

## Anatomy Final Projects 5/20/05

Hi [REDACTED]. I'm glad I have a chance to comment on your final anatomy project. I'm impressed – how could we have gone through all of PD without my realizing you are a poet! Your poem has a strong structure, both external and internal, that propels the reader forward. What I liked best, however, was the way you intermingled the deceased body of the cadaver with the living body of the student so that it becomes very apparent you learned not only about dissection, but about being a human being. Excellent work, [REDACTED].  
Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. Nice to run across you again – even if at one remove. I really liked the poem you wrote for your final anatomy project. The experience you describe is familiar to many medical students – kind of a medical “aha!” In so many courses, in so many exposures, it's just “more information.” Suddenly, when you “see” the gall-bladder, the heart, the lung, it all comes together. You get it. I suspect the same thing will happen when you start third year – it all becomes important and meaningful. That's how it is for people who are destined to be doctors. Enjoy your summer, and hope to see you next year. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hello, [REDACTED]. I'm reviewing some of the anatomy final creative projects, and I'm so glad I had the chance to read yours. This is a lovely poem as well as a tribute to your cadaver. I like the way you used the intimate, second person address, as though you're having a final conversation with this body which somehow has become a “friend.” You know, students often feel that the study of medicine is all about getting answers. In part, of course, that's true. But I think you'll discover that a lot of times, medicine is really about learning to ask the right questions, and learning to accept that there are not always answers. It seems to me you are already well on your way. Thanks for this work, Dr. Shapiro

Hi, [REDACTED]. I had the opportunity to review the final creative project you submitted for anatomy. The poem you selected speaks eloquently to the immortality of the soul and spirit, regardless of one's specific religious beliefs. It is the suffusion of the life of the particular individual back into the living universe. I've read this poem before, but it never fails to move me. Thank you for sharing it. Dr. Shapiro

Hi, [REDACTED]. It's nice to re-encounter you, even at one remove. I had the opportunity to review the final creative project you submitted for anatomy. What a good poem. I loved your associations to these two mysterious (at least to a layperson) words. You really have a fine ear – the images you evoked were completely believable and convincing. The romantic visions you conjure are brought up short by the vulgar, almost harsh insertion of the colloquialism for male testicles, yet it all somehow fits. Revealing the true meaning of

the words has a romance and grandeur all its own. By the way, I saw the article about your winning the UCI piano concerto contest. Wow! Talk about multitalented. So is being a doctor just something to occupy your spare time? ☺ Dr. Shapiro

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██████████, this was an interesting and thought-provoking poem that you wrote for your final anatomy creative project. I thought it represented the voice of a medical student, expressing both ambivalence and gratitude about the anatomy experience. It occurred to me it could almost be read as the voice of the cadaver as well. In any case, it made me think of how difficult and troubling gross anatomy can be. Whether it will stand the test of time, only time will tell. The poem itself is very well-crafted with a confident use of language. Thank you for such good work. Dr. Shapiro

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Hello, ██████████. For your final anatomy creative project, you wrote a truly lovely tribute to your cadaver. The dissection of the face is often difficult for students, because it often seems to embody the person of the cadaver. Your poem created a beautiful reframing. Through acts of imagination, each feature dissected and examined triggers a touching and humanizing fantasy about your cadaver. The poem as a whole conveys a peaceful and respectful sense of closure. I hope that is how you felt at the end of the anatomy class. Thank you for this work. Dr. Shapiro

██████████  
Hi ██████████. I found this to be a truly powerful poem: no niceties about imagining the happy life of the cadaver, no honeyed expressions of gratitude. Your images are brutal, and the depiction of your lack of emotional response stark. You pull no punches. You do not feel more compassionate, more sensitive, but less so. In fact, many philosophers of medicine claim that that is precisely the purpose of the anatomy experience – to change the way you feel (or don't feel) about things. I'd suggest that the goal is rather to learn a double movement between steadiness in the face of disgusting, horrifying, or overwhelming experiences; and tenderness, so that you retain the capacity to connect emotionally with the suffering of your patient (or the personhood of your cadaver). Hard to do, but worthwhile to try. Thank you for such strong and honest writing. Dr. Shapiro

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██████████, I have the enjoyable task of reviewing some of the anatomy final creative projects, including yours. I liked your poem, especially your decision to write it from the point of view of the cadaver. In this way, you chose to give your cadaver a voice. I very much liked the contrast between the calm, measured tone of the narrator and the vulnerability and disruption of the scene described (“naked for all to see,” “exposed and unraveled,” “my body in a pile”). To me, the poem conveyed a sense of peace and satisfaction, a “purpose fulfilled.” Good work, thank you. Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████████. I have the enjoyable task of reviewing some of the anatomy final creative projects, including your poem “Please stop!” I liked the structure of the poem, the

“discoveries” of the student contrasted with the pleas of the cadaver. Also, when most students write about the cadaver’s perspective, they usually talk about how happy the cadaver feels at how much good s/he is doing. So it was a welcome change to read about a cadaver who might have felt this was all a big mistake – stop, I want to get off! You also did a great job of conveying how each dissection diminished further the humanity of the patient. The final lines showed not only how the patient had been harmed by this process, but the student as well. This was a very well-conceived and well-written work.  
Dr. Shapiro

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██████████, I’m reading some of the final anatomy creative projects, and luckily I was able to read yours. Your poem is a thoughtful meditation on the totality of the anatomy experience. You have the insight, as others have had before you, that what happens in the anatomy lab is considered shocking and appalling by most civilized standards. Of course, context is everything, and the learning that occurs should make the experience a privilege.

I was glad to read that you were able to *stop* for a moment during dissections and think about the person of the cadaver. The ability to remind yourself of that simple fact, no matter how briefly, will help you immensely when you start to see living patients. I also liked that, for you, anatomy was enjoyable and fulfilling- those emotions *should* be part of this experience, especially when you are able to see the big picture of what this is all about. As you note, you’ve been given a great opportunity, and now it is up to you to use it well. Thank you for this excellent work. Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████████. How nice to find a “trace” of you as I review some of the anatomy final creative projects! This struck me as both a poignant and lighthearted poem. Writing from the point of view of the cadaver, you manage to express a wise tolerance, a perspective “from above” as it were. Some of the lines were really touching in their simplicity (“It will be nice when it’s over. We can all go home”). And the last couplet was terrific, the contrasting understatement of “a little change” with the incineration of the body parts. Yet, for this cadaver, he seemed glad to have helped and ready to move on. Very well done. Thank you for a strong piece of writing. Regards, Dr. Shapiro