

Anatomy Creative Projects 2008 Comments

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Hello, ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. I liked your poem from the cadaver's perspective, especially the way you as the student-writer were reflecting on your cadaver; and she was reflecting on her life. I also liked the way you were able to imagine her life so vividly – it made her seem quite real to me. Of course, you also asked the “big” question – at the end of the day (or the life), what's it all about anyway? What does it all mean? In a way, it seemed to me you provided a good answer in your last line – use up every bit of me in the service of helping others. I think most of us would be pretty happy if we'd been able to accomplish that in our lives. Thank you for contributing this poem. Dr. Shapiro

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Hello, ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. I was intrigued by your sojourn – as the spirit of the cadaver – into the afterlife. It sounded very comforting! It must also have felt nice to you to imagine that your cadaver was satisfied with his decision to donate; and enjoyed making this final use of his physical body. Your poem conveys a sense of being at peace both with donation (although it's obviously not for everyone, as Jesse makes clear) and with death. Thank you for contributing it. Best, Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. I liked the toughness of the poem, a certain irony at the start of the poem (“late as usual”), that perhaps your cadaver would also appreciate. I also valued the respect and consideration that you gave to the naming of the cadaver. There are different views about the propriety of this (as you probably know); but I think your poem models how bestowing a name on one's cadaver can be a bond between them; can acknowledge the cadaver's humanity; and can make dissection both easier and more meaningful. Best, Dr. Shapiro

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Hello ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. This is really a neat poem. I hope you will find time to add “finishing touches” and consider submitting it to Plexus! I was impressed by the way you simultaneously adopted the viewpoints of both cadaver and student. The chorus line you devised for each was an elegant summary of their feelings and intention. Then, in the final stanza, when you brought them together, it generated a sense of rightness and completion. It's clear you've put a lot of thought into the whole dissection process and how to make it as meaningful and valuable as possible. Very nice work! Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. I was very moved by your essay, both by your courage in sharing the loss of your father, and also in the honest, humane speech that you gave in appreciation of the donated cadavers. I especially respected your ability to identify that turning point when cadavers became more than “lab experiments.” It is sometimes pretty scary to recognize the humanity of cadavers – and paradoxically, sometimes even more so that of patients because of course with living beings there is so much more at stake. Yet without making that transition, no doctor, no matter how smart, will ever be more than a technician. Your essay shows that you took the risk of thinking deeply about the cadavers in the lab – who they were, what they might think of the anatomy lab and the students who dissected them. This ability to enter into the life of another – and, importantly, move from that understanding to discerning how one might best serve the other – is key to good doctoring. Thank you for this thoughtful and perceptive reflection. Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. I was impressed with your essay. Like most medical students, you seem to equate being a physician with being strong. I don’t dispute this – being a doctor does require strength. But it also requires tenderness and thoughtfulness – precisely the qualities you displayed in your writing. One of the most profound things you said was that you would be a different person after making that first cut. That is very true, because you have now done something that is only permitted to an elite group of individuals. As you observe, it is a tremendous responsibility. In my view, that incision does not make you a better or worse person; but you do have some influence on whether, in this process of transformation from ordinary person to doctor, you do become a better or worse person. Both can happen – and sometimes simultaneously! Perhaps the most important way you can keep yourself on track to be the person, and the doctor, you want to become is to regularly engage in reflection on what you are learning, observing, and experiencing. I wish you much good luck on the journey. Best, Dr. Shapiro

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Hello ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. You wrote a very touching poem. I was moved by the line when you reassured your cadaver not to worry, you would take good care of him. You know, the hands and the face are the two parts of the cadaver that most often give students pause in dissection, probably because they contain so much unmistakable humanity. It is lovely that you were able to move beyond the cut-and-paste approach to realize that, trite as it sounds, your cadaver can be your first patient; and the habits you lay down in the dissection lab will carry over into your clinical life much more readily than you might imagine. Good luck this year! Dr. Shapiro

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Hello ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. I really enjoyed your poem. It is not only clever, but revealing. The “relational” dimension between cadaver and student is very real, and it is valuable to consider it through various metaphors, not only the rather discrete and safe one of doctor/patient. There is an intimacy in dissection that should be considered and reflected on, as you do so well. As you indicate, sometimes it is a tempestuous and not altogether satisfying relationship. Eventually it will end, and when it does, the way the final break-up occurs will likely be significant ☺. Thanks for such a well-written and well-conceived poem. You should think about submitting it to Plexus!
Best, Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. I like the intentional misdirection of your poem – of course you are describing your cadaver, but the language implies it could be a very different kind of relationship. It is a clever device, but also helps to reveal a deeper truth: what separates the living from the dead? What constitutes a relationship? Indeed, in many ways, you show that your cadaver was, indeed, “the perfect man” for you. Very nice work. Dr. Shapiro

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Hello ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. Your metaphor of the house was very original – I liked your rooting around in the attic! Some of the other images (stanzas 3 and 4) were quite lovely as well. The poem addresses effectively both the sense of violation that dissection can produce (“Let’s tear the place apart”), as well as the potential to confront and learn from the cadaver’s mortality. I commend you for finding the wisdom that lies deeper than the information, or even the knowledge, at the heart of dissection. Best, Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████████. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. Thank you for your poem. I especially liked the way you conveyed a sense of teamwork between cadaver and students. They were taking this strange, disturbing, exciting journey together – which is exactly what doctors and patients should do. It sounds like you know your anatomy, although you are quite right that you’ll end up forgetting a lot of it :-). I can guarantee you, however, that you’ll never forget your cadaver. Best, Dr. Shapiro

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Thanks, ██████████, for your poem. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative

projects. Your work had many compelling images. One I especially liked was your desire to use your blade to penetrate the thoughts, the stories of your cadaver. It is true that the relationship between student and cadaver can be very one-sided. The only way it can be filled is through the exercise of your heart and imagination. What is sadder is that this one-sidedness can easily extend into the doctor-patient relationship as well, unless you continue to plant the seeds you harvest in anatomy lab. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. Thank you for such a thoughtful and heartfelt contribution. Everyone is moved at a different time, and in a different way, by the experience of dissection. (It is only the students who *never* feel anything about anatomy whom I worry about). The heart, so full of symbolism, often provides a powerful trigger for digging deeper (sorry for the pun) into the layers of meaning that anatomy contains.

I also hear you wondering about how to hold on to all that is most precious to you in life while pursuing your study of medicine (and that reminds me of the intensity and focus you brought to the litmed elective that day). Although your questions are painful, and with no easy answers, in my view it is actually a very healthy thing to be asking them. That in itself is a crucial step toward charting your own course in a way that respects who you are as your training proceeds. I especially liked the last several lines of this poem, where you suggest that transformation occurs not only in the cadaver, but in the student. There is no doubt that medicine transforms its practitioners. But you have considerable say in whether or not you “lose your spirit” in the process. Best of luck finishing up this year, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED], thank you for the low-tech version. Your poem was well worth waiting for! It is beautifully crafted – the insistent repetition of “color” as you explore its ever-deepening meanings is especially powerful. I also liked all the active verbs you used in relation to the cadaver – an apparent contradiction, but it perfectly conveyed her still-vital power. Many students comment on the effect on them when they see a cadaver’s painted nails. It is often a turning point in which they become emotionally engaged with the person (or former person) of the cadaver, as you did. This poem captures not only captures this awareness, but *illuminates* it. Thank you very much for it. You might consider submitting it to Plexus as well. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. How nice I got your poem! I liked it very much, especially the different tone and form of each stanza, which I thought reflected your own evolution, from the rather humorous, “clunky” rhymes of the first stanza, to the discovery of awe and wonder

in the second, to the imagining of the cadaver's life in the third, and finally the appreciation and gratitude for the gift of the cadaver (as you casually lean and place a pin, an excellent touch that unifies all elements of the poem). One of my favorite lines was the one about "the burden these saints impose with their gifts." The juxtaposition of saints and gifts, such uplifting, generous, and noble words, with "burden" is startling, disturbing – and gets at the complex truth of dissection. Very well done! Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. How nice I got your essay. I love that you were a French lit major – very cool :-). You obviously are experiencing dissection not only as a scientist, but as an artist. Your writing makes transparent the mystery, magic, and awesome beauty discoverable within dissection. The language of your essay is vivid and evocative. It also reveals your patience, persistence, openness, curiosity, and dedication, all qualities that will stand you in good stand not only in anatomy, but in all aspects of doctoring. All patients contain a "treasure"; and if you are able to bring it forth, your profession will continue to inspire you. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hello [REDACTED]. I am one of the faculty working with Dr. Leonard to provide students with feedback and comments about their anatomy creative projects. I thank you for such an open and honest self-exploration. Interestingly, I too was deeply traumatized by a difficult event associated with my grandmother's death when I was only eight. For many years, I had waking nightmares about death – not the pain and suffering of dying, but the nothingness, the complete non-consciousness of death. In my case, my own spiritual convictions evolved over time slowly and imperfectly, and they did mitigate, but not dissolve, my fears. Ironically, it was only when I was forced to confront my fears through my own illnesses that I began to lose my fear. I think it is a process, and I think that fear and faith are not necessarily a contradiction. Faith which "solves" everything too neatly I think may also be too simplistic (just a personal opinion). In any case, by struggling authentically with these issues, you will find the answers within your heart and within your faith. Best, Dr. Shapiro