

# *English Literary File*

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# The First 24

## Personal Narrative by Justin Cooley, English 101

Goodbyes are never easy, and this one was definitely the hardest one I had ever faced in my eighteen years. I was still young and this was a gigantic decision I had made. It was not going to be easy. I was going to Parris Island—home of angry, yelling drill instructors and mindless recruits striving to become United States Marines. In my mind I thought, *Do I have what it takes to make it?* I had never been away from home for this long, and saying goodbye to my family and girlfriend tore me in half. Could I do this?

“God, ya’ll already fuckin’ smell! Put your maggot heads between your knees and don’t bring ‘em up!”

This is Parris Island. But all I can see is the floor of the bus. Where are they taking us that I can’t look up and see? The urge to just catch a single peek was thwarted by the fear of getting caught and I kept my head bent down out of sight. I nudged the guy sitting next to me.

“What’s taking so long?”

“Man, I don’t know. I think they’re just trying to scare us.”

“Well it’s working.”

The bus drove for what seemed like hours and hours, stopping and going, almost taunting us with the chance to look up. But when we did stop, I was far from ready to get off. I was ready to go home.

“Get off my bus and get on my yellow footprints! Move! Move! Move!”

Every one of us jumped to our feet and hurried off the bus. As I fell in formation and put my feet at the 45-degree angle to match the yellow footprints, I could feel the fear in the air. I may have been away from my family and anyone I knew, but I wasn’t alone. We were all scared. The fear was evident in the looks of the guys beside me. Our hearts all raced loudly and I felt the recruit’s breath behind me—as I am sure the one in front of me felt mine. I had no idea what was about to happen and what to do about it.

“Through these portals pass the world’s finest fighting men: United States Marines. It’s up to you if you make it.”

We lined up and marched through the large, threatening silver doors. We were back to chest, tighter than sardines could even imagine. They split us up and led us down rows of desks. As we sat down they handed out the contracts. In my head, all I was thinking was *What am I agreeing to? What does this allow them to do?* But I put my signature down—blank after blank of signatures.

“Now, let’s go call Mommy and Daddy you bunch of babies. Tell them you’re O.K.” The instructor just laughed at us all.

We were again crammed into a tight room with at least fifteen phones along the front wall. There was a script right beside the phone for what we were supposed to say. And that’s all we could say. I dialed my mom’s number and waited for her to answer. She knew I’d be calling.

“Hello?” That’s all I heard. I started barking off the script word for word.

“I love you.” I caught it just as I finished the last sentence.

Those were the last words I would hear from anyone back home for three months. I hung up the phone and rushed to the next room. We had our pictures taken, fingerprints scanned, and signed even more paperwork. I felt like I was signing my life away. I had been on the island for about six hours now.

After the most painful haircut of my life, where it felt as though they were just pulling the hairs out instead of cutting them, they moved us into a room with a long catwalk and cubbies with huge green sea bags laying in them. We grabbed the bags and were marched through an assembly line of gear. Skivvy shirt and shorts, socks, underwear, utilities—everything was stuffed into our bags.

“Strip down. Now!”

“Now grab a skivvy short and shirt.”

“Put them on.”

We were all dressed in desert camouflage, with tennis shoes, or “go-fasters,” on our feet instead of boots. We were 1<sup>st</sup> Phase recruits. Lost, confused, “garbage” recruits. They put us in a holding room for hours. We were instructed to stand in formation at the position of attention. Several recruits passed out from locking their knees. We just continued standing there. I had been on the island for about fifteen hours.

“Time to see your new home. Grab all your gear.”

We wrapped ourselves in huge sea bags so heavy that we could hardly walk. Then we marched. It seemed like forever. We passed the parade deck, where three months in the future I would become a United States Marine. That seemed so far ahead that it wasn’t even imaginable. I had a long, hot summer to face before I would get to see that day.

We finally arrived at the barracks and dropped all our gear onto a rack. The instructor taught us how to make a perfect rack and then told us to practice. We made our rack and then ripped the blankets off. We repeated it over and over, until the pattern was embedded in our minds. My rack mate, Pvt. Farmer, whispered to me as we kept tightening the racks:

“Cooley.”

“Yeah.”

“Man, this ain’t that bad yet. Wait until we pick up and meet our real drill instructors. That’s when it’s gonna suck.”

Farmer was right. I had only been on the island for twenty-four hours. This wasn’t the worst yet. I knew it. I just didn’t want to think about it. I missed home, my family, and my girlfriend.

Almost eight months later I can still remember every minute of that first day and the ones that followed. As it turned out, Week One was really the hardest. It’s the beginning of a five-week breakdown phase. I was treated like dirt and brought down to a level where they could make a Marine out of a boy. I hated it while I was there, but I would gladly do it again. There is no place like Parris Island: no place better for making Marines. I have changed a lot since June 14<sup>th</sup>, the day I stood on those footprints, and it has all been for the better. I made it off the island to see my family and girlfriend on September 10<sup>th</sup> and although there’s no place like the island, it is much better to be home.

## ...AKA: *Failing... Falling Actually*

### Personal Narrative by Ira Pace, English 101

It was silent. Then, all the noise came back, frantic cries and questions. Yet I could only hear a faint ringing, a muffled voice of concern breaching the pain.

We always did the same thing each Saturday. Wake up around 6:00 am and groggily find my bike shoes. Reach blindly into the pantry for some crackers and a few fruit-by-the-foot—always a must for mountain bike adventures. I finish gathering my provisions. The time is around 6:30, and I am still so tired I mumble inaudibly to myself.

The cell phone's chirp pierces my zombie like state. It's my mountain bike trainer.

"You got everything?"

"Yeah, I think so," I answer half asleep.

"I'm right outside. Let's hit the trail before the horseback riders are out."

The road winds and twists. I love the mountain scene in Dupont State Forest. Bouncing down the road, with the occasional Fall Out Boy song mixed with some old school rap, we hit the unpaved road. Long forgotten by most people, this area is like my Fortress of Solitude. This clearly is the road less travelled.

Unloading our gear and checking each tire, chain, and camelback as we go... fast forward some: the air is cool, whooshing by my ears. The light is sparse. Trees shade the ground below them, with rays of light cutting through the leaves. It's the same image every time we hit this trail. I know the curves, the climbs, the downhill better than anyone, but my mind blanks when we get to the jumps. Today, I think I have no reservations. After the strenuous climb, my legs ache as they do each time we climb this Goliath. Littered with leaves, stumps and boulders, it is, in my mind, the AgroCrag from Global Guts. I tend to exaggerate a bit.

We stop at the top for some water, a small snack, and to take in the sounds of nature. A bird, not so far off, sings eagerly awaiting a response. A few squirrels tussle in the leaves, and a small stream babbles about something carefree. At the bottom, the waterfall beckons to me with its hypnotic roar.

