultimate backfire. Laertes, in partnership with Claudius (with his own motives for Hamlet’s death), is assertive in not only avenging the death of his father, but seeking to put Hamlet through a suffering that lasts in both his final moments and in the afterlife. In conversation with Claudius, he says that he wishes to “cut his throat i’th church” (4.7.103) further demonstrating his hatred for Hamlet by thinking of ending his life in a religious setting. It is the vengeance in his mind and heart that allows him to be easily encouraged by Claudius’ own agenda to kill Hamlet, as well as his own, and as a result creates a powerful team between them both that is guided by the immoral nature of revenge at the cost of someone’s life. Being a rash character, he is driven by the emotional instinct to act instead of think, even when he realizes “it is almost against my conscience” (5.2.293) when speaking with Claudius. Vengeance in Laertes’ climax ultimately proves to be unsuccessful, unravels his entire life, and ends it. His storyline teaches the reader that dedication to revenge will take a bigger toll on the seeker, than the target, reversing the goal that was intended in the first place to obtain peace.

Hamlet’s plight for revenge reaches its climax in a scene of accomplishment met with a doomed fate. Leading up to the scene where he is finally able to pierce Claudius with a poisonous sword, Hamlet endured a grueling time of an insanity façade where he meticulously thought about how he would be able to avenge his father’s death at the hands of his uncles extreme betrayal and lack of conscience. His climax of the character is elongated throughout the story as he overthinks and overanalyzes every step of his revenge, getting to a point towards the end where he is unsure when the time will ever be right to make his move. In a final moment of heated anger, Hamlet says to Claudius
"Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,/ Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?/" (5.2.320) This demonstration of overkill, both stabbing him with the poisoned sword as well as forcing him to drink the poisoned drink, goes to illustrate the extent to which grief and rage can drive a human being. The lesson learned is that dedication to a cause that is inherently wrong will only bring an endgame that is equally as wrong, harming both sides involved rather than true vengeance.

Neither allocates the time to themselves to grieve the great pain of losing a parent, and in turn, channel the flood of emotions into a plight of ruthless violence. They lose their honor in the process. By allowing their sole purpose to be dictated by vengeance that lacks any morality, Hamlet and Laertes share an inner demon that comes out in very different ways. Moreover, they illustrate the significant meaning of vengeance and its foundation to humanity. As beings with complex emotional mindsets, impulse is inevitable when trauma and loss suddenly change the course of a daily life routine. As Hamlet loses his father and primary male figure at the hands of his own family member, and as Laertes loses his father and sister suddenly and with partial fault to Hamlet, it is simple to understand what pushes these characters in such similar ways while they are so internally different in attitude and in action.

Throughout the storyline, there is an intertwine between the struggles, hardships, and death that Hamlet and Laertes have both experienced. It causes a chase to avenge the death of their fathers. Along with that, the way that they channel these events in their life is the same: an ambition to obtain vengeance takes over their life and morality thus dictating their ability to make decisions. Shakespeare’s iconic work of Hamlet is a golden ideal of what it means to write a tragedy, where characters like Hamlet and Laertes’ plights are met with death and despair, despite their efforts throughout the story to seek peace within themselves.
Who Censors the Censors?

By 2030, for the first time in history, more than five billion people will have access to the internet. And based on research by Freedom House, the international human rights group, the largest growth in user numbers will be in countries where online censorship is most prominent, nations like China, Russia, and North Korea. As of this writing, so much as clicking on an article flagged by the government could be considered a crime in these places. And if you wrote the article, forget it: you and your family may end up in a work camp or prison.

As our methods of communicating across digital networks have proliferated, so too have the mechanisms of governmental censorship. For example, deep packet inspection permits government agents to read unencrypted emails, browser histories, and even text that you typed and did not post. If these “dangerous” activities are discovered, hosting services can automatically block access to services and sites. Better yet, the government will slow down load speeds to a crawl in targeted neighborhoods, rendering the internet essentially unusable for everyone within the offending party’s orbit.

If you are wondering about the prevalence of these activities, know that they are incredibly hard to track with any accuracy. Since nearly all of these surveillance strategies are clandestine, researching their power and influence is a risk unto itself. Often, users do not know their countries are employing these techniques until they open up their computer and find their search functions limited or, in some cases, shut off entirely.

The desire of governments to censor the flow of information has turned repressive software into a multibillion-dollar industry, a figure that exists in stark contrast to the utter lack of funding for investigations into these practices. While there are some groups pushing back against these offenses, like Toronto’s Citizen Lab, there are far more unknowns than knowns in digital censorship.

Mapping these unknowns will be one of the most important missions for Generation Z, the young people who have to build on the work done by programmers from Beijing to London. We also can not take the work of past dissidents for granted: Tor is an incredible resource for this work, a resource that could easily disappear tomorrow. Anti-censorship advocates must be ready to adapt.

Government censorship is not a new phenomenon. What is new, however, is the public’s ability to combat censorship. Through peer-to-peer algorithms, open-source software, and VPNs, we aren’t helpless in this fight. However, activists can not continue on their own, especially not if we are looking at the long-term health of civic discourse. Protecting our access to information will demand a mass movement of citizens, companies, and policymakers, a group large enough to shout down the silent force of government censorship.

References
How the Miller's Tale Handles Status

During the time that the Canterbury Tales were written, class and status were very important aspects of people’s lives. Although these are still present concerns today, in Chaucer’s time they were fundamental to determining how a person could and should behave. Despite these strict class divisions, stories of the time would often contradict said divisions for the sake of interesting narrative. The Miller’s Tale does its part to defy status through its ironic romance between the poor scholar, Nicholas, and the carpenter’s wife, Alison.

Although a carpenter’s wife does not seem like a particularly high status, the text makes it clear that Nicholas is lower class than Alison and her husband. When Chaucer introduces the characters, he describes the carpenter as a “wealthy lout who took guests to board” (Chaucer). With this statement, Chaucer is introducing the aspect of wealth that often alludes to and determines status. Regardless of how wealthy a person was, the implication of a difference in wealth was intentional. To ensure that the reader knows that Nicholas is lower class, Chaucer writes that “a poor scholar was lodging with [the carpenter] there,” referring to Nicholas (Chaucer). Not only is Nicholas referred to as poor, but he is also placed under the authority of the carpenter through his lodging. Thus, it is made clear to the reader that Nicholas is of lower class and status than both the carpenter and his wife, Alison.

With this established difference in status, Nicholas manages to both earn Alison’s love and outwit the carpenter, creating an ironic twist on the thoughts on class at the time. The story implies that Nicholas started an affair with Alison when he “fell in with this young wife to toy and play” (Chaucer). Already, Nicholas has the carpenter beat since he is coveting his wife behind his back. Along with this, Nicholas manages to trick the carpenter into thinking that “[his] wife and [him] must hang apart” or she would drown in his predicted flood (Chaucer). Despite Nicholas’s social class, he is able to outsmart the carpenter in order to continue his and Alison’s affair. Nicholas is portrayed as being somewhat of a hero within the story, or at least a winner in the eyes of the author. With both the fact that he possesses the love of the carpenter’s wife, and that he is shown to be smarter than the carpenter, Nicholas proves to contradict his class standing.

Even though the carpenter possesses a status which supposedly has more worth than Nicholas’s, Nicholas proves to be superior to the carpenter within the narrative. The Miller and Chaucer’s intentions behind this tale would have been to purposefully defy the predispositions people may have had about class at the time. This not only can be applied to Chaucer’s time, but to our time as well. Today it is even more popular to believe that one’s class does not determine their worth. Although someone may be of low status, this does not mean that they are inferior to those of high status.
Optimistically Oblivious

Despite being popularized in the Enlightenment period, satire bleeds into many modern-day stories, whether in writing or on screen. Classics from that era are the source of common elements, such as blind faith and hyperboles, found in contemporary satires. *Don Quixote* and *Tartuffe*, two increasingly influential tales, incorporate both of these aspects by forming a story around a character that faces many adversities due to their ignorance towards reality. A similar notion comes into play in the 1998 film *The Truman Show*, which follows the life of a man who is also oblivious to what is truly happening around him. Contemporary stories such as *The Truman Show* highlight satirical elements of works from the Enlightenment period, specifically how an unawareness of reality can form blind optimism and result in the betrayal of trust.

