

Hi you two. I'm including a sample of the (admittedly superficial but nevertheless heartfelt) kinds of responses I'd like to send to the students who completed the anatomy projects. I have not sent these yet, pending your okay or additional input, so fire away. Johanna

[REDACTED] (poem about tattooed cadaver)

Hi [REDACTED]. Because of my interest in applications of humanities and arts to medical education, Dr. [REDACTED] allowed me to review the anatomy creative projects. What a wonderful poem you wrote! Its specificity and detail (the mermaid on the deltoid) brought this cadaver to life (excuse the pun), as did your and fantasies about his worries and inspirations, and the annoyances of his daily existence (jealous girlfriend?). By switching from third to second person in the last stanza you made a lovely move closer toward this body "motionless on a steel table." The final phrase, mimicking the previous stanza's concluding line, as well as the cliché "moment by moment" was a great way of getting the reader to think about how we "measure" the passing of time and the approach of our own mortality. A very appropriate meditation to emerge from gross anatomy lab!

[REDACTED] ("My Teacher" poem)

I liked your creating a "dialogue" with your cadaver, and the way you imagined his or her life filled with love and beauty. Your vow to remember this "first patient" with awe and respect is an important one. I loved the idea that this "teacher" would "bless" each future patient. What a wonderful way to express the interconnectedness of us all. Hold that thought!

[REDACTED] ("Anatomy" poem)

Great poem. It's very effective in jumping back and forth between an inanimate skeleton and a living, loving human being. It also takes a foundational skill of medicine, namely touch, and explores all that can be revealed when the physician is "touched" by the patient's life. Also, because of the images created by the poem, although you never say so directly, the "touch" you extend toward your cadaver appears at once gentle and respectful. Great ending line that begs the questions, "What is seeing anyway?" and "How can a physician really see his or her patients?" Good work.

[REDACTED] ("First Day in Anatomy Lab" essay)

Hi [REDACTED]. I enjoyed your meditation on "first day of anatomy lab." Really good observation of your own sensations, emotions, and thoughts. That quality of close attention will stand you in very good stead when you start to figure out what is going on with patients. I also appreciated your awareness of *simultaneous and contradictory* emotions. The practice of medicine, the relationships between doctor and patient are rarely only one thing or another, but rather are more likely a complex conglomeration of many often conflicting realities. Careful and nonjudgmental awareness will help you understand and be comfortable with these phenomena. Your last line struck me very forcibly. Keep making promises to yourself and your patients. It's that willingness to commit wholeheartedly that makes a truly fine physician.

[REDACTED] ("Anatomy and Humanism" essay)

Hi [REDACTED]. I appreciated this thoughtful, insightful reflection on the relationship between science and humanism. Your concluding sentence said it well: the practice of medicine is a constant balancing of closeness and distance. If you keep the patient tenderly juxtaposed between these two poles, I think all will be well.

[REDACTED] ("My Vida Loca" poem)

Hi [REDACTED]. I enjoyed this poem. Perhaps not surprisingly, the "emptiness" of the cadaver (the "cavity") leads naturally to thoughts about the "fullness" of life, the soaring, flying, guiding spirit. One can only agree with you that we are all of us trapped in the mystery of our crazy lives.

[REDACTED] ("Making an acquaintance" essay)

What an intriguing approach to consider that you are "making the acquaintance" of your cadaver. I found it fascinating that, based on your obviously restricted contact, you were able (tentatively) to deduce so many qualities about this individual. This ability to pay careful attention to patients, and then think imaginatively about what they have taught you, is one of the sign-posts of a skillful clinician. A very creative and insightful essay.

██████████ ("Death and the Dead" essay)

Hi ████████. I liked the way you wrote this essay. By speaking directly to the reader, you engage us viscerally. I am right there, walking by your side, seeing through your eyes. The whole metaphor of an art gallery brought into immediate focus the relationship between art and medicine in a very thought-provoking and original way. And the actual images you evoked were quite beautiful - vivid, touching, even humorous. I loved that the whole experience put you in "a surprisingly good mood." This juxtaposition of exposure to death and a kind of pleasant peacefulness perfectly conveys the unexpected reassurance and relief you experienced in anatomy lab.

