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THE "HIGH" OF AN HONEST WIN

**Student Response Essay to
Harry Bruce's "And May the Best Cheater Win"**

Talking Points

1. Outline several constructive strategies for dealing with a rule or law you feel is unfair. You might view a film about a tactic called civil disobedience. See, for example, I Have a Dream about Martin Luther King or Walden about Henry David Thoreau.
2. If you observe someone cheating during a sports match in which you're a player, what do you do about it?
3. Discuss the meaning of the following terms: self-concept, self-esteem, and integrity. What people or forces help us form each of these attributes?

After our class discussed Bruce's essay about cheating in sports, I got to thinking about some of my peers' comments and values about scholastic cheating. There are two central concerns. First, what is happening to our school system and the individuals within it? And second, why is it happening? To answer these issues, I conducted independent research—minor in comparison to Pooley's—but it's indicative of what transpires among teens. The bald fact is this: most students reported cheating to "survive" at school. The moral and social consequences are far-reaching. In so doing, they're not only cheating the system, but worse, they also condone their own actions and deprive themselves of the satisfaction of a good mark, honestly earned. Let's begin with some hard statistics from my survey conducted at a typical upper-middle class high school. *Fact:* 71 percent of high-school students interviewed have skipped a class and lied about it to school officials. *Fact:* 100 percent of these students have copied homework to pass a homework check. *Fact:* 100 percent have attempted to find out test questions and answers from students who have previously written it.

"Avoiding punishment by parents and teachers" is one of the reasons Karen, one typical "A" student, lied about skipping class. "I had a doctor's appointment," she said with a straight face to her history teacher. Did she follow the rules and bring a note or sign out? She "forgot." However, because

her plight *sounded* sincere, and she'd developed a reputation of a "good and trustworthy student," the teacher relented and did not call home. So she, and many compatriots, get off the hook, so to speak—at least temporarily.

Annette, a graduating student, neatly summed up students' sentiments: "People—students or adults—cheat and lie because they can usually get away with it. If people were caught and punished more often, fewer would cheat on tests—or income taxes."

One major problem is attitudinal; few contemporary high-school students take homework—or school—very seriously. "I'll do that tomorrow" is a common sentiment. Procrastination is part of the problem, but today's teens tend to hold different values from earlier generations who often didn't take education as a right. And they fool themselves into thinking that the cheating will happen "just this once." Finally, priorities are just plain different: "My girlfriend and my job come first," George admitted. "But that's the way most of us guys feel. Hey, why not?"

This to-heck-with-the consequences attitude prevails before tests, too. Here's a typical high-school scenario. It's lunch hour and Susan has a biology test next class. In fact, it's the one her best friend, Jennifer, has just finished.

SUSAN: So, was the test hard? What was on it?

JENNIFER: Oh, some diagrams and essay-type things. You know.

SUSAN: Like what?

JENNIFER: Well . . .

Jennifer proceeds to disclose test details. They're cheating, but may not affix that label. The girls merely convince themselves of the need for this "discussion," rationalizing their actions as "survival tactics," as one graduating student put it.

Most students who themselves cheat certainly *appear* to condone cheating among others. Almost everyone, it seems, is guilty. And even if you don't cheat, you're reluctant to be stigmatized as a "squealer." Let's say you're in the middle of a major chemistry test. You observe the pair in front of you exchanging answers. But the teacher seems to be dozing at the front of the room. So you decide to ignore them and concentrate more intently on your paper. None of my business, you rationalize. And at the end of class, you leave, feeling only slightly guilty for not reporting the incident to the teacher. Are you, then, a cheater, too?

In a sense, yes. "Guilt by association," it's called. Allowing someone to cheat is as unethical as if you'd opted to cheat. *Fact:* 99 percent of the high-school students interviewed wouldn't inform the teacher they'd witnessed cheating. The social consequences are too high for most teens to bear. But if this isn't cheating the students who studied late into the night and kept their eyes on their own paper, what is?

But what of that 1 percent who don't condone and may report cheating? It

seems that if one's self interest is *directly* involved, a report may be filed. For example, a teacher told me of a case several years ago in which two students reported a third who'd purchased an independent study project worth 20 percent of her final course mark. Indeed, they provided the evidence for the zero which was awarded. Why did they take this action? "We're competing for the same scholarships and prizes as Sally. She's getting an unfair advantage." When money's at stake among graduating students, a different "morality" takes charge.

Whether we like to admit it or not, most of us cheat in one way or another. We may involve ourselves with cheaters. Or we may participate directly in activities which permit others to cheat. Yet few people perceive themselves as cheaters. Most of us feel we're honest human beings. *Fact*: 100 percent of high-school students interviewed *claimed* they did not condone cheating. Bruce's argument seems to apply to the classroom, as well as to the locker room. It sometimes looks as if the best cheater does "win." Wrong.

Fact: they're only "the best cheater" of their self-respect.

**Harry
Waters**
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WHAT TV DOES TO KIDS

Talking Points

1. Compare TV viewing habits with your classmates.
2. What restrictions, if any, have your parents placed on your TV viewing over the years? When you're a parent, do you expect to follow the same policy?
3. Does viewing television violence and sex-role stereotyping increase tolerance for such behaviour? Discuss. You may wish to view a film such as *The Question of Television Violence* (NFB, