

Nonfiction for CP (Second Edition)

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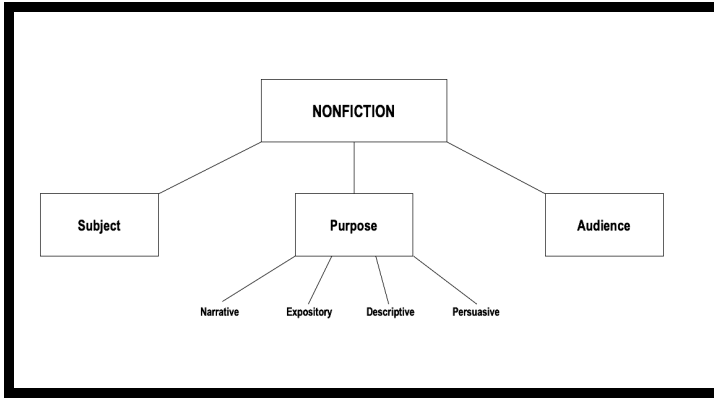
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What Is Nonfiction?

There are two main categories of prose¹ writing: fiction and nonfiction. Fiction is writing that is not true—it is made up. Fairy tales, short stories, and novels are examples of fiction.



Nonfiction is all prose writing that is not "made up" or imaginary. There are many different genres of nonfiction writing. A few of the more common genres are biography, news articles, history, essays, and speeches.

Writers of nonfiction write for a variety of purposes. They write to give information, to explain, or to express an opinion or argument. However, all nonfiction writers are guided by three things as they write: their subject, their purpose, and their audience. The subject is the specific topic about which the author is writing. The purpose might be, for example, to entertain, inform, or persuade. The audience is the type of reader for whom the work is intended. Many nonfiction works are written for experts, while others are meant for casual readers. Authors select information and write in a way that will suit their subjects, achieve their purposes, and be understood by their audiences.

The four most common reasons for writing nonfiction are narrative, expository, descriptive, and persuasive. Narration tells true stories. Description creates a picture of its subject in words. Exposition presents facts or explains ideas. And persuasion tries to convince readers to accept an opinion or take action.

¹ written or spoken language in its ordinary form, without metrical structure; in other words, writing that isn't poetry

At its best, a truly literary work of nonfiction creates a total effect that enlightens, entertains, and inspires. As you read the selections in this textbook, decide how effectively each piece is able to achieve these lofty goals.

Literary Focus: Strategies for Reading Nonfiction

There are a number of things you can do to increase your enjoyment and comprehension of nonfiction.

1. Preview the selection. Look at the title, pictures, diagrams, subtitles, and any words or terms in boldfaced or italic type. All of these will give you an idea of what the selection is about.
2. Figure out the organization – If the work is a biography or autobiography, the organization is probably chronological (in the order in which things happen). Other selections might be organized differently, such as by topic.
3. Separate facts and opinions.
4. Question as you read. Ask yourself, “Why did things happen the way they did? How did the people in the selection feel? What is the writer’s opinion? Do I share the writer’s opinion, or do I have different ideas on the subject?” Some questions are provided in the “Study Questions” section after each selection.
5. During your reading, stop now and then and try to predict what will come next.
6. As you read, build on your understanding. Add new information to what you have already learned and see if your ideas and opinions change.
7. Continually evaluate what you read. Evaluation should be an ongoing process. Remember that evaluation means more than saying a selection is good or bad. Form opinions about people, events, and ideas that are presented. Decide whether or not you like the way the information is presented.
8. Determine if the writer is showing any bias (prejudice in favor of or against the subject, usually in a way considered to be unfair). Decide if the writer can be trusted to provide you with reliable information.
9. Determine the author’s purpose in writing the selection. What is his or her overall aim or objective? What is his or her thesis statement?

Shark Attack!

by Henry and Melissa Billings

A shark attack is an attack on a human by a shark. Every year, around 80 unprovoked attacks are reported worldwide. Despite their rarity, many people fear shark attacks after occasional serial attacks, such as the Jersey Shore shark attacks of 1916, and horror fiction and films such as the Jaws series. Out of more than 489 shark species, only three are responsible for a double-digit number of fatal, unprovoked attacks on humans: the great white, tiger, and bull. This article takes readers inside the phenomena of shark attacks. As you read, decide whether the facts as presented fill you with fear or make you more curious about sharks. (First published 1996)

Eight-year-old Doug Lawton splashed happily in the water near Sarasota, Florida. He and his twelve-year-old brother were having a great time. Mr. and Mrs. Lawton smiled at them from the beach. The boys were not out very far. They were only ten feet from shore. The water was shallow. Everything looked perfectly safe. No one knew that at that moment, a shark was heading right for Doug. At about 4:10 P.M. on July 27, 1958, it struck. It opened its jaws and sank its teeth into Doug's left leg.

Terrified, Doug's brother grabbed Doug. He pulled him toward shore and dragged him out of the murky water. The five-foot shark still clung stubbornly to Doug's leg. Mr. Lawton raced to the water's edge. He grabbed the shark's tail, trying frantically to pull the creature off his son. Doug's uncle ran to help, too. He hung on to Doug's shoulders so the boy wouldn't get pulled back into the water. After a few moments of complete terror, the Lawtons saw the shark open its jaws. It flopped back into the water. Then it swam silently away.

Doug Lawton lost his leg as a result of this attack. Doctors had to cut off the mangled limb in order to save his life. Still, Doug was lucky. He lived through his encounter with a shark. Hundreds of others have not been so lucky.

Take the case of fifteen-year-old Billy Weaver. He and four buddies were surfing off the coast of Hawaii in 1959. As a big wave rolled in, Billy's friends "caught" it. They got their surfboards on top of the wave and rode it in toward shore. Billy, however, missed the wave. When his friends looked back, they saw that something had happened. Billy was in trouble. They swam back to him as

fast as they could. But by then, a shark had come up out of nowhere and bitten one of Billy's legs completely off.

The boys tried to get Billy to shore. But the shark was still lurking in the waters. When the boys saw it gliding toward them, they left Billy's side and swam like crazy for shore. All four of them made it to safety. But Billy did not. His torn, lifeless body was later found floating among the waves.

What caused sharks to attack Doug Lawton and Billy Weaver? We will probably never know. We can't even be sure what kinds of sharks they were. Many types are known to attack human beings. Some of the deadliest are great white sharks, tiger sharks, and bull sharks. But all sharks can be dangerous. And in most attacks, the type of shark is never even determined. Most victims don't take the time to figure out exactly what kind of shark is trying to kill them!

For years, experts have looked for ways to prevent shark attacks. But sharks don't make it easy. They follow no set pattern. Sometimes they strike at night, sometimes in midday. They may attack in water that is deep or shallow, cool or warm, rough or calm. Sharks live in many different places. Shark attacks have been reported everywhere from New Jersey to South Africa to Japan.

In the 1940s experts found that most sharks stay away from the rotting flesh of other sharks. But no one brings rotting shark meat along during a day at the beach. So experts looked for something else. They came up with a chemical they called Shark Chaser. When dumped into the water, it was supposed to drive sharks away. Soon packets of Shark Chaser were being tucked into all U.S. Navy life jackets. But the stuff didn't work. Sharks just swam right through the chemical.

More recently, people have put giant nets around some beaches. These keep most—but not all—sharks out. Some beaches use a "bubble curtain." Air bubbles are blown into the water. That creates a "curtain" that many sharks won't pass through. The problem is, of course, that some sharks will pass through the curtain. And so the search for a way to prevent shark attacks goes on.

In the meantime, some experts say that swimming all alone makes you a prime target for sharks. Most attacks come when a person is in the water alone or has broken off from a group. But having others around did not help Albert Kogler. He was swimming at Baker's Beach in San Francisco, California, in 1959. There were dozens of people there that day. Kogler did not go very far out. He

was just fifty yards from shore. A friend was swimming right next to him. Suddenly a shark bit Kogler. It ripped through his shoulder and left huge cuts across his chest. Kogler's friend managed to get him out of the water. But Kogler died a few hours later.

Other experts warn that sharks might be drawn to light-colored objects. But twenty-four-year-old Graham Hitt was wearing a black wet suit when he was attacked. Hitt and some friends were skin diving in New Zealand in 1968. Without warning, a fourteen-foot great white shark grabbed Hitt in its jaws. It shook him once, then released him and swam off. But the damage was done. That one bite had cut Hitt's left leg to the bone. Blood spewed out into the water. Hitt was dead by the time rescuers got him to shore.

One thing does seem certain. Sharks are attracted to noise and motion. They have keen hearing and pretty good eyesight. So if you think sharks might be nearby, do not scream or splash about. A family from Texas met tragedy by doing this. The family's boat sank in the Gulf of Mexico. As they waited to be rescued, they sang songs to lift their spirits. They also splashed in the water to keep sea gulls away. It wasn't long before sharks arrived. Three of the family members were attacked. One—a ten-year-old boy—died from his wounds.

Believe it or not, the helicopter sent to rescue this poor family might have made things worse for them. Research shows that sharks move toward low tones. Helicopters make low tones. So the whine of a helicopter can actually draw sharks to a rescue site.

In the end, there's really only one way to be sure a shark doesn't get you. And that, of course, is to stay out of the water. Some shark attack victims, however, refuse to take that recourse. One such individual is surfer Bethany Hamilton.

On October 31, 2003, Hamilton, aged 13 at the time, went for a morning surf along Tunnels Beach, Kauai, with her best friend Alana Blanchard and Alana's father and brothers, when a 14-foot-long tiger shark attacked her, severing her left arm just below the shoulder. The Blanchards helped paddle her back to shore. Alana's father fashioned a tourniquet out of a rash guard and wrapped it around the stump of her arm. By the time she arrived at the hospital she had lost over 60% of her blood and was in

hypovolemic shock². A doctor living in a hotel nearby raced to the rescue.

As Bethany fought for her life, a family of fishermen caught and killed a 14-foot-long tiger shark about one mile from the attack site. When measurements of its mouth were compared with those of Hamilton's broken board, it matched. The police officially confirmed that it was the same shark that had attacked her.

Despite the trauma of the incident, Bethany was determined to return to surfing. After adopting a custom-made board and teaching herself to surf with one arm, she returned to surfing on November 26, 2003, just 26 days after the attack. Bethany wrote about her experience in the 2004 autobiography *Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board*.