██████████ ("The red heart" poem)

Hi ████████. I really enjoyed this poem. Of course I'm a big fan of William Carlos Williams, and this is a fine tribute to that physician-poet. The concreteness of your images perfectly captures the heart both as an organ and a metaphor. Nice work!

██████████ ("Who are you?" poem)

Hi ████████. You wrote a really well-crafted poem, and managed to use meter and rhyme scheme in a way that enhanced, rather than detracted from, the seriousness of your message. The dialogue between the "unknown scholar" and the cadaver is both effective and touching. The dissected body springs to life and becomes a wise guide, encouraging both gentleness and steadfastness. Lots of lovely language that hearkens back to an earlier, but perhaps more dignified, time in medicine (and in life) and really works.

██████████ (poem about encounters with the body growing up)

Hi ████████. I thought this was a truly terrific piece of writing. It sings of the enduring fascination of the body, yet reaches far beyond to the theological and spiritual implications (or not). That it does so through incredibly well-observed, harshly honest "mini-tales" makes this journey toward self, others, and "ourselves" irresistible. The structure of the poem is subtle, but very effective. The concluding image is compelling and powerful. All in all, a poem I won't easily forget.

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 5:04 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Hi [REDACTED]. I liked this project very much: "Diary of a Cadaver"? Even the typeface lent an aura of credibility! You imagined a fulfilled cadaver, happy in the knowledge that s/he had made a final contribution that moved these students along their path toward becoming "competent, compassionate physicians." That's how I imagine it too! I hope on that last day of anatomy you were cheering, or at least smiling. Congratulations! Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 4:58 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]rt
Subject: final anatomy creative project

[REDACTED] this was a wonderful exercise in point of view writing. Very creative! You imagined a healing message from cadaver to student. It also made me think that, while students have many questions they wish to ask their cadavers, the cadavers too (at least in the realm of imagination) have questions they would like to ask their students. This poem projected a sense of coming full cycle - reproducing the same encounter, but on the other side of months of anatomy. Seen through your cadaver's eyes, you recognize that you have grown from anxious, clumsy, astonished neophyte to confident, competent, and knowledgeable anatomist. Seen through the cadaver's eyes, what must have been a confusing, desperate, fearful, and disgusting experience at times has a fundamental rightness about it. You are well on your path to being the doctor and servant you want to be. Very nice work!

Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 4:48 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Hi [REDACTED] I'm glad I had the opportunity to read your anatomy poem. I was very affected by it. By addressing your cadaver directly, you moved emotionally closer to her, and brought the reader along with you. You explore a fascinating and disturbing realization - after the gross anatomy lab comes to an end, so much is "known" about the patient anatomically, yet so much will forever remain unknown. I think it is not uncommon for physicians to discover that they know so much, yet also so little, about the people they are attempting to heal. In my reading, you are grappling with an existential dilemma that we can never know our patients completely. All we can do, as you did with your cadaver, is to pay attention to the stories they have to tell, however incomplete they may be.
Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 3:49 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

[REDACTED], thank you for such a revealing and honest poem. I think I got some sense of just how difficult anatomy was for you, how it evoked first way too much emotion, and then seemed to have no room for emotion at all. I hope as you proceed through medical school, you will find "time for feeling" because, at least in my view, medicine is very much about feeling. In my view, it's a very good thing that as much as you "don't want to feel," you do. You were brave to explore your feelings about feelings so deeply. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 3:31 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Hi [REDACTED] You wrote a poignant poem to your cadaver. It seems to me many students leave anatomy with some feelings of guilt - for treating the cadaver carelessly on occasion, or making the off-hand flippant remark, or simply, as you say, for distancing themselves from the humanity of the body. Asking forgiveness is hard to do, but also very healing. I hope it is a practice that you will keep in mind as you proceed through your training. I predict that you will have many occasions (big and small) for which you need to ask forgiveness and forgive yourself. From my perspective, this is not a sign of an incompetent physician, but rather of an honest - and human - physician. One of the most important lessons in medicine is to be able to acknowledge your mistakes and learn from them. Forgiveness is an important part of this process. Thank you for the opportunity to read your project. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 3:12 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Dear [REDACTED], thank you for the opportunity to read the poem you submitted for your final anatomy project. Anatomy inevitably turns one's thoughts to matters of life and death, and in this context, the symbol of the phoenix seems particularly relevant. I agree with you that it is a healing image that encourages us to hope for renewal and rebirth. How the "phoenix" manifests itself in the cycles of health and illness, life and death is something you'll be exploring throughout the course of your life as a physician. I am sure you will find many ways to "return the favor." Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 2:36 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