This is the part where my courage breaks down. Months of crashing, wiping out, or backing down from these jumps have plagued me to the point of annoyance. These are not the ordinary small hills I had mastered within the first week. Perpetual Mt. Everest's loom from jump to jump. The five to ten foot jump would either land me on a new boulder or lay me down in some dead leaves near a tree.

"You got this." I say to myself.

"No, you're gonna crash again."

"Pfffft." In defiance of my negative side, I retort.

Eerily, the forest grows quiet. No more song birds. My coach, standing, cocky, at the bottom, looks to me as if I am just going to walk this out.

"As if."

Down I go. It seems to take hours as I descend. The whooshing returns, and my bike's shocks creak with every bounce. My burning muscles will my bike downhill.

First jump, as usual, is picturesque, one of those BMX images that make front cover of *Mountain Bike Magazine*. Second jump, I waver, as always, but it's not bad. Space and time begin to bend. I can hear my heart beating louder than my favorite band's bass drum. I feel the fear explode throughout my body, and I get ready. The third and final jump is from a small boulder, smaller than the rest, but to land short means hitting a fallen tree. Too long, however, and I will be colliding with a tree I have met so many times before.

I pick up speed; I know I am going too slowly. Two feet away and there is nothing I can do. I fly in the air in slow motion.

“I’m gonna make it.”

The sound of my bike catching the fallen tree is the last thing I remember.

Waking up less than a minute later, the white hot sunlight (or the immense pain in my head) hurts my eyes. The leaves and dirt taste gritty, and they smell like my wet dog. My bike is ten feet away from me, tires still spinning in reminder of my wreck.

“Whaaa?... What happened?” I manage to spit out with gulps of water in between.

“You had the jump, until your back tire caught the tree.” My trained replied. His voice cannot hide the concern.

The pain was blinding, demoralizing, and unending. The next run a week later, concussion and all, I conquered the beast.

# *What You Leave Behind*

## Popular Culture Analysis by Marshall Henderson, English 101

In March of 1997, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* introduced the world to a retelling of classic sci-fi and fantasy movie monsters through a lens that only Joss Whedon could create. In the beginning, the show focused on vapid entertainment in the form of high school drama and demon-slaying violence. As the series progressed, however, there was a gradual shift into deeper philosophical and emotional content. "The Body," the sixteenth episode of season five, is perhaps the strongest example of this. This episode removed nearly every supernatural element from the show in favor of an authentic and emotional experience—to which every person can relate. "The Body" effectively utilizes the experiences and relationships of the characters to explore the surreal reality surrounding a death.

The episode opens with Buffy Summers (Sarah Michelle Gellar) returning home, opening the door, and calling into the house with, "Hey, Mom." She goes through some arbitrary dialogue, then turns to look into the living room. She sees her mother, played by Kristine Sutherland, on the couch, clearly not moving. Buffy asks what she's doing, immediately becoming concerned. A flashback of a happy Christmas memory plays, a dinner table surrounded by friends and family. A sense of happiness and family permeates the scene. Buffy's friends and family sit around a table after the main part of the meal. Joyce, Buffy's mother, stands to get the pies at the end of the meal. After some playful banter between Joyce and Buffy, the scene abruptly ends as a pie falls to the ground, cutting away to Joyce staring with an empty expression. The paramedics arrive, but they cannot wake her up. Joyce is dead.

The rest of the episode guides the viewer through the ripples of Joyce's death, exploring the impact it has on each of her family members and friends, as well as their relationships. Willow (Alyson Hannigan) frets over what to wear to the hospital--worrying about whether each outfit is appropriate. Xander (Nicholas Brendon) feels angry, criticizing the doctors for their inability to do anything to prevent Joyce's death, eventually punching through a wall. Anya (Emma Caulfield) doesn't understand the idea of mortality and life, resulting in her asking inappropriate questions. Tara (Amber Benson) knew Joyce primarily through her relationship with Willow, so she awkwardly plays a peripheral, supporting role—trying to be there without getting in the way. Dawn (Michelle Trachtenberg), Buffy's sister, is in shock at first, then fixates on wanting to see the body without understanding what her being "gone" means. Each character goes through his or her own process of grief and acceptance, coming together at the end to support one another.

"The Body" produces an exceptionally effective display of death and its effects and does this primarily through the nearly complete absence of melodrama. Perhaps the most potent example is how quiet the episode is. With each scene, Whedon introduces us to another character's attempts to cope with the death. The viewer sees flashes of emotion and attempts at understanding. The swelling music, pounding rain, and wailing sobs are conspicuously missing. In fact, long stretches of the episode invite silence. Scenes will last even after the dialogue has ended and characters have left the scene and, without any backing musical track, Whedon leaves emptiness hanging in the air—seemingly to emphasize Joyce's absence. Uncut, single-shot scenes follow characters without quick transitions or changing angles to imply action. With only sounds of movement accompanying them, these long shots give the viewer an acute awareness of each moment that makes the day of the tragedy seem so much longer.

While much of the episode focuses on what isn't there, the absence associated with death contrasts what remains: life. Shortly after finding the body, Buffy steps outside. It's a beautiful day—wind chimes tinkle in the background and the laughter of children can be faintly heard. Whedon shows the viewer this completely contrary expression of a death compared to most media representations,

where deaths invite storms and cause the entire world to stop for that one event. Later in the episode, Xander visits Willow so they can travel to the hospital. He double-parks and goes in. After the conversation ends and they prepare to leave, the camera moves outside from the window, looking down at his car, and the traffic officer leaving a ticket on his windshield. A controversial scene at the end of the episode occurs while Dawn is in the morgue and is attacked by a vampire. Buffy steps in, fights the vampire and eventually kills him. Many criticize the scene for being out of place, for breaking the somber flow of the episode. This episode, however, follows with the previous examples of pointing out one of the most important themes of the episode: death—no matter how important to the people around it—does not stop life from going on.

What is perhaps the most overarching theme in the episode is the idea of “negative space.” While Dawn is in her art class, prior to learning about Joyce’s death, she works on drawing a statue. The teacher instructs them to “remember, we’re not drawing the object. We’re drawing the negative space around the object. The space around. The space in between” (Whedon). This is less a description of the assignment than a description of the episode. The episode is not about the fact that Joyce died, but about the space around Joyce and the space between people. It’s about the growth and development of relationships, about what connects and what separates those that knew her. These people stand together, as family, as friends, and in love. They support each other, but deal with the death independently. The viewer sees each person shortly after learning of the news, all as separate groups. It isn’t until the end of the episode, after each person has digested the news and begun coming to terms with it, that the viewer ever sees them all together.

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is a series of real-life circumstance dressed up in a fantasy backdrop. This is precisely why an episode like “The Body,” something so completely focused on the reality, has such a powerful impact. With this, Whedon exposes the viewer to the naked core of the story. The characters are designed to be reflections of real people, used as vehicles to facilitate a discussion of reality. “The Body” is a conversation with the viewer about the way that people relate, and the evolution of these relationships as people themselves are changed, and it is one that is definitely worthwhile.

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# Malcolm X: “The Ballot or the Bullet”

## Textual Analysis by Anne Marie Renalds, English 101

“The Ballot or the Bullet,” by Malcolm X, is an influential speech empowering the black community to fight the control of the “white man” by using the ballot or the bullet. Malcolm X uses the “white man” metaphorically because he is not referring to the friendly white neighbor living next door. The “white man” is a theoretically evil person who blasts peaceful protestors with fire hoses and attacks innocent children with ravenous dogs. The “white man” oppresses the black community in every possible way. Malcolm X urges his followers to join organizations, such as the NAACP and CORE, to spread Black Nationalism, and to bring awareness to the problems affecting blacks. His inspiration encourages oppressed blacks to fight the oppression of the “white man” by means of the ballot or the bullet. Yet, could the ballot or the bullet metaphor have a different effect on 21<sup>st</sup> century society? Because of the effects of violence in today’s media, a young person who has not been educated about the history and meaning of the ballot or bullet metaphor could develop the wrong impression of this historical phrase as well as current, violent political rhetoric; therefore, young people should be educated about political language, and politicians need to become more aware of the words they say in any form of public media.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, authors of *Metaphors We Live By*, define metaphor as a “device of the poetic imaginations and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language.” Lakoff and Johnson describe metaphors that involve power “having control or force [as] up and [those that involve] being subject to control or force [as] down.” This means that if one person has control over another person they are in a “superior position” and thus more powerful, and metaphors of upward motion or position will express this power dynamic. Malcolm X refers to a similar phenomenon when he describes the “white man” who considers himself in a position of power because of race. Although the Constitution gives blacks equal rights, in the 1960s blacks were still confronted with brutal policemen and inhumane acts of race-based violence during peaceful protests. The “white man” felt he had domination over the black community: the white man was up and the black man was down. Malcolm X uses “extraordinary rather than ordinary language” to describe the oppression of the white man in order to urge his followers to fight their persecutors with either the bullet or the ballot.

Stressing this choice between the bullet or the ballot, Malcolm X insists that, “It’s one or the other in 1964. It isn’t that time is running out—time has run out!” He continues to suggest that the “white man” wants the African American vote but then gives the black community nothing in return. By using the threat of the ballot or the bullet, the black community can fight oppression, segregation, and in turn receive respect like the majority of American citizens. Based on my interpretation, Malcolm X’s speech empowered the black community to unite and fight racial persecution. I believe the end of segregation, lynching, and oppression was directly related to this speech because Malcolm X’s followers were inspired to come together and defend their rights. However, during the 1960’s, violent forms of entertainment, including video games and movies, were uncommon; therefore, Malcolm X’s references toward violence, such as, “kill that dog, kill him, I’m telling you, kill that dog,” were not taken literally. People did not go around killing police dogs after Malcolm X’s speech. Yet, the “killing the dog” metaphor did encourage the black community to stand up against the symbolic master of the dogs, the “white man.” Because of the violence portrayed in video games, this same type of metaphor could be interpreted differently in today’s society. The popular videogame, *Call of Duty*, has an option to send dogs to attack the opposing team. In return, the rival team kills the dogs if the dogs do not attack them first. Since these popular video games portraying violence and war are readily available to uneducated

teens, it would be easy for a young person to confuse a politician's campaign slogan as a literal call to arms. While it is true that civil rights are not a serious issue for blacks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, violence is a serious issue directly affecting all Americans.

Politicians today may feel they are in a powerful position and can use this power to say and do whatever they choose. Especially when politicians are using slogans such as, "the battleground that Arizona has been," the recurring ballot or the bullet, and other violent metaphors directed toward opposing running mates (Gregory), our political discourse suffers from violent conflict. The politicians during the 1960's are similar to the politicians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they all make promises they do not keep. Malcolm X's argument is the same argument American citizens have been making the last 40 years after his speech. Politicians might be in a position of power and have the ability to say whatever they please, but the ideas they propose and the metaphors they use to propose them are important to the people who listen to their speeches.

I believe the 21<sup>st</sup> century version of the ballot or the bullet slogan and the effects of the slogan on a community can be seen in the recent battle cries of politicians. Although these cries might not have directly caused the tragedy in Arizona, the controversies involving political rhetoric after the shooting could have been avoided. Catherine Crabill, Republican legislative nominee for Virginia's 99<sup>th</sup> District, emphatically quotes Patrick Henry as part of her campaign rhetoric, "If war is inevitable, then let it come, I repeat sir, let it come" (qtd. in Neiwert). She then shouts, "We have the chance to fight this battle [against Democrats] at the ballot box before we have to resort to the bullet box. But that's the beauty of our Second Amendment right. . . . Our Second Amendment right was to guard against tyranny!" (qtd. in Neiwert). In this case, Crabill is calling upon people who have the right to vote to use their right, but if they lose in a legitimate, civil election, to resort to the "bullet." This is a radically different use of Malcolm X's famous quote. If politicians spent less time trying to generate war between the right and left sides and more time working together to improve Americans' trust in government, then the tragic shooting of Democratic Representative Gabrielle Giffords in Arizona might not have been so controversial and divisive. Yet, the reality is that politicians are constantly shouting offensive and violent remarks at the opposing side. Their vocabulary is intimidating, aggressive, and needs to be corrected. Therefore the question is: could the tragedy in Arizona have been avoided by careful word choice? I believe the answer is not as simple as politicians watching the words they say. I believe the American mindset needs to be transformed, politicians need to become more aware of the way they express their opinions, and young adults should be educated about the metaphors used in adult and political language.

Lakoff and Johnson suggest that metaphors are an important part of language and everyday life. I pose the question: could these commonplace metaphors have a negative effect? Phrases such as "His criticisms were right on *target*," and "He *shot down* all of my arguments" seem harmless but could have the wrong connotation (Lakoff and Johnson). Other countries do not use metaphors associated with war, so why is the American language so violent when people are arguing? I feel these associations with war and violence have a negative effect on debates and arguments. Rather than having a civil conversation to solve a dispute, Americans become very defensive and aggressive during arguments. The argument becomes a competition, and a potentially violent one where the ballot and the bullet start to mean the same thing. As Lakoff and Johnson state, "We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent." During political debates, politicians often become defensive and aggressive when discussing heated topics. I think the American people would prefer to see politicians work together on ideas, rather than lash out at each other in a political war of words. If all their hostile energy could be directed into solving issues, such as how to prevent another political shooting, I think the American people would begin to trust the government and use the ballot again.

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# *Chains and Whips Excite Me*

I-Search by Cori Harris, English 101

Sadism is something that is rarely discussed or questioned in my everyday life. This may be because when people hear the word sadism, they automatically assume you are talking along the lines of a dominatrix or sexual acts. However, with little to no true knowledge about the subject, I always thought sadism could relate to far more than just sexual behavior. For instance, when someone trips and falls, the immediate reaction I expect to hear from people around me is laughter. Why is that? Why does our society find great enjoyment in a person's injury? Although I try not to, sometimes I will catch myself finding pleasure from another's misfortunes. To many people, the reaction of happiness from others' hardships seems natural and non-problematic. In my opinion, there is something seriously wrong with a society if it takes the downfall of a person to bring joy.

I found myself extremely curious about the whole idea of sadism and wanting to know about the different forms of it. My interest in this topic mostly began from seeing incidents, like the one previously mentioned, of someone falling. I have never understood why people have the initial reaction of laughing rather than having sympathy and asking if the person is all right. I would like to see different cases of sadism and try to more clearly understand what makes cruelty so attractive to our society. I am not sure if there is a clear answer to this question, but I am interested to see other people's interpretations of the topic and if they see sadism as a problem or not. From observing small acts of sadism in everyday life, it seems as though it is just part of our society. Therefore, I am also curious to see whether any scholars have discovered ways to prevent the sadistic behavior that has become so natural in society.

After thinking about this topic quite a bit, there are a few things that I seek to find through research. First, I want a thorough definition of sadism. Furthermore, I want to explore different cases of sadism: including minor to extreme cases. The most important aspect I seek to question is why sadism is such an attraction for people in our society. Finally, I will research scholarly ideas about the prevention of sadism. There may not be a right or wrong answer to my questions, but I am curious to learn about other opinions on the topic and determine whether or not sadistic behavior is problematic in our culture.

## **On the Search for Sadism**

When going about the research for my chosen topic, first, I used the resources that the librarian taught us on our library day. This demonstration provided the means through which I obtained access to multiple sources with information on sadism. From Internet sources I was able to find journals, books, and videos about sadism and the many different views on it. Searching for and reading the research was enjoyable because of my genuine interest in the topic.

I began the research process with the library catalog to find books on sadism. I checked out *Cruelty* by Kathleen Taylor, which specifically questions why sadism exists. Another text, *The DSM-IV Personality Disorders*, edited by W. John Livesley, has a section dedicated to Sadistic Personality

Disorder. I also utilized the *Academic Search Premier* database to look at different journal articles on sadism. One article that I found relevant to my topic is “Shadows of Cruelty,” by Frida Beckman and Charlie Blake, which reviews different reports of sadism. The other was “Sadism Revisited,” by V. Siomopoulos and Jewett Goldsmith—an overall discussion of the dimension of sadism. For my popular culture sources, I incorporated songs because of my interest in music and the types of lyrics that artists use. In the music industry today, there are many cases that show the popularity of sadistic behavior through artists’ song lyrics. I found it astonishing to read sources about sadism and how the perspectives vary from person to person.

### **Curiosity Killed Me And The Sadist Liked It**

The first thing I wanted to do in my research was to see the various ways that sadism is defined. I figured this would help me obtain fundamental understanding of my subject. Kathleen Taylor describes the general term of sadism as “the delight in hurting” and when “the victim’s suffering is enjoyed for its own sake” (204). Sadism is described as a personality disorder in *The DSM-IV* and is conveyed as “the desire to inflict pain upon a sexual object” (Livesley 329). These are two vastly different descriptions of sadism; however, both are correct. In “Sadism Revisited,” sadism is described as “a variety of behaviors extending from plain nonsexual, physical, or mental cruelty to infliction of pain, or perpetration of mutilations, or even murder, during, before, or after sexual activity of any sort” (Siomopoulos and Goldsmith 631). These definitions are closely aligned to my definition of sadism, yet I recognize that the tripping and falling example I used previously does not seem like a solid example. Most of the definitions I found during my research involved someone inflicting pain on another, rather than watching someone get hurt. I learned that for something to be considered sadistic, the situation will be different from my original observation.

When searching for different cases of sadism, I found examples that were extreme and disturbing, along with other examples which our culture ignores without thought. “Shadows of Cruelty” talks about the case of the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq where United States Army police personnel were committing sadistic acts against the prisoners. The case was broadcast consistently on the news and pictures were leaked of the various acts of torture the police did to the prisoners. The article states that “it was the existence of these prison photographs in themselves that created the most potent reaction to the atrocities of Abu Ghraib” (Beckman and Blake 2). I interpreted this to mean that people do not consider sadism a problem until there is actual proof of it. Since I never think about such extreme incidences occurring, I find I agree with this. However, after looking at the pictures from the Abu Ghraib case, I was so disturbed and could not understand how someone could do the horrific acts these officers were doing to other people. Beckman and Blake’s article also discusses other well-known extreme cases, such as Nazism and slavery. I understand that the people who know about these cases consider the actions wrong, but I still sought to determine whether people realized that sadism still exists in everyday life.

I found sadistic lyrics in many of the popular songs that my generation listens to today, and am pretty amazed that these grotesque lyrics go unnoticed. In Rihanna’s recent song titled “S & M,” which

stands for sadomasochism, she says “chains and whips excite me.” This illuminates the fact that some people really do get ‘sexually excited’ from painful acts. Many of these songs include messages that are extremely vulgar, and I find it ridiculous that they were even produced. In “Sadistic,” by Torture Killer, one part says “To every drop she’s bleeding, I laugh and masturbate. Your torture is my pleasure, I kill and violate!” In “Roman’s Revenge,” Nicki Minaj and Eminem rap that he “[t]ied her arms and legs to the bed, set up the camera and pissed on her twice.” I found many other songs that contained other lyrics of this vulgar content. I find it abhorrent how it has recently become popular to talk about such violent actions. From these situations, I thought it was very puzzling that though extreme cases sadism are disturbing to the public, yet talking about engaging in these actions in a song is socially accepted. Is this not how most actions begin—with the idea of it? I do not find it acceptable for people to talk about sadistic behavior as if it is not an important issue. These artists seem to have no idea that they are negatively influencing someone to act upon the violent acts portrayed in their song lyrics. After seeing the negative results, I feel that sadism in either form, acted out or talked about, should be avoided.