For many, shark attacks are a source of fear. For others, they are a source of curiosity. Whatever the case, it is certain that shark attacks, even though rare, will continue to occur into the foreseeable future.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. How was Doug Lawton injured by a shark?
3. What happened to Billy Weaver?
4. Why is it difficult for experts to implement ways to prevent shark attacks?
5. What is a “bubble curtain”? Why is it ineffective?
6. What happened to Albert Kogler?
7. What was Graham Hitt wearing at the time of his attack? Why is this relevant?
8. Why might a rescue helicopter make things worse during a shark attack?
9. What happened to Bethany Hamilton? How did she respond to it?

Literary Focus: Subject

In nonfiction, the **subject** is the specific topic about which the author is writing. Nonfiction writers may take an **objective** approach to their subjects, limiting their writing to a creative arrangement and presentation of the facts. Often, however, they take a **subjective** approach, giving us more than just the facts. They choose, organize, and interpret these facts in a certain way, and thus they

² a life-threatening condition that results when you lose more than 20% of your body's blood or fluid supply; this severe fluid loss makes it impossible for the heart to pump a sufficient amount of blood to your body

frequently reveal their own opinions about their subjects. Sometimes they also reveal their own personalities and ways of looking at the world.

Two pieces of nonfiction about the same subject will be different because each writer has selected, organized, and interpreted the facts in a unique way. For example, two writers describing the same baseball game may write very different pieces of nonfiction. One writer may write a serious, detailed study of the game for people who know a great deal about baseball, while the other may write a humorous account to be read by people who know nothing about the game. These accounts of the same subject will differ largely because each author writes for a different purpose and audience, two concepts that will be explored in later chapters of this textbook.

Question: What is the subject of the selection? Why might the writer have selected this particular subject? Did the writer take an objective or subjective approach to his subject? How might the writer's approach to the subject differ from another author's?

222-0: The Worst Blowout in College Football History

by Lucas Reilly

The 1916 Cumberland vs. Georgia Tech football game was an American football game played on October 7, 1916, between the Georgia Tech Engineers and the Cumberland College Bulldogs at Grant Field (now known as Bobby Dodd Stadium) in Atlanta, Georgia. The game became the most lopsided in the history of college football, as Georgia Tech was victorious 222–0. Quite simply, it is the biggest beatdown in the history of college football. Read all about it in this essay by writer Lucas Reilly and ask yourself what it might have felt like to have been part of such a debacle – as both the winner and the loser! (First published 2018)

College football fans are no strangers to blowouts. A few years ago, Missouri pummeled Delaware State, 79-0; Michigan smothered Rutgers, 78-0; Miami slugged Florida A&M, 70-3. But those games sound like gentle drubbings compared to the lopsided 1916 skirmish between Georgia Tech and Cumberland University, which ended 222-0.

If that score sounds spiteful, it was. Georgia Tech's coach, John Heisman—for whom the coveted trophy is named—was reportedly bent on revenge. A year earlier, during the spring of 1915, Cumberland's baseball club had recruited a handful of semi-professional ballplayers from Nashville and disguised them as college athletes. Boasting a lineup stacked with pros, the little Tennessee college creamed Georgia Tech's ball club, 22-0.

The defeat garnered national attention, leaving Heisman, who coached both Georgia Tech's baseball and football teams, humiliated. When he discovered that Cumberland had cheated, he vowed to get payback.

Oddly, Heisman nearly missed his chance. By 1916, Cumberland, a university out of Lebanon, Tennessee, a small town about 30 minutes outside of Nashville, was facing financial difficulties and as such canceled that year's season of football. The football squad's student manager notified its opponents that, since it would not be fielding a team that season, Cumberland would have to cancel all scheduled games. But Cumberland made a careless mistake—they forgot to brief Georgia Tech. When Cumberland discovered the error, it was too late: They were contractually obligated to play, football team or no football team.

Tasting blood, Heisman wrote Cumberland's football manager a pointed letter to ensure he wouldn't flake: "I hereby offer you the sum of \$500 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Atlanta for your football team on the condition that you honor your contract by participating in and completing the Cumberland-Georgia Tech football game." The offer was freighted with a legal threat: If Cumberland didn't play, Georgia Tech would charge a \$3000 forfeiture fee. The expense "would have been a severe blow to Cumberland," says Sam Hatcher, author of Heisman's First Trophy, in an interview with *The Tennessean*, "and probably would have closed the school, if you want to know the truth."

Cumberland agreed to play. The old football manager assembled a team of at least 13 players (some sources say up to 19), consisting of fraternity brothers, law students, and boys from town. To avoid getting caught by university administrators — who were unaware of Heisman's ultimatum — the team covered up their practice sessions by calling them "men's choir meetings."

Most of the volunteers had no knowledge of, or experience playing, football. "I played once in high school and once in prep school," Cumberland's Gentry Dugat admitted to *Sports Illustrated* in 1961. He wasn't that interested in playing football anyway. He had signed up because he'd never ridden a passenger train before; it was basically a free vacation.

As Cumberland practiced, no one bothered to cook up trick plays or study the Xs and Os of fundamental football. Instead, coaches assigned each player a code name that corresponded with a specific vegetable. When the offense took to the line of scrimmage, the quarterback called plays by hollering the names of different crudités. "Plays sounded like this: 'Turnip over lettuce. Hut one, hut two...'" reported Jay Searcy of the *Chicago Tribune*. "Cucumber to cauliflower. Hut one, hut two..."

The week before the big game, Cumberland's rag-tag team tested their strategy in a meaningless exhibition game against Sewanee: The University of the South. They lost 107-0.

On October 7, 1916, more than 1000 fans passed through the turnstiles of Grant Field in Atlanta to watch the greatest slaughter in college football history. Cumberland was a wreck before the first whistle blew. Aside from their obvious shortfalls—a severe lack of strategy, knowledge, and, well, talent—Cumberland was already at a

disadvantage because three of its players had gotten lost during a layover in Nashville and failed to chase down the connecting train to Georgia.

The game that ensued would turn out to be a mythical comedy of errors that is today riddled with fuzzy details. We know that Cumberland received the first kickoff, and, as the ball hurtled through the air, their quarterback attempted a block and was promptly coldcocked. Morris Gouger took the reins and gave Cumberland fans a ray of false hope when, on the team's first drive, he rushed for three yards. (It would be one of Cumberland's best plays all day.) Shortly after, Cumberland punted, Georgia Tech got the ball, and it scored on its first play.

When Cumberland got the pigskin back, it wasted no time and fumbled. Georgia scooped it and scrambled to the end zone. Touchdown. When Cumberland got the ball again, it fumbled a second time. Georgia picked it up and rushed to the goal line again. Touchdown. According to some accounts, Cumberland must have believed in the power of threes, because when the team received the ball again, they repeated the fumble-turnover-touchdown trifecta for a third time.

By halftime, the score was 126-0. Coach Heisman appeared underwhelmed during one pep talk. "You're doing all right," he lectured his team. "We're ahead. But you just can't tell what those Cumberland players have up their sleeves. They may spring a surprise."

If Cumberland had tricks up their sleeves, they probably weren't the tricks Heisman was expecting. At one point, a few frazzled Cumberland players marched over to Georgia Tech's bench and plopped down; one grabbed a blanket and hid underneath it. Heisman accosted them and screamed, "You're on the wrong side of the field!" But the boys shook their heads. "No, we're not. We've been in there too many times, and we've had enough."

Later on, two Cumberland players would jump the stadium fence.

Georgia Tech found time to goof off, too. "At one point, I remember, our tackle, Bill Fincher, took out his glass eye and threw it in the water bucket," Tech's George Griffin told *The New York Times* in 1986. "Some Cumberland boys came over and started to drink out of it, and they got a terrible fright."

But nothing was as terrifying as the action on the field. In one (likely apocryphal³) story, a Cumberland player fumbled and watched the ball bounce toward a teammate's feet. The fumbler pleaded for his teammate to pick it up, but he was having none of it: "Fall on it yourself," was the reported reply. "You dropped it."

According to *Sporting News*, Cumberland's Charlie Warwick would later brag that, "We were sort of getting to 'em in that last quarter." Which, statistically, was kind of true. Georgia Tech scored 63 points in the first quarter but only managed 42 in the fourth quarter. But Warwick neglected to mention that Coach Heisman, in what can only be interpreted as a merciful bid for sainthood, had agreed to shorten the second half to 15 minutes.

The final score of 222-0 was so one-sided people must have expected the scoreboard to tip over. The statistics were obscene. Georgia Tech scored 32 touchdowns. One player, the All-American G.E. Strupper, scored eight times. He could have scored more, but at one point, Strupper ran through open field, stopped short of the goal line, gently placed the ball on the grass, and waited for a teammate to pick it up and walk into the end zone. Georgia Tech, which never threw a pass, finished with 501 rushing yards.

Cumberland, on the other hand, never earned a first down. It never crossed the 50-yard line. Five of their punts were returned for touchdowns. They lost at least nine fumbles. Their statistical superstar, Morris Gouger, finished the day with less than zero yards of offense. They threw 11 passes, and completed eight of them. (Technically, only two completions. Six of them were caught by the wrong team.)

To Cumberland's credit, they weren't the only big loser that season. Cockeyed mismatches were common during the sport's nascent days: One week after Cumberland's licking, Ohio State would rout Oberlin College, 128-0. And in Illinois, the Lane Technical School would give Cumberland's dismal performance a run for its money in a blowout loss to St. Viator College.

That final score? 205-0.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?

³ A story that is probably not true

2. Who was the coach of Georgia Tech? Why did he seek “revenge” against Cumberland?
3. Where was Cumberland University located?
4. Why had Cumberland canceled its football season?
5. Why did Cumberland have to play Georgia Tech, despite having canceled its season?
6. Where did Cumberland’s football manager find players? How did he disguise their practices?
7. Why did Gentry Dugat agree to play in the game?
8. Describe the code names assigned to Cumberland players.
9. What was the outcome of Cumberland’s exhibition game with Sewanee?
10. How many fans saw the Cumberland-Georgia Tech football game? Where was it played?
11. Identify three humorous details from the game.
12. What is the likely reason Georgia Tech scored fewer points in the second half than the first?
13. How many passes did Georgia Tech throw in the game? How many first downs did Cumberland earn?

Literary Focus: Purpose

An author’s **purpose** is his or her aim for writing the selection. It might be, for example, to entertain, inform, persuade, or present an idea to the reader. It can often be articulated in a selection’s **thesis statement**, although not every work of nonfiction contains a single sentence that so clearly states the writer’s purpose or the selection’s main idea. Often the writer’s intent must be inferred by the reader.

Question: What is the authors’ purpose in writing this account? Is there a thesis statement that states the authors’ purpose? If not, how do you know?