[REDACTED] thank you for sharing this powerful poem. I don't know if it has any direct connections to anatomy; if it does, they eluded me, except that anatomy can certainly produce fear and trembling in students! I read it as a poem about fear, perhaps to the point of a panic attack. Many years ago, I experienced a panic attack driving on the freeway with my two little daughters, and it was very similar to what you describe. The first person present voice makes the experiences of the narrator vivid and involving. I walk down that stree with you, and I feel the thunder, the shaking, the heavy shadows, the powerlessness... the fear. Your writing conveys the experience of overwhelming terror in a convincing and empathetic manner. Thank you for taking the risk to write so genuinely and authentically. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 2:24 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]ert
Subject: final natomy creative project

Dear [REDACTED], what a great parable! I was totally caught up in this story. I really wanted to find out if the little girl would find her answers, would she survive the forest, what would happen at the fountain, were the surrounding people friendly or hostile. This, you see, is the power of narrative, it draws us close to the story and the story-teller. Your story could be about anatomy, of course, but I read it broadly, perhaps about the process of becoming a physician, and more broadly still, certainly about life itself. I will cherish the last line of this story - this is exactly how I would like to feel about my life every day (doesn't always happen, but change, brightness, richness, and yes, answers, are there if, like your little girl, we have the courage to venture forth and find them). I enjoyed this very much. Thank you for the opportunity to read it. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 1:55 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Hi [REDACTED]. This final poem is a lovely acknowledgment of all that your cadaver taught you - and with a rhyme scheme to boot! It makes a fine end-piece to your anatomy experience. Your initial poem was full of so many questions directed toward your cadaver, trying "to know a stranger," and in this writing I believe you have found some answers. I appreciated the opportunity to read your creative work. Thank you, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 1:30 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

You know, [REDACTED], many people make the point that your cadaver is your "first patient." Others talk about the cadaver as a teacher. But in this final essay you take these ideas one step further, implying that your cadaver is your role-model! This is a really good insight. Just as your cadaver has given selflessly of himself (I know your cadaver was a "he" because I remember the mermaid tattoo you wrote about in your first poem), so you too as a physician will be required to reach deep into your soul and give selflessly. Like your cadaver, you will not always receive gratitude and appreciation in return from your patients (although many, many times you will). It occurs to me that, for the donor, the act of giving must be sufficient in and of itself. I suspect that, at the end of his life, your cadaver felt gratefulness that there was still some good he could do. Similarly, physicians should strive to maintain an attitude of gratefulness for the opportunity to practice their craft, although often this isn't easy. Maybe you should post this essay on your refrigerator as a reminder of the "solemn promise" you've made, even when you are sleep-deprived, have too many patients and can't find their labs, and your R2 is yelling at you... :-) Thank you for the opportunity to read this heartfelt essay. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

[REDACTED] (“The Passage” – poem)

Hi [REDACTED]. For me, this poem really captured the strange, but real connections between student and cadaver, first based on the contrast between stillness and motion, then woven inextricably by your imaginings about the journey of her life. By seeing yourself poised at the start of your own journey into medicine and healing, you link your life and your path with hers. I hope over the next 3 years you will find many ways to keep that sense of connectedness with your patients.

[REDACTED] (“Rap Poem”)

I don’t know much about rap, but I did like the edgy, cynical, sometimes confrontational tone you achieved. It’s easy to fall into saccharine sappiness writing about dead people, and you avoided that trap. Instead, you seem locked in a struggle with your cadaver, in which quite unexpectedly and miraculously resolves, albeit faintly (“dimkest of lights”). Thanks for this good work.

[REDACTED] (“From Fear to Honor” – poem)

What a nice tribute to your mother. So many people teach us so much along our ways, it’s nice to express our gratitude occasionally. And I really liked your use of near-rhymes, whether intentional or not. Their slight “offness” prevented your poem from being too treacly, and conveyed to me some sense that everything in life, as in anatomy lab, eventually fits, but not too neatly.

[REDACTED] (“The Voice of the Cadaver” – poem)

[REDACTED], this is a really good example of point-of-view writing. By imagining not only the life, but the voice, of your cadaver, you bring her to life. I like the role-reversal you create: the dead woman encouraging her student-physician to be bold and brave and reassuring her about the outcome. I hope you can remember that, although you are the one training to be a healer, the doctor-patient relationship has many reciprocal aspects, and often patients (just as you imagined with your cadaver) can help heal their doctors if they are allowed to do so.

[REDACTED] (“A Story” – poem)

You create a wonderfully strong, generous, and life-affirming picture of your cadaver. I loved the image of this woman in death raising her arms like a lover, like a mother, to welcome the naïve and fearful students who have come to learn from her body. It was very comforting to read and – I imagine – to write.

[REDACTED] (“A Sound Within” – poem)

This poem boldly explores the potential intimacy between cadaver and student. Students often see the end of the cadaver’s life as the beginning of their own journey into medicine, but your poem frames the encounter as very much a joint pilgrimage. It is typical to deal with suffering and death through detachment and withdrawal. But when you do so, as you rightly intuit, you lose your opportunity to “dance among the stars.”

[REDACTED] (“Please!” – poem)

You found a good, consistent voice for this poem. I can really see this guy – a rough and tough smoker who isn't above a little profanity, a no-nonsense, down-to-earth straight shooter who wants the same in return. I hope his encouragement helped!

[REDACTED] ("Lesson 1" – poem)

Hi [REDACTED]. Thank you for this skillfully written and moving poem. It is a fine meditation on the relationship between science and humanism, and all the distancing mechanisms we use to push away death and its handmaidens. And you're right, it's easier to think about pathology than pain, less threatening to memorize the anatomy than contemplate the effects of chemo. If the first (and perhaps necessary) lesson is to "stare down" death, then perhaps succeeding lessons need to help us "recognize" death, not only as the enemy, but as an old acquaintance.

[REDACTED] ("Crisscross Thoughts" - poem)

I agree, dissecting dead bodies does produce "criss-cross" thoughts – and emotions (great term, by the way!). It is humorous, and inspiring, and repellent, and noble – also anxiety-producing, uplifting, and boring. You pick up some nice ironies – a body filled with organs that no longer work, students engaging in behavior that in any other context would be criminal, learning that is dependent on death. Life is pretty strange. Thanks for sharing your thoughts.

[REDACTED] ("Rage" – poem)

Nice shades of Dylan Thomas in this poem. This is a very creative insight – that the altruistic donation of one's body to medical science may be rooted in rage as much as in generosity. Interesting thought. It doesn't take away from the selflessness of this final act, but it does hint at the complexity of human motivation. It also suggests that negative emotions, such as anger, can be transmuted into great goodness if they are worked with carefully. A good lesson to keep in mind as your medical training progresses!

[REDACTED] ("To Know a Stranger" – poem)

I liked all the questions you directed at your cadaver. I hope you can keep this attitude of respectful and compassionate curiosity in the presence of living patients, who will be able to answer your questions if you show an interest.

[REDACTED] ("Revelations on Death" – poem)

Your meditation on the nature of life and death reminds me of the epigrammatic tale, in which Chuang-tse, a great Buddhist sage, wonders upon seeing a butterfly: "Am I Chuang-tse, or I am the butterfly, dreaming I am Chuang-tse?" I think it's never a bad idea to keep a flexible attitude toward the fundamental mysteries of the universe. As a physician, steeped in the latest scientific knowledge, it's easy to conclude you understand everything, but often the more we know, the less we understand. Keep up your philosophical ponderings!

[REDACTED] ("I am about to meet..." – poem)

In this lovely poem you take the risk of exploring all the connections you have with this unknown cadaver – woman, grandmother, mother, self. It is all too easy to do the opposite, focusing on all the differences between us and the sick, suffering patient. Empathy, the ability to see other as self, can be scary because it makes us realize that not only could we be "them," but that in some ways we are already "them." It can also be

incredibly humanizing. Good for you for venturing into this dangerous but rewarding territory.

[REDACTED] (“A gift in life and in death...” poem)

This thoughtful address emphasizes that your cadaver may teach you more than information, more than knowledge, in fact has a profound wisdom to convey if you look deeply into those sightless eyes.

[REDACTED] (“A Moment in Life” – poem)

[REDACTED], I liked the double entendre of your title. This poem describes a moment in life, as you contemplate the body of your cadaver, but it also reminds us that we only have a moment in life, before we vacate the premises to “live elsewhere. Your poem reminds me of the inextricable intertwining of body, mind, and soul that makes up a human being. What a mystery!

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 1:14 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project-----

You know, [REDACTED], I really appreciated your essay, it was a nice departure from the more normative projects on cadaver as patient, life and death etc. Despite your protestations, I think any time we really learn something about ourselves, it can be pretty "earth-shattering." You learned that you are not always the best, that entrenched habits are hard to break, and that it's easy to forget important things. If you don't beat yourself up too badly for not being a perfect person, you'll see that these are great lessons to learn about oneself, and truly be grateful to anatomy for providing the vehicle that brought them to your awareness. Knowing these things about yourself will make you more empathetic when you encounter patients who are not always good at what you tell them to do, have habits that are hard to change, and don't remember what medications they're taking or even what diseases they have! I think all truly good doctors continue to learn things from their patients - not only about the patients, but about themselves. This reminds us that at its best, the practice of medicine is not a one-way street, but a highly interactive process. Thanks for such an honest self-reflection. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

P.S. Since you are the only student I know who participated in the closing ceremony string quartet, I wanted to share how beautifully moving and evocative the music was that evening. Please convey to the other members my gratitude for a listening experience that opened my heart. Dr. S

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 12:51 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Hi [REDACTED]. Your essay expresses so well an essential tension in medicine - what the internist and SUNY professor Jack Coulehan calls the balance between "tenderness" and "steadiness" (the latter term, by the way, may serve better than "distance" and "detachment"). You never want to stop feeling ("Cut with love," the Yale surgeon Richard Selzer once advised), but you want not to be overwhelmed by your emotions so that you will cut with a steady hand. You learned two great lessons in anatomy (plus all the anatomy you learned): how to develop meaningful connections with colleagues through a process of mutual trust and honesty; and how to "rehumanize" a patient by paying to attention to just one small personal detail. I hope you don't forget these insights - they will help you keep the balance to which you aspire. The best line in your essay for me was your realization that your patient's "humanity - though she was dead - was still alive." If you can keep that thought before you with every patient - even when they are angry, demanding, complaining, or comatose -you will have no difficulty maintaining your empathy. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to read this thoughtful essay. Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 12:51 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Hi [REDACTED]. Your essay expresses so well an essential tension in medicine - what the internist and SUNY professor Jack Coulehan calls the balance between "tenderness" and "steadiness" (the latter term, by the way, may serve better than "distance" and "detachment"). You never want to stop feeling ("Cut with love," the Yale surgeon Richard Selzer once advised), but you want not to be overwhelmed by your emotions so that you will cut with a steady hand. You learned two great lessons in anatomy (plus all the anatomy you learned): how to develop meaningful connections with colleagues through a process of mutual trust and honesty; and how to "rehumanize" a patient by paying to attention to just one small personal detail. I hope you don't forget these insights - they will help you keep the balance to which you aspire. The best line in your essay for me was your realization that your patient's "humanity - though she was dead - was still alive." If you can keep that thought before you with every patient - even when they are angry, demanding, complaining, or comatose -you will have no difficulty maintaining your empathy. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to read this thoughtful essay. Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 12:36 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Hi [REDACTED] I LOVE the tone you create in your poetry - casually conversational, ironic and slightly self-deprecating, yet conveying such profound thoughts and feelings. This is also a carefully constructed poem, working the themes of reflection and passing with a slightly different implication in each stanza. The metonymic recurrence of "face" for the way we construct and maintain identity I also really liked. You are well on your way toward becoming a physician-poet, so I suggest you hang on to your hat and enjoy the ride! Excellent, compelling writing. I look forward to working with you on Plexus next year. In the meantime, enjoy your summer and keep writing. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 12:24 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