In my last research paper, I came to the conclusion that discrimination was inevitable and would never be completely gone, because it is hard to eliminate how people feel. I also had previous doubts that sadistic behavior could be eliminated. This also deals with people’s thoughts and feelings and seems unexplained. However, Kathleen Taylor makes an influential closing remark that helped answer my questions about the prevention of sadism:

Understanding cruelty . . . is the only viable means, in the long term, of dealing with [sadism]. Recognizing the warning signs and patterns of cruel behavior and acknowledging our own susceptibilities may help us put in place the beliefs and the social incentives, which can make cruelty less likely to occur—though it will never be eliminated. If we can come to see cruelty not as otherized evil, but as comprehensible, if morally vile, behavior, it may be a little less painful to grasp that being cruel is part of being human. (232)

This excerpt shows that cruelty cannot fully be avoided, but it can be lessened. As stated earlier, I admit that I sometimes catch myself getting pleasure from other people’s pain and I have to remember that. After reading this, I realized that in order to help the cruelty issue, I must to remember that we as humans are not excluded from this cruelty.

After completing this research, I feel I have a much clearer understanding of what sadism is, and its effect in our world. I know there are many other sources I could find and I am still interested in continuing this area of research. Some of the things I researched made me uneasy because I do not support any forms of violence. However, I know educating ourselves about the topic will help people to become more aware of sadistic issues in our culture, and I hope to be able to prevent minor acts that I may see in my community. Not only did I find that physical cases of sadism can be extremely terrible, but I also discovered that sadistic language is not a positive thing either. For instance, I will not want my children to grow up listening to the types of music that my generation has made popular. I feel that sadism could not be completely prevented, but there are efforts to eliminate the attractiveness of sadism and its influence in our culture.

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# Where to Draw the Line Between Transracial Adoptions

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Critical Response by Ciera Burnett, English 101

It has become common today to dismiss racial controversy on many topics from relationships to positions in the workforce. This is because these images of racial equality have recently become more common. The question remains whether children should be adopted by parents outside their race. Most people know this occurs, yet no one questions it. I believe that transracial adoption should not be accepted because it shows racial and structural inequality in the system. It also undermines tradition and cultural uniqueness, and it creates disparities within families and among potential families. Demographic studies illustrate that black Americans make less money than whites, making it impossible for blacks to adopt children of their same ethnicity because of the agencies' outrageous prices. Transracial adoption promotes many different prejudices, including those dealing with a parental candidate's demographic and economic position. Before transracial adoption becomes fully acceptable among everyone, some of its negative aspects should be brought to the forefront. In addition to the structural economic inequalities and disparities that complicate interracial adoptions for African-American adoptees, these negative aspects include loss of the adoptees' heritage, identity, and potential families because of adoption by white parents.

Adoption agencies do not take into consideration how hard it is for certain applicants to meet qualification guidelines because of economic situation, which may minimize potential families of the same ethnicity as the adoptee. Although author Leslie Hollingsworth does not say so directly, she assumes that the adoption process is merely another form of structural oppression and exploitation. In Leslie Hollingsworth's article, "Promoting Same-Race Adoption for Children of Color," she evaluates the welfare system behind adoption. She deals with the controversy and belief systems of many spectators and participants who were involved in the out-of-home care system, such as foster homes. The report analyzes disparities in child welfare services related to ethnicity and addresses poverty among minorities as the underlying cause of most transracial adoptions. The article states how welfare services limit blacks' parental rights because of their eligibility policies and their inability to take into consideration many people's cultures and lifestyles.

Why would blacks want to adopt if they are being discriminated against in the process? Some critics argue that "reducing fees for African-Americans to recruit more black children would be like a literal devaluing of black children" (Clemetson and Nixon). But how is it different from welfare services going through with transracial adoptions that "charge" a high price for black children? They are devaluing a child by making it a financial issue in the first place, because they are not putting the adoptee's personal feelings and beliefs in the forefront. Hollingsworth argues that because of these policies, poor, usually minority children, are at risk of permanent removal from their families because of their economic position in society. Instead of public policies helping or correcting the problem that causes children to be in out-of-home care, they move the children to homes believed to be financially comfortable. Needless to say, it is mostly whites who meet their high-cost guidelines. This leads to an increase in transracial adoption. The thesis of the article is that "efforts should be made to ensure that adoptive parents of the same race as the child are available and systematic barriers should not interfere" (Hollingsworth 113).

Hollingsworth complicates matters further when she quotes Ruth McRoy, who states "human beings are products of their environment and develop their sense of values, attitudes, and self within

their own family structures” (qtd. in Hollingsworth 105). Her point is that adoptees do not know themselves and tend to try to find out who they are when they are adopted. She is trying to point out that transracial adoptions make children confused because what they think they are is actually who they are trying to be, which is not their true “self.” In other words, Hollingsworth argues that black children, or any other minority children in white homes or in homes of other races, are cut off from the healthy development of themselves as people of their own race.

Many minority children occupy adoption agencies in the US today, but it seems as if they are the last option for the racially diverse parental candidates that qualify. The article “Breaking through Adoption’s Racial Barriers” explores this issue and analyzes how many white parents are adopting black children. The reasons presented are because of the long wait for white children and the high cost of international adoption for children of non-African ethnicities. One white couple in the article explains how they felt they had open arms and an open mind to be matched with a black child from Africa. The question is why was this option their first option? If whites are doing it to help black children have stable homes, why not adopt here in America as their first option rather than as their back-up plan? Why do Caucasian couples prefer to adopt children internationally—especially from Africa? In today’s society, Americans tend to believe that if one really wants to influence any type of cause, especially to support minority groups, one must look overseas to demonstrate one’s level of contribution. This has become especially common among interracial adoption, with celebrities like Angelina Jolie—who adopted her African daughter Zahara from Ethiopia, and Madonna who adopted her daughter from Malawi. Many other wealthy white people have also decided to join in the exploit—when a hurricane hit Haiti there were plenty who adopted black children from that area.

These families and celebrities claim to uphold colorblindness, but Lynette Clemetson and Ron Nixon argue that “color aware families should be created, not colorblind [families].” The difference between color aware families and colorblind families is not just the awareness in one’s ethnicity, but also awareness in one’s culture. Colorblind families take into consideration the adoptees’ ethnicity and may have some sensitivity towards it; however, they forget about the child’s past upbringing. Color aware families recognize that an adoptees’ ethnicity comes with a culture. Color conscious families may try to incorporate the child’s culture in the way they raise the child taking into consideration how to make the child feel more included because of differences between both theirs and the adoptees values. You can then argue that many white people who adopt foreign African children are color blind, because they do not take the children’s culture into consideration. This is due in part because these couples are bringing Africans and Haitians to America, where their culture does not exist. Clemetson and Nixon’s point is that if parents adopt transracially, they owe it to the child to incorporate some of the child’s heritage into their upbringing. In making this comment, the author urges transracial adoption parents to make an effort to incorporate the customs of the adoptive child’s heritage in family traditions. By doing this, the family allows the child to grow up incorporating these customs into their future family and not treating the traditions with indifference.

