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LETTER TO THE REVIEWER

Dear reviewer:

Putting together pieces for my portfolio has been a reminiscent experience. I know that is a cliché, but I am amazed at how different my writings from my senior year are from any writings I have done before. I have matured as a writer this year. In the past most of my essays were poorly formed and I had trouble sticking to my thesis; however, this year I have improved my paragraph structure and have used more examples in my supporting paragraphs. The essays—"Iago's Deceit," "Beowulf's Heroic Motives," "The Amazing Effects of One Bomb"—that I have included in my portfolio exemplify this growth in my writing ability. The intense emphasis that is put on analyzing others' works in my English class has shown me ways to improve my own writing. I find myself paying more attention to variety of sentence length and punctuation. These were not new concepts to me, but in the reading that I have done for class this year I have seen how that they can be used effectively. I believe that this new quality is apparent in each of my portfolio pieces.

This year I have also discovered that writing is a perfect way to express how I feel on a subject. My short story "Self Entrapment" was originally written to poke fun at one of my friends; however, in revising it in preparation for inclusion in my portfolio, I realized that while writing it I had discussed how I feel about people who shut themselves off from the world, what I believe the future of computers will hold, and my opinions on politics. My personal narrative, "A Full Service Experience," allowed me to write down how I felt about the concert I attended. To me it doesn't matter if anyone ever reads my

personal narrative, at least I know I have expressed how I felt. In the past I never really liked writing that much, but this year has been an awakening for me. After reading works such as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead and Heart of Darkness, I have seen how complex feelings and ideas can be expressed through writing and I believe that because of this knowledge in the future I will enjoy producing more writing.

Sincerely,

Senior Writer

A F U L L S E R V I C E E X P E R I E N C E

I awoke on that Wednesday morning and prepared for a normal day, but I knew today wasn't going to be an ordinary day. In the future I would consider this to be the defining day of 1996—my eighteenth year of terrestrial existence. I went through all of the paces of a normal day: get up, eat breakfast, go to school. All the time pretending that today would be a day like any other day, but I knew it wasn't; today, I was going to a Smashing Pumpkins concert.

The Smashing Pumpkins were—and still are—one of my two favorite bands of all time. I had really been following the Pumpkins for only about a year; their song “Bullet with Butterfly Wings,” the first single off of their fourth album Mellon Collie and The Infinite Sadness, had really impressed me. I bought the album within a few days of its release and was pleasantly surprised at how amazing the other twenty-seven songs on the two CD album were. The album is less like an album with two CDs but more like two albums in the same case: each of the disks—Dawn to Dusk and Twilight to Starlight—had its own individual character. In the year after I bought this album, I bought their three other albums, seven singles and two import CDs: plain and simply, I was hooked.

In November of 1995, shortly after the release of MCIS, the Smashing Pumpkins announced that they would play a few dates at venues around the world and then they would begin a 103-show tour of North America. The tour dates and locations were posted on The Smashing Pumpkins web site on the World-Wide Web, and I avidly watched the list as each date was announced. Finally, what I had been waiting for happened: a tour date in Nashville was announced. I zealously awaited the day that tickets went on sale. On the Saturday morning that tickets went on sale I was on the phone ordering some within an hour of the ticket office's opening, but apparently so had everyone else who wanted to buy tickets because my tickets were for row X of the balcony, but I wasn't disappointed; I was still going to see my favorite band in concert.

On the day of the concert, I drove over to my friend's house. I was going to drive five of my friends and myself to the concert in my family's new minivan, and we picked my friend's house as the meeting point. Everyone showed up by five and we set off on our great odyssey. The trip itself was fairly uneventful; we had the normal squabbles over what to listen to on the radio. Traffic on the interstate was not bad until we got into downtown Nashville. We were parked in the Municipal Auditorium parking structure by 6:30. The show wasn't scheduled to start until 7:30 and since none of us had eaten, we decided to walk around downtown to find a place to eat. We found a McDonald's but it was closed. After more searching we found a Burger King, ate, and

returned to Municipal Auditorium by 7:00. There were two long lines stretching around the building. We stood patiently in line. The line moved fairly quickly and we were through the gates within about fifteen minutes. We found our seats, and they weren't as bad as we expected: we were fairly close to the stage, but we were off to one side instead of facing it from the front.

