

Anatomy Creative Project Comments 12/15/03

Hi [REDACTED]. I'm glad to see you decided to participate in the Anatomy Creative Projects option. This was a reflective, thoughtful essay. I don't know whether the goal is to be "disturbed" by the anatomy experience, although of course it seems perfectly natural to me if someone reacts in this manner. Rather, I'd say the goal is to do precisely as you have done – think about what you're seeing, hearing, learning, experiencing, and think about what meaning it might have to you and your future career in medicine. There also is certainly something seemingly brutal, perhaps even "inhumane," but I don't think this is the only way to understand the experience. Just as with much of medicine, the humanity or lack thereof is often found in how the act is executed. You're right that all too often in anatomy, and in medicine in general, there is so little time and you are so overwhelmed with raw information that it's difficult to step back and "ponder ethics and the nature of man." But maybe consider finding one occasion in the lab when your goal is not to identify the veins, arteries, muscles and bones, but to make the incision with love, gratitude, and awe. Thank you for sharing your insights. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hi. I really liked the image in the last couple of verses about the cadavers chatting, laughing, and dancing. Most students think of their cadavers as wise and solicitous guides, but it's nice to see them kicking up their heels and having some fun! I also like to think that the cadavers themselves are not frightened by the dissections and organ removals, but are rather glad to watch their bodies "transform" and give this final gift. Thanks for tackling this subject as a poem. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

This was a lovely poem, filled with awe at the miraculousness of the human body, even in death, and gratitude for the teachings of the cadaver. The poem is carried along by a confident rhythm and rhyme scheme. I hope this will be first of many patient-teachers that you encounter. Thank you for this very appealing thank-you note to your cadaver. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hi, [REDACTED]. I'm so glad you decided to participate in the Anatomy Creative Project option. I enjoyed your essay very much. I especially appreciated your point that anatomy is an opportunity to learn not only about nerves, muscles, organs, bones, but also about oneself. You know, the spiritual deepening you've experienced as a result of anatomy is interesting, but not as surprising as one might initially think. Many scientists have found that their study of sciences enhances, rather than diminishes their faith. Thank you for sharing your initial impressions so thoughtfully and perceptively. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I enjoyed reading your essay for the Anatomy Creative Projects option. You present effectively, and with a wry irony, your initial "dreams of grandeur" with the more

sobering and disturbing reality. Probably the only thing was just as you imagined it was Dr. Leonard, who in my experience is always admiring and approving ☺. However, I must take exception to one comment. When you write, “I now needed to ignore my emotions in order to...learn medicine,” this may be true in the short-term. Sometimes in an acute clinical situation, or when you are simply overwhelmed by too much raw information, you may need to put your feelings on hold. Ultimately, however, leaving your emotions behind may defeat the purpose for which you went to medical school. In writing this essay, you did an impressive job of reflecting on a whole range of emotions that entered into your first encounter with anatomy. I hope that somehow, amidst all the memorizing and skill mastery that must occur over the next 3 ½ years, you make room for understanding your own feelings and those of your patients. Thanks very much for sharing your experience. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

██████████, thank you very much for chronicling honestly and authentically your experience thus far in anatomy. You are a good and accurate observer of your own reactions, thoughts, and feelings, which suggests you will be a good observer of your patients as well. And the picture you create of the eager med students poised above their cadaver, scalpels in hand, on pause made me smile. It *is* a big step, even if it only lasts a couple of minutes. The main point I take away from your essay is that there is no single “right” way to respond to the anatomy experience. Excitement, enthusiasm, eagerness are emotions that very much belong in the anatomy lab. Glad you’re having fun! Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hi ██████████. Thank you for contributing this essay to fulfill the Anatomy Creative Project option. You really caught me with your final line – pretty sneaky! I really thought I was reading something from the perspective of the medical student, which of course is exactly what you intended! The message I took away from this sleight of hand is that not all that much separates cadaver and student. In fact, the cadaver understands the student very well and empathizes with the student’s situation. In the last paragraph, you raise some penetrating issues. What is life all about? What is the relation between mind and body? Although medicine is more practical than philosophical, occasionally probing your own thoughts about such questions will help you decide what kind of doctor you will become. Very good work. Thank you. Dr. Shapiro

██████████, your essay is an extremely thoughtful and honest examination of your own thoughts and feelings at the beginning of anatomy lab. Of course, there is no “right” way to respond to this experience. Some students are moved, some are disturbed, some feel very little. You were very perceptive in realizing that the “roiled-up” nature of your initial feelings had to do with anxiety in confronting death. Most importantly, you reflected carefully on a possible downside of anatomy – desensitizing you to the reality that “practicing medicine does involve human life and emotion...” Once having identified the problem, you move to a partial solution, and the next time you see your cadaver, you thank him. Excellent – short, but truly sweet. As your medical training

progresses, you won't often have time for in-depth emotional probing. But it becomes tempting to ignore the emotional side of medicine as too complicated, too time-consuming. Looking for small ways to remind yourself of your patient's humanity – and your own – is what it's all about. Thanks for sharing. Regards, Dr. Shapiro