No Level of Alcohol Is Safe

by Sarah Boseley

Drinking is as harmful as smoking and governments should consider advising people to abstain entirely, say the authors of an important study. As you read the following essay, consider the evidence that is presented and decide how convincing you think it is. If you find it convincing, what makes it so? If not, why not? (First published 2018)

Drinking will shorten your life, according to a major new study that suggests every glass of wine or beer over the daily recommended limit will cut half an hour from the expected lifespan of a 40 year old.

Even the occasional drink is harmful to health, according to the largest and most detailed research carried out on the effects of alcohol, which suggests governments should think of advising people to abstain⁴ completely.

The uncompromising message comes from the authors of the Global Burden of Diseases study, a rolling project based at the University of Washington, in Seattle, which produces the most comprehensive data on the causes of illness and death in the world.

Alcohol, says their report published in the *Lancet* medical journal, led to 2.8 million deaths in 2016. It was the leading risk factor for premature mortality and disability in the 15 to 49 age group, accounting for 20% of deaths.

Current alcohol drinking habits pose “dire ramifications⁵ for future population health in the absence of policy action today,” says the paper. “Alcohol use contributes to health loss from many causes and exacts its toll across the lifespan, particularly among men.”

Many people believe there are health benefits to one or two glasses of wine or beer a day, they say. “Our results show that the safest level of drinking is none.”

The study was carried out by researchers at the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), who investigated levels of alcohol consumption and health effects in 195 countries between 1990 to 2016. They used data from 694 studies to work out how common drinking was and from 592 studies including 28 million people worldwide to work out the health risks.

Moderate drinking has been condoned for years on the assumption that there are some health benefits. A glass of red wine a day has long been said to be good for the heart. But although the researchers did find low levels of drinking offered some protection from heart disease, and possibly from diabetes and stroke, the benefits were far outweighed by alcohol’s harmful effects, they said.

Drinking alcohol was a big cause of cancer in the over-50s, particularly in women. Previous research has shown that one in 13 breast cancers in the UK were alcohol-related. The study found that globally, 27.1% of cancer deaths in women and 18.9% in men over 50 were linked to their drinking habits.

In younger people globally the biggest causes of death linked to alcohol were tuberculosis (1.4% of deaths), road injuries (1.2%), and self-harm (1.1%).

In the United Kingdom, the chief medical officer Sally Davies has said there is no safe level of drinking, but the guidance suggests that drinkers consume no more than 14 units a week to keep the risks low. Half a pint of average-strength lager contains one unit and a 125ml glass of wine contains around 1.5 units.

While the study shows that the increased risk of alcohol-related harm in younger people who have one drink a day is small (0.5%), it goes up incrementally with heavier drinking: to 7% among those who have two drinks a day (in line with UK guidance) and 37% for those who have five.

One in three, or 2.4 billion people around the world, drink alcohol, the study shows. A quarter of women and 39% of men drink. Denmark has the most drinkers (95.3% of women, and 97.1% of men). Pakistan has the fewest male drinkers (0.8%) and Bangladesh the fewest women (0.3%). Men in Romania and women in Ukraine drink the most (8.2 and 4.2 drinks a day respectively), while women in the UK take the eighth highest place in the female drinking league, with an average of three drinks a day.

“Alcohol poses dire ramifications for future population health in the absence of policy action today. Our results indicate that alcohol use and its harmful effects on health could become a growing challenge as countries become more developed, and enacting or maintaining strong alcohol control policies will be vital,” said the report’s senior author, Prof Emmanuela Gakidou.

“Worldwide we need to revisit alcohol control policies and health programs, and to consider

⁴ choose not to do or have something

⁵ consequences

recommendations for abstaining from alcohol. These include excise taxes on alcohol, controlling the physical availability of alcohol and the hours of sale, and controlling alcohol advertising. Any of these policy actions would contribute to reductions in population-level consumption, a vital step toward decreasing the health loss associated with alcohol use.”

Dr. Robyn Burton, of King’s College London, said in a commentary in the *Lancet* that the conclusions of the study were clear and unambiguous⁶. “Alcohol is a colossal global health issue and small reductions in health-related harms at low levels of alcohol intake are outweighed by the increased risk of other health-related harms, including cancer,” she wrote.

“There is strong support here for the guideline published by the Chief Medical Officer of the UK who found that there is ‘no safe level of alcohol consumption’.

“Public health policy should be to prioritize measures to reduce the numbers who drink through price increases, taxation, or setting the price according to the strength of the drink (minimum unit pricing), followed by curbs on marketing and restricting the places where people can buy alcohol.

“These approaches should come as no surprise because these are also the most effective measures for curbing tobacco-related harms, another commercially mediated disease, with an increasing body of evidence showing that controlling obesity will require the same measures,” she wrote.

Ben Butler, a Drinkaware spokesperson, said: “This new study supports existing evidence about the harms associated with alcohol. Our research shows that over a quarter of UK adults typically exceed the low risk drinking guidelines and are running the risk of serious long term illnesses.”

In a commentary in the *Lancet*, Professors Jason Connor and Wayne Hall from the University of Queensland Centre for Youth Substance Abuse Research in Australia, anticipated that the suggestion of lowering recommended drinking limits will come up against opposition.

“The drinking levels recommended in this study will no doubt be described as implausible and impracticable by the alcohol industry and other opponents of public health warnings on alcohol. Nonetheless, the

findings ought to be widely disseminated and they should provoke informed public and professional debate.”

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. Who performed the study that appeared in the *Lancet* medical journal? Would you consider them a reliable source? How does this impact the persuasiveness of their conclusions?
3. According to the study, what is the safest level of alcohol?
4. According to the study, are there any health benefits to moderate drinking? If so, what are they? Would it be judicious, according to the article, to drink moderately to enjoy the health benefits? If no, why not?
5. What does the study suggest is the greatest health risk caused by alcohol?
6. Identify three measures recommended by the study’s senior author to help encourage alcohol abstinence.
7. What do professors Jason Connor and Wayne Hall say should happen with the study’s findings?
8. Did this article change your perspective on drinking in any way? If so, how?

Literary Focus: Audience

A writer’s **audience** is the type of reader for whom the work is intended. Many nonfiction works are written for experts, while others are meant for more casual readers. If a writer’s audience are people who already have an interest in the work’s subject, he or she might assume that the readers already possess some basic background knowledge about the subject. If writing for a general (broad) audience, however, it is necessary for a writer to provide all the most essential information so that readers will be able to understand what the author has written.

Question: Who do you think is the audience for this selection? Is it a general audience or an audience that would already possess critical background knowledge about the subject?

⁶ unmistakable

Little Altar on the Roadside

by Huynh Quang Nhuong

Huynh Quang Nhuong was born in Vietnam, in a tiny village (or hamlet) called My-tho. In his book, The Land I Lost: Adventures of a Boy in Vietnam, Nhuong describes the lives of the villagers. As you read the following selection, note the beliefs and traditions that make up the fabric of the villagers' daily life. These events took place in the 1940's, before the beginning of the war that eventually involved the United States and brought devastation to villages like Nhuong's. An altar is a place where people burn incense and pray when worshiping. In Vietnam, many small altars are set up along the roads. Tank is the family buffalo. (First published in 1986)

When I went to the rice field with Tank, my mother often wanted me to burn some incense at a little altar along the roadside. Sometimes I lingered there for a while and cut off the vines that crawled over the altar. But I never lingered if it was growing dark, for at night the deserted road leading to the field seemed too sad and lonely because of the presence of the little altar.

In a little house near the southern end of our llet lived a widow and her young son. With the help of her relatives and friends she had brought up her son since the death of her husband, who was killed by a lone wild hog. This woman was still very young at the time of her husband's death, but she refused to remarry, despite many proposals from other men, because she dearly loved her husband. The image of his mangled body remained as vivid in her mind as if the accident had happened yesterday.

When her son was old enough she told him of her wish to see him married. She told him that she became lonely when he was working in the field, that her eyes were not good enough anymore to sew his torn clothes, that he needed a wife to help him at home, and that she needed grandchildren to make her life less lonely. She also told him that since he was the only male left in his family, if something happened to him there would be nobody to continue his father's line and no one to take care of the tombs of his ancestors.

Her son listened to his mother. He agreed that the greatest disgrace for the dead was for nobody to take care of their graves, or burn incense in front of their tombs after having cleared the weeds away during the Lunar New Year.

So a few weeks later a go-between⁷ found him a bride in a nearby village.

Three days before the wedding the son went to the jungle to cut down some bamboo trees to make a new bed for himself and his bride. He built the bed but he did not use it because according to tradition the wedding bed had to remain as virginal as the bride and bridegroom, so for three nights he slept on a bench on the veranda of the house.

The night before the wedding his mother could not sleep because of a strange sense of foreboding. She got up and walked to the side of her sleeping son. In the semi-darkness, she could not see his face clearly at first. When she looked closer she saw a large banyan⁸ leaf entirely covering his face. She jumped back and leaned on the door and tried to recover from the shock of this dreadful sight. She was upset because people always covered the face of the dead with a banyan leaf. When she felt calm enough she tiptoed to her son's side, gently took the leaf away, and then stayed near him for a while before going back to her room.

But once again the mother could not fall back to sleep. So in a little while she got up and came to see her son. For the second time she saw her son's face covered with a banyan leaf. This time she decided to find out who had done this most unlucky thing.

She removed the leaf and pretended to go back to her room, but when she had passed the half opened door she turned back and hid behind it. A few minutes later she saw a mouse dragging a large banyan leaf and covering her son's face with it. Struck by terror at this omen, she fell down and lost consciousness.

When she came to, the night was still young, so she decided to spend the rest of it at her son's side. She decided not to tell him what she had seen, because if she did she would spoil his wedding. But after the wedding she would persuade her son to give up his profession as a woodcutter and convince him to become a carpenter or a blacksmith. Then he would have nothing to do with the hazardous jungle or the unpredictable river. Early in the morning of the day of the wedding, she went to visit her husband's grave and prayed to him to protect their only son. Next she went to the village chief and told the chief what she had seen the night before. She asked the chief to

⁷ Matchmaker, someone who arranges marriages

⁸ Fig tree

forbid her son to perform any dangerous duties during the next few months. Then she went home and prepared the food and drink for the wedding.

Everyone in our hamlet came to the wedding and brought gifts, except the minstrel. He did not bring anything because his gift was to entertain the others with his songs. The rest of the day the mother was distracted by the laughter and cheerful conversation of the guests and by the minstrel's songs instructing the bride and the bridegroom in their new responsibilities as husband and wife.

She was even happy with the appearance of the bride, whom she saw for the first time that day. The young girl was not pretty, but she looked very healthy. There was no doubt in the mother's mind that she would soon have grandchildren and that they would brighten her house in the days ahead.