Satires at their core amusingly address a serious issue. For *The Truman Show*, that point of controversy is society’s widespread obsession with social media and, in turn, technology’s ability to control human lives. Directed by Peter Weir and written by Andrew Niccol, the film tells the story of a middle-aged man named Truman Burbank who exists in an entirely fictional society where his every move is broadcasted live to the real world on a show called *The Truman Show*, unbeknownst to him. Jim Carrey, an actor well known for his performances in multiple satires, plays the role of Truman. He exhibits his talents as an actor by appropriately displaying an ignorant and used character who draws empathy from the audience. *The Truman Show*, despite its unique approach, successfully portrays a modern-day issue in an exaggerated, and therefore satirical, light.

Dramatic irony, a fundamental component of satire, is when the audience is more aware of reality than the main character, leading that individual down a disassociated path that presents many dangers. Christof, the fictional creator of *The Truman Show*, states that “we accept the reality of the world with which we’re presented” (*The Truman Show*, 1:06:10-1:06:15). While the viewers of *The Truman Show*, as well as the audience of the film itself, know the truth, Truman believes that his life on Seahaven Island is reality. The public’s meta-awareness indicates the ironic element of blind faith and ultimately leads Truman down a dangerous path to self-discovery. This metaphorical blindness, however, stems from both *Don Quixote* and *Tartuffe*. Just like Truman believed in his reality, Don Quixote, after transitioning into knighthood, “had come to believe that all these fictitious happenings were true; they were more real to him than anything else in the world” (Cervantes 1546). Their similar disassociation from reality and attachment to the world of fantasy ties into the satire by slowly revealing the consequences of blind faith. *Tartuffe* highlights the audience’s awareness through Dorine’s speech when she comments that Orgon’s trust “is poured out to Tartuffe, like he’s his priest! You’d think they’d see the heresy at least” (Molière 143). Like Dorine and other characters, the viewers of this play see through Tartuffe’s ploys, while Orgon remains infatuated by the hypocrite. Orgon’s blind faith, similar to Don Quixote’s and Truman’s, places him in a situation where he is vulnerable to society’s evils.

The main character’s disassociation from reality often promotes a false sense of optimism, causing them to act overwhelmingly positive towards an undeserving society which satirically shows how the selfishness of humanity drowns out the selflessness of genuine optimism. At the start of every day, Truman greets his neighbors with a lovely “good morning…oh, and in case I don’t see you, good afternoon, good evening, and good night” (*The Truman Show*, 0:02:46-0:02:53). His cheerful spirit traps him in a repetitive loop, believing that his routine actions are out of free will and not from a controlled environment. Don Quixote shares a similar fictitious optimism in his daily endeavors, such as when he claims that “those black-clad figures that you behold must be…certain enchancers who are bearing with them a captive princess” (Cervantes 1569). He attempts to save the “princess,” blinded by his belief that he is acting in her favor rather than against her. Don Quixote expects positive reactions from those around him just as Truman does, although Truman is much more likely to get such responses from his controlled society than in Don Quixote’s free world. Orgon’s optimism also presents an opposing force as he turns against his own family, stating that Tartuffe has “taught me to love nothing and no one…[my family] could die right now, I’d feel no pain”
As dismal as this thought seems, Orgon sees it as a positive outlook towards his own self-growth, like how Truman uses his animated personality to discover himself. The exaggerated optimism of all three characters exemplifies the concept of hyperboles, a common element seen across most, if not all, satires.