Given all of these complications, the government needs to start putting the emotional needs of the child first, not just worrying about placing the child in a home. Numbers should not matter in adoption agencies just the satisfaction of the child. What may make the children truly content is to be around their own race. “Race Matters in Adoption” argues how the main focus of adoption should be centered on the child, and how transracial adoption is centered on continuous racial hostilities. According to McRoy, “only a black family can transmit the emotional and sensitive subtleties of perceptions and reactions essential for a black child’s survival in a racist society” (qtd. in Hollingsworth 105). Like McRoy and Hollingworth, Ruth-Arlene Howe’s belief is entirely against transracial adoption. She mentions children as being “legally freed to be adopted” (468). She considers transracial adoption a system of slavery. The welfare system involves exchange of minorities for money from the majority who are rich white people—which tends to foster a racist society. Howe suggests that if the focus

centers on the child, it should emphasize the best interest of the child's well being. The article states how the government should "provide support for adoption by relatives, when that is not the best option for a particular child, provide federal funding for subsidized guardianship" (Howe 475).

Although guardianship may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of today's concern over children's developmental state. In the newspaper article "Should Race Be a Factor in Adoptions?" Jenine Lee St. John argues that race should be a factor in adoption. The purpose of this article is to influence the audience that transracial adoptions are at odds with identity. The article suggests that this type of adoption makes minority children lose touch with their racial identity therefore making them lose touch with their sense of self. It suggests that adoption should be an uplifting event for an adoptee, not one full of complex anxieties of self-realization through lost heritage and racism. The report seems to question whether this type of adoption should continue since it tends to benefit only the person who is adopting and leads to future psychological problems for the child. These psychological problems often lead to "transracial adoptees struggling to fit in with their peers, their communities, and even with their own families" (John 26).

The anxiety about one's skin color develops due to historical, social, and political factors. In "Skin Color in Transracial and Inracial Adoptive Placement: Implications for Special Needs Adoption," Ruth McRoy and Helen Grape analyze these factors which seem to be many adoptees foundation in finding their true identity. Their data seems to be consistent with St. John's argument that transracially adopted persons with obvious racial divergence may experience identity dilemmas earlier in life to find out where they fit in. The factors play an important role because children who are in environments where they feel excluded because of their race may find their overall mental health negatively affected. As McRoy and Grape note, "In reality, some transracially adopted children may actually attempt to pass for white in order to identify more closely with their adoptive families" (686). This leads to the conclusion that many transracial adoptees actually try to create an identity that may not be their own, causing psychological problems and problems among peers which can lead to isolation among a child who is supposed to feel needed.

In terms of the minority child feeling accepted, the article "Beliefs and Attitudes about Transracial Adoption Among a Sample of South African Students" focuses on how transracial adoption is acceptable among many South Africans, because they believe it will bring forth racial and culture tolerance. It appears acceptable because "the adoption of a black child by a white person may be seen by black South Africans as the most convincing evidence of change regarding race relations in America" (Moos 1118). The question is how can one group gain racial intolerance if they are forcing it upon another group of people who are economically and politically vulnerable? If racial intolerance has to be forced then transracial adoption should not be. The two should go hand in hand; under racial tolerance when each culture has accepted the other, then there should be transracial adoption. Under these circumstances it would seem as if the adoption was a forced union, and the adoptee's culture would not be respected.

Transracial adoption not only focuses on blacks adopted by whites even though this is the most common type, but by a child of one ethnicity being adopted by another. The truth is black children are the children that occupy most adoption agencies and out-of-home care systems. I support Clemetson and Nixon's view that transracial adoption should be accepted if parents incorporate the adoptees' heritage into their upbringing, but I find Hollingsworth's argument about adoption eligibility for the minorities and Howe's research on transracial adoption as slavery equally persuasive against transracial adoption. While Clemetson and Nixon's claim that there is nothing wrong with adopting children outside their race is debatable, I agree with her stance that "color aware families should be created, not color blind" (Clemetson and Nixon). I still insist that parents should make children feel comfortable with their identity through any means necessary so the child will feel comfortable with themselves and the way they look. I truly believe that transracial adoption should be beneficial towards the parents and the child

and not just towards one party. If one party is unhappy with the other then it should not take place. If both are happy then it should not matter what others may think. The opinion of the public and their views of the adoption as a whole should not matter in terms of overall happiness.

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# A Song and a Letter: Which is Better?

## Rhetorical Analysis by Matthew Guinan, English 102

Life is a battle, if one is willing to fight. In order to obtain any goodness in this life, sacrifices must be made. One of the most difficult battles that every person must face takes place inside—moral choices are made that define one's character. Two classic pieces of literature that exemplify this battle are *A Christmas Carol* (1843) by Charles Dickens and *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) by C. S. Lewis. Both are highly effective, yet one is certainly more influential in its themes of morality than the other. By examining the audience, goals, strategies, and themes of each, a logical determination of which is better can be reached.

One of the most memorable stories of all time, *A Christmas Carol*, is a story of warmth and new life. Composed by Charles Dickens, the story relates the journey of a bitter man in his old age, namely Ebenezer Scrooge. He has rejected all purposes of life except for his excessive, gnawing hunger for wealth. On the night of Christmas Eve, he is visited by the ghost of his business partner, who is suffering great punishment in his after-death state. He warns Scrooge that if he does not abandon his evil ways, he will suffer a similar fate. He continues on to say that Scrooge will be visited by three spirits in a final attempt to melt the ice in his heart. On the other hand, *The Screwtape Letters* is another beautiful work, written by C. S. Lewis, that presents a series of letters. The story is about the advice of one demon to another on how to corrupt a man and lead him to ruin. They want to win the man's soul. Both stories are about the interior battle that every person must face.

The intended audience for each of these books is quite dissimilar, although they do coincide in some areas. *A Christmas Carol*, for example, has a very wide range of audiences; it has the potential to appeal to both men and woman. This story, as is evident from the title, is centered on the Christmas season. It can thus be of interest to people who enjoy Christmas, and stories about this festive season. However, this story can be very dark at times and contains some intense imagery. The ghosts, for example, are vividly illustrated. Generally, those interested in this story would be middle to late teens through adults. Having said this, *A Christmas Carol* is a story for all ages. Its brevity attracts a more extensive audience, especially teens. Additionally, while the book itself is certainly not for children, the story has been adapted into many variations for adults and children.

The audience for *The Screwtape Letters* bears little similarity to *A Christmas Carol*. However, they do connect on a few points; *The Screwtape Letters*, like *A Christmas Carol*, is meant for both men and woman. *The Screwtape Letters* is aimed at those who are trying to live by moral standards and can appreciate the difficulty of this. The age range would include late teens and up. It is clearly not meant for children; the utilization of demonic characters is evidence of this.