At promptly 7:30 the lights dimmed and the opening act, a band called Garbage, came on stage. I wasn't expecting a lot from them—after all, they were Garbage—but they did put on a good show, and in retrospect I really enjoyed seeing them. Garbage does have the honor of being the first band I ever saw perform live—whatever that is good for. They played for forty-five minutes, and after they left the stage the lights came back on. The entire auditorium sat in anticipation of what was to come.

We sat around for about twenty minutes, and then without a warning the house lights dimmed, leaving the auditorium completely dark. Then the song “Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness,” which is the introductory piano track on their album of the same title, began to be played over the speakers, and hundreds of lighters around the auditorium lit up. While this was going on, I watched the side entrance to the stage which was directly in front of me. I was able to pick out the band members entering the stage: Billy Corgan, the singer and lead guitarist; James Iha, the backup guitarist; and D'Arcy, the bassist. As “Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness” drew to a close, the band did what can best be described as tearing into a jam, and the crowd began

screaming. The band paused and then broke into the song “Where Boys Fear to Tread.” I was overwhelmed: I was watching my favorite band play one of my favorite songs only a few yards away from me. After that they fanatically played the next two songs on the set: “Zero” and “Cherub Rock.”

Then it was time for a slow song; they played “By Starlight.” “By Starlight” had never been one of my favorite Pumpkins songs, but hearing a song live can work wonders for a person: now, “By Starlight” is one of my favorite songs. While they were playing “By Starlight” the stage lights made hundreds of star shaped images on the ceiling of the auditorium. After “By Starlight,” I got so into the concert that I have forgotten the exact order of the set. They played their big hits like “Today,” “Disarm,” “Bullet with Butterfly Wings,” and “Muzzle.” They also played several songs from Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness like “Porcelina of the Vast Oceans” and “Galapagos.” They also did an excellent rendition of my favorite song, “Thru the Eyes of Ruby,” that they drew out for almost twenty minutes. Between songs, the jovial group cracked several jokes. One of my favorite moments was when Iha asked if anyone liked country music and the crowd booed. Then D’Arcy said, “I thought that this was Country Music City, USA,” and the crowd booed even louder. Corgan also said several times that they were “proud to be the world’s first dull service alternative rock band” and that became the running joke of the evening. Finally they played the song “Drown” and Corgan said that it would be the last song of the evening, but after two minutes they returned and Iha

remarked, "You guys are still here?" Then they went on to play two more songs: "1979" and "X.Y.U."

The lights came back and brought an my first concert was over. Only one word even begins to describe how I feel about this concert: awesome. We went to the lobby and stood in line to buy tour shirts. My only disappointment of the evening came when the woman in front of me bought the last toboggan. We drove back to Bowling Green, and at about one o'clock in the morning one of the most amazing events in my life until that time came to an end as I fell asleep with the memories of the evening still fresh on my mind.

S E L F E N T R A P M E N T

Houston jolted suddenly from his sleep. He reached over to his night stand to find his glasses. Instead of finding his glasses, his hand ran directly into a half-empty glass of Coke, which fell from the nightstand and shattered on the floor below. Houston rolled over and felt a sharp pain in his stomach; he realized that he must be lying on top of his glasses. He sat up and searched for the glasses. Luckily, they were unbroken. He put them on and stared at the digital clock in the corner. After his eyes adjusted, he could see that it was flashing 12:00.

“Well, judging from the streams of golden light flowing under the door, it must be time to get up,” Houston said to himself, clearing his throat as he spoke.

Houston dragged himself out of bed. He was still wearing the same clothes that he wore the day before. In fact, he realized that he had worn those same clothes for almost a week. Houston walked over to the sink. He had no lights turned out, so he had to search for the toothpaste. After spending several minutes feeling around the sink, he remembered that he had been out of toothpaste for several weeks. Even without having any lights on in his room, Houston could easily find the door to the outer room: streams of golden sunlight framed the door. When Houston opened, the door the sunlight practically knocked him off his feet.