Once blind faith creates optimism, optimism in itself will hide obvious dangers, resulting in betrayal due to the character’s inability to see past their positivity which satirically depicts how optimism is no longer a benefit to humanity, but a threat to the individual. As Truman begins to understand the reality of his existence, his childhood best friend, Marlon, attempts to dissuade him from such thoughts, saying, “The last thing I would ever do is lie to you” (*The Truman Show* 0:57:49-0:57:55). Up to this point, Truman has put full faith in Marlon, but his friend knows the truth just as well as the audience. Truman’s cheery nature compels him to trust Marlon blindly, allowing his childhood companion to take advantage of him and continue controlling his environment. This kind of betrayal, while evident to the audience, happens behind the back of the protagonist, a common theme that also occurs in *Don Quixote*. After coming across a farmer whipping his slave, Don Quixote attempts to prevent the farmer from continuing. However, the moment after the daring knight leaves, the farmer “seize[s] the lad’s arm and [binds] him to the tree again and [flogs] him” (*Cervantes* 1559). Don Quixote, blinded by his optimistic trust in strangers and his belief in societal morality, is entirely unaware of the perpetrator’s deception. The connection between Marlon’s words and the farmer’s actions reveal the satirical consequences of excessive optimism found in both Enlightenment and modern-day stories. For Orgon, however, Tartuffe’s betrayal is apparent to both him and the audience when the heretic says, “This house belongs to me, yes, all of it, and I’ll decide what’s true, as I see fit” (*Molière* 181). The protagonist’s optimistic view of Tartuffe becomes his downfall as the antagonist attempts to hijack Orgon’s life.

Despite subtle differences, the unifying factor between all three tales is that through a certain amount of oblivion among the characters, satire reveals society’s manipulative and self-destructive tendencies.

*The Truman Show* is one of many contemporary pieces that draws inspiration from Enlightenment satires such as *Don Quixote* and *Tartuffe*. Despite the gap in centuries between Cervantes and Molière and Niccol, their shared elements prove literature’s ability to span multiple eras, regardless of societal or technological changes. Blind faith and exaggerated optimism, while important to these stories, are only a small taste of the similarities one can find between past and present satires. Whether on the screen or by the page, satires from ages prior have continued to influence the modern world of storytelling.
Villain College Essay

A True Knight

King Arthur’s court was well renowned for their courage and chivalry. I planned to test that. I just needed one of King Arthur’s knights to accept my challenge. Just one. On New Year’s Day, I challenged all of the Knights of King Arthur’s court. What was my challenge? I challenged all of the court to behead me and if I survive, I shall return the blow at the Green Chapel a year and a day later. (289-300). One knight took up my challenge, Sir Gawain. He raised the ax I gave him and he beheaded me. Despite that, I survived and remained Sir Gawain of our contract. (426-454) By next year, he should come to the Green Chapel, where I will return the blow.

On Christmas Day of the next year, we crossed paths again. Only then, I “was not” the Green Knight but I was a humble lord known as Bertilack. I welcomed him warmly and allowed him to stay with me. “Tonight he will fast and pray. Tomorrow we’ll see you fed.” (897-898) That was when my tests began. As I went hunting in the morning (1177), I sent my wife to try and seduce him. I could tell that she caught his eye. On the first test, she offered herself to him. (1237-1240) He refused saying he is too honorable to take a woman who is already taken. He passed this test. For the second test, I had her attempt to seduce him again. He again refuses and passes the second test. For my third and final test, I had my wife barely clothed on top of his bed to try and seduce him. I had her try and get a token of love from him. Again he refused but then, I decided to throw a curveball. I had my wife give him a “magical” green girdle that will save him from being beheaded by the Green Knight. This is where he fails. Sure he is honorable, but he is not brave. After this day, he left for the Green Chapel.