However, her son seemed not to be in touch with what was going on. He laughed and forced himself to smile at his friends' silly remarks about the wedding night, but his smiles always turned into strange grimaces at the end.

In the evening when the last guest had gone, the mother went to her room. She was exhausted. Suddenly at midnight the hysterical cries of the bride woke her. She ran to their room and found her son convulsing uncontrollably, saliva coming out of his mouth. Her son tried to hold on to his mother's hands. In a barely audible voice he whispered, "Mother, help me. Mother, help me."

She quickly pushed the bride out of the room and told her to yell as loudly as she could to alarm the neighborhood. By the time the closest neighbor arrived the son had let go of his mother's hands and his bewildered eyes had become empty. And while the first arrival looked on, the mother closed her son's eyes, touched his face, and then dropped dead at his side.

The death of the bridegroom apparently had been caused by poison, since his skin grew pink and there was no insect bite or injury of any sort on his body. The bride was charged with murder, and according to the laws of the land she would be hanged if she could not prove her innocence. All during the funeral the bride clung to the coffin of her husband and kept begging him to wake up and tell people that she had not killed him.

The coroner⁹ felt sorry for the young bride and made a special effort to look into the matter. First he went to the hamlet where her parents lived and made a thorough inquiry about her life before her marriage. He learned that she had had no lover and that her parents had been glad she was getting married because they still had many more daughters who needed husbands. After his inquiry he did not find any reason why the girl should have killed her husband.

Returning home, the coroner made one last effort to save the girl by examining the wedding bed. He spotted a little hole in the bamboo near the head of the bed. He held his breath and examined the hole closely. Suddenly he jumped back. His vision was blurred by some invisible vapor coming out of the little hole.

With the consent of the village chief he broke the bamboo bed, and out jumped a small two-steps snake¹⁰. It tried to get away, but the villagers chased after it and killed it. The snake must have been in the bamboo tree since hatching. Its mother, in her wandering life, had laid an egg in the hole created by some insect while the tree was still young. The taller the tree grew the narrower the hole became and when the baby snake hatched it was trapped in the tree forever. It must have stayed alive by depending upon the rain and dew and the stray ants or insects that accidentally fell into the hole. Since it didn't use its venom often, it had built up a lot of poison, and the breath of the snake would be strong enough to kill a person who breathed it. So the bridegroom, sleeping with his nose near the hole, had been killed by the snake's breath, and not by his wife.

The bride sold the little house and returned to her parents. At first she came back every once in a while to visit the graves of her husband and his family and to clear the weeds which grew on them. But then she did not come anymore. She remarried and lived with her new husband far away from our hamlet. So the people of our hamlet built a little altar on the side of the road leading to the graves of the son and mother and father, and during the holidays someone always burned incense at their altar, and from time to time travelers stopped by and prayed at the roadside

⁹ official in charge of investigating the cause of a death that is not clearly due to natural causes

¹⁰ nickname given to the many-banded krait snake; according to legend, if bitten by a many-banded krait, the victim would be dead before taking two steps.

altar, hoping their prayers would make their long journey less hazardous.

But most importantly, the lonely little altar on the roadside reminded us that just down the deserted road there were three tombs to take care of, especially during the Lunar New Year.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. Why was the little altar built?
3. Explain what caused the young bridegroom's mysterious death.
4. How was the bride's life spared?
5. How do the villagers pay their respects to the dead during the Lunar New Year?
6. Why does the presence of the altar make the writer feel sad and lonely?
7. Why do you guess the son didn't seem to be "in touch with what was going on" at the wedding?
8. What was the mother's probable cause of death?
9. Do you think family and community values are very important in this hamlet? Cite some facts to explain your answer.

Literary Focus: Narration

An author can write for any number of purposes. Four of the most common purposes are to narrate, describe, persuade, or inform. **Narration** is a type of writing that tells a story. A narrative work can be either fictional or nonfictional, depending on whether the story it tells actually happened. Biographies, narrative essays, short stories, and novels are all kinds of narrative writing.

Most narratives are told in **chronological order**, the order in which events naturally occur. Effective narratives usually follow a pattern similar to the plot of a short story. That is, a **conflict**, or problem, of some kind sets in motion a chain of events. These events build to a **climax**, or peak of interest--the point at which we realize how the conflict or problem will be solved.

Events in a narrative are also often related by **cause and effect**. That is, certain events lead logically to certain other events.

Question: Is this selection an example of narration? Is it written in chronological order? Are the events related by cause and effect? Does the selection have a conflict or climax? If so, identify them.

The Girl Who Can't Feel Pain

by Alex Tresniowski

What a gift it would be to never feel pain! If you think that statement is true, the story of Ashlyn Blocker may reveal some surprising reasons why pain is not the impediment we often think it to be, but may instead be a necessary attribute of humanity. In this essay, writer Alex Tresniowski gets to the heart of what makes Ashlyn's life so much different from others while revealing why many people believe pain to be a "gift." (First published 2005)

How lucky can you get? That's what John and Tara Blocker figured when their then 2-week-old baby daughter Ashlyn developed a diaper rash so terrible it hurt just to look at it. Miraculously, here she was with an awful inflammation, and still this sweet child—who always slept through the night and never cried—was acting like nothing was wrong. Recalls Tara, 33: "We took her to the doctor and we were like, 'Wow, we have the happiest baby in the world because she's not even affected by this.'"

It wasn't until a few months later, when Ashlyn's left eye became bloodshot, that the Blockers began to worry. "We gave her eyedrops, but she wasn't getting better," says Tara, a homemaker. "My mommy instincts just kept saying, 'Something's not right.'" Sure enough, an ophthalmologist discovered a massive corneal abrasion, a condition normally so painful that even an adult would be howling. But not Ashlyn.

After further testing, doctors eventually determined that she suffers from a condition called Congenital Insensitivity to Pain with Anhidrosis, or CIPA. Incurable, untreatable and so rare that only 35 cases are known in the U.S., CIPA makes Ashlyn completely unable to sense pain or extreme temperatures—and thus utterly vulnerable to a wide range of injuries and infections. In most cases, it's deadly — toddlers diagnosed with CIPA don't usually survive. Suffers are also unable to sweat, which leads to hyperthermia. "When people hear about it, they're like, 'Isn't that a good thing?'" says Ashlyn's father, John, 32, a telephone technician. "We say, 'Just take a moment and think about it. Pain is there for a reason.'"

Think of a child who slams into walls and shrugs at the blood on her face; think of a girl who, as a toddler, absent-mindedly bit her skin just for fun. That's Ashlyn. Now 5 (at the time of this article), she has badly burned her

hand by leaving it on the muffler of a gas-powered motor, had her fingers crushed in a door frame and, on one horrible occasion, walked into the Blockers' home in rural Patterson, Ga., and announced she couldn't get the dirt off her skin. "It wasn't dirt," says her father, cringing at the memory. "It was hundreds of fire ants biting her." Ashlyn has badly bitten her tongue, cheek and lips, causing so much damage that when she began knocking out her front teeth—by crashing into walls or biting down on a bottle—her parents were actually relieved. "It was," says Tara, "a blessing in disguise."

But even if Ashlyn is at times a danger to herself, she is a delight to her family, doctors and teachers. At the Blockers' five-bedroom country-style home in tiny Patterson (pop. 627), she darts from room to room, scoops up Princess, her 4-month-old Chihuahua-Jack Russell terrier mix and shoots baskets in the driveway. Only recently has she begun to comprehend that she is different from her friends. "I can't feel my boo-boos," she explains matter-of-factly, distracted by the barrette she clips to the mane of her My Little Pony doll. Other children—like her brother Dereck, 7, and sister Tristen, 2—tend to tire out more quickly than Ashlyn, who never seems to slow down. "She's like the Energizer Bunny," says Beth Cloud, the nurse at Patterson Elementary School, where Ashlyn is in kindergarten. "She is precious, but she goes headfirst into everything."

One of the first obstacles CIPA patients must overcome is teething, as they often bite holes through their tongue and gums without realizing they are doing so. Such dangers have led some parents of CIPA patients to remove their children's teeth, knowing that by the time their adult teeth come in, their children will be old enough to control their biting. The removal of teeth does, however, often cause difficulties eating. While their peers are learning to eat hard foods, they must eat soft foods and are thus often left developmentally behind.

People with CIPA also have difficulties with behaviors that involve paying attention to bodily cues. For example, they have trouble becoming toilet-trained, since they are unable to recognize the feelings associated with going to the bathroom. Often, they set timers reminding themselves to use the restroom. Timers are also helpful in reminding themselves to eat, as they do not feel hunger pains. Additionally, they must be wary of eye injuries that may come from scratching or rubbing their eyes too hard and wear goggles or glasses to prevent such injuries.

Maintaining a healthy body temperature is problematic for individuals with CIPA, and in fact, can be a dangerous problem. One of the most dangerous characteristics of CIPA is the common fever associated with it. Patients are unable to sweat and are therefore unable to regulate their body temperature the way most people can. During exercise and time spent outside, they must be cautious of overheating because otherwise they may experience febrile seizures or even death. Many parents of children with CIPA choose to live in cooler climates in order to prevent overheating.

From the beginning, Tara and John Blocker have had to strike a delicate balance between protecting their child's safety and offering her a normal childhood. As a toddler, Ashlyn did so much damage to her hands that her parents had to wrap them in athletic tape. "She looked like a little boxer," says her mother. Even so, "we don't want Ashlyn to live in a bubble," says Tara. "We've learned what to worry about and what not to worry about, and we give her her space."

After considering homeschooling, the Blockers opted instead to enlist the help of the staff at Patterson Elementary. There, Ashlyn's teachers downplay the special measures designed for her benefit. Ashlyn is at risk of overheating during the day, so she gets a water bottle at her desk—and so do all the other kids in her class. A teacher discreetly feels her forehead several times a day to check for fever, and after recess she stops by nurse Cloud's office for a thorough checkup. "They get the sand off of her feet, wash her eyes and treat any scratches," says Tara. "I call it her NASCAR pit stop." As for teasing from the other kids, once a little boy jabbed Ashlyn in the arm with a stick to see if she would react. "It wasn't mean," says teacher's assistant Sue Price. "It was like his little science experiment."

Ashlyn also can't smell. Her mother worries she'll grow up being unable to smell smoke if there's a fire, or not know if the milk's gone bad.

Almost certainly, Ashlyn's medical problems will multiply as she ages. CIPA, caused by a genetic mutation shared by both her parents, results when a particular type of nerve cell fails to develop normally. The absence of pain makes her brain slow to respond to injuries, which can take twice as long as normal to heal. Damage to the joints is typical, since people with CIPA unknowingly put weight on injured ankles and knees. "In the next 10 years this is the most important problem Ashlyn will face," says Tokyo

pediatric neurologist Dr. Kenji Nihei, one of the world's leading CIPA experts (see box). "Many patients become unable to walk."

