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### An Assortment of Weekly Threaded Discussion Questions and Student Responses

**DQ—Week 02:** In what ways do Oomen and Sedaris demonstrate the features of the form Ballenger talks about on p. 94? In what ways do they differ from his description? Be sure to give specific examples. Finally: what do you think is the controlling idea (the “so what” of Oomen and Sedaris?)

**Sample Student Answer:** First, both Oomen and write in first person in their essays. They both help the reader understand more clearly by writing the story in their point of view. Oomen's commonplace as described in feature two, was the barn in which she routinely went to every day to play. A barn most people wouldn't find very exciting or where dramatic things would happen, but her humble choice of subject opens up opportunity to think beyond the surface. Sedaris used something very relatable such as his family to describe his experience to others. Oomen used the primary method of development to explain her before thoughts and after she fell. When thinking about what her experience meant, she initially thought she had died. Sedaris, after experiencing yet another let down from his father, realized that his father's promises were unreliable and disappointing. For the fourth feature, it states meanings are shown through the process of coming to know them. Oomen shows readers her process of daily activity in the barn and thought process to build up to what she really wants to say by her writing. Sedaris never says exactly that his father couldn't keep promises, but rather based his essay solely on the events that happened in a summer that characterized exactly the kind of man his father was. Lastly, when Oomen tells readers what happened as a result of her her care-free outlook, she realizes what happens when one thinks they are invincible. On the other hand, Sedaris shows what happened because of his father's inability to keep promises, and what happens when one has too high of hopes for something relatively inevitable to begin with.

**DQ—Week 03:** In what ways do Shihab “Long Overdue” and Ortiz “One More Lesson” surprise you and why? What confuses you and why? How do the readings help you think about or model the personal essay? What questions/issues arise from the readings? What are the connections and dissonances among the readings? Most importantly, follow up such questions by contemplating *why*. The goal of these discussion questions is to move beyond your first reaction to analysis Remember to proofread carefully and use examples from the texts to make your arguments.

**Sample Student Answer:** Shihab’s *Long Overdue* illustrates her neglect to say something—anything—during the times when her race is stereotyped. The gardener says her lawn care is long overdue, just like her words against criticism are long overdue. Shihab neglects to correct racial stereotypes and does not take care of problems when they arise. And, for this, her world looks much like her garden: more weeds than grass.

Shihab's continual lack of response surprised me. She confused me by only presenting a solution for the other side of the argument, not her own. But she could have said something to make those people think about what they've said about her? Or are some things really better left unsaid? Is it possible to talk to a brick wall and make it listen? Or will it just stare back?

Ortiz's *One More Lesson* describes the culture shock she experienced as a schoolgirl moving from Puerto Rico to New Jersey. In her home country, joy constantly surrounded her. Her entire family would gather to make meals well ahead of the celebration; the preparation, in part, *was* the celebration. Their father sent them gifts much more extravagant than any of the other families received. They felt guilty. This new culture was penetrating their own on such a small scale. The move to New Jersey increased this guilt tremendously. There, they were not allowed to show their true colors, do the things they grew up doing, or even speak the language they wanted to speak.

It surprises me that her mother or someone in her family didn't break down and leave the country. The last sentence was confusing to me. I understood what she said, but I don't know where it came from. Why didn't her father see that his family was suffering? Or did he see the suffering and just ignore it? Why was he so interested in how his family appeared to the world? Why was he so embarrassed about his family?

The connection between the two essays, I think, is a smothering of the writer's cultures. Both authors talk about other's reactions to their culture, as well as how they perceive their reactions.

**DQ—Week 4:** As I met with you all in our conferences, many of you struggled with the idea of Showing and Telling. So this week, I'd like you to go to this Website and read about Showing and Telling, then post a healthy paragraph (minimum 100 words) from your personal essay in which you "show" a scene to your reader. Since I didn't have this up yesterday, I'll extend the due date to Sunday, midnight.

**Sample Student Answer:** "Stay a foot away from anything covered in blue paper – it's sterile, keep your mask and glasses on at all times-blood could spatter, and most importantly if you feel light headed please step out - we don't need another patient in this room." Note to self: remember those three rules for the next five hours. "Mr. Smith I need you to close your eyes and count backwards from one hundred, when you wake up you'll have a brand new knee." The machines have started to beep and the bright lights are shining down on Dr. Bradley's next patient. As he cuts open the knee with the sharp cauterizing tool the smell of burning flesh filled the room – how exciting! I had always dreamed about seeing surgery in person. Not only am I an avid viewer of all discovery health shows that involve blood, guts, and surgery, but I have been infatuated with the idea of becoming a Doctor myself.

**DQ—Week 6:** Use the topic of your paper as the "Title." Then in your post, state why you chose your topic and list at least 3 question you have about your topic. Then

[respond](#) to 5 of your classmates. Copy and paste the question that you like best; then add a question of your own you would like to see answered about that topic. If you notice someone without [m]any responses, please try to give that student a hand by giving him/her some suggestions. This is a dish best served hot (a metaphor, by the way), so get this done as soon as you can. Due Friday at midnight.

**Sample Student Answer:** Bad Seed or bad parenting?

I chose my topic because ever since I can remember starting in middle school I've wondered about this. My mom and I used to watch all sorts of thriller movies and etc. that I found so interesting. Every time she would ask something along the lines of what caused this person to do such horrible things? Wondering why myself, I have been curious ever since then. Crazy people are interesting and why they became crazy I'm sure is just as interesting.

Questions:

1. Are serial killers born psychopathic, or do they learn their behavior through the environment?
2. Does bad parenting or good parenting affect whether or not their behavior can be reversed or strengthened?
3. If serial killers are born crazy, what can be done with their mind to stop them?

The question I like best is: Policial messages in Dr. Seuss-Do children realize this? Do they care?

**Two students' responses to this student's post: A)** I've kinda always wondered this too, it's interesting to think about and really try to figure out why people act the way they do. You may come out with a non-specific answer too in the end though. I liked your question: 2. Does bad parenting or good parenting affect whether or not their behavior can be reversed or strengthened? **and How??**

You could also ask: The difference between "mental illness" and "psychopath"?

**B)** Does bad parenting or good parenting affect whether or not their behavior can be reversed or strengthened?

I remember when the Virginia Tech massacre happened and the parents of Seung-Hui Cho were on the news. They looked like a normal family. They were absolutely shameful that their son had committed such a horrendous act. They looked like good parents, so I think maybe their son's actions were out of their control. I know that he was prescribed medication that he never took, trained himself on video games, etc. You could definitely use that example for your paper. :)

My Example for students: While [DQ—Week 7: As you drive around town or the campus parking lot or the city, notice the various bumper stickers that attempt to persuade us](#)

to: adopt a philosophy of life, warn us of a terrible harm/situation, vote for something/someone, or sell us a product. Select one bumper sticker; in about 100 words, tell us what "rhetoric" it uses to persuade and what it is trying to persuade. Log onto two of your classmates threads and make comments. Be sure and give your thread a catchy title. Proof and correct your post before your final submission. The initial post is due Saturday night, and your responses are due by Sunday night.

Driving around town, I saw an old pick-up truck sporting a sticker that read, "Don't Let Annie Get Your Gun." The name "Annie" in the sticker has a double meaning. First, the name refers to a past Texas Governor, the late Anne Richards, who fought against a bill passed in Texas allowing citizens to legally carry a handgun. Second, the name alludes to an early 19th century exhibition sharpshooter Annie Oakley, who starred in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Although humorous, the creator makes a rhetorical statement that persuades citizens that Annie Richards (or the government) will "get their gun," a right to bear arms, they typically argue, given them in Second Amendment. If we consider this in the context of our ethnographic essay: we may assume that the driver of this truck is, most likely, male and a member of the NRA (National Rifle Association), who publicly opposed Richards's administration. Furthermore, by denigrating Anne Richards's name to "Annie," the sticker's creator has belittled the respect a governor of Texas deserves and relegated position to that of a child.

**Sample Student Answer:** While driving around my hometown, a suburb of Chicago, I saw a car with a bumper sticker that read, "1/20/09 End of an Error". The sticker also had an American flag in the background. The date referred to President Barack Obama's inauguration date. The second part of the bumper sticker was a play on words. Instead of the common phrase, "End of an Era", the sticker had "Error" in place of "Era". The phrase "End of an Era" means that a point in time in which a series of years should be remembered. By stating "Error" instead of "Era", the driver insinuated that President Bush's presidency was a mistake. Although there were some highs and lows during his presidency, it is difficult to grasp the legacy of the President. Under the circumstances our country faced with 9/11 and the struggling economy, it is unreasonable to criticize our President when the same events might have happened with other candidates. Also, this sticker shows lack of respect for our President and country. I find it ironic that there is an American flag in the background of the sticker, because referring to a Presidency as a mistake does not seem too patriotic. It is inevitable that people will disagree with President's decisions, but there should be more respect for them.

**DQ—Week 09:** For this week, I would like you all to practice peer reviewing. Under Doc Sharing, Portfolio Three, there is a sample student essay about Romona Flowers, an instructor here at TCU. I've also attached it here. Read the essay and then answer the Peer Response questions below. You may want to do this in a Word Doc and upload it.

### Peer Response Questions: Profile

1. What do you like best about this draft? What does it do well?
2. Who or what is the subject of this profile? How complex is the portrait of the person or place profiled? Does the profile create a dominant impression

while also investigating the subject from multiple points of view? Suggest ways the writer might make the profile fuller, more complex.

3. How is the profile structured? How well does the structure work to develop the profile and keep the reader interested in the subject? (Unlike a feature, profiles often do not have a narrative arc or tell a story that develops over time.)
4. Comment on the effectiveness of the lead. Does it draw you in? Does it hint at what is to come?
5. Comment on the writer's use of description, character, dialogue, and anecdote. Note any places where author commentary (telling) might be revised to include more narrative. Let the writer know if he or she needs to do additional interviews or observations in order to beef up details.
6. How effectively does the writer use secondary research to flesh out the profile of a person or organization. Suggest additional secondary research the writer might use.
7. Comment on the conclusion. Does it emphasize the overall impression? Does it connect back to the lead? Does it make a necessary or important contribution to the profile as a whole?
8. Comment on the language and style of the piece. Note places where the language needs to be revised to make it clearer and more lively—more like magazine style.

**Sample Student Answer:**

1. I feel this draft conveys Roma's true personality through direct quotes and the introduction. I found myself never getting bored and wanting to know more about how she was like in person. It engages readers to want to get to know her because she seems like such a like-able person.
2. The subject of the profile is Roma Flowers, a lighting designer and professor at TCU. The profile goes in depth to how she became a lighting designer, adding humor from saying it was because of a boy she had a crush on. It gives full details of her life until the present with all the different companies she has worked for in different cities. The writer could possibly research further how she is now. She gives a lot of background information that helps one understand her more as a person but not too much into her present profession. However, she uses a good amount of sources with positive feedback and good information on Roma's personality.
3. The profile is structured to where it starts off in the present classroom, an environment Roma is most herself in, and then goes back to her past up until where she is now in her life. I find the structure works very well because it makes sure not to bore readers with one part of her life for too long. The quotes from her and her sources are also interesting to make you want to read more about her.
4. The comparison to Whoopi Goldberg immediately makes me think of the crazy braids and humor. The way she is dressed can help readers understand she's an interesting person just from the first two sentences. Interaction between her and her students with

direct quotes give a vibrant setting and personality engaging readers as well. By the last second, it hints that Roma is a diva.

5. The writer uses description very well to give the foundation of her character. Dialogue from Roma is high energy and humorous to convey the type of person she is in and out of the classroom. I feel there is a lot of narrative throughout the essay, so the only place I would recommend is possibly towards the end, once again suggesting more present things.

6. Secondary research is plentiful in this paper. It seems as though for each part of Roma's life that is described, there is at least one source to talk about her and their experience at that time. However, I would suggest using possibly more students sources to how she is as a professor. Never in the essay are students really interviewed about their thoughts towards her.

7. The conclusion does tie back to the lead where she first states that Roma is a diva. Throughout the piece and by the ending direct quotes, she changes her views on the nickname with a catchy last sentence. The overall impression is that Roma is hard working, and down to earth, contradicting the nickname she had for years. As a whole, the profile turns a lighting designer, that isn't the most interesting sounding job, into someone one would want to get to know and highlights her life to make her a bit more extraordinary than what is perceived in the beginning.

8. The language is quite lively considering the quotes and how interesting her life seems, but I feel the vocabulary isn't advanced enough for a college level paper. I understand it is supposed to be a magazine article, but the structure could be a bit more challenging to sound more professional than just another student essay.

**DQ—Week 11:** This week you were to read "Getting Real in the Classroom," by Ellen Goodman (page 278-79) and "I am Not a Savage," by Kelly Sundberg. Read the essays carefully and analyze them according to the criteria you learned in Chapter 8. Consider the writer's arguments and explain their main claims and premises or assumptions behind them. To refresh your memory about these terms and what they mean, consult "Features of the Form" found in Chapter 8. What basic arguments strategies the writers seems to use (see page 280). While reading, consider how they use evidence, how they use their voice and their experience as authority, and how they use tone. Do they "bow with respect" to the issue? Explain your opinion. Remember to give examples from the text to back up your answer. Please have this assignment done by Sunday night. Read and comment to at least one other student's post.

**Sample Student Answer:** In *Getting real in the classroom*, the writer talked about the "boy crisis" in education. It meant Now days girls are smarter than boys in academic. According to the Figure 8.3 for a comparison of argument essays in chapter 8 (Ballenger 275), I think this essay is an informal argument essay. Because of the public issue "boy crisis", the audiences of this essay are publication's readers. "Op-ed essays are often relatively brief treatments of a topic" is a features of informal argument essay, so the writer directly stated the brief claim at the beginning to show an obvious points for the readers. From the report in "National Assessment of Educational Progress" (Ballenger

278), the writer wanted to say the premise behind the claim is that girls are doing better but boys are not doing worse in school. It follows the feature that central claim is based on premises and assumptions. (Ballenger 275) The basic strategy the writer seemed to use was that "argument from authority" (Ballenger 280). For example, the writer said that "Christina Hoff Sommers' screen opened with the dire warning: 'It's a bad time to be a boy in America.'" If the expert's warning is true, the claim is true. But the risk is that is the expert, Christina Hoff Sommers, really relevant to the question at the issue? In order to convince her viewpoint, the writer also used some researches, such as the report from Sara Mead who said that it was just a 'some boys crisis'.

I don't think that Goodman "bow with respectful" to the issue. I felt that the writer's tone was defensive. For instance, Doug Anglin, filed a lawsuit claiming sex discrimination in the whole system. "If you sit down, follow orders and listen to what they say, you will do well and get good grades," he complained. "Men naturally rebel against this." (Where? In the Army?) The writer also added her experience. As a grandmother, the writer did not think that "boy crisis" should let us stop worrying about why girls lose their interest in the city or why women with those bachelor's degrees still earn less than their male counterparts (Ballenger 279). We should concern more about single child and less about that girls are better than boys in school.

In *I am not a Savage*, I was confused because the essay was more like a story than the argument essay. The main point is racism, but the writer did not state her claim directly at the beginning. The writer used her own experience and her own voice instead of the researchers to show the route her prejudices changed of the place she lives. For example, when Rosa Abrahamson spoke and cried that "We are peaceful and do not take pride in that name"(Ballenger 312) in writer's school, Kelly started to consider her prejudices and changed her viewpoint. Obviously, the writer "bow with respectful" to the issue. I felt that the tone was sad through reading entire essay. For example, the writer felt ashamed to be a part in the community after the speech of rancher named Bud. From writer's own experience, at the end, the writer hoped that more people pay more attentions on Native American culture.

### **DQ Week 16: Extra Credit:**

For your extra credit Discussion Question, submit a rhetorical analysis of a television commercial(s) of your choice. Your rhetorical analysis (minimum 300 words) should be based on a close observation of that advertisement. In your analysis, you need to describe the commercial's audience, purpose, and context. To aid you in discovering the intended audience, consider the viewing demographic of the program the spot sponsors. Is it *Gossip Girl*? Or is it *Wheel of Fortune*? These two shows appeal to polar opposite audiences. Consider analyzing the intended audience according to demographics of age, gender, race, political persuasion, income level, region, professional and leisure interests, etc. Point to specific features of the commercial that give you clues to the intended audience. Who are these advertisers? Where do they get their authority as experts on what we need or want? Do you see any level of research in this piece? How would you characterize the commercial's style? Is it funny? Serious?



Scary? Embarrassing? Finally, be sure to discuss how this commercial persuasive appeal (ethos, pathos, or logos) affects the way viewers see their world.

**Due: before the final exam.**

**Student Response:** A commercial I have seen quite frequently this past month is for the Reebok Easy Tone tennis shoes. There are a few different commercials they show for this product, all with women as their spokesperson. One of the commercials is in black and white, with a girl in just a tank top and tiny little shorts. Of course, the model chosen has very pretty, toned legs. The camera never actually shows the girls face, or upper body at all. It is merely focused on her legs. The second commercial has a bit more humor, starting out at her legs, until she tells the camera man to look up. He then goes to her face and as she's talking, the shot goes back down to her legs/butt. The target audience is very obviously towards women and teens alike, who want the nice legs these models are showing off. Reebok is and always has been a well-known brand of shoes and athletic gear. Being around for so long, the company has gained credibility from quality and loyalty from customers. Because of the credibility and the visual evidence of how nice these girls legs are, it shows what we as customers want from a product. I don't see much level of research for the shoes, but the way the shoes were designed must have had some thought in order to achieve the toning principle. Each commercial has a different tone. I would think the humorous commercial would be targeted for younger audiences because it would grab their attention more. The black and white commercial I feel went for a more serious, almost sexual tone possibly for young women who want their legs/butt to look better for maybe their boyfriends, husbands, or guys in general. The idea of getting a better body by just the shoes a girl wears, appealing because they won't have to work out to get it, would allow the company to not have to worry about prices so much since america seems to like being catered to and not having to do much work. Ethos is the technique used because like I said earlier, Reebok's credibility gained over the years, and the model's visual evidence how one's legs can look if they use the Reebok Easy Tone tennis shoes, draws audiences in to want to buy this product.