On New Year’s Day, when I got to the Green Chapel, that was when I would return what had been done to me. We met, he got on his knees. I swing my axe at his head three times. On the first, I “missed.” This is because he passed my first test. On the second, I “missed.” This is because he passed my second test. On the third; however, I nicked his neck. This is because he failed his third test. He failed to remain truthful and to exchange the girdle given by the wife. He panicked at first but eventually he calmed down. This is when I revealed everything to him. I revealed that I was Lord Bertilack. I revealed that I sent my wife to try and seduce him as tests. I even revealed my creator, Morgan Le Fey, and our motivation on why we tested him and King Arthur’s Court. Although he passed the first two test, he failed the last. He seemed ashamed and dishonored, we sent him away. Hopefully now, they all know what is true chivalry.
Our society as a whole has changed over time but an overwhelming amount since the 14th century. Back then women were not seen as people but more of a prize to love and have to do your chores. Men were the ones working and taking charge of everything. In the Miller’s Tale, Chaucer has the Miller tell a story not too far from his social class although it might be ahead of their time.

“Yet I’d not, for the oxen of my plow, Take on my shoulders more than is enow,”(Chaucer 1) said the Miller. In this we can see that beings a Miller and joking about taking the weight of his oxen shows that his statues is low much like the people in his story. Nicholas, the Clerk in the story, is falling in love with a Carpenter's wife. “For she was wild and young, and he was old,”(Chaucer 2). In the 14th century it was common for men of all ages to marry women who are young. With Chaucer having the young girl married to the old Carpenter he is pointing out how in society women were treated with expirations dates. A partner that Chaucer has developed is showing that women are story and can do more than they are given this story points out more of the flaws that people see in giving women more.

The Miller’s Tale describes the young lady as having a pretty head, glowing, and wild which contradicts with other stories told. In many the women are perceived as strong and in charge not like a doll to be stolen between men. “In all this world, searching it up and down, So gay a little doll, I well believe,”(Chaucer 2). In having her viewed like this Chaucer is saying how yes women can be strong and powerful many are pushed to believe they can’t be. Another topic addressed in this text is loyalty. “Fell in with this young wife to toy and play, The while her husband was down Osney way,”(Chaucer 2). This is depicting cheating which we can greatly relate to today. In this time period you got married and were faithful to your spouse mainly because sneaking around was much harder than it is today so, using this in a story shows that not every marriage was happy and was forced.

Overall The Miller’s Tale had many connections between Chaucer and the Miller. Marriage and Women were the most important things that Chaucer tried to get across in his story. With his theme of women empowerment he showed how society views women and how women accept it. Marriage is not a new concept but is expanded with being loyal and the age groups of the characters. The Miller himself spoke about his wife and how they got along with tied him to that as well. Overall with the The Miller’s Tale, Chaucer brought up many good point of what the 14th century was doing wrong and how he think they aren’t going to get fixed.

Work Cited
Prioritize Education During Pandemic

May 5, 2020

When I first learned on March 14 that school was canceled until spring break due to COVID-19, it felt surreal. It hit home that this pandemic presented a real danger. Our home went into lockdown mode. My parents forbade me and my sister from getting together with friends; we stopped going out to restaurants, the gym, and life as I knew it seemed to change in an instant.

In that first week of staying-at-home, my teachers contacted us via email and had work assigned for us. We were later informed that new assignments would not count for a grade because not all District students have digital devices and Internet connectivity. I understand that it’s not fair to have grades if not everyone has access to technology. COVID-19 has laid bare the societal disparities regarding access to technology.

For me, the fact that grades would not count on new assignments put a huge damper on my motivation. Some of my friends feel the same way. Early in the lockdown, there were as many as 30 students in attendance on classroom video conferences but now it’s surprising to find even 10. Backsliding is a real thing. Additionally, we were recently informed that our 4th quarter grades would be the grades we had in the 3rd quarter. Many students lost an entire quarter of learning new material.

I will officially be a high school senior this Fall. There’s uncertainty as to what our senior year will look like. If it’s anything like the last academic quarter for the Class of 2020 that would be disastrous. Many of us have dreams to go to college and have worked hard in preparation to get there. Some of us plan on entering the workforce, and we need a high school degree to get a job. Everything seems muddled and stressful, due to the uncertainty that surrounds us.