Some doctors say CIPA sufferers may also experience emotional problems. Someone as fearless as a child with CIPA could grow up to make bad judgments and take harmful risks—such as reckless drug use—or, in the other extreme, become excessively cautious. Still, "kids with all kinds of sensory impairments do very well," says Dr. Lawrence Shapiro, an internationally known child psychologist. "There's no reason to think she won't have a normal life."

So the Blockers will continue to make hard choices for their daughter, at least until she can make them for herself. "She wants to be a ballerina," says Tara wistfully. Because of the harm that could do to her joints and bones, her parents will push swimming instead. Teaching Ashlyn to detect the signs of infections like appendicitis will be difficult—recently she had tonsillitis that went undiagnosed for six months—but Tara and John are heartened that she now knows to find her mother when she sees blood and has learned to ask if her food is cool enough to eat.

And most days Ashlyn could hardly appear more ordinary. "She'll cry when she gets her feelings hurt or a toy gets taken away," says John. "And she can feel tickles and hugs and kisses," says Tara. "She's got the best laugh in the world." For the moment, her parents hold onto the hope that this fearless girl with the missing front teeth will have a remarkable life. Still, if they had but one wish for their daughter, it would be this: "I would give anything, absolutely anything," says Tara, "for Ashlyn to feel pain."

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. What does the acronym CIPA stand for? What are its characteristics?
3. What led Ashlyn's parents to realize something was wrong with her?
4. Explain some of the problems Ashlyn's CIPA has caused.
5. What is Ashlyn's "NASCAR pit stop"?
6. How can CIPA lead to physical problems? Emotional problems?
7. What one wish would the Blockers make for their daughter?

Literary Focus: Description

Description is the type of writing that creates a clear picture of something--a person, animal, object, or place, for example. All works of literature, both fiction and nonfiction, contain description.

Good descriptive writing should create a strong **overall impression** of the subject. This overall impression is made up of many concrete **details**: specific images, pictures, colors, shapes, sounds, sometimes smells, tastes, textures, and even emotions.

Question: Is this selection an example of descriptive writing? Does it create an overall impression of its subject? Identify three concrete details that help describe its subject.

Is Marijuana as Safe as We Think?

by Malcolm Gladwell

Cannabis, also known as marijuana or pot among other names, is a psychoactive drug from the Cannabis plant. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the main psychoactive component of cannabis, which is one of the 483 known compounds in the plant. Cannabis has various mental and physical effects, which include euphoria, altered states of mind and sense of time, difficulty concentrating, impaired short-term memory and body movement, relaxation, and an increase in appetite. The effects last for two to six hours, depending on the amount used. Although it remains illegal at the federal level, there have been many recent attempts to legalize it for recreational purposes based on the supposition that it is largely safe for consumption. This assumption, however, continues to come under scientific scrutiny as explained in the following article from The New Yorker magazine. (First published 2019)

A few years ago, the National Academy of Medicine convened a panel of sixteen leading medical experts to analyze the scientific literature on cannabis. The report they prepared, which came out in January of 2017, runs to four hundred and sixty-eight pages. It contains no bombshells or surprises, which perhaps explains why it went largely unnoticed. It simply stated, over and over again, that a drug North Americans have become enthusiastic about remains a mystery.

For example, smoking pot is widely supposed to diminish the nausea associated with chemotherapy. But, the panel pointed out, “there are no good-quality randomized trials investigating this option.” We have evidence for marijuana as a treatment for pain, but “very little is known about the efficacy, dose, routes of administration, or side effects of commonly used and commercially available cannabis products in the United States.” The caveats¹¹ continue. Is it good for epilepsy? “Insufficient evidence.” Tourette’s syndrome¹²? Limited evidence. A.L.S., Huntington’s, and Parkinson’s¹³? Insufficient evidence.

¹¹ warnings

¹² a disorder that involves repetitive movements or unwanted sounds (tics) that can’t be easily controlled.

¹³ these are neurodegenerative diseases--incurable and debilitating conditions that result in progressive degeneration and/or death of nerve cells, which can cause problems with movement or mental functioning

Irritable-bowel syndrome? Insufficient evidence. Dementia and glaucoma? Probably not. Depression? Probably not.

Then come Chapters 5 through 13, the heart of the report, which concern marijuana’s potential risks. The haze of uncertainty continues. Does the use of cannabis increase the likelihood of fatal car accidents? Yes. By how much? Unclear. Does it affect motivation and cognition? Hard to say, but probably. Does it affect employment prospects? Probably. Will it impair academic achievement? Limited evidence. This goes on for pages.

We need proper studies, the panel concluded, on the health effects of cannabis on children and teen-agers and pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers and “older populations” and “heavy cannabis users.” The panel also called for investigation into “the pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic properties of cannabis, modes of delivery, different concentrations, in various populations, including the dose-response relationships of cannabis and THC or other cannabinoids.”

Figuring out the “dose-response relationship” of a new compound is something a pharmaceutical company does from the start of trials in human subjects, as it prepares a new drug application for the F.D.A. Too little of a powerful drug means that it won’t work. Too much means that it might do more harm than good. The amount of active ingredient in a pill and the metabolic path that the ingredient takes after it enters your body—these are things that drugmakers will have painstakingly mapped out before the product comes on the market, with a tractor-trailer full of supporting documentation.

With marijuana, apparently, we’re still waiting for this information. It’s hard to study a substance that until very recently has been almost universally illegal. And the few studies we do have were done mostly in the nineteen-eighties and nineties, when cannabis was not nearly as potent as it is now. Because of recent developments in plant breeding and growing techniques, the typical concentration of THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, has gone from the low single digits to more than twenty percent.

Are users smoking less, to compensate for the drug’s new potency? Or simply getting more stoned, more quickly? Is high-potency cannabis more of a problem for younger users or for older ones? For some drugs, the dose-response curve is linear: twice the dose creates twice the effect. For other drugs, it’s nonlinear: twice the dose can increase the effect tenfold, or hardly at all. Which is

true for cannabis? It also matters, of course, how cannabis is consumed. It can be smoked, vaped, eaten, or applied to the skin. How are absorption patterns affected?

Last May, not long before Canada legalized the recreational use of marijuana, Beau Kilmer, a drug-policy expert with the RAND Corporation, testified before the Canadian Parliament. He warned that the fastest-growing segment of the legal market in Washington State was extracts for inhalation, and that the mean THC concentration for those products was more than sixty-five per cent. “We know little about the health consequences—risks and benefits—of many of the cannabis products likely to be sold in nonmedical markets,” he said. Nor did we know how higher-potency products would affect THC consumption.

When it comes to cannabis, the best-case scenario is that we will muddle through, learning more about its true effects as we go along and adapting as needed—the way, say, the once extraordinarily lethal innovation of the automobile has been gradually tamed in the course of its history. For those curious about the worst-case scenario, Alex Berenson has written a short manifesto, “Tell Your Children: The Truth About Marijuana, Mental Illness, and Violence.”

Berenson begins his book with an account of a conversation he had with his wife, a psychiatrist who specializes in treating mentally ill criminals. They were discussing one of the many grim cases that cross her desk—“the usual horror story, somebody who’d cut up his grandmother or set fire to his apartment.” Then his wife said something like, “Of course, he was high, been smoking pot his whole life.”

Of course? I said.

Yeah, they all smoke.

Well . . . other things too, right?

Sometimes. But they all smoke.

Berenson used to be an investigative reporter for the *New York Times*, where he covered, among other things, health care and the pharmaceutical industry. Then he left the paper to write a popular series of thrillers. At the time of his conversation with his wife, he had the typical layman’s¹⁴ view of cannabis, which is that it is largely benign¹⁵. His wife’s remark alarmed him, and he set out to educate himself. Berenson is constrained by the same

problem the National Academy of Medicine faced—that, when it comes to marijuana, we really don’t know very much. But he has a reporter’s tenacity¹⁶, a novelist’s imagination, and an outsider’s knack for asking intemperate¹⁷ questions. The result is disturbing.

The first of Berenson’s questions concerns what has long been the most worrisome point about cannabis: its association with mental illness. Many people with serious psychiatric illness smoke lots of pot. The marijuana lobby typically responds to this fact by saying that pot-smoking is a response to mental illness, not the cause of it—that people with psychiatric issues use marijuana to self-medicate. That is only partly true. In some cases, heavy cannabis use does seem to cause mental illness. As the National Academy panel declared, in one of its few unequivocal conclusions, “Cannabis use is likely to increase the risk of developing schizophrenia¹⁸ and other psychoses¹⁹; the higher the use, the greater the risk.”

Berenson thinks that we are far too sanguine²⁰ about this link. He wonders how large the risk is, and what might be behind it. In one of the most fascinating sections of “Tell Your Children,” he sits down with Erik Messamore, a psychiatrist who specializes in neuropharmacology²¹ and in the treatment of schizophrenia. Messamore reports that, following the recent rise in marijuana use in the U.S. (it has almost doubled in the past two decades, not necessarily as the result of legal reforms), he has begun to see a new kind of patient: older, and not from the marginalized communities that his patients usually come from. These are otherwise stable middle-class professionals. Berenson writes, “A surprising number of them seemed to have used only cannabis and no other drugs before their breaks. The disease they’d developed looked like schizophrenia, but it had developed later—and their prognosis seemed to be

¹⁶ persistence

¹⁷ here, difficult and unwanted

¹⁸ a serious mental disorder in which people interpret reality abnormally. Schizophrenia may result in some combination of hallucinations, delusions, and extremely disordered thinking and behavior that impairs daily functioning, and can be disabling.

¹⁹ conditions that affect the way your brain processes information. They cause you to lose touch with reality.

²⁰ optimistic

²¹ the study of how drugs affect the nervous system

¹⁴ ordinary person’s; non-expert’s

¹⁵ harmless

worse. Their delusions and paranoia hardly responded to antipsychotics²².”

Messamore theorizes that THC may interfere with the brain’s anti-inflammatory mechanisms, resulting in damage to nerve cells and blood vessels. Is this the reason, Berenson wonders, for the rising incidence of schizophrenia in the developed world, where cannabis use has also increased? In the northern parts of Finland, incidence of the disease has nearly doubled since 1993. In Denmark, cases have risen twenty-five per cent since 2000. In the United States, hospital emergency rooms have seen a fifty-percent increase in schizophrenia admissions since 2006. If you include cases where schizophrenia was a secondary diagnosis, annual admissions in the past decade have increased from 1.26 million to 2.1 million.

Berenson’s second question derives from the first. The delusions and paranoia that often accompany psychoses can sometimes trigger violent behavior. If cannabis is implicated in a rise in psychoses, should we expect the increased use of marijuana to be accompanied by a rise in violent crime, as Berenson’s wife suggested? Once again, there is no definitive answer, so Berenson has collected bits and pieces of evidence. For example, in a 2013 paper in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, researchers looked at the results of a survey of more than twelve thousand American high-school students. The authors assumed that alcohol use among students would be a predictor of violent behavior, and that marijuana use would predict the opposite. In fact, those who used only marijuana were three times more likely to be physically aggressive than abstainers were; those who used only alcohol were 2.7 times more likely to be aggressive. Observational studies like these don’t establish causation. But they invite the sort of research that could.

Berenson looks, too, at the early results from the state of Washington, which, in 2014, became the first U.S. jurisdiction to legalize recreational marijuana. Between 2013 and 2017, the state’s aggravated-assault rate rose seventeen per cent, which was nearly twice the increase seen nationwide, and the murder rate rose forty-four per cent, which was more than twice the increase nationwide. We don’t know that an increase in cannabis use was responsible for that surge in violence. Berenson, though, finds it strange that, at a time when Washington may have exposed its population to higher levels of what is widely

assumed to be a calming substance, its citizens began turning on one another with increased aggression.

His third question is whether cannabis serves as a gateway drug. There are two possibilities. The first is that marijuana activates certain behavioral and neurological pathways that ease the onset of more serious addictions. The second possibility is that marijuana offers a safer alternative to other drugs: that if you start smoking pot to deal with chronic pain you never graduate to opioids²³.

Which is it? This is a very hard question to answer. We’re only a decade or so into the widespread recreational use of high-potency marijuana. Maybe cannabis opens the door to other drugs, but only after prolonged use. Or maybe the low-potency marijuana of years past wasn’t a gateway, but today’s high-potency marijuana is. Methodologically, Berenson points out, the issue is complicated by the fact that the first wave of marijuana legalization took place on the West Coast, while the first serious wave of opioid addiction took place in the middle of the country. So, if all you do is eyeball the numbers, it looks as if opioid overdoses are lowest in cannabis states and highest in non-cannabis states.

Not surprisingly, the data we have are messy. Berenson, in his role as devil’s advocate, emphasizes the research that sees cannabis as opening the door to opioid use. For example, two studies of identical twins—in the Netherlands and in Australia—show that, in cases where one twin used cannabis before the age of seventeen and the other didn’t, the cannabis user was several times more likely to develop an addiction to opioids. Berenson also enlists a statistician at N.Y.U. to help him sort through state-level overdose data, and what he finds is not encouraging: “States where more people used cannabis tended to have more overdoses.”

The National Academy panel is more judicious. Its conclusion is that we simply don’t know enough, because there haven’t been any “systematic” studies. But the panel’s uncertainty is scarcely more reassuring than Berenson’s alarmism. Seventy-two thousand Americans died in 2017 of drug overdoses. Should you embark on a pro-cannabis crusade without knowing whether it will add to or subtract from that number?

²³ Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, morphine, and many others.

²² medicines that help people deal with psychoses

Drug policy is always clearest at the fringes. Illegal opioids are at one end. They are dangerous. Manufacturers and distributors belong in prison, and users belong in drug-treatment programs. The cannabis industry would have us believe that its product, like coffee, belongs at the other end of the continuum. “Flow Kana partners with independent multi-generational farmers who cultivate under full sun, sustainably, and in small batches,” the promotional literature for one California cannabis brand reads. “Using only organic methods, these stewards of the land have spent their lives balancing a unique and harmonious relationship between the farm, the genetics and the environment.” But cannabis is not coffee. The experience of many users is relatively benign and predictable; the experience of a few, at the margins, is not. Products or behaviors that have that kind of muddled risk profile are confusing, because it is very difficult for those in the middle to appreciate the experiences of those at the statistical tails. Low-frequency risks also take longer and are far harder to quantify, and the lesson of “Tell Your Children” and the National Academy report is that we aren’t yet in a position to do so. For the moment, cannabis probably belongs in the category of substances that society permits but simultaneously discourages. Cigarettes are heavily taxed, and smoking is prohibited in most workplaces and public spaces. Alcohol can’t be sold without a license and is kept out of the hands of children. Prescription drugs have rules about dosages, labels that describe their risks, and policies that govern their availability. “Start low and go slow” is probably good advice for society as a whole, at least until we better understand what we are dealing with.

Late last year, the commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, Scott Gottlieb, announced a federal crackdown on e-cigarettes. He had seen the data on soaring use among teen-agers, and, he said, “it shocked my conscience.” He announced that the F.D.A. would ban many kinds of flavored e-cigarettes, which are especially popular with teens, and would restrict the retail outlets where e-cigarettes were available.

In the dozen years since e-cigarettes were introduced into the marketplace, they have attracted an enormous amount of attention. There are scores of studies and papers on the subject in the medical and legal literature, grappling with the questions raised by the new technology. Vaping is clearly popular among kids. Is it a gateway to traditional tobacco use? Some public-health

experts worry that we’re grooming a younger generation for a lifetime of dangerous addiction. Yet other people see e-cigarettes as a much safer alternative for adult smokers looking to satisfy their nicotine addiction. That’s the British perspective. Last year, a Parliamentary committee recommended cutting taxes on e-cigarettes and allowing vaping in areas where it had previously been banned. Since e-cigarettes are as much as ninety-five per cent less harmful than regular cigarettes, the committee argued, why not promote them? Gottlieb said that he was splitting the difference between the two positions—giving adults “opportunities to transition to non-combustible products,” while upholding the F.D.A.’s “solemn mandate to make nicotine products less accessible and less appealing to children.” He was immediately criticized.

“Somehow, we have completely lost all sense of public-health perspective,” Michael Siegel, a public-health researcher at Boston University, wrote after the F.D.A. announcement:

Every argument that the F.D.A. is making in justifying a ban on the sale of electronic cigarettes in convenience stores and gas stations applies even more strongly for real tobacco cigarettes: you know, the ones that kill hundreds of thousands of Americans each year. Something is terribly wrong with our sense of perspective when we take the e-cigarettes off the shelf but allow the old-fashioned ones to remain.

Among members of the public-health community, it is impossible to spend five minutes on the e-cigarette question without getting into an argument. And this is nicotine they are arguing about, a drug that has been exhaustively studied by generations of scientists. We don’t worry that e-cigarettes increase the number of fatal car accidents, diminish motivation and cognition, or impair academic achievement. The drugs through the gateway that we worry about with e-cigarettes are Marlboros, not opioids. There are no enormous scientific question marks over nicotine’s dosing and bio-availability. Yet we still proceed cautiously and carefully with nicotine, because it is a powerful drug, and when powerful drugs are consumed by lots of people in new and untested ways we have an obligation to try to figure out what will happen.

A week after Gottlieb announced his crackdown on e-cigarettes, on the ground that they are too enticing to children, Siegel visited the first recreational-marijuana facility in Massachusetts. Here is what he found on the

menu, each offering laced with large amounts of a drug, THC, that no one knows much about:

Strawberry-flavored chewy bites
 Large, citrus gummy bears
 Delectable Belgian dark chocolate bars
 Assorted fruit-flavored chews
 Assorted fruit-flavored cubes
 Raspberry flavored confection
 Raspberry flavored lozenges
 Chewy, cocoa caramel bite-sized treats
 Raspberry & watermelon flavored lozenges
 Chocolate-chip brownies.

He concludes, “This is public health in 2018?”

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. What is the “dose-response” relationship?
3. Identify three specific questions about cannabis that we still don’t have conclusive answers for.
4. Who is Alex Berenson? What caused him to start investigating the effects of cannabis on humans?
5. What conclusions did Berenson draw about marijuana use based on his studies?
6. What did the 2013 study from the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* show?
7. What might be inferred from studying assault rates in Washington from 2013-2017? Why?
8. What can be learned from studies of twins in Australia and the Netherlands?
9. What point is being made in the discussion of e-cigarettes and nicotine use?
10. What is the significance of Siegel’s question at the end of the article?

Literary Focus: Persuasion

Persuasion attempts to convince people to accept an opinion or to take action of some kind. Persuasion is used in such different types of expression as editorials, advertisements, and speeches.

Persuasive writers should appeal to the intellects of their audience by presenting **evidence**, **examples**, and **logical arguments** in favor of their opinions. In addition, a persuasive work should present arguments that are logically connected in a clear, simple structure that readers can easily follow.

Persuasion can also try to convince its readers by touching the audience’s emotions. Effective writers understand that if their readers can be moved to feel compassion, pride, anger, or determination, then they are also more likely to agree with the speaker’s opinions.

Question: What did the writer intend for readers to think, do, or believe in response to the article? What techniques did the writer use to try to persuade his audience?

The Bystander Effect

by David McRaney

Many believe that when someone is hurt, people will rush to the individual's aid. In truth, however, the more people who witness a person in distress, the less likely it is that any one person will help. The following selection by writer David McRaney explores the details behind a common human fallacy. (First published 2011)

If your car were to break down and your cell phone had no service, where do you think you would have a better chance of getting help—a country road or a busy street? To be sure, more people will see you on a busy street. On the country road, you might have to wait a long time before someone comes by. So which one?

Studies show you have a better chance on the country road. Why?

Have you ever seen someone broken down on the side of the road and thought, "I could help them, but I'm sure someone will be along." Everyone thinks that. And no one stops. This is called the bystander effect.

In 1968, Eleanor Bradley fell and broke her leg in a busy department store. For forty minutes, people just stepped over and around her until one man finally stopped to see what was wrong. In 2000, a group of young men attacked sixty women at a Central Park parade in New York City. Thousands of people looked on. No one used a cell phone to call police. The culprit in both cases was the bystander effect. In a crowd, your inclination to rush to someone's aid fades, as if diluted by the potential of the group. Everyone thinks someone is going to eventually do something, but with everyone waiting together, no one does.

The most famous illustration of this phenomenon is the story of Kitty Genovese. According to a newspaper article in 1964, she was stabbed by an attacker at 3 A.m. in a parking lot in front of her New York City apartment complex. The attacker ran away when she screamed for help, but not one of the thirty-eight witnesses came to her rescue. The story goes on to say the attacker returned over and over for thirty minutes while people watched on from surrounding apartment windows as he stabbed her. At the time the story was written it led to intense interest in the phenomenon from psychologists. Social psychologists started studying the by-stander effect soon after the story went viral, and they determined that the more people

present when a person needs emergency help, the less likely any one of them will lend a hand.

In 1970, psychologists Bibb Latane and John Darley created an experiment in which they would drop pencils or coins. Sometimes they would be in a group, sometimes with one other person. They did this six thousand times. The results? They got help 20 percent of the time in a group, 40 percent of the time with one other person. They decided to up the stakes, and in their next experiment they had someone fill out a questionnaire. After a few minutes, smoke would start to fill the room, billowing in from a wall vent. They ran two versions of the experiment. In one, the person was alone; in the other, two people were also filling out the questionnaire. When alone, people took about five seconds to get up and freak out. Within groups, people took an average of 20 seconds to notice. When alone, the subject would go inspect the smoke and then leave the room to tell the experimenter he or she thought something was wrong. When in a group, people just sat there looking at one another until the smoke was so thick they couldn't see the questionnaire. Only three people in eight runs of the group experiment left the room, and they took an average of six minutes to get up.

The findings suggest the fear of embarrassment plays into group dynamics. You see the smoke, but you don't want to look like a fool, so you glance over at the other person to see what they are doing. The other person is thinking the same thing. Neither of you react, so neither of you becomes alarmed. The third person sees two people acting like everything is OK, so that third person is even less likely to freak out. Everyone is influencing every other person's perception of reality thanks to another behavior called the illusion of transparency. You tend to think other people can tell what you are thinking and feeling just by looking at you. You think the other people can tell you are really worried about the smoke, but they can't. They think the same thing. No one freaks out. This leads to pluralistic ignorance—a situation where everyone is thinking the same thing but believes he or she is the only person who thinks it. After the smoke-filled room experiment, all the participants reported they were freaking out on the inside, but since no one else seemed alarmed, they assumed it must just be their own anxiety.

The researchers decided to up the ante once more. They had people fill out a questionnaire while the experimenter, a woman, shouted in the other room about how she had injured her leg. When alone, 70 percent of

people left the room to check on her. When in a group, 40 percent checked. If you were to walk along a bridge and see someone in the water screaming for help, you would feel a much greater urge to leap in and pull them to safety than you would if you were part of a crowd. When it's just you, all the responsibility to help is yours.

The bystander effect gets stronger when you think the person who needs help is being harmed by someone that person knows. Lance Shotland and Margaret Straw showed in a 1978 experiment when people saw two actors, a man and a woman, pretending to physically fight, they often wouldn't intervene if the woman shouted, "I don't know why I ever married you!" People helped 65 percent of the time if she instead shouted, "I don't know you!" Many other studies have shown it takes only one person to help for others to join in. Whether it is to donate blood, assist someone in changing a tire, drop money into a performer's coffers, stop a fight—people rush to help once they see another person leading by example.

One final, awesome example is the Good Samaritan experiment. Darley and Batson in 1973 got a group of Princeton Theological Seminary students together and told them to prepare a speech on the parable of the Good Samaritan from the Bible. The point of the parable is to stop and help people in need. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells his disciples about a traveler who is beaten and robbed then left to die along a road. A priest and another man walk past him, but a Samaritan stops to help even though the man is Jewish and Samaritans weren't in the habit of helping out Jews. After filling out some questionnaires, with the story fresh in their minds, some groups were told they were late to give the speech in a nearby building. In other groups the subjects were told they had plenty of time. Along their path to the other building an actor was slumped over and groaning, pretending to be sick and in need of help. Of the seminary students who had plenty of time, about 60 percent stopped and helped. The ones in a rush? Ten percent helped, and some even stepped over the actor on their way.

So the takeaway here is to remember you are not so smart when it comes to helping people. In a crowded room, or a public street, you can expect people to freeze up and look around at one another. Knowing that, you should always be the first person to break away from the pack and offer help—or attempt escape—because you can be certain no one else will.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. What is the bystander effect?
3. How is the murder of Kitty Genovese an example of the bystander effect?
4. Briefly explain the 1970 experiments of psychologists Latane and Darley.
5. How does the fear of embarrassment factor into the bystander effect?
6. What is the illusion of transparency?
7. Briefly explain the 1979 experiment by Shotland and Straw.
8. Explain the Good Samaritan experiment.

Literary Focus: Exposition

Exposition (or **expository writing**) is the type of writing that presents facts or explains an idea. It is the language of learning and understanding the world around us. If you've ever read an encyclopedia entry, a how-to article on a website, or a chapter in a textbook, then you've encountered examples of expository writing.

Question: Why is this selection an example of expository writing?

The Boy Who Sees with Sound

by Alex Tresniowski

What things do you think you would be unable to do if you were blind? Many people think that the blind are severely limited in the kinds of activities in which they can participate. In this selection, Alex Tresniowski introduces us to a boy named Ben Underwood. Blind since age 3, Ben skateboards, shoots hoops, and plays video games. How does he do it? Just like bats and dolphins. (First published 2006)

There was the time a fifth grader thought it would be funny to punch the blind kid and run. So he snuck up on Ben Underwood and hit him in the face. That's when Ben started his clicking thing. "I chased him, clicking until I got to him, then I socked him a good one," says Ben, a skinny 14-year-old. "He didn't reckon on me going after him. But I can hear walls, parked cars, you name it. I'm a master at this game."

Ask people about Ben Underwood and you'll hear dozens of stories like this—about the amazing boy who doesn't seem to know he's blind. There's Ben zooming around on his skateboard outside his home in Sacramento; there he is playing kickball with his buddies. To see him speed down hallways and make sharp turns around corners is to observe a typical teen—except, that is, for the clicking. Completely blind since the age of 3, after retinal cancer claimed both his eyes (he now wears two prostheses²⁴), Ben has learned to perceive and locate objects by making a steady stream of sounds with his tongue, then listening for the echoes as they bounce off the surfaces around him. About as loud as the snapping of fingers, Ben's clicks tell him what's ahead: the echoes they produce can be soft (indicating metals), dense (wood) or sharp (glass). Judging by how loud or faint they are, Ben has learned to gauge distances.

The technique is called echolocation, and many species, most notably bats and dolphins, use it to get around. But a 14-year-old boy from Sacramento? While many blind people listen for echoes to some degree, Ben's ability to navigate in his sightless world is, say experts, extraordinary. "His skills are rare," says Dan Kish, a blind psychologist and leading teacher of echo-mobility among the blind. "Ben pushes the limits of human perception."

Kish has taught echolocation to scores of blind people as a supplement to more traditional methods, such as walking with a cane or a guide dog, but only a handful of people in the world use echolocation alone to get around, according to the American Foundation for the Blind. A big part of the reason Ben has succeeded is his mother, who made the decision long ago never to coddle her son. "I always told him, 'Your name is Benjamin Underwood, and you can do anything,'" says Aquanetta Gordon, 42, a utilities-company employee. "He can learn to fly an airplane if he wants to."

Ben plays basketball with his pals, rides horses at camp and dances with girls at school events. He excels at PlayStation games by memorizing the sounds that characters and movements make. "People ask me if I'm lonely," he says. "I'm not, because someone's always around or I've got my cell phone and I'm always talking to friends. Being blind is not that different from not being blind."

Ben was just 2 years old when doctors discovered his retinal cancer. Ben's first Braille teacher, Barbara Haase, believes the boy's ability to see during his first two years helped him develop "a sort of map of the physical world," she says. Growing up, Ben got help from his brothers Joe, now 23, and Derius, 19, and sister Tiffany, 18. (His father, Stephen, died in 2002.) "They taught him how to find the seams on his clothes so he puts them on right side out, stuff like that," says Aquanetta. "But they didn't overdo it."

Aquanetta sent Ben to mainstream schools, where professionals on staff gave him individual attention and taught him to overlook taunts from classmates who waved their hands in his face or snatched food off his tray. "The hardest thing for me to accept is rejection," says Ben, who starts ninth grade in the fall. "I can tell when someone rejects me in some way."

At home his mother let him play with no restrictions. "If he fell, she would just say, 'Oh, he fell,' and he'd get up and try again," says his kindergarten teacher Ann Akiyama. "I've seen him run full speed into the edge of a big brick column and get back up. He was fearless."

Ben learned how to read Braille and walk with a cane, but when he was 3, he also began teaching himself echolocation, something he picked up by tossing objects and making clicking sounds to find them. His sense of hearing, teachers noticed, was exceptional. "One time a CD

²⁴ Artificial body parts

fell off his desk and I was reaching for it when he said, ‘Nah, I got it,’” says Kalli Carvalho, his language arts instructor. “He went right to it. Didn’t feel around. He just knew where it was because he heard where it hit.” Haase took walks with Ben to help him practice locating objects. “I said, ‘Okay, my car is the third car parked down the street. Tell me when we get there,’” she says. “As we pass the first vehicle, he says, ‘There’s the first car. Actually, a truck.’ And it was a pickup. He could tell the difference.”

Ben was 6 when he decided he wasn’t going to use a cane—he calls it a stick—to get around. “You go to school and you’re the only one with a stick, what’s the first thing some kid’s going to do? Break it in two,” he says. “And then where are you? You’re helpless.” At times he was even able to come to the aid of people with normal sight. “I remember taking him to the park with my son, sister and my nieces, and it got dark,” says Akiyama. “But Ben had figured out the park’s layout, and he led the way out. He was in his element.”

Still, Ben’s zone of maximum comfort remains his family’s three-bedroom stucco home—where he lives with his mom and brother Isaiah, 11—and the quiet streets around it. Some professionals who work with Ben worry that his near-complete reliance on echolocation could hurt him when he finds himself in unfamiliar settings. Haase wishes he would use a cane to help him gauge, for instance, the depth of a hole. But Ben is sticking to his guns. “He’s a rebellious traveler,” says Kish, who despite teaching echolocation around the world still occasionally uses a cane. “Ben puts himself at risk.”

Others believe Ben’s remarkable abilities will make it easier for him to face new challenges and conquer new surroundings. “The world is not going to change for these kids; they need to adapt to it,” says Ben’s eye doctor James Ruben, a Kaiser Permanente ophthalmologist. “His mother understood that plenty of sighted people have miserable lives and plenty of unsighted people have happy lives.”

Last month Ben widened his horizons even further. “The thing I’m most scared of is water,” he says. “But if I had eyes, it’s what I’d most like to see.” So on June 25 he took a trip to San Diego’s SeaWorld Adventure Park to swim with dolphins and hear how they use echolocation. Waist-deep in a saltwater pool, he immersed one ear as Sandy, a bottle-nosed dolphin, swam toward him. “Man,” he said, “she clicks fast!” Ben spent 45 minutes playing with Sandy, touching her teeth and stroking her dorsal fin.

