

Anatomy Creative Projects II MAY 2007

Hi, [REDACTED]. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your intriguing, albeit somewhat mystifying, poem. I read it several times, and tried to understand it (although I'm not sure I succeeded!). I imagined it might be about the greed of modern society to keep consuming, feeding our hunger and "thirst." Perhaps "those eyes" refer to the eyes of the cadaver, which contain truths our society does not want to learn. We all "buy a ticket" to the good life promised us, but perhaps we do not receive satisfaction on this ticket. (I do not have a clue about the Malloy reference). The body, like so many bodies, has lost its way in death; and this is the price all of us pay every day for the "cancer" devouring our world. Is this even close? At least you can see I wrestled with it! Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your moving essay, equal parts doubt and hope. Perhaps it all balances out as humility, a much-underrated quality among physicians. I suppose your discovery that knowledge can lead to a realization of how much we don't know is why sometimes "ignorance is bliss," yes? But really, it is not; and with this rite of passage, you've started on the amazing, terrifying, humbling journey toward physicianhood. I guarantee that at least 50% of your class shares your self-doubts – and the other half should! Feeling "in pieces" at the end of your first year of medical school is pretty natural – although it takes a lot of courage to admit. Your self-awareness and honesty are commendable, and an indication of the kind of excellent physician you will make. Thank you for this essay, and for your reflections. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your poem, which I frankly thought was terrific. I loved the parallels you drew between cadaver and medical student, your awareness that the student is at least as affected and changed by the experience as the cadaver. I was especially touched by the hope that, although they both have made sacrifices, their lives have been and will be worthwhile. My only caution is one based on what I take to be literary license: I hope you will never truly feel that "you have up your life for that of others." It's all about balance, right? Learn how to replenish and nourish yourself so that you will be able to continue to give. Have a great summer, and thanks for sharing this work. Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your lovely poem, "reflection (a reflection." You did a wonderful job of juxtaposing the

science and the art, all that is macabre and all that is beautiful about this profession you've chosen. I was particularly moved by the repetition of the three pivotal moments you identified in the life of the cadaver - the sensation of wind, the experience of a kiss, and the tears of disappointment – and the way you then linked them to your own life. It is obvious from this poem that you have learned a great deal from your cadaver on multiple levels. Excellent work! Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your collection of haiku. I agree completely about the difficulty in writing haiku. It is a real challenge to succinctly craft an image that reveals genuine emotion and/or insight. I liked so many of your lines – the idea of “soundless instruction,” for example, which made me realize how much of medical education relies on sound (some students might say noise) for teaching; yet how much can be learned from silence; or the idea that the cadaver indeed exacts a “price”; or the upsurge of emotion when dissection is finally “done,” yet so much lies ahead. I can see you worked hard at this series; and the result is a coherent and moving flow from beginning to end. Thank you for sharing this work. Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I met you briefly at the last Plexus meeting, and am glad to see you following in the footsteps of Ogden Nash (among others!). I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your witty limerick. The smell of anatomy lab does garner a lot of student attention; and is vivid decades later in the memories of physicians. What I particularly liked about your poem is that you adopted the point of view of the cadaver to say, in essence, hey guys, get a perspective! I think if you can maintain this process with your living patients, you will go a long way toward experiencing empathy for their situation – even if it is with a giggle. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hey, [REDACTED]. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to randomly be assigned your poem! You are a fine writer. The conversational style of this work is terrific. It's like you are having a chat with your next-door neighbor. It conveys a kind of special intimacy that you've developed with your cadaver, where you can approach her/him with an awareness of your shortcomings, but also an awareness of his(hers)! You talk to your cadaver as an equal, not worse than, but also not better than you. The last line is quite beautiful in the way that it reflects and deepens the original question of the title, and helps us understand that you have great admiration for the truly “Christian” (in the sense of selfless giving) nature of anyone who chooses to donate their body. As always, you are walking the walk, [REDACTED]. Have a great summer, and please say hi next year. Best, Dr. Shapiro

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Hello ██████████. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your poem “I’ll never know.” It was poignant and touching, and captured very well how you found your way to the humanity of the cadaver through heart, muscles, skin, blood vessels, and finally the cancer that killed him or her. I also found your expression of regret very profound – of course, you could have regretted that your cadaver wasn’t thinner, or didn’t have more typical veins; but instead, your regret was for all the gaps of the human life that can never be dissected in the anatomy lab. This poem truly reflects the important lessons of anatomy. Thank you for writing it. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████████. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your imitation of Frost’s classic poem. You made a very good choice. Like the narrator of Frost’s poem, you pause a moment on your journey to reflect on the scene before you, and perhaps also what has brought you to this point in your life. Like him, you feel the lure of the pause; but also like him, you know your path continues onward into the future, in fulfillment of promises you have made. Your questions about the cadaver must remain unanswered, even as you proceed. I liked this poem a lot! Thank you for sharing it. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████████. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your point of view essay. Very creative! All the details you provided (especially about Earl!) really brought the cadaver to life (so to speak). Your use of humor also gave her a distinctive personality. Imagining her satisfaction with the knowledge you and your classmates had received and the help she provided must have been a little like a blessing. Good work. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████████. How nice to encounter you unexpectedly in this way. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your poem/essay (not sure which, doesn’t really matter). What an intriguing metaphor – the medical student as vicious lion, “feeding” his “hunger” (for knowledge) by ripping the cadaver to shreds. As you come to realize in writing the poem, it has a certain truth, and also is not completely fair (to the student, not the lion :-)). Lions are driven by a survival imperative (well, actually, so are medical students! :-)). But it is only medical students who, hopefully, see the people as well as the bodies. Very nice work, ██████████. Have a wonderful summer, and much good luck next year. Dr. Shapiro

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Hi, [REDACTED]. I am part of a team working with Dr. Leonard to review and comment on the creative projects submitted by students. I was lucky enough to read your poem from the cadaver's perspective. I really enjoyed the way you played with the meaning of words, the way you noticed how quickly the technical words of medicine can, with the alteration of a letter or two, become infused with emotion. Believe me, you will see this happen all the time in clinical practice. I also liked the line about the cadaver becoming a part of your stories. Again, as you proceed through your training, you'll find that your life and the lives of your patients become inextricably entwined, always offering you the opportunity to "make you better than you were." Thank you for sharing this work, [REDACTED]. Dr. Shapiro