

Dear Kat,

Writing 39A has been an interesting experience of emotions and understandings. I had come with the pre-conceived notion that it's a writing class, it's going to be a lot of work and a pain. I was proven completely wrong as even though there was a good amount of work. I wanted to do that work and wanted to come to class. In fact, Writing was the class I enjoyed the most this quarter. I managed not only to learn a lot related to the subject of Writing, but also developed in terms of analyzing and understanding different writing pieces. I got to read different pieces of writing by authors I had never even heard of, but also grew to adore their style and sense of writing. But mostly importantly during this class, I developed immensely as a writer and made some really good friends like Sean, Foster, Shawnah etc.

Writing 39A is not only a class which requires one to write, but also requires one to understand the readings, as well as participate in group discussions, peer evaluations which generally took place in class. I believe I was a vital part of my group and actively gave my contribution during the discussions such as when we were to discuss the different parts of Beowulf or analyze Dillard's work and identify the audience so aimed by her. Like for *Living Like Weasels* by Annie Dillard, we figured out that Dillard aimed at showing the value of perseverance and avoidance of being all over the place by drawing a parallel to an animal (The Weasel). It can be seen in everyday life, making it more relatable and understandable for the aimed audience. We concluded that her purpose was to make the audience reflect on their own thoughts and bring a change in themselves, and I played an important role in identifying the purpose and explaining my perspective of what I felt to the group. I was an active participant individually in class as well where I used to put my point and argument across openly. I also used to ask questions to you and Sam whenever I had a doubt, and met both of you many times during the quarter to understand how to improve as a writer and as well as on my assignments. I took the feedback positively and improved on my work each time following the changes.

We had several assignments related to Beowulf till Week 5, or so called 'Side Quests'. For the first Side Quest, where we had to analyze parts of Beowulf where Grendel is frightening and terrifying, using quotes from the poem, my response was:

Ancient Danes, once ruled over by great leaders, was all away from trouble until out of the blue, came a gruesome menace named Grendel who decided to create havoc at the most unexpected of times, thus establishing a rather a terrifying and monstrous image for himself and establishing a factor of fear inside the population of Danes. An example portraying his horrific behavior from the poem is: "Grendel struck again with more gruesome murders. Malignant by nature, he never showed remorse." (Line 135-137), which basically describes how Grendel had no remorse or sympathy whatsoever and recklessly murdered many, hence establishing a terrifying and intimidating image for him, thanks to his unexpected and abrupt activities.

We see some development in Side Quest 3, where I describe the quotes with more detail, particularly quoting:

As for that of a good warrior, in lines 1384-1396 Beowulf tells King Hrothgar that there is no point of mourning for the demise of his comrade but rather it is better to take immediate action in getting rid of the menace that is Grendel's mother and that the warrior will be known for his feats after his demise more than he is when alive (line 1387-1389). Beowulf also shows that a good warrior is sure of his strength and provides reassurance to the king as to that he will defeat Grendel's mother in lines 1392-1396. One can also see the qualities of a viking here, as a viking's proud and outspoken nature can also be noticed here in the lines just so mentioned.

I, then provided more analysis for my quote which was missing in the first side quest. As I look back to the two side quests, and then at Boss 2 where we had to analyze whether Beowulf is brave in terms of Aristolean standards I can clearly mark the difference between the them and how I have advanced as a writer. I now not only provide context and background for my quotes, but also give a description of how those lines make sense to me and my thesis. Particularly this extract:

Beowulf is based on a hero's journey where he defeats 3 monsters through the course of the poem, having obstacles along the way, but he wouldn't qualify as a brave individual in terms of Aristolean standards. In Book 3 Chapter 8, it is stated that a person who fights for honor isn't considered brave, as fighting for one's honor serves as a compulsive purpose, that here is to maintain his reputation, and we can see Beowulf doing the same in the lines:

And a young prince must be prudent like that,  
giving freely while his father lives  
so that afterwards in age when fighting starts  
steadfast companions will stand by him  
and hold the line. Behavior that's admired  
is the path to power among people everywhere. (Line 20-26)

These lines show the importance of behavior about gaining the respect and support of others, that is basically establishing honor. As the Viking society so highly values its heroic code, it highly esteems those who conform to the code's principles. Therefore, he can be stated as a hero in terms of Viking standards, but not in Aristotle standards as basically fighting for honor is just a form of self-praise and appraisal. This is especially seen when Aristotle describes the citizen soldier specifically 'This kind of courage is most like to that which we described earlier, because it is due to virtue; for it is due to shame and to desire of a noble object (i.e. honor) and avoidance of disgrace, which is ignoble.'. This line shows how a feat done out of compulsion or habit isn't considered brave.

In the first Side Quest, I accurately quoted what I must and provide evidence as to why Grendel is terrifying. But in the extract for Boss 2, I provide not only concrete evidence for my thesis, but I also give context for my quotes as well as a rather detailed and more convincing analysis of the

quotes so chosen. Through this, one can understand that the writer is not only an expert on the topic but also connect with the writing more, thus understanding the thesis more. Furthermore, looking at my Boss 3, where we were to present an argument about what is the best way to engage an audience, my analysis of Dulce est Decorum est by Wilfred Owen, shows drastic improvement:

Owen aimed to evoke the emotions of understanding, terror, and fear in the mind of the reader, to prevent future wars. By reading this poem, the audience would be able to think about the horrors of war and understand why a situation of a war isn't one anyone would ever want to be in. This can be seen in the lines:

He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.  
 If in some smothering dreams you too could pace  
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
 And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin

These lines portray the sorrow and plight of Owen when he was helplessly watching his comrade perish in front of his eyes and he couldn't do anything about the same, especially when he says 'He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.', as this shows how much the man was suffering because of the war and receiving such a sorry death. The reader then feels pity for the dying soldier, and kind of helpless as if they were in the shoes of Owen. Owen's motive was to promote the avoidance of war and he did exactly that by using phrases like 'Drunk with fatigue', 'The blood come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs', as these phrases emphasized the horrific nature and sights during wars, but also gave the reader a horrific imagery of the same, so they can relate to Owen's disgust of wars. This all through the description of his own personal experience, thus making his message clear about the same.

I am proud of myself as a writer because to most extent, I am accurately able to put my point forward related to my thesis. I am able to analyze the poem piece by piece by picking out specific phrases from the poem such as when I explain how 'Drunk like fatigue' pertains to my thesis. This shows my understanding of the poem and how it makes sense to me (the writer), as well as how it would make sense to the reader, more importantly sense to my thesis. I can provide a wide spectrum of evidence and analysis with background information, with detailed and concrete evidence related to the same.

What I look forward to most in Writing 39B and 39C are the varieties of diverse writing pieces I will be exposed to. I await the different writing pieces that I would be writing using those readings or so. In almost all our pieces we were asked to imitate the style of many famous writers who have already established their credibility in the writing world. We imitated Virginia Woolf (Side Quest 5), Charles Baxter (Boss 3), Susanne Weil (Boss 2) and many more. These readings made me ponder about different aspects of life and how differently minds work. I, not only developed as a writer but also grew to learn about many of the writers and their pieces of writing. I grew to comprehend what they are trying to convey through different versions of

writing. I expanded my imaginative horizon and explored new ideas and fragments of my mind which I thought were inaccessible. Like as for Boss 3, to prove my thesis, I was to write an anecdote, particularly quoting:

Tears began dropping from my eyes as if everything in the world was lost, because it seemed like it did. My mother, my forever support was in danger and I couldn't do anything about it. It was ten minutes till they got her out. Ten long minutes. During these ten minutes, I felt as if my soul was snatched away from my being and I stood in front of the main door of the school motionless, waiting for it to open. The ring of the fire alarm which earlier seemed like an indication of caution, now felt like a calling by the devil. I dropped on my knees with my hands folded praying to God with the hope that she is bought out as soon as possible.

This proves a stark difference to my previous story out of my imagination in Side Quest 5, differing in terms of detail, use of metaphors and description of emotions. I barely describe what Wulfa is feeling like during the battle, which can be seen:

The years passed and Wulfa and her vision never failed in giving rise to an ace archer. A scroll from afar arrived into the dwelling of the Wulf family, where she was overjoyed yet envious to hear the feats of her brother in Heorot. Her confidence was at the brim of breaking when she decided to against every norm and flee from the cage of stereotypes, and pay a visit to her beloved brother in Heorot and finally establish her stature as a warrior.

I provide no proper description or background information as to how Wulfa would feel or react in the situation she is in, but I learn to do so properly in Boss 3 such as when I say that ‘..I drop on my knees with my hands folded...’ showing the plight and distress I was in that time. I can convey the emotions I felt at that moment in a way that I am able to connect with the reader. We can easily strike a difference between the two and understand how I developed as a writer.

One of the newest things, I learnt about is MLA Formatting. As an international student, I never had the need to do any research or citations using MLA formatting or any type of formatting for that matter. During the class, I realized what MLA format is and as to how it makes sense while writing papers. The stark difference can be visibly noticed between my first and last citation of Annie Dillard’s *Living like Weasels* for Boss 3:

Initial: Dillard, Annie, *Living like Weasels*.

Final: Dillard, Annie. “Living like Weasels”. *Virginia Commonwealth University*,

Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017, <<http://www.courses.vcu.edu/ENG200-lad/dillard.htm>>.

Even though I advanced a lot as a writer during the class, what I can still work on is the emphasis of my thesis. A strong thesis is one which can easily be defended by the words from the writing piece itself. You taught us to ‘Show, not tell’, and though I have learnt to do that to the extent that I am able to project my thesis appropriately. Yet, I need to make my thesis speak for itself. I

need to learn to make it so strong that my writing piece is defeating every counter argument which could be made to refute the statement. Providing concrete evidence with relevant detailing is highly essential and must be part of any writer's to-do list. Another thing I can improve on is on the avoidance of run-on sentences while writing. This makes our writing rather tedious to read and understand and hence, we are better off without them. What I struggled most in class was coming up with original arguments and anecdotes which make most sense to my thesis. I am now able to present an argument based on the works I read and cited. What I need to work on is the fact that my arguments are making sense to the reader. That in a way that he/she is able to agree with my point of view at the end of the essay. All these skills can be acquired by maintaining the same avid attitude during both Writing 39B and 39C, where I would have new monsters to defeat and conquer.

One of the major struggles I had during the class was that due to a heavy load of classes like Math, Physics, History, it was extremely difficult to subsist in way that I do well in all of them. Submitting assignments on time with conviction was something which was really tough for me. For Writing 39B and 39C, I want to make sure that I manage all my classes in a way that I don't give too much or too less time to either. I need to learn to manage time more effectively in a way that each of my classes receive the same amount of effort and dedication. All this in a way provided I do well in the classes as well. For instance, this very cover letter, even though I put my point across for my grade out, I believe that I could have done a better job in writing this. Due to extra work from classes like Physics, Math and History, I was not able to serve justice to the letter. There is still a lot of improvement to be done. I need to distribute my time in a way that I am able to understand the concepts but also prepare for my finals and midterms at the same time. Time management is one of the key skills I obtained during the course of class, but it is also something I need to work upon for the future.

Writing 39A has been a journey of several emotions for me. This class has not only prepared me for Writing 39B, 39C and Upper-division writing but also improved my general style of writing. I never felt so internally motivated to attend a class and pull all-nighters for different assignments of any class other than this very class. I felt like I could not only progress as a writer but as an individual as I am to expand my horizon of imagination. As I look back to the first assignment in class we had about 'The Best Food', I can now proudly say that I can write an academic essay with concrete evidence and background information (Steps to write a good essay learnt can be seen from my portfolio as well), and come up with ideas and stories to emphasize on a point. After all this, I can only sum up that I would deserve a grade in range of awesome (A, A-,B+) mainly due to my ardent participation and dedication towards the class.

Regards,

Ankit Jain

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Professor Eason

Writing 39A

17 March 2017

Pandora's Box of Stories

A bright sunny day, it was a normal day like any other but who knew that this day would be so heart-rending. I woke up in the morning and got ready for school. I was in Grade 2 and had a wonderful teacher Mrs. Alice who used to always reward us with chocolates for doing well in class. I am always excited to go to school, play with my friends, and learn new concepts. I was furthermore excited as, my mother came with me to school to volunteer at the charity bake sale in my school. I helped my mother get all her baked goodies into the car and we set off. I reached class on time and then saw all my friends. It was the 3rd period. I was sitting in the class with all my classmates, just about to start our pop quiz, when the fire alarm rang. We all were prepared for such an unlikely situation because of constant fire drills and presentations. The entire school was evacuated in less than 5 minutes. As we came out, I began looking for my mother to make sure she was safe. I looked left and right, and left again, to realize that she still isn't out. I didn't let my emotions or imagination run wild and tried to contain myself to the best of my ability, but my mind had other plans.

