

Anatomy Creative Projects Comments 5/18/06

Hi [REDACTED]. I am working with Dr. Leonard to review the creative projects this year, and I was lucky enough to read your humorous poem. I hope you had as much fun writing it as I did reading it! I liked the way it progressed from your own particular misery and sense of being overwhelmed by anatomy to an appreciation for the larger picture, especially the gift the cadaver has given you. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the creative projects this year, so I had the pleasure of reading your poem about judgment day and warfare. Warfare is an interesting metaphor that comes up a lot in medicine. I noticed that pitting yourself "against" the subject matter really seemed to motivate and energize you. There will probably be more ahead. Maybe you can also consider "negotiating" with the enemy, and making peace. In any case, I'm glad you won this particular battle. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

What a poignant poem. I really like the way the poem moves from busyness, even freneticism to calmness and reflection. That image of two hands-ten fingers-peach nail polish will stay with me for a long time. It is a powerful symbol of the connection that is always there, if we choose to acknowledge it. You've done a great job of piercing through to the humanity of both cadaver and medical student. Thanks for sharing! Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the anatomy creative projects, and had a chance to read your poem "Sophia." This is an incredibly beautiful, evocative, mysterious, and lyrical piece of writing. The images are quite extraordinary – sounds dying before blooming, hooded death, trading parietal pleura to drink in the sky, memory hanging like a final tear, the soundless melody, language as a footpath, silent soul falling into the speechless moon – wow, these are so original, so thought-provoking, so moving. Most of the time I thought you were writing in the voice of the cadaver, but sometimes I wondered if I didn't hear the voice of the medical student as well. I imagined that the dates marked the journey from death to dissection to final freedom. Am I on the right track at all? Regardless, for me it was quite a remarkable piece of work. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hi, [REDACTED]. I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the anatomy creative projects, and had a chance to read your poem "Discover." I enjoyed the way you cleverly inserted the word "anatomy" throughout the poem. The repetition of the phrase "your gift" emphasized your appreciation and gratitude for the donation of your cadaver. Beginning and ending the poem with the injunction to "discover" gave a lovely coherence to the

poem, and underlined the awe and wonder you felt. Thank you for this lovely effort. Dr. Shapiro

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Hello, ██████. I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the anatomy creative projects, and had a chance to read your poem representing the cadaver's point of view. You were very effective in imagining this cadaver's thoughts and feelings. I liked the way you balanced the cadaver's awareness of the students' occasional oversights, insensitivity, roughness, and crude humor with his/her willingness to give these same students the opportunity to learn from his/her body. You provide an intriguing answer to the question so many medical students ask: if the person really knew what would happen to their body, would he or she still have made the same choice? I hope you are right, and that the benefits to the students' learning and to future patients would outweigh the brutal aspects of dissection. Thank you for a very thoughtful and touching poem. Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████. I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the anatomy creative projects, and had a chance to read your poem "How Far We Have Come" (isn't that the truth!). The poem is a thoughtful and appreciative backward look at the whole anatomy experience. You did a great job of capturing all the changes and growth that occurred over the past 6 months. I was especially touched by the line "the sight of the cadavers/cut and torn and broken/ makes my heart cry..." As your journey continues, you will be seeing so many more bodies that are "cut and torn and broken," only they will be living bodies. I hope your heart will be as open and tender toward them as toward the cadaver you dissected this year. Dr. Shapiro

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██████████, I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the anatomy creative projects, and had a chance to read your poem "Anatomy and I." You charted a remarkable journey with humility and humor. Although you became familiar with the sights and sounds (and smells) of dissection, you did not become callous. I liked the last line of the poem a lot: "Be one with it/ one with the wind." It's a very interesting pairing of anatomy, such a concrete, at times brutal experience, with the evanescence and purity of wind. To me it suggests that anatomy can help students become aware of less tangible dimensions to life and death – and to appreciate them because they cannot be resisted. Thank you for sharing. Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████. I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the anatomy creative projects, and had a chance to read your series of haiku. I thought they were quite beautiful, and truly captured the essence (as well as the syllabic pattern) of haiku. I liked the emphasis on humanity, friendship, acceptance of uncertainty, seeking, and wisdom. I think all these things can be found, not only in the anatomy lab, but in many other aspects of the practice of medicine. Each of these haiku is like a miniature teardrop – or a smile. Thank you for this original work. Dr. Shapiro

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Hello, ██████. I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the anatomy creative projects, and had a chance to read your two poems. I enjoyed them both. Sometimes a few carefully selected words can convey a lot, as your haiku illustrates: the essence of anatomy is all about learning and growing. In "Thank You," you take time to thank all your teachers – your professor and your cadavers. It seems to me you recognize that, beyond the "mountain of knowledge" you've climbed, you've used the anatomy experience to become a better person. I hope that you continue to "learn and grow" as you continue your training, not only academically, but emotionally and spiritually as well. Thanks for this excellent work. Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████. I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the anatomy creative projects, and had a chance to read your poem "A Doctor's Gift." It was a really interesting and unusual idea to imagine that the cadaver was a former physician. Quite creative! Because of this device, the poem operated on two tracks: one was the cadaver reflecting back on life, from medical school through practice, culminating in death; the other was the cadaver in the present, still being a caring, compassionate, and knowledgeable "teacher" in death as in life. I liked this double movement a lot. It also made me wonder whether you might have considered the possibility that one day you yourself, as a physician in the future, might make the choice to donate your own body. In any case, thank you for writing such a discerning poem. Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████. I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the anatomy creative projects, and had a chance to read your poem. I thought it was a great idea to indulge in a little ranting, and I sincerely hope it was cathartic! There are a lot of med students who experience the same gap you describe – you study hard, you're filled with awe and appreciation, you've learned a lot, and yet you feel overwhelmed by information, and it doesn't always come together for you on the exams. The final image of the poem was really terrific, and I hope it gave you some perspective. You may feel like you're sinking and drowning, but you've seen the marvel of "that tropical coral." Have confidence that you will be able to "swim out," having taken what you need to from the anatomy experience. Best of luck on your final! Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████. I'm working with Dr. Leonard to review the anatomy creative projects, and had a chance to read your poem, "Unknown Whispers" (good title!). You did a beautiful job of really trying to "see" through the eyes of the cadaver. The experience is disturbing and unsettling. Everything seems bright but vague and indiscernible, as though wrapped in glowing cotton. Your poem does not settle for the easy answers – the cadaver confidently and generously guiding grateful students. Instead, despite his/her good intentions, the cadaver seems disconnected from the students, unable to understand them, hopeless, uncertain. At the core of life is an overwhelming sense of mystery, and you don't try to solve it. This is an honest and brave piece of writing. Dr. Shapiro