The main goal of *A Christmas Carol* can be found in its theme or message: the graces from the Christmas season can overcome the darkest depths of the human soul and shine forth throughout the entire year. Dickens is attempting to show how appreciating Christmas can lead to a reformed life. This is best portrayed in the following quote from Scrooge: "I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach" (81). Dickens also ties in another message, but it is much more subtle. It would almost be unnoticeable if not for a very powerful, gentle, and infamous line said by the meekest of characters: "God bless Us, Every One!"(88). No one is beyond hope; that is what Dickens is implying through this quote. Also, considering this quote comes from such a seemingly weak character (Tiny Tim), Dickens is also saying that true strength comes from weakness and humility.

*The Screwtape Letters* also involves a lesson of morality and repentance. However, where these two texts differ, is that *The Screwtape Letters* chronicles the many attempts to corrupt a young man who is already of good character. *A Christmas Carol*, as mentioned above, is about the turning away from a life already full of corruption. *The Screwtape Letters*, on the other hand, takes a very unique approach; Lewis writes it through the eyes of the enemy. He wrote this in order to help people avoid the dangers to morality of this life. Lewis once said, "Though I had never written anything more easily, I never wrote with less enjoyment" (183), suggesting that he suffered from writing about demons who triumph and enjoy their work throughout most of the book.

*A Christmas Carol* has very strong examples of ethos; it is written, as earlier mentioned, by Charles Dickens. This man is arguably one of the most well-known authors in literature. *A Christmas Carol* is perhaps his most famous work, but among his many others are: *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, and *David Copperfield*. Additionally, *A Christmas Carol* also displays pathos extensively. At the beginning of the novel, there is little emotion. Scrooge is very cold and unfeeling, and Dickens wants the reader to understand this. Later, however, once the reader has had a chance to become familiar with the character of Scrooge, pathos is almost constant to the end. The reader begins to empathize with Scrooge as the pains of his past, present, and future are revealed. But, pain is also caused by Scrooge; he greatly pained the woman that once loved him. And, he, in a very distant chamber of his heart, once loved her.

Next, *The Screwtape Letters*, like *A Christmas Carol*, was written by a famous author: Clive Staples Lewis. The author of the Narnia series, C. S. Lewis has certainly made his mark in literature. At first glance, it would not appear to the reader that *The Screwtape Letters* contained pathos. Written as a series of letters by demons, this book is not written in a way that provides a personal connection with the main character. However, although subtle and uniquely presented, this book does have pathos. The reader observes the attempted corruption of the young man, and the various methods that are used. The man has many troubles in life, such as his relationship with his mother, and his consternation at the possibility of being drafted for war. The reader might also feel a tendency to empathize with the character after witnessing the demons' attack on him.

Many strategies are used in each of these books to effectively convey the moral theme. *A Christmas Carol*, for example, uses extensively descriptive imagery and the Christmas season to draw in readers. It also utilizes ghosts and time travel, to a certain degree, as a way of making the story more fantastical and engaging. *The Screwtape Letters*, on the other hand, uses only the letters from one demon to another. This way, C. S. Lewis is presenting very serious, intense, and necessary material in a more approachable manner. The fact that it is written in the form of letters puts an entertaining twist on the textual content. Both are similar, though, in the sense that they go into great detail. The moral themes are built up throughout leading to a magnificent climax, where the main character of each reaches victory. In *The Screwtape Letters*, the victory is quite satisfying after observing the pain of the main character the entire time. As the demon, Screwtape, writes to his demon nephew, "You have let a soul slip through your fingers . . . . There was a sudden clearing of his eyes (was there not?) as he saw you for the first time, and recognized the part you had had in him and knew that you had it no longer" (171). The man referred to is the main character who recognizes that all of his misfortunes have been caused by demons tempting him to leave the path of morality and goodness. In contrast, in *A Christmas Carol*, the victory is very cheerful and warm. As the narrator explains, "[Scrooge] became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world" (88). The ease and simplicity of this ending fits with the holiday season, but the emphasis on the internal moral struggle is somewhat lost in the sentimentality.

Overall, because of these subtle differences, *The Screwtape Letters* is more effective at reaching its goal. The opportunity to view the works of demons close up inspires a realization of the dangers involved in real life. While *A Christmas Carol* is certainly entertaining, its moral theme is seen more in

the context of the story. Although this theme is very relevant, though by no means non-existent in the real world, it may be seen as fictional and sentimental as the rest of the story.

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# Are You Responsible?

## Analyzing the Teen Pregnancy Crisis

Proposal by Victorious Nelson, English 102

Teenage pregnancy is a big concern in society today. In each generation, the amount of pregnant teens increases. This is not just a problem in America, but a worldwide problem that seems to have no solution. The question is what can be done to effectively explain to teenagers that unsafe sex is a bad idea, and to show them that there are other options besides engaging in sexual activities at such a young age. Although society makes it possible for teenagers to learn about the risk and harms of engaging in sexual activity through sexual education programs, apparently such classes are insufficient because the rate of teen pregnancy continues to rise. Teenagers tend to believe that having sex is harmless and that the negative consequences they learn about in school will not happen to them. Parents should take more responsibility in making sure that their teenagers are taking precautions and not engaging in sexual activity. No child is exempt from the teen pregnancy crisis; therefore, parents should feel obligated to talk to their children about how to handle and avoid sexual situations. Teen pregnancy is a growing problem among families, and parents should become more aware of what is causing this problem in order to help prevent it.

Becoming pregnant is supposed to be a happy time in a woman's life, and in the life of her family. However, when a teenager becomes pregnant the reaction is the complete opposite. Becoming a teenage mom causes chaos and stress in the life of the young woman and her family. Most teenagers do not fully understand what they are getting themselves into when they engage in sexual activity and become pregnant. They do not see being pregnant as a serious issue until it happens to them personally, and they have the stress of trying to care for themselves and someone else. From personal experience, I have seen more and more teenage pregnancies in my family and in my classmates in the past few years. I have seen the effect that it has on the girl and her family. Most of them experience great struggle—with no job and the everyday expenses of caring for a child. When asked if the result is anything like they thought it would be, most answer no. These girls wish they had waited to become a mother because it is too much to handle. Teenage pregnancy is an unwanted situation that is expensive for the parents and for society in general. Jeanette Koshar describes her findings on the financial cost of teen pregnancy by stating “teen pregnancy is financially costly. It is estimated that 7 billion dollars a year is spent on adolescent childbearing” (505). This is a great amount of money that could be used on other important issues instead of pregnancy caused by adolescent mistakes.