[REDACTED], the title of your poem sent me running to my closest available colleague, but once I discovered its meaning, this poem came together for me. Linkages, connections, the sacred cycle - as I read your poem, these things comprise the subject of your reflections. One thing leads inextricably, miraculously to another, from the cut that allows you to look inside to the healing power that medicine contains. The repetition of last word and first word is great - it produces a rhythmic quality, as well as a building, a sense that all this is leading somewhere worthwhile. Comparing this work to your original poem, I can see that you have a philosophical bent, and care about the interconnected meaning of things. I hope throughout medical school you continue to ponder and question. Regards,
Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 11:33 PM
To: [REDACTED] a
Cc: [REDACTED] bert
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Another touching poem, [REDACTED]. It is so simple and heartfelt, and the last line gives it the quality of a prayer. The image of you sitting quietly by your cadaver was lovely, and evoked the physician sitting by the bedside of the patient, when no more action can be taken, and all that can be offered is human comfort. Not only was the cadaver changed by anatomy (as you put it, "mangled"), but you were changed as well. And somehow, despite the "mangling," I think neither would regret the experience. Thanks for this poem. Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 11:32 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Hi [REDACTED]. In this final project, you continue your musings on the nature of life and death that you began in your first poem. Here, I sense you are also wrestling not only with philosophical speculation, but also with a tangible and difficult event. Life can, and does, change in an instant, and sometimes very painfully. But I think we often have the capacity to wrest good out of evil, and meaning out of suffering. I hope that out of whatever it is that is distressing you come some good and some hope.
Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 11:31 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]ert
Subject: final anatomy creative project

[REDACTED] I enjoyed the poem you wrote for your final anatomy project. It had a kind of picaresque quality to it, a kind of poetic coming of age. The person you were at the start of gross anatomy was very different than the person who reached the end of the course. I'm glad that you developed such meaningful relationships with your classmates, your professors, your cadaver, and even Netter. That bodes very well for your future as a caring clinician. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

6/6/2003

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 11:29 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Hi [REDACTED]. I had the opportunity to read the lyrics to your adaptation of "The End of Innocence" (I wish I knew the original, sorry! I do remember your first project was a rap song, but this seems a somewhat different genre, right?). In any case, this work beautifully summarizes a central theme of medical education, i.e., a loss of innocence. I've heard time and again that becoming a doctor changes you fundamentally, in ways both good and (sometimes) bad. We often resist change, yet change is the one constant in life. So, as your lyrics suggest, perhaps the best any of us can do is recognize what we want to save (perhaps "the soft heart in each of us") and decide what we will substitute for innocence. I liked this work a lot. Dr. Shapiro

6/6/2003

what a bitter contrast to the loving, comforting image of the cadaver welcoming her fearful students that you portrayed in your first poem. This time you chose to focus on the physical brutality and occasional insensitivity that are inevitable parts of the anatomy experience. This poem is so much more anguished than the first. Here you provide no answers, no comfort, but instead confront the cadaver with the worst of your actions, and then demand her response in a series of questions almost pitiless in their honesty. You seem to be saying, enough pretense and platitudes about cadavers as teachers, guides, and first patients. The reality is infinitely more savage. This poem struck me as a very authentic cry, addressed directly to your cadaver, seeking reconciliation on the other side of gross anatomy. I know this poem does not represent the sum total of your feelings about anatomy, but it certainly represents a passionate emotion, and I'm glad you were able to express it baldly and without reservation. Not all experiences, and especially not all experiences in medicine, have easy answers. Thank you for risking such powerful writing. Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 8:49 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: final anatomy creative project

[REDACTED], mine is only one perspective, but in my opinion the answer to your queries is oh my gosh, no, your poem is in no way disrespectful, nor does it reflect poorly on the anatomy program. In my view, just the contrary on both scores. It is too simplistic to think that the anatomy experience only engenders feelings of gratitude, appreciation, and delight. There is a dark side to anatomy, both because of what it shows us about the human body and what it shows us about ourselves. Where can this be explored, except through poetry and creative work? By addressing the patient directly, your poem shows great respect for her humanity. I imagine that your fellow students, as well as others who have lived through anatomy, will read your poem and say, "Thank goodness someone had the courage to express these emotions as well." You did great work, don't feel badly about it. Thanks for asking, Dr. Shapiro

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
To: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: 6/5/2003 12:22 AM
Subject: RE: final anatomy creative project

Hi Johanna,

Thanks for the great feedback, you definitely understood my intent in writing this piece. Before sending this in, I was very worried that whoever read it wouldn't understand that this poem was the expression of only a single aspect of anatomy, albeit an aspect that had been haunting me as the class came to a close. Anyhow, our class is displaying the humanities projects in Tamkin and I was wondering if you thought my poem might be misinterpreted as being disrespectful or reflect poorly on the anatomy program if it were displayed. Please let me know what you think. Thanks!