Bob McMains, supervisor of SeaWorld’s dolphin program, says that in his 23 years there, few people have listened so intently to the sounds the dolphins make. “He’s got a gift with dolphins; he’s truly unique,” says McMains. “I told him, once he’s 18 he’s got a job here anytime.”

McMains can get in line. Ben’s world may be dark, but the most amazing surprises are just a click away. He might become a math teacher or a pro skateboarder—or, as his mother believes, just about anything. And wouldn’t that make for a truly amazing Ben Underwood story? “I tell people I’m not blind,” he says. “I just can’t see.”

(Note: In 2009 Ben died from his retinal cancer.)

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. Why did Ben begin his “clicking thing”?
3. How did Ben go blind?
4. How loud are Ben’s clicks?
5. What is Ben’s clicking technique called?
6. Who is Dan Kish?
7. How does Ben excel at Playstation?
8. Why did Ben decide to stop using a cane?
9. What did Ben learn at SeaWorld Adventure Park?

Literary Focus: Biography and Autobiography

A **biography** is the story of a person’s life written by someone other than that person. A good biography both relates the facts about its subject’s life and present’s the writer’s attitude toward the subject. The skilled biographer uses details, incidents, examples, and quotations to help us understand the subject’s personality. In particular, a good biographer includes **anecdotes**, brief accounts of true events, to add depth and color to a biography. Anecdotes help us see the subject’s personality in action. For example, in the preceding biography, the author tells us that Tubman teased Josiah bailey for refusing to look at Niagara Falls on his way to freedom. This anecdote gives us a vivid picture of Tubman’s personality—her earthiness, her sense of humor, and, most important, her fearlessness.

An **autobiography** is the story of a person’s life written by that person. Like any other author of nonfiction, the autobiography writes for a particular purpose. Authors write autobiographies, for example, in order to inform us about their own successes and failures or persuade us to appreciate their actions or to entertain us with stories from

their past. An autobiographer may combine some of these purposes or may write for an entirely different purpose.

Question: Is this selection a biography or autobiography?
How do you know?

The Catch-Dog

by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings spent much of her life on a farm at Cross Creek, Florida. Described by Rawlings as "a bend in a country road," Cross Creek is a wooded, marshy place quite different from the cities in which Rawling had previously lived. Her experience in Cross Creek formed the background for her novels (including The Yearling) and short stories (including "A Mother in Mannville"), many of which center on children and animals. Rawlings wrote of her Florida home in Cross Creek. The following essay, which comes from this book, concerns a dog that becomes the author's companion for a time. As you read, think about why the author treats the dog as she does. (First published in 1942).

I was struck, with Harper's bear dogs on the hunt, as with John Clardy's fox hounds, by the sharp line drawn between house dogs and work dogs. Florida hunters believe that any dog allowed the run of the house cannot be made a good sporting or working dog. I cannot agree. I make companions of my pointers and take them with me in my car. It seems to me that my Mad Pat, for instance, hunts with even greater enthusiasm and earnestness than kennel dogs I have known, through his delight in sharing the hunt with me and his desire to please me. Discipline of course must be strict and business-like and must begin with the puppy. Because of this, I did once a cruel thing to a work dog whose path crossed mine.

The dog and I first met on a warm June evening. I was walking east along the Creek road, a little later than usual. The sun had set. I remember feeling lonely. I was a little uneasy, as well, for the moccasins and rattlers cross the road in the twilight. A ramshackle²⁵ car came out from the lane that leads to Cow Hammock and turned toward the village. A dog followed it. He ran with the dejection of the forsaken. He was not noticed. A half-mile ahead he stopped disconsolately²⁶ and began to trot back toward home. I saw that he was of a tawny yellow. He had something of the build of the Belgian police dog. As he came closer, I became aware of his mixed breeding. A black and alien smudge ran down his nose, and his long tail was

ignominiously²⁷ curled, revealing the mongrel. He trotted with a wolflike purpose.

I called to him with some uncertainty as to his nature. The yellow dog stopped. He came to me. I held out my hand and he snuffed it. I touched his rough coat. I pulled one ear. He rubbed his nose briefly against me in a gesture of acceptance. A feeling of friendliness passed over us in the dusk.

I said, "Come, boy," and he turned and walked with me.

It was good, after long months without a dog of my own, to have him beside me. He left me in a few minutes and went ahead, but the link between us was unbroken. Now and then he stopped and looked back, to be sure that I was following. Once he came to me to be touched; to be reassured that we were, truly, together. Studying him, I saw that he was a working dog; the catch-dog, it proved, of my new neighbor in Cow Hammock, who used him to round up his vagrant hogs. The business dog has his own ear marks. He is self-contained. He expects no luxuries of life, no graciousness. He possesses usually a simple integrity. He does his work faithfully and well and takes his pan of cornbread and an occasional bone, not with gratitude, but with the dignity of one who knows he has earned, that day, his keep. His gratitude is reserved for the rare expression of friendliness such as I had given him. That first night he ran well ahead of me and up his home lane, not taking too much for granted the closeness of our relationship.

The next day I set out up the road in the late afternoon. I passed the entrance to Cow Hammock.

I called, "Here, boy! Here!"

I expected no response and there was none. I was halfway to Big Hammock when a clicking sound on the gravel road caught my ear. The yellow catch-dog was running to overtake me as though his life depended on it. I waited for him and he bounded about me with the joy of the alien who comes at last to his own. I was as glad as he. We walked that evening in a great content and that time he did not turn up his lane until I passed it with him. After that he waited for me with a faithful regularity. If I went early, I might have to call. Invariably he heard and joined me as soon as he could leave his business. If I went late, he was waiting at the lane. A few strokings of his head and he was satisfied. He went ahead, not far, looking back often over his curled and shameful tail.

²⁵ About to fall apart

²⁶ Sorrowfully

²⁷ In shame

Sometimes we romped together. We enjoyed most the game with the bull-bats²⁸. We stalked them together. They have a trick of sitting bright-eyed in the road, waiting for the approach. At the last instant they take off, circling to swoop low over their pursuer's head. It is a good game of tag. The yellow dog beat me at it. Often, a bull-bat too sure of himself all but lost his tail feathers. When this happened, the catch-dog raced joyfully around and around, or chased a quite imaginary rabbit.

One evening we loitered, for the approaching night was hot and sultry. As we turned west again, the last red stain of sunset faded from the sky and the road was dark. The catch-dog walked slowly beside me. Suddenly he stiffened. He made a sound, half growl, half moan, deep in his throat. Then he backed against me. I became aware that he was pushing me with his strong hindquarters, moving me away as deliberately as though he possessed an arm with which to do so. I backed with him to the far side of the road. On the gray gravel what had been a wide shadow resolved itself into a large rattlesnake that slid now into the grass. The catch-dog and I quivered, for the blood curdles instinctively at such an encounter in the dark. We hurried the rest of the way. Then and afterward we were joined by the closeness of those who, together, have escaped a danger.

One night I heard him being beaten for having gone away when he was wanted. Once he failed me, when an outlaw boar was being cornered. I heard the shrill squealings of the hog and knew that the catch-dog was at his work. He came later to my gate, as though to show me that his failure to join me was not of his intention. He did this sometimes, too, when circumstances kept me from my walking. Otherwise he did not intrude on my life of which, he recognized, he was not a part.

Some weeks after we began our jaunts together I was given the high-bred pointer puppy for which I had been waiting. The puppy was captivating. I devoted myself at once to his care and training. I wanted to raise the handsome young fellow as a companion, so that I was especially anxious to discipline him firmly from the beginning. I ended my evening walks down the highway, going about the grove instead. The puppy was not yet broken to go to heel and I could not risk the distraction of the catch-dog, a rabbit chaser, to disturb his training. Two

or three days later the yellow dog came to my gate, wagging his tail. I ignored him and he went away.

A week later I took my young pointer on a leash. We passed the entrance to Cow Hammock. Passing, the catch-dog must have scented us, for some distance on he came after us on the gallop. He was insane with joy. He jumped against me, he went taut proudly, introducing himself to the puppy. He dropped his forelegs to the ground and shook his head, inviting the new dog to play. The puppy barked shrilly and tugged at the leash. Discipline was hopeless. There was nothing for it but to drive the catch-dog away. I made a menacing gesture. He looked at me unbelieving and did not stir. I picked up a handful of light gravel and threw it in his direction and went on, dragging the puppy behind me. The catch-dog followed. He watched me with bewildered eyes.

I shouted with as much sternness as I could manage to bring from a sick heart, "Get back!" and he stopped and made no further effort to go with us. On the way home, we passed him, lying at the Cow Hammock entrance, his head on his paws. He fluttered his tail a little, as though in hope that I did not, could not, mean my rejection of him. The pointer and I hurried by.

Now we pass as though we were strangers. I am ashamed to face him, having used him in my loneliness, and then betrayed him. He shows no signs of recognition. His tail curves over his back. He trots with a high head, looking straight ahead. He is a work dog, and he must be about his business.

Study Questions

1. What is the main idea of the selection?
2. According to Rawlings, what part does discipline play in raising a dog?
3. When and where does Rawlings meet the catch-dog?
4. How does the dog usually respond when he sees Rawlings?
5. What does Rawlings do when she meets the catch-dog after the pointer puppy comes? How does she feel about her treatment of the dog?
6. Before the puppy comes, what are Rawlings' and the catch-dog's feelings for each other?
7. Do you understand Rawlings' treatment of the catch-dog after the arrival of the puppy? Why or why not?

²⁸ Night-flying birds also known as nighthawks and nightjars

Literary Focus: The Total Effect

The most effective way to approach nonfiction is to read it actively and attentively. Keep in mind that a work of nonfiction, while factual, represents only one author's version of the truth, written for a particular purpose and audience. When you actively look for clues about the author's intentions, you will increase your ability to understand and judge what the author is saying. You will also find more pleasure in reading nonfiction if you notice the facts, details, and language that the author uses to accomplish his or her purpose. When you think about the various elements of nonfiction as you read and contemplate what you have read, you will experience the **total effect** of the work.

Reminders for Active Reading of Nonfiction

1. The **title** often announces the author's purpose.
2. The nonfiction writer uses various elements and techniques, including the following:
 - a. a **thesis statement** or clearly implied main idea
 - b. **facts, incidents, evidence, and examples** supporting this idea
 - c. **topic sentences** to alert the reader to the main idea in each paragraph
 - d. **chronological order, cause-and-effect order**, or some other clear organization
 - e. **anecdotes** to reveal character
 - f. **logos, pathos, and ethos** to persuade
 - g. **concrete details** to create vivid pictures
3. The writer of any piece of nonfiction has a **purpose** in mind. The reader should uncover that purpose.

Question: How would you evaluate the total effect of this selection?