“Everyday it is the same thing,” Houston said, speaking to himself again. “I wake up and the clock is never set. I try to brush my teeth, but there is never any toothpaste...and do I even own a toothbrush? I am always blinded by the sunlight. I thought that this was supposed to be the wettest city in the world. That’s why I moved here! Sunlight! Sunlight! Sunlight!”

Houston kicked a box of cereal that was lying on the floor.

“Well, now it’s time to complete this daily ritual and eat half of a box of cereal.”

Houston opened the cupboard, where he found four boxes of Wheaties. That was just enough to last him for a week.

“Now the paperboy will knock on the door.”

Just as he had predicted, there was a knock on the door. Upon opening the door, Houston found exactly what he expected to find.

“Here is your paper,” said the paperboy.

Without saying a word, Houston took the paper and closed the door. The paperboy—Houston did not know his name—was also the grocery boy. Every other week he would deliver eight boxes of Wheaties. On the few occasions when Houston received mail, the paperboy would bring that, too. Houston paid the paperboy a good salary that was well deserved. He had to walk all of those stairs since the elevator broke.

Houston himself had never been on the stairs even though he had lived in The Space Needle for almost five years. After graduating from high school seven years ago in 1997, Houston became somewhat of a drifter—he was afraid to go to college and never enrolled. He still lived with his family in Kentucky but would leave for months at a time. For a couple of years in high school he dated a girl named Christie. A few weeks after his eighteenth birthday in November of 1997, Houston won five hundred and sixty million dollars in the Wisconsin lottery. Houston decided to return home and ask Christie out again, but she rejected his proposal: Christie said that he could not come and go and expect her to still love him. He neglected to mention that he had won the lottery. That was the breaking point for Houston. In January of 1998, Houston bought the entire Space Needle and moved into it. In the six years since then

Houston had been alone in the Space Needle; his only companions were his newspapers and his computer. He had an entire floor of the structure filled with newspapers, and he had over five gigabytes (five billion characters) of news articles stored on his computer.

Houston sat down and unfolded the newspaper—Friday, March 13, 2004. The headline announced a huge sale at Caster-Knott’s Mart. Houston thought back to a time only a few years past when there were no advertisements on the front pages of newspapers. He started to turn through the pages until he found a page that had the news on it.

“Well it looks like the MSA is going to invade Washington state,” Houston announced.

The Militant States of America had been slowly expanding throughout the country for several years now. Houston had never worried that much about the MSA until Washington state’s referendum on whether or not to join the MSA last year. The MSA threatened the state with invasion, but the voters still voted down the referendum. Houston’s hate of the MSA was the first thing that had truly interested him since Christie’s rejection. While on his many travels, Houston ran across something that caused him to dislike the MSA’s leader Tim McVeigh, but the rejection had made him forget what it was, and though he tried hard, Houston could not remember what it was.

“It’s time to do some research,” Houston shouted.

Houston threw down the paper and lurched toward the computer. He turned on the monitor and shook the mouse to wake up the computer. Houston stared at the computer’s desktop background—a scanned image of the last picture he and Christie had made together—for a couple of seconds. The computer’s SmartAgent® realized that Houston was not going to get any work done, so it ran the newspaper search utility.

“It is amazing how Jeff made computers become so smart,” Houston said as he was suddenly broken from his trance. Houston began to reminisce about his old friend Jeff. Immediately after high school, Jeff perfected his first in a series of SmartAgent® programs. His SmartAgent® would gather information about users—their preferences, their habits, etc.—and compile it into an artificial intelligence neural network. Jeff’s goal with SmartAgent® had been to make computers so easy to use that you almost did not know that you were using a computer. After just a few public demonstrations, Microsoft offered Jeff a huge contract; since then SmartAgent® had sold over a billion copies. Jeff had once offered to teach Houston to program, but remembering his trouble trying to learn the C++ programming language and being too proud to accept help, Houston had refused. It could be considered the biggest mistake in Houston’s life; Jeff was a billionaire before his twentieth birthday.

The SmartAgent® realized that Houston was daydreaming again and suggested that he search for the text “Bowling Green.” The computer had even started to compile a list of articles before Houston awoke from the daydream and typed in “Tim McVeigh” and then pressed the button labeled “Search.” The search turned up thousands of articles, so the SmartAgent® arranged the articles into a timeline of the events in Tim McVeigh’s public history—the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building, his arrest, his conviction, his pardon, his election as governor of Michigan, and then his declaration of independence and the formation of the Militant States of America. Houston remembered that he had been in Michigan during the short time between McVeigh’s being elected governor and his declaration of independence. He highlighted those two dates and pressed the button labeled “Search Harder.” The execution time of this query was longer than the previous; however, he found what he desired to find.

Houston saw a copy of *Time* magazine and retrieved it from the shelf. It had a picture of Jeff on the cover and was dated October 1997. Houston could hear the book store's owner opening a box behind the counter.

"What in the world is this?" the owner asked of no one in particular.

"What's that?" Houston inquired.

"Somebody just delivered this case of books. *How to Profit from the Violent Overthrow of the United States Government* by a T. McV. It looks as if someone is trying to play a joke on the governor."

"Mind if I take a look at it?"

"No problem," replied the store owner as he handed Houston a copy.

"So is this the first time something like this has happened to you?" Houston asked as he flipped through the book.

"No. Ever since we carried a book that was supposedly an autobiography of Elvis' life after his faked death, people have sent us strange books. Just last week we got a book that was signed by Santa Claus."

"Is that right?" Houston asked, trying to appear interested. By now, he was much more interested in the book. "Can I have this?"

"No problem," replied the owner. "I was just going to throw them out anyway."

Houston picked up the *Time* and handed the owner a five-dollar bill.

Houston awoke from the flashback. After he left Lansing he went on to Chicago before winning the lottery in Wisconsin.

Houston looked at the computer's monitor where the title of the book was still highlighted. He could now remember reading the entire book. It seemed far too detailed to be a simple joke. The book reminded him of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Just as Hitler did, McVeigh began to follow his plan. After Michigan's secession, several other states decided to join. Now every state

along the former Canadian border—Canada merged with the United States after Quebec’s secession in 2001—except Washington had joined the MSA, along with the Yukon Territory, Arizona, New Mexico, eastern Tennessee and Rhode Island. There was some talk of an attempt to prevent these states’ secession, but the federal government in Washington was too indecisive to do anything.

Houston remembered how the militias that had called themselves “patriots” loved McVeigh so much. He promised them freedom of speech and championed the right to bear arms. What people got that they did not expect was the explosion of hate literature and pornography that came after joining the MSA. Cities—and even rural areas—had turned into battlegrounds because people now resorted to gun violence in almost every argument instead of trying to reach a peaceful settlement.

Houston searched for the book and quickly found it in stack of newspapers from the around the time when these events passed. He thought about how he was finally benefiting from being organized. He knew that this book was what he needed to bring down McVeigh, and he would love to do it, but how? How could he—a recluse in the Space Needle—convince others that he was telling the truth. He needed help, but from whom. He would have to talk to others, and it had been so long since he had he was not sure if he could do that. Finally, Houston remembered Jeff. Jeff had moved to Seattle.

“But would Jeff remember me?” wondered Houston. “And even if he did, I can’t see him looking like this. And see him! Jeff is one of the most famous and richest persons in the world. How can I get to him?”

Houston started to search for his telephone, but momentarily paused to start a search of the words “Jeff’s hangout” on his computer. The SmartAgent® thought it would be better if it had a last name to search with, so it asked

Houston for one and he entered it. Houston went on with his quest to find the phone. He had not used the phone in almost two years, so he did not even know where to begin to look. He decided to look behind a stack of Wheaties boxes because he remembered eating Wheaties when the paperboy called to say that the elevator was broken. He found it and pressed the use button. Sure enough the paperboy—Rob Clank was his name—had called him on April 15, 2002. Houston instructed the phone to call Clank and it obeyed.

The phone rang three times before a somewhat tired sounding Clank answered the phone. “Hello?” Clank said, sounding fairly perplexed.

“Hel-hel-hello,” Houston finally forced out the word. “Ca-can you bring me a razor, toothpaste, a toothbrush, a comb, shampoo, and some soap.”

Unsure if he had correctly deciphered the mumbling, Rob replied, “A razor, toothpaste and brush, comb, shampoo, and soap. Is that right, sir?”

“Ugh...Yes and that will be all,” replied Houston.

“Yes sir, I’ll have them for you tomorrow morning.”

“That will be fine.”

Houston hung up the phone after completing the sentence. He wondered why it would take the paperboy so long; he had planned to start today. In the meantime the SmartAgent® had returned the definite answer as to where Jeff liked to spend his free time. Jeff owned an amusement park on an island on Lake Washington and liked to hang out there every Sunday afternoon. Houston brought up the system clock window and discovered that today was Saturday. “Maybe everything will work out okay after all.”

Houston spent the rest of the day playing DOOM 2 on his computer. He owned every DOOM from DOOM 1 to DOOM 52, but after the third one they were all pretty much the same. He went to bed early and woke up the next morning to repeat his daily ritual. The paperboy arrived with all of the items

Houston requested, and Houston handed him his U.S. Funds Card. The paperboy inserted the card into his telecomputer and had Houston fingerprint and voice verify the transaction. That was how all business transactions took place today. Beginning in 2001 the Funds Card served as a replacement to paper money and as a form of identification.

Houston took his bag of toiletries into the bathroom and began to clean himself. It was the first good bath Houston had had in months. While he was shaving, Houston began to think about what he was going to do. A huge knot formed in his stomach and he wished he had not eaten an extra bowl of Wheaties. Houston put on some clean clothes. As he walked by a mirror, he realized that he needed a haircut: no one would pay attention to a guy with hair that long. The knot in his stomach became tighter and tighter as he approached the door. He did not think he could make it. The fear of facing the outside world became so overwhelming that he ran back to his chair.

He fidgeted in his chair for almost half an hour. Finally he had a vivid image of McVeigh's army marching through the streets of Seattle. That was enough to get him going; he jumped up and ran towards the door. He tried not to think of what he was doing as he threw open the door and started running down the flights of stairs. After a few flights his head started to spin.

"Oh great," he cried. "All I need is to fall down the stairs."

His voice echoed through the cavern-like stairwell. For some reason the sound of his own voice seemed to ease his fears and he began to hum. He continued flying down the stairs and all but forgot the urge to turn around and give up.

"Looks like all of those Wheaties are going to pay off," Houston jested.

That was the first joke Houston had told in years. Boy, did it feel good. He kept on running down the stairs. Every few flights he would pass a window,

and the city was beginning to look closer now. Houston came around one corner and almost tripped on a full box of Wheaties.

“Where did these come from?” he asked himself.

He jogged to the next landing and sure enough around the corner was a huge stack of Wheaties boxes.

“This is really odd,” he said. “Why would that kid store all of these here?”

Houston jogged a few more flights, being careful not to trip on the Wheaties boxes. He rounded another corner and ran directly into the paperboy. The paperboy was knocked down a flight of stairs but luckily was unhurt. Houston hopped down to the next landing. There he found a sleeping bag and a portable TV.

He was shocked out of his fear of talking to people. “What in the world are you doing here?”

“I stopped for a nap on my way down, but I heard humming and woke up.”

“But it looks as if you live here.”

“I do.”

“Why on Earth would you want to do that?”

“Well, going up and down these stairs is an all day job. I used to have a life until that elevator broke. Now this is all I have time to do. I just save my pay until I have enough money to take my girlfriend out on a good date.”

The word “girlfriend” caused a violent reaction in Houston. The knot in his stomach suddenly untied and he began to vomit voraciously. He tried to make it down more steps. The paperboy stood and watched Houston fight his way down the steps. Houston continued running. The city appeared much closer.

Thanks to his little bout with vomiting, Houston was literally running on empty. He longed to pass another stack of Wheaties, but it did not look as if that was going to happen. Houston also had a horrible acid taste in his mouth and he would have done anything to get rid of it. He rounded another corner and found a doorway. He had no idea what it was so he stopped to catch his breath and take a look inside. Much to his surprise when he opened the door he found a bathroom with an unopened tube of toothpaste and a toothbrush. Just what he wanted. He brushed his teeth.

Feeling refreshed, he began to run down the steps again. Soon he reached the end of the stairs and, without thinking, he opened it. He was in the lobby at the base of his tower, and it looked as if someone had dumped a truckload of Wheaties into it. The long run exhausted Houston and he collapsed onto the floor. After a few minutes he crawled over to the nearest box and began to eat some of them.

Houston stood up and tried to move towards the door but was unable to do so. He had enough energy to move, but the fear had returned. Slowly he turned around and started to open the door to the stairs, but the image of McVeigh marching through his beloved Seattle returned and that was enough to get him moving. Before he realized what was going on, he found himself on the streets of downtown Seattle. Houston remembered a barbershop being around the corner. He found it right where it used to be and entered the establishment.

The man behind the chair said, "May I help you."

"Ugh..." Houston again found himself unable to speak.

"What's a matter, son. Cat got your tongue?"

The old man reminded Houston of his grandfather and that made him feel more comfortable. Houston pulled out his funds card and pointed at the picture. He managed to mumble, “Make me look like this...again.”

The man began to work diligently on Houston’s mop of hair. Houston could not remember where he parked his car. It must still be in the garage behind the back of the building—or tower. The man finished cutting Houston’s hair and handed Houston a mirror. Houston looked just as it had looked when he first moved into the Space Needle. Houston paid the man, left, and started to walk around the base of the tower. Back behind the tower, he found his garage door. Inside he found his powder blue Ford Tempo that he had had since his junior year of high school.

“I hope it still runs,” Houston said.

It must have been Houston’s lucky day because it started on the first try. Truthfully, it sounded as if it was running better than it did most of the time he was in high school. All of the gauges checked out, so Houston backed out of the garage and he was off to Lake Washington to find Jeff.

The streets of Seattle were exactly as he remembered, except that there actually seemed to be less traffic. “I guess all of those trains they built actually paid off,” Houston said to himself. Houston found his way to Broad Street. As he traveled down Western Avenue and onto Alaskan Highway, he was amazed at how well he could drive. It had been three years since the last time he had been outside. He got onto I-90 and traveled towards Mercer Island where Jeff’s amusement park, Nirvana, was located. Soon, Houston started seeing signs for Exit 6. He was not sure if this was the right exit or not, but his decision was made when he saw a sign proclaiming “Nirvana Amusement Park, Next Right.” He followed the signs along the road to Nirvana, and before he realized it he was in the parking lot.

Cool, you don't have to pay to park, Houston thought.

He pulled into a parking space and started to open the door, but he froze. His head started to spin when he began to think about what he was going to do.

What am I going to do? There is no way Jeff will remember me, he thought, and how am I supposed to find him? This place is huge. Am I just going to walk around until I find him?

"That is exactly what I am going to do," Houston announced to himself trying to sound reassuring.

Nervously, Houston opened the door. He got out and looked around. Quite unsure of himself, he stumbled along towards the entrance. Houston felt like vomiting again, but the image of McVeigh marching right up to the base of Space Needle kept him going. Soon Houston realized that people were watching him. He realized he must look like an idiot trying to walk along and convulsing the whole time. He straightened himself up and continued.

After what seemed like an eternity, he made it to the front gate. Without saying a word, he handed the cashier his funds card and she handed him a ticket and his card back. He stumbled along towards the actual entrance to the park. Houston thought about how it seemed so redundant to buy a ticket only to have to hand it over only a few feet away; he was surprised that Jeff had not eliminated this by now. Having something else on his mind gave him more confidence. He walked over to the huge virtual map of the park and was busy sorting through the numerous roller coasters when he noticed somebody walking behind him. He glanced out of the corner of his eye and realized that it was his old friend Tom Klunk. Then he recognized the person with Tom as being Jeff. Suddenly, Houston felt as if the blood had been drained from his body. He felt a sudden urge to run, but he remembered how his tendency to

run away from new situations led to his parting of ways with Christie. He started to stumble off towards Jeff. He was stumbling so badly that he thought even if Jeff recognized him, he would think that Houston was drunk.

Jeff was talking to some business associates when he noticed a man stumbling towards him. Jeff just thought it was one of his employees who had gotten drunk and was coming to complain to him. That kind of thing seemed to happen all of the time. Jeff turned back to the conversation, but then he realized who it was.

“Houston, is that you?” Jeff asked excitedly.

Houston was about to reply yes, but instead he collapsed, still clutching the piece of paper and the book he had in his hand.

Houston woke up in an unfamiliar bed in an unfamiliar room. He sat up in bed.

“Where am I?” he asked himself, still half asleep. “Was that all a dream? I don’t really live alone in The Space Needle, do I?”

Houston walked over towards that bedroom window and looked through it. In the distance he saw the snow-capped Mount Rainier. All right, this was Seattle, but it must still be a dream. There was a knock at the door. Houston answered it, and Jeff walked into the room.

“Good, you’re awake,” said Jeff. “We found your paper and it looks as if you were right about McVeigh.”

Houston’s head started to swim again. This must not have been a dream.

Jeff continued, “I hacked into McVeigh’s computer last night after we brought you here from the park. From his files, it appears that McVeigh owns a business that publishes pornography and some of that hate literature that seems to be so popular nowadays. He also sells guns and other weapons. That

must be what you discussed in that letter you had with you. We've leaked the information to the press and they're broadcasting it tonight."

Houston was amazed. He had overcome his fears and in the process was going to take down McVeigh. The only thing he could say was, "Thank you, Jeff."

BEOWULF'S HEROIC MOTIVES

Beowulf—the title character of the English epic—is a great warrior and, later in the epic, King of the Geats. He proves himself in battle many times, and his heroism becomes well known. Beowulf becomes a strong leader with many followers; however, he does not fight to gain power, but instead he fights out of generosity and for revenge.

Beowulf's actions prove that he is not out to gain power. After the death of Hygelac, Beowulf is offered the throne, but instead of breaking the ancient laws and traditions of his people, he refuses the throne and opts to become an advisor to the young King Heardred. The Geats have long been feuding with the Swedes; however, while Beowulf is king, this war dies down because the Swedes recognize Beowulf's excellent ability as a warrior. Instead of taking advantage of the Swedes' fear, Beowulf chooses simply to enjoy the time of peace.

Being an ideal Nordic-Germanic hero requires that Beowulf believe that the murder of a friend or kinsman must be avenged. Beowulf's avenging of the death of Hygelac at the battle of Frisia is not the only example of this behavior. Beowulf battles Grendel's mother as revenge for Æschere's abduction and death. Beowulf's mortal battle with the dragon is revenge for the burning of Beowulf's mead-hall and for the death of Geatish people.

Beowulf fights Grendel out of generosity. He has already proven his great ability and now he must use it. Beowulf recognizes that Hrothgar is old and unable to avenge the death of his thanes himself, so without any promise of reward Beowulf sets sail and offers his services. Hrothgar gives Beowulf his permission to fight Grendel, and Grendel is killed. During the battle with

Grendel, Beowulf shows his generous spirit by battling the beast without weapons because Grendel does not know the ways of "noble fighting."

Beowulf's actions prove that his motive was not to gain power, but instead he acted heroically out of his generous spirit and his Nordic-Germanic belief in avenging deaths of friends and relatives. When these heroic motives for actions are considered along with his obvious superhuman strength and ability, clearly Beowulf is an epic hero.

I A G O ' S D E C E I T

In Shakespeare's play *Othello*, the role of the villain is played by Iago. His entire motive for existence seems to be solely to disrupt the lives of others through his constant schemes and trickery. One of the reader's first impressions of Iago comes in his speech in lines 39-62 of Act I, Scene 1. In this speech Shakespeare's masterful use of the English language expressed through syntax, diction, imagery, and tone gives the reader a clear impression of the contemptible character of Iago.

In lines 40-45 Shakespeare reveals Iago's dislike of loyalty. Shakespeare's diction—such as “duteos,” “knee-crooking,” “doting,” “bondage,” “provender,” “old,” and “cashiered”—help to create an image of loyal followers who are little more than hollow men. The simile in line forty-four furthers this image by showing that such men are as worthless as farm animals and are not smart enough to look out for their own well-being. The alliteration of the sharp “kn” in line 42 helps to bring the line to the reader's attention and makes the phrase “knee-crooking knave” stick in the reader's mind.

Another image is created by the metaphor in lines sixty-one and sixty-two. This image of daws pecking at Iago's heart vividly expresses that Iago knows that if it is ever uncovered how deceitful he is, he will suffer greatly. The idea that Iago knows that what he does is wrong is revealed in lines 54-57; each of these lines is split into two parts. This syntax reveals Iago's witty use of words. The reader reads to the comma in each line and then pauses; the effect turns the lines into a chant-like passage and causes the reader to notice what each line is saying.

Syntax and diction are used to reveal Iago's character in other places throughout this passage. In lines forty-nine and fifty Shakespeare alliterates

the "th" sound to draw a parallel between "throwing" and "thriving" to reveal Iago's belief that servants should take advantage of their masters. In line 54, Shakespeare purposely has Iago refer to Othello as "the Moor" as insult to Othello and to show Iago's dislike of Othello because he is of another race. Iago's last line in this passage—"I am not what I am"—sums up the entire passage: Iago may appear to be a loyal follower, but he is in reality much different.

In this speech Shakespeare reveals how deceitful Iago is. In the rest of the play the reader becomes aware of how truthful Iago was in this speech. The other characters regard Iago as an honest soldier when the truth is that he is responsible for all the evil that takes place.

THE AMAZING EFFECTS OF ONE BOMB

August 6, 1945 was a clear day over Hiroshima, Japan. In almost a year of the American bombing of Japan, this city remained remarkably untouched; however, on this day the air raid alarm sounded and an American B-29 Superfortress flew overhead and dropped one bomb. This one bomb was the most destructive bomb ever used against an enemy position up to that time. The bomb produced a bright flash of light followed by three concussions. In 1940, the population of Hiroshima had been 348,000; on this day, sixty percent of the city was destroyed, most was destroyed immediately, and 78,000 people died. Another 51,000 were either injured or missing. It may not have been a pretty sight, but the development and use of nuclear weapons in World War II was necessary.

In July of 1945, the leaders of the Allied countries met at Potsdam to discuss the future of Europe and the war in the Pacific. The leaders issued an ultimatum to Japan on July 26 calling for unconditional surrender. The ultimatum stated that the allies would "strike final blows upon Japan." In the weeks before the bombings, American planes dropped leaflets on the targeted cities urging the Japanese to surrender or to face "ultimate destruction." Japan failed to respond. Military planners had estimated that 1,000,000 soldiers would lose their lives in the planned invasion of Japan. Then the bomb fell on Hiroshima followed by another on Nagasaki three days later. Two

days later the Japanese finally responded. They announced that they would surrender unconditionally. The bomb was necessary to bring about a quick end to the war. Though it took many lives, it also saved many.

A wise man once said that war is only the accelerated development of technology. The atom bomb would have eventually been built. Even before the war so advanced work had already begun. The development of nuclear weapons began during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Several scientists across Europe had begun to theorize ways to unlock the energy believed to be held within the nucleus of the atom. Leo Szilard, a Hungarian who fled to England from the Nazi occupation, theorized in 1933 that it might be possible to construct a "device for the industrial extraction of energy in the form of a bomb." Otto Hahn and Lise Meitner, both of Germany, were working with uranium to create a chain reaction. Through a series of defections from Germany, data pertaining to the bomb ended up in the hands of Albert Einstein. In 1939, Einstein contacted President Roosevelt to inform the President that he believed that nuclear energy could be used to build a bomb. The President immediately created a group whose task it was to research, but as there was no need at that time for such a device, development was slow. At this same time Germany and Japan had already started efforts to build a nuclear device. The war served only to accelerate the pace of development.

The United States at the beginning of World War II was not regarded as a technological power. Most of the major discoveries of the first part of the

century came from Europe and not America; however, as war threatened Europe many scientists, such as Oppenheimer and Fermi, escaped from the advancing Nazis to come to the freedom that was offered by the United States. The scientists were allowed to work without fear far from the battlefields of Europe. This was the perfect opportunity for the United States to establish itself as a world power both technologically and politically. Fortunately, the leaders of the country saw this opportunity and spent money on research. It became clear that all sides of the war were building nuclear devices. The United States was able to build the bomb faster than any other country and therefore was able to win the war. If Germany or Japan had built nuclear weapons before the United States they would have won the war. The American development of nuclear weapons just made sense.

Though the bomb left great destruction behind, it is nothing compared to the huge number of lives that would have been lost if the bomb had not been used to coerce Japan to surrender. The bomb also established the United States as a technological and political power. The development of the bomb changed the world forever, and luckily it was in favor of the United States.