If we are to head back to school in August, we need a plan for us to be safe. Our valuable teachers and staff should be considered frontline workers. Our teachers should be given the personal protective equipment they need. We should all be wearing masks, have strict social distancing rules, and we should consider staggering the student population on the A/B schedule to reduce the number of students on campus at one time, and integrate distance learning into the rotation. Then there’s school busing, and lunchtime, which is usually a time during which students look forward to hanging out with their friends. I’m sure the list can go on.

If, as medical experts are predicting, there is a second COVID-19 wave this late fall and winter, our schools need a better distance learning plan if students are ordered to stay home again. We should make it mandatory to have devices and connectivity for all high school seniors. While all students need devices for distance learning, prioritizing the distribution of devices to high school seniors will help more of us stay on track for graduation. It’s imperative that we have an attendance policy that lessens the burden on teachers to track down students so that they can spend their valuable time teaching.

Our schools were not ready for COVID-19, but now we have a chance to prepare for school to open safely and intelligently by Aug. 10. Weeks have passed. Now is the time to get an education plan in place that will work for the months ahead.

The way we take care of education during this crisis will impact our future in ways we cannot even imagine. I’m
proud to be from the Battle Born State. We are now faced with our biggest battle yet: the greatest global crisis of our lifetime. With the shortfall on state and local taxes, there will be many challenges facing our leaders in prioritizing the needs of our citizens. I call on our federal, state, and local leaders in government, business, and nonprofits to fight for our children and ensure education is high on the list of priorities.
Hamlet Essay

In Hamlet, the structure lends itself to draw parallels to certain characters. Ironically, there are only two women within the story, and they foil each other. Ophelia and Gertrude’s demise can be attributed to the overarching male authority figures in both of their lives; however, their lack of obedience is what truly led to their demise. Through binary opposition and symbolism, Gertrude and Ophelia experience the same downfall, despite their different backgrounds.

The lifestyle of both Ophelia and Gertrude foil each other and dramatically shift the theme of obedience within Hamlet. For example, when the king emphasizes that Gertrude not drink from the poisoned chalice, her reply is: “I have, my lord; I pray you, pardon me” (5.3.74). Her disobedience is a symbol that failure to respect authority can have dramatic results. Additionally, she lived a life of promiscuity in Hamlet’s perspective and this negative predisposition creates a setting where she is the antagonist, and that her downfall is inevitable. This tone of promiscuity is foiled dramatically by Ophelia’s innocence as she lived a chaste and restrained life in comparison to Gertrude. Ophelia’s formal way of addressing Polonius emphasizes the negative effect his authority over her has, as Polonius is a barrier preventing Ophelia’s happiness. On the contrary, once Polonius dies, Ophelia loses a sense of authority and goes insane, stating: “How should I, your true love know From another one? By his cockle hat and staff, And his sandal shoon” (5.1.79-82). Ophelia’s spiral into madness is distinct because it highlights the binary opposition between adhering to an over authoritative figure, and having a lack of obedience because there is no form of authority to have dominion over her.

Shakespeare uses Ophelia’s character arc to convey the message to readers that following rules without considering the consequences is dangerous, and challenges readers to evaluate their commitments. In her final downfall, she hands rue herbs to Gertrude: “there’s rue for you; and here’s some for me:—we may call it herb of grace o’ Sundays” (4.1.27). This symbolic use of herbivory is brilliant as it is a foreshadowing of what is to come for the king and queen. The rue herb is symbolic of regret, meaning that Gertrude will regret her decision to not only drink from the chalice, but for remarrying the king. This bizarre act is a result of her derangement due to having no authoritative figure. Her innocence and failure to think independently is why she ultimately dies. Through this action, a lesson of moderation is conveyed by revealing that being too radical will constrain people, but no authority whatsoever can drive them to insanity.