I sprinted towards the door of the school to get in but was stopped by the fire fighters with assurance of my mother's safety. As the flames of fire fumed higher than the Burj Khalifa, my heart started pounding 10 times faster. Tears began dropping from my eyes as if everything in the world was lost. My mother was in danger and I couldn't do anything about it. It was ten

minutes till they got her out. Ten long minutes. During these ten minutes, I felt as if my soul was snatched away from my being and I stood in front of the main door of the school motionless, waiting for it to open. The ring of the fire alarm, which earlier seemed like an indication of caution, now felt like a calling by the devil. I dropped on my knees praying to God with the hope that she would be brought out as soon as possible.

As they brought my mother out, I went and hugged her tightly without uttering a single word. As we travelled back home, the songs on the radio seemed to have a pinch of gloom even though it shined a smile of decency. It seemed as if the crickets chirped even at 12 pm in the afternoon.

The next day, I received the news that our school was shut down for a few days. As I breathed a sigh of contentment, I went downstairs and made a scrumptious breakfast in bed for my mother, with a reinforced perspective of life. I realized that life doesn't give one too many chances. It is extremely unpredictable but it depends on one how one takes it on and holds on tight to their roots.

As a writer, I have tried to show my readers how I am learning from the situation and experiencing life with a fresh and brand new philosophy through the anecdote. When the reader reads this anecdote, he/she will be able to relate to it and probably call or hug their mothers. It evokes the emotions of fear, worry and concern in the audience, which are precisely the reactions that I wanted to convey. I was trying to convey what and why I felt that way. I wanted the audience to think about what they would do if they were in the same situation. I do so because the entire story is providing a visual imagery of a situation which can generally be noticed in daily life as well, such as if we just consider the entire setting of a bake sale in a school. The entire situation is easy for the reader to imagine and form a strong visual image for the same in

his/her head. This message conveys the unpredictability of life, in the most coherent way possible. The fact that the audience can accurately imagine the situation that I, the writer was in, and imagine themselves in the writer's shoes fulfills the writer's purpose of anecdote to put across his/her message.

While watching movies or TV Shows, we have a visual aid for relating to a situation but while writing, we need to do so by the power of our words. Hence, due to the high degree of relativity and the existence of in-depth human dimension, anecdotes engage the mind of the audiences in the best way possible. An anecdote is much more than just a personal experience. It is where the writer pours his/her heart out by mentioning a vital incident which took place in his/her life to emphasize on the point which he/she is trying to convey. It is used to divulge a truth, or so thesis, in a more relatable manner to the reader, mainly by evoking different emotions in them.

In an anecdote, one can also characterize a person or thing using details such as their specific quirks or traits. This is done to impart a conceptual idea about a person, place, or thing through definitive details of a short narrative. They add flavor to writing pieces by adding a human and personal dimension to them, that is, to make them emote the way the writer did or intended to. This also engages, involves, and grasps the attention of the reader. Anecdotes can be considered better than fictional stories as they are more believable and easier to visualize. Anecdotes are intended to make the reader imagine as to what they would do if they were in place of the writer, and what their reaction be. Through this, they can understand the emotions of the writer and thus the writer's thesis in the way he intended, as due to the awakening of personal and human emotions into the mind of the reader.



Anecdotes can also be used to convey social messages, as we can see in *Dulce est Decorum est* is a poem by Wilfred Owen. He was not only a poet but also a soldier who fought in the World War I. The entire poem is basically an anecdote by Owen, about the horrors of war when he was out fighting for his life. We can see what he saw in war such as in lines:

Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots  
 But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
 Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

These lines show the sight that Owen must have seen and what he went through when he was out on the battlefield. The audience meant for the poem were the people who lost their loved ones during the war as well as the younger generation. It was meant to expose the younger generation to the agony of the fallen. It is no doubt, that this poem will galvanize them to avoid future wars and prevent further bloodshed. Owen aimed to evoke the emotions of understanding, terror, and fear in the mind of the reader as when he uses words like ‘...Limped on, blood shod...’, ‘...All went lame; all blind..’ or ‘...deaf even to the hoots...’. By reading this poem, the audience would be able to think about the horrors of war and understand why a situation of a war isn’t one anyone would ever want to be in. He/she would be able to relate the thinking of Owen and understand why he thinks war is bad through the imagery he is so providing.

In the lines:

He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.  
 If in some smothering dreams you too could pace  
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin

These lines portray the sorrow and plight of Owen when he was helplessly watching his comrade perish in front of his eyes and he couldn't do anything about the same, especially when he says 'He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.', as this shows how much the man was suffering because of the war and receiving such a sorry death. The reader then feels pity for the dying soldier, and kind of helpless as if they were in the shoes of Owen. Owen's motive was to promote the avoidance of war and he did exactly that by using phrases like 'Drunk with fatigue', 'The blood come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs', as these phrases emphasized the horrific nature and sights during wars. This gave the reader a horrific imagery of the same, so they can relate to Owen's disgust of wars. After this, we can feel the sympathy and the pity that Owen must have emoted at that particular period and thus relate to it. This all through the description of his own personal experience, thus making his message clear about the same.

Anecdotes are usually used to change the reader's perspective of an already existing issue, such as we saw in Owen's case it was to show how horrific is the nature of war. Each writer does so in a different way, as we can see that Owen did so by providing the pitiful sight of his comrade. Similarly, Annie Dillard's 'Living like Weasels', conveys her idea by means of extreme detailing of her surroundings and her vision. 'Living like Weasels' is a story of a weasel which was spotted by Dillard near the pond, and how that weasel makes her think about life and the value of perseverance. Her purpose is to change the way we all envision our lives, to basically stop overstretching our multitude of options, instead be like the weasel, who grasped on to his goal with all it had (the bird) and didn't let go. The weasel being an animal we can see in our daily lives makes it easier to be imagined by the reader. Dillard provides a detailed

explanation of her surroundings and the walk she took to reach the pond. She could have simply written 'I went to Hollins pond', but instead she writes:

'Twenty minutes from my house, through the woods by the quarry and across the highway, is Hollins Pond, a remarkable piece of shallowness, where I like to go at sunset and sit on a tree trunk. Hollins Pond is also called Murray's Pond; it covers two acres of bottomland near Tinker Creek with six inches of water and six thousand lily pads. In winter, brown-and-white steers stand in the middle of it, merely dampening their hooves; from the distant shore they look like miracle itself, complete with miracle's nonchalance. Now, in summer, the steers are gone. The water lilies have blossomed and spread to a green horizontal plane that is terra firma to plodding blackbirds, and tremulous ceiling to black leeches, crayfish, and carp.'

She gives detail of every minor thing she saw or felt during the walk she took to the pond. I believe that she I this to change the way we live and think. She wants to take us into her world and feel every emotion she felt and everything she went through during those 20 minutes. If she hadn't provided this information about her journey, we would not be able to imagine the situation she was in and how it even makes sense to her or any of us. We would not be able to see that she is taking this journey to get a break from her fast-paced life. She wants us to feel at peace like she did at the pond such as when she says '...from the distant shore they look like miracle itself, complete with miracle's nonchalance...'. This provides a rather soothing and peaceful image in our minds, thus making us want to be in her shoes. Making us want to feel what she felt, and where she felt it. This is all is to give the reader an insight into what she is trying to convey about how we get caught up in the multitude of choices in the fast-paced world. She wants us to understand that we must take things in a slow pace and strive for achieving our

one chosen goal with all our might. The grasp of the weasel on the bird metaphorizes the message she is trying to convey. Specifically, when said ‘Seize it and let it seize you up aloft even, till your eyes burn out and drop; let your musky flesh fall off in shreds, and let your very bones unhinge and scatter, loosened over fields, over fields and woods, lightly, thoughtless, from any height at all, from as high as eagles.’, we visualize about the same with words like ‘Seize it and let it seize you up aloft even’. We understand how important perseverance is through the grasp of the weasel onto the bird, which is an easily imaginable visual. All this through the minute details she gives to evoke the emotions of wonder and relativity in our minds. This entire extract keeps the reader hooked onto to what is going on around him/her and makes them want to continue reading.

Storytelling can change the world. It can change minds. Change enough, you change everything. Everyone perceives stories in such different ways that no one can even imagine. Many religions, cultures, even today are based on just simple stories and how they perceive reality in a story, the best way being of a personal experience. It’s a power which comes with a great responsibility. Many can twist words and stories for their benefit but true meaning and virtue lies in when people understand the motive and the message behind those very stories. They may be fictional or non-fictional, but it’s on all our imaginations and minds as to how we understand and visualize those experiences and stories.

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Ankit Jain

Professor Kathryn

Writing 39A

17 March 2017

The Brave and the Rash

What is bravery? Who is really considered brave? Bravery is said to be the display of courageous behavior, but like a spectrum of colors, it has various shades with each shade being similar yet difference from the other. One can consider reputation and honor as a display of bravery, as like that of the Vikings, one of them being Beowulf from the poem Beowulf who is considered one of the bravest Vikings due to the various feats he has so performed and the beasts he has slain. On the other hand, Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher, has his own opinion on bravery and courage in his book Nicomachean Ethics, written specifically in Book 3 in Chapters 7-9 where he speaks about what courage is and gives examples of those who fulfill his criteria for courage and who do not, with a more philosophical and theoretical approach to the same. He believes that courage is internally motivated rather than compulsive. After understanding both views, the question that so arises, is Beowulf brave in the eyes of Aristotle? The answer to question is arguable, but it can be closely concluded that Beowulf, even with many feathers in his cap related to the beasts he defeated would not be considered courageous in terms of Aristotean standards, thanks to his boastful and cocky nature which go against the fundamentals so set by Aristotle.

Aristotle introduces the concept of bravery in Nicomachean Ethics specifically when he states ‘the brave man is as dauntless as man may be. Therefore, while he will fear even the things

that are not beyond human strength, he will face them as he ought and as the rule directs, for honor's sake; for this is the end of virtue.' (Bk. 3, Ch. 7). This shows Aristotle believes that one who faces the impossible but does it to the best of his ability, and does it without any compulsion, is considered brave. He tells us that a brave person is one who performs the right actions, with the right motives at the right time. He believes that courage is holding a calm and neutral position in one's feelings of conviction and distress. He also states the two extremes of a rash individual and cowardly individual as in the lines: 'The rash man, however, is also thought to be boastful and only a pretender to courage' and 'The coward, then, is a despairing sort of person; for he fears everything.' (Bk. 3, Ch. 7), to draw a parallel to the definition of a brave individual to extremes. He also states the five types of individuals who he doesn't consider brave which are the Citizen Soldier, the Experienced, the Passionate, the Ignorant and the Sanguine Confident (Bk. 3, Ch. 8). He also goes on to state 'It is for facing what is painful, then, as has been said, that men are called brave. Hence also courage involves pain, and is justly praised; for it is harder to face what is painful than to abstain from what is pleasant.' (Bk. 3, Ch. 9), telling that true bravery lies in facing pain and having virtue.

This entire extract well establishes what bravery is for Aristotle, but the Vikings seem to have a different view for the same. They believe that one's reputation is an important factor for their stature in society which can be seen when Beowulf is addressing King Hrothgar before battling Grendel in the following lines of the poem Beowulf, specifically quoting:

So every elder and experience councilman

Among my people supported my resolve

To come here to you, King Hrothgar,

Because all knew of my awesome strength. (Lines 415-426)

Beowulf gives assurance to King Hrothgar that he is capable enough to defeat Grendel by providing the examples of beasts he had formerly slain. He is establishing his reputation as a warrior who has defeated many monsters by providing a sort of resume for the same. This shows the importance of ones already performed feats for vikings, in other words their honor or so heroic code. These lines basically portray the importance of reputation, perseverance, and honor for the Vikings. The two views of bravery display a contrast thus showing that Beowulf cannot be considered brave in Aristolean Standards. Beowulf has instances where he proves his stature as a brave individual but many which can be proven otherwise with respect to the views of Aristotle. He starts off initially as not a brave individual by Aristolean standards but grows to be a brave hero, even by Aristolean standards as he realizes his flaws, yet fights for his subjects with all his might. But what can be argued about the same is that was the action entirely selfless or was there an ulterior motive to the same?

Beowulf is based on a hero's journey where he defeats 3 monsters through the course of the poem, having obstacles along the way, but he wouldn't qualify as a brave individual in terms of Aristolean standards. In Book 3 Chapter 8, it is stated that a person who fights for honor isn't considered brave, as fighting for one's honor serves as a compulsive purpose, that here is to maintain his reputation, and we can see Beowulf doing the same in the lines:

And a young prince must be prudent like that,  
giving freely while his father lives  
so that afterwards in age when fighting starts  
steadfast companions will stand by him



and hold the line. Behavior that's admired

is the path to power among people everywhere. (Line 20-26)

These lines show the importance of behavior about gaining the respect and support of others, that is basically establishing honor. As the Viking society so highly values its heroic code, it highly esteems those who conform to the code's principles. Therefore, he can be stated as a hero in terms of Viking standards, but not in Aristotle standards as basically fighting for honor is just a form of self-praise and appraisal. This is especially seen when Aristotle describes the citizen soldier specifically 'This kind of courage is most like to that which we described earlier, because it is due to virtue; for it is due to shame and to desire of a noble object (i.e. honor) and avoidance of disgrace, which is ignoble.'. This line shows how a feat done out of compulsion or habit isn't considered brave.

Aristotle also states that another of the people who aren't considered brave are the ones who are most experienced and boastful of their actions. Even though they have the experience of being in the situation to be faced, they are usually all talk and would be the first to escape any difficult situation so faced specifically when said 'Professional soldiers turn cowards, however, when the danger puts too great a strain on them and they are inferior in numbers and equipment; for they are the first to fly, while citizen-forces die at their posts, as in fact happened at the temple of Hermes.' (Bk. 3, Ch. 8). The boastful nature of Beowulf can be seen in the lines 415-426, where he speaks of his past experiences in his address to King Hrothgar to gain his confidence and give him confirmation for the defeat of the brute that is Grendel, specifically:

They had seen me boltered in the blood of enemies

When I battled and bound five beasts,

Raided a troll-nest and in the night-sea

Slaughtered sea-brutes. I have suffered extremes  
 And avenged the Geats  
 Upon themselves, I devastated them).  
 Now I mean to be a match for Grendel,  
 Settle the outcome in a single combat. (Lines 415-426)

These lines show the experience related to war which Beowulf already possesses, so he falls in the category of experienced soldier which is deemed as not brave by Aristotle. From both the quotes so discussed, it can be established that Beowulf is not brave in terms of the standards so set by Aristotle. Beowulf believes that he is brave thanks to all the monsters he had already slain in the past, not because he is brave or courageous. Aristotle states that being brave is not relying on one's experience, but it is being mindful and conscious, and doing it without any reflex or habit.

In the lines above from *Beowulf*, we can also portray Beowulf as a rather rash individual. After stating his experience, he goes on to say that he will fight Grendel unarmed in lines 436-438: 'I hereby renounce sword and the shelter of the broad shield, the heavy war board.', thus showing he is one to take rash decisions, which goes against the Aristotelean standard of bravery.

Now one can argue that Beowulf can be seen having the right motive and may even fall into Aristotle's definition of true bravery stated in the Chapter 9, specifically in lines 2585-2591(...The glittering sword, infallible before that day failed when he unsheathed it...), when he continues the battle with the dragon even though his sword fails him as well as in lines 2682-2687(...Beowulf's ancient iron-grey sword let him down in the fight...). This gives the impression that he is fighting for his subjects to the best of his ability no matter what the result

may be. What can refute that is the thought, is the fact that even though he is doing it for the subjects of his nation, his honor is still his main priority. But still, he fails to do so at the right time which again falls into the category of a rash individual 'The rash man, however, is also thought to be boastful and only a pretender to courage; at all events, as the brave man is with regard to what is terrible' (Bk. 3, Ch. 7). This shows that Beowulf took a rather rash decision to fight the dragon even after his sword failed him, and also considering the fact that he has aged since his last battle with Grendel's mother. He himself admits in line 2513-14(...Now I am old but as king of people I shall pursue this fight for the glory of winning...), thus proving that it wasn't the right time for him to combat the dragon, which puts him far away from the definition of a brave individual in the eyes of Aristotle. The same line also shows that he was fighting for honor (glory of winning) rather than his subjects. This also defeats the fact that Beowulf wasn't a brave individual initially, but grew up to be one as he aged, as even though he may have been said to have the right motive, his main intention is still to add to his honor and remain legendary even after his demise.

Beowulf has proven his prowess as a warrior and a brave individual many times in the eyes of the Viking community, and has established himself as the best of the best, but the same can be argued when talking about bravery as per the standards set by Aristotle. In my eyes, true bravery is when one stays true to oneself and performs the feat without any thought of compulsion or self-praise, which in many ways is like that of Aristotle. My views on whether Beowulf is brave or not, concur with that of Aristotle in many ways, thanks to his overly boastful and cocky nature throughout the course of the poem.

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Ankit Jain

Professor Kathryn

Writing 39A

17 March 2017

**Journey to the Middle of Mesa Court**

Of Indian origin,  
the only offspring of an engineer and homemaker,  
living in the majestic city of Dubai  
was mused with the idea about my future education  
to be the supporting pillar for my parents for long time to come  
out of which came the United States as the victor location  
but stood a 2400-point beast for which I sat and sat,  
was ironically named SAT.  
I went sprinting place to place hunting answers to  
exasperating reading, never ending math and  
tedious writing fragments of the beast.

Arrived the morn of the vanquish of the beast  
with a sword chiseled like a number 2 pencil.  
Four hours did go the battle for the beast to finally  
succumb twenty mornings later with a bitter sweet smile  
of decency with a pinch of gloom.

Just when I thought that was it done,  
little did I know that it has only just begun.

After an era, longer than any of Ross's marriages  
arrived the demon college search  
to avenge his slain comrade, but to only be subdued  
by the wrath of Ankit Jain and my trusty dagger  
friendly christened as *colleges.startclass.com*.  
But alas, the dagger carried not only boon but also bane  
for it paved the path to an alley of savages of essays and applications.

But with valor I fought with the competence  
of my imagination aided by my allies of music and dance  
sanctioning a permit to reach towering heights.

The fifteen application monsters were rendered useless  
by the morn of New Year's Eve to give rise only soon to  
the barbaric and remorseful period of rejection  
spawning the behemoth named: Heartbreak.

But never fear, I rose  
to the challenge aided by my loved ones  
and so was slain, Heartbreak with the  
mace of aspiration and sword of hope.

It was then time to crown the successor  
to *The Indian High School*  
and four stood in competition from all over the land.  
So I flew with the scroll of inspection and campus touring  
for the contestants to stand behind the podium  
with the chance to rule over the land of Ankitasia.  
Travelling over the 7 seas to step through the doors of *Virginia Tech*  
followed by an excursion across the continent  
to explore the grounds of UC Davis, UC Irvine  
and *Cal Poly SLO*.

When it seemed all rosy came one last brute  
named Confusion, tall as the Burj Khalifa  
with endless strands of 567 pounds of spiked red fur  
concealed deep inside the Cave of Failure.  
With a permanent befuddled countenance  
and sense of bewilderment and dement  
the battle commenced with me being knocked topsy-turvy  
by the firearm of Mayhem upon entering the Cave of Failure.  
Brawn surprisingly overpowered my brain  
as I bungled to slice and dodge  
while the monster lodged to venture into  
its ultimate form – Chaos.

With its fur now as thick as Medusa's hair  
And its 20 arms as that of Ravana,  
Chaos would hinder my dream of building  
a mansion for my parents  
where they would spend their elderly years.

When all seemed lost with the rise of Chaos  
and US no longer seemed like an option,  
my guardian engineer called Dad,  
a man of strong judgement and sagacity,  
came down from the heavens of *Dodsal Pvt Ltd.*  
and bestowed upon me the ancient weapons of wisdom and advice.  
With points evened out, the battle grew savagely vicious  
until I, with all my might  
cuffed the beast and reduced it to chunks  
with the its own barbed spikes and the weapons so bestowed  
to ultimately victor and arbitrate a new sovereign  
by climbing to the top of the barbarian's head  
and then parading it around like Poseidon's trident.

As the day of the coronation arrived,  
the flight back home seemed longer than it should  
and finally was crowned



the University of California, Irvine as the successor to Indian High School

thanks to its pool of job possibilities

and diversity of students yielding a positive environment for me.

So, I dashed straight outta IHS Dubai

into the UCI forest of Anteaters.