- [REDACTED] I

-----Original Message-----

From: Shapiro, Johanna
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Sent: 6/4/2003 10:58 PM
Subject: final anatomy creative project

[REDACTED] what a bitter contrast to the loving, comforting image of the cadaver welcoming her fearful students that you portrayed in your first poem. This time you chose to focus on the physical brutality and occasional insensitivity that are inevitable parts of the anatomy experience. This poem is so much more anguished than the first. Here you provide no answers, no comfort, but instead confront the cadaver with the worst of your actions, and then demand her response in a series of questions almost pitiless in their honesty. You seem to be saying, enough pretense and platitudes about cadavers as teachers, guides, and first patients. The reality is infinitely more savage. This poem struck me as a very authentic cry, addressed directly to your cadaver, seeking reconciliation on the other side of gross anatomy. I know this poem does not represent the sum total of your feelings about anatomy, but it certainly represents a passionate emotion, and I'm glad you were able to express it baldly and without resolution. Not all experiences, and especially not all experiences in medicine, have easy answers. Thank you for risking such powerful writing. Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. Boy, am I happy you came to medical school at UCI. It's been such a pleasure to have you in the literature and medicine selective, and to watch your burgeoning talents as a poet. "Final Call" is a terrific take-off (it's not really a parody, because the approach is too serious) of Hamlet's famous soliloquy. It's so appropriate and works so well because both narrators wrestle with indecision. Your linguistic and thematic parallels are absolutely pitch-perfect. What an inspired idea and flawlessly executed! I am really impressed! I think you should submit this for publication somewhere. Thanks for sharing, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. Nice to "hear" from you again, if only through the medium of the anatomy project. This was a very imaginative piece of writing. There is something so poignant about the image of the cadaver's spirit haunting the bedroom of his anatomy student, still trying to comfort and reassure her. And ironically being chased away by a protective husband/lover. You express a really deep thought in the idea that both cadaver and student are "called" to their "professions." A good cadaver should be able to establish a connection with his student just as a good physician should be able to do the same toward her patients. What happens with the cadaver is prescient. Often, while meaning to do good, the physician evokes a response of fear and threat in the patient, who lashes out. Yet, as your cadaver counsels, ultimately it is about the connection, imperfect as it may be, and the tears which symbolize that connection. Thanks for this intriguing work.

Regards, Dr. Shapiro

You know, [REDACTED], it's very interesting that your two poems, an anatomy course apart, to me have a similar flavor. I was struck very forcibly in your first poem by the way you considered the intimacies that lie between cadaver and student. In "Five Times," you return to this theme of closeness and connection. I read the poem as a kind of dialogue between cadaver and student that emphasizes the coming together "in rapture," a kind of transcendent exchange of wisdom, strength, and truth. Even the eventual separation promise ultimate connection "ahead." I found this to be a rich meditation on encounters "of the third kind" in anatomy lab. Thanks for sharing.
Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I had a chance to read your anatomy project, which I very much liked. The repetitive question, "Who are you?" resonates with increasing meaning as the poem develops. And the excavation of the body by eager anatomy students can yield only certain answers. Ultimately, the metaphors of journeying, changing, cycling, returning until identity dissolves into freedom provide the true meaning of the poem. This is a very spiritual and philosophical poem which I found both moving and comforting. Thank you for reaching deep to write it. I'm very glad I got to know you a little bit over the year, and hope to see you next year. Take good care, and enjoy your summer!

Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2003 5:24 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: anatomy creative project part 1

Hi [REDACTED]. You put together a very cool poster – it made me smile, but it also made me think. You create a lovely visual metaphor for the world, helping us to think of it as a living, breathing organism. What's especially innovative about your approach is that you don't restrict yourself to the natural world; indeed, your focus is more on human-contrived institutions – freeways, machines, microchip boards, social institutions like the police and the FBI. Yet these too must somehow function together in a way that doesn't destroy the organism as a whole. Hard to do as a person, and perhaps even harder to do as a society. Thanks for this creative effort. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

12/15/2003

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2003 2:10 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: final anatomy creative project

Hi [REDACTED]. I'm glad I got to read your final project for anatomy. It was a really creative idea to turn around and write a letter to the upcoming class. I wonder if, with your permission, Dr. [REDACTED] might want to consider actually sharing this with incoming MS1s. It has a lot of wisdom to share and does so in a highly palatable manner. Your analogy of visiting a foreign country is quite apropos, and in fact, many medical anthropologists (and patients) have used the same metaphor to describe the patient's experience of illness. Plus, how nice of you to provide a travel guide! - Anatomy on \$10 a Day (probably in cleaning costs) or maybe Down and Out in Anatomy ("Down and Out in Paris and London" by George Orwell).

I loved your conceptualization of anatomy lectures as the foundation for the journey, but "not the journey itself." This seems to me a great insight that shapes appropriate expectations for what the lectures can and cannot provide. And your analogy of the cadaver to a "hastily deserted city" is unexpectedly beautiful (you could compose a poem around this image!). All in all, this was a really neat project, both informative and reassuring. Thanks for the chance to read it. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. It was nice to see you tackling a poem this time around. It was also interesting that in your first essay, you focused a lot on your own thoughts, sensations, and emotions. Now, with experience, you reflected on the care you had shown "Mrs. B" over the course of anatomy lab. Documenting the details of that care – "eyes...body... lungs... heart... rib cage... bodies supine..." was powerful reading for a non-anatomist, and created vivid images of you in relationship to your cadaver. I liked the way you explored issues of soul and body, and particularly the way you dissected the phrase "just a body." It seems to me that, even when the soul has departed, because of what the body symbolizes more than what it (biochemically and physiologically) is, it should always be treated with the utmost caring and concern. I loved the line in the first stanza when you wrote "I am always careful... just in case." I think for every harried, annoyed, impatient physician, this would be a very good motto indeed. It was fun having dinner last night. Good luck with your research, and take time to enjoy the summer! Regards, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED] I liked the subtle irony in this poem ("don't we look professional?"; "not a single complaint"). In comparing it to your first poem (Lesson 1), I could see the growth in your self-confidence and expertise, as well as the implied doubt as to how well these qualities will generalize to flesh-and-blood patients. You write very beautifully, and your poem almost eerily evokes the strange bonds that form between cadaver and student. Thank you for the opportunity to read this work. Regards, Dr. Shapiro

█ I'm a big fan of haiku, so thanks for experimenting with this form. It's surprisingly hard to say a lot in a little, but you did it very well. I especially liked "Gratitude," which as I read it was full of meanings – the student's gratitude toward the cadaver, the patients' gratitude that their future doctor had a cadaver to learn on, and perhaps their gratitude that he wasn't learning on THEM! In reviewing the poem your first submitted ("My Teacher") I was struck by the way you continue to link donor, student, and (future) patients. The ability to perceive this kind of interconnectedness is an important skill in humane doctoring. Thanks for allowing me to review your work. Dr. Shapiro

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2003 5:10 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: anatomy creative project part 1

Hi [REDACTED]. I'm glad you decided to participate in the Anatomy Creative Projects option. And your project *was* creative! To me, the hand and the heart are perhaps the two parts of the body most emotionally fraught with symbolism. Hands are our extenders – they make, do, cook, type, play music, paint, sculpt, stroke, hug, caress, and yes strike and shake. So much of who we are is expressed through the hands. And as for the heart, it also spans the gamut of human emotion – love, courage, sorrow, rage, jealousy. Lying in your shoebox, inanimate, they reminded me how all the anatomy in the world can never reveal their mystery. Thanks for sharing this work.
Dr. Shapiro

12/15/2003

Shapiro, Johanna

From: Shapiro, Johanna
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2003 5:16 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: anatomy creative project part 1

[REDACTED] what a completely cool figure you constructed. It is somehow quite light and playful, for all its "skeletal" quality. And it contains a beautifully rendered lung. Might this suggest the importance of breath, as in the "breath of life"? And I very much liked what you wrote about the lung changing your life by transforming from "his" lung and "the cadaver's" lung to a "shared" lung. It's a wonderful insight that, in some ways, you must learn to let your patients in, to allow them to become a part of you. That process changes you, changes them, and makes for the art of doctoring. Thanks for such a creative effort! Regards, Dr. Shapiro

12/15/2003