The portrayal of Gertrude is tragic in of itself, as she is simply following her orders and is criticized for it. Hamlet holds great disdain for his mother and this naturally puts her in an antagonist position. When describing her, Hamlet states: “Frailty, thy name is woman!” (1.2. 146). Her obedience to authority foils to Gertrude because she willingly chooses to marry the king, as she herself is the authority. While her marriage to Claudius is admirable in a sense because she is doing what she sees as best for the people, her willingness to concede authority results in a tragic death. The chalice is not only a symbol to mock the royal marriage, but it connects both Gertrude and Claudius together in death, as they die in succession.

The message of authority depicted in the foiling between Gertrude and Ophelia is that moderation is a necessity when carrying out authority. A dictatorship suppresses the rights of people and Shakespeare uses Ophelia to illustrate both. Additionally, Shakespeare emphasizes the importance of free thinking within Hamlet. Gertrude’s commitment to follow orders despite any moral conflicts reveal that this isn’t the best method of authority either. Situational irony is present in the foiling of women as they are the only two women and experience a restraining authority. Additionally, the women both die because of irrational thinking and this reveals that Shakespeare wants people to think rationally and clearly.

Ultimately, the tragic character arcs of the women in Hamlet reveal a deeper meaning and lesson on obedience to the higher power. Shakespeare brilliantly illustrates two drastically different predicaments, but both conclude with the same outcome. The lessons about obedience are a necessity as finding perfect balance between the two extremes is...
the real challenge.
Knightly Revelation

Throughout Sir Gawain's journey, he encountered many obstacles that challenged who he really is. Gawain faced anything from the harsh nature to resisting Bertilak's wife. Many would consider the actions pursued as a result of his bravery, but that is not necessarily the case. Gawain shows moral courage consistently throughout his journey, which ultimately keeps him alive and upholds the lesson that one should display loyalty and truthfulness to the values of oneself.

Starting in the castle, Gawain, Arthur and a bunch of other knights are celebrating with a feast when The Green Knight barges in, proposes the game, and leaves. Now, the differences in bravery and moral courage is that bravery is more physical and doesn't have much to do with thinking, while moral courage involves psychologically doing the right thing, which may not always be the bravest. Gawain shows moral courage in this instance as he asks to take over the mysterious challenge while everyone else contemplated what was going on (Borroff 8). Gawain showed courage because morally, he wanted to uphold the knightly virtues he should have. This wasn't so much bravery because there wasn't any physical harm being afflicted on him, at least yet, so it was mentally up to him to make this commitment to the challenge. This was the first step leading to how his truthfulness and loyalty to his values would save him in the end.

Additionally, Gawain showed his moral courage at the castle with Bertilak and his wife. Bertilak’s wife acted as a temptress toward Gawain to try and seduce him and cause a distortion in his mindset. Gawain claims that she is “bound to a better man” (Borroff 27). This attacks the moral aspect and the virtues for what Gawain stands for. There isn’t anything related to bravery in the sense that he isn’t doing anything that may be life threatening or physically harming at the moment, but he is morally choosing to deny her. This takes courage on its own as many before him have failed and suffered as a result. Later on in the story, this scene can be referred back to as the defining moment where his loyalty and morals is what kept him alive in the Green Chapel.

Lastly, we see his display of moral courage in the final moments in the Green Chapel. We are approaching the climax of the story when The Green Knight is about to chop off Gawain’s head when The Green Knight stops and tells Gawain not to flinch. To this, Gawain resends that he will “neither flinch nor flee” (Borroff 48). The flinching is more of a psychological aspect to oneself and it relates to the moral courage that needs to be shown. He is brave that he is already in the position to accept the impending axe swing, but it is his moral courage, upholding the knightly virtues to kneel there and not flinch. This was one of the last events where The Green Knight tested Gawain’s loyalty to his values and after evaluating everything, decided to keep him alive. The lesson that one should stay true to their values is what keeps Gawain alive.

Overall, Gawain displays several accounts where he shows he is a character of moral courage. Gawain followed what he has been taught as a knight and passed the tests that required more than just a brave soul willing to put his body on the line, but rather a morally right mind. By standing by what he believes in, Gawain was able to pass and survive the games of The Green Knight.