The government has tried to reduce the amount of teen pregnancies through the administering of sexual health classes at school. In her article on understanding policy changes on teenage sexual activity and pregnancy, Claire D. Brindis discusses the amount of money the government has spent on promoting sexual education in schools. She states that “approximately \$620 million have been spent nationally since 1998, representing approximately \$168 million in FY 2005. These programs require teaching that abstinence from sexual activity outside of marriage is the expected standard for all school-aged children” (282). The students seem to understand the message behind the programs, but still choose to follow a different path. This is most likely due to the amount of social pressure that teenagers face to follow the “in-crowd.” In viewing the adolescent-peer relationship, it is said that “several studies have demonstrated that peers’ sexual norms and attitudes are associated with an adolescent’s sexual behavior” (Manguen and Armistead 260). If a teenager has a friend who is engaged in sexual activity, then chances are the teenager is going to want to be like the friend and try it out as well. Teenagers are prone to

follow the actions of people they are close to, and normally their friends are the ones they follow most. The messages shared during sex education classes are normally ignored because teenagers feel that they will not fall victim to the negative results that are taught. They continue to live a carefree lifestyle, not thinking about the consequences they could possibly receive for their actions. They tend to listen to what their family says about sex while they also try to keep up with the actions of their friends. Today's teenagers have more and more sexual conversations with their peers, which make the number of sexually active teens increase. Sexually active teens tend to improperly engage in sexual activity—without the use of birth control and condoms, which means the chance of teenagers becoming pregnant is higher than if teenagers applied safety measures. The way teenagers think and act is only a part of human nature. During the adolescent years, the teenagers are trying to find out who they are and develop a lifestyle for themselves—a lifestyle typically modeled by peers and family. However, this lifestyle may get interrupted by an unwanted pregnancy.

Most would place the entire blame on the teenagers, because they chose the wrong path. Although this statement is partially true, what some people fail to realize is that the parents of the teenagers deserve blame as well. Manguen and Armistead discuss the factors that parents associate with the reasons adolescents engage in sexual intercourse. Such factors include the “parent-adolescent relationship and parental attitudes about sexual behavior” (260). They go on to state that in “the context of a better parent-adolescent relationship, adolescents are less likely to have sex, and parents with more restrictive attitudes about adolescent sexual behavior are more likely to have children who are not yet engaged in sexual intercourse” (260). It is imperative for parents to understand that developing a good relationship with their children will have a stronger influence on them, and their children will value their opinion about sexual health. It is apparent that many parents think that it is enough for the student to hear about sexual health through school programs. Even though the school shares information about sexual health in the curriculum, parents seem to forget that parents themselves have more influence on their children with appropriate communication, rather than placing all the responsibility on a teacher.

Parents often find it difficult and intimidating to talk to their kids about sex and other related topics. I do not know if they just feel that their opinion is insignificant or if their children just will not listen, but they are wrong. In her article about how words can work, Lunquist states “It’s no secret! Young people whose parents talk with them openly and honestly about sexuality are much more apt to make wise decisions about sexual behavior. In fact studies demonstrate that kids who have strong relationships with their parents are much less likely to be involved in an unintended pregnancy or to get a sexually transmitted infection” (92). Teenagers do value their parents’ opinions, and will normally do the right thing if parents communicate clearly and consistently about what is right. One factor that will control how teenagers respond to what their parents tell them is the parent’s approach. In her article, Jeanette Koshar states that one way to prevent teen pregnancy is to get to know the new teen culture and how teenagers act and think (508). Parents must remember that times have changed since their peers were teenagers, thus they cannot use real life examples all the time. They must also understand that time has changed and things are different in the modern generation. For example, merely telling teenagers that sex is bad and is not allowed in the household is not enough because they are exposed to more sexual situations, such as sexually active and pregnant friends. The amount of peer pressure has risen, and it is much harder to resist temptation. Another factor that controls how obedient teenagers are to their parents is how much say the teenagers have in the issues in the household. Teenagers tend not to rebel as much when their parents do not demand them to obey without an explanation or a choice. The idea that we as people like to be given choices, not told to do things all the time, is a common theory in psychology. Carlson and Tanner explore how parental beliefs and attitudes can influence their child’s sexual behavior. They discover that children follow the family rules more when parents are authoritative, which means parents balance children’s rights and responsibilities by not only granting autonomy to children for some decisions, but also expecting adherence to family rules. If teenagers

understand what their parents expect of them, then they will incorporate their everyday decisions with respect to their parent's authority.

A possible solution to the teenage pregnancy issue is to have parents become more involved in the lives of their children. When teenagers feel that they have great communication with their parents, they are more willing to say no to peer pressure and things they know are wrong. Being involved in numerous activities will also limit the risk of unwanted behaviors. Howard Seidman describes how parents can keep their children out of trouble and make sure that they are following the right path. He gives tips for parents to make sure that their children are safe. Some examples he gives are encouraging group activities, not leaving the children home alone all the time, and knowing who the children are hanging out with (Seidman). When parents know what their children are doing and who they are with, it maximizes the trust that they have with the teenager and will help them feel confident that the teenager is making wise decisions.

Another solution to this problem could be to emphasize parental education on the topic of sex and make it possible for parents to have a better understanding of the lifestyle their teenagers may live. This parental education should start in middle school, the time when the child is about to become a teenager. There should be a time during orientation, before the students actually start school where the parents and teachers come together to discuss the expectations of the students' sexual behavior, as well as academics. The parent meeting should go over how to talk to the child about sex and consequences of sex, as well as ways to prevent unwanted pregnancies and STDs. By having this education class, the parents will be able to talk effectively about sexual issues that are most prevalent now for their child's age group and have a productive discussion with their child on a level that they can fully comprehend.

I believe that effective parent-adolescent communication is the key to ending the teenage pregnancy crisis. Parents must be willing to make sure their children understand that participating in sexual activities at a young age is risky for one's health and can have lifelong effects. Talking with individuals who have become teen mothers emphasizes communications and provides personal experiences through which young teens may become aware of possible consequences. After conducting an experiment on victims of teen pregnancy, Susan L. Lloyd discovered that the majority of teenagers who get pregnant feel that it was a result of a lapse in communication between the parents and teen, along with unstable family relationships. This poor communication made it difficult for the teen to relate their experiences with their parents. However, most teens said that after the pregnancy, the communication between their families became stronger (Lloyd 245-48). This is most likely due to the teamwork needed to help raise a baby. Had the communication between the families been strong from the beginning, an unwanted pregnancy may have been prevented. It is imperative that parents begin to bridge communication gaps sooner to make sure that teenagers know their parent's position on the issue of sexual activity, and they need to make sure that their children are taking appropriate precautions.

The amount of teen pregnancies in the U.S. and around the world could be reduced with proper parental support and supervision. Parents must stop feeling discouraged that they cannot effectively discuss the topic of sexual health with their teenagers. Parents fail to realize that teenagers will listen to their advice if they take the time to seriously discuss important issues, such as engaging in sexual activity. In a world where peer pressure is rampant and the temptation to do the wrong thing is even worse, parents need to be there for their teens and encourage them to do the right thing. The teen pregnancy crisis can, and should, be solved in order to make life easier for present and future families. No one should fall victim to the tragedy of an unwanted teenage pregnancy, and with the right help and family support, this crisis can be on its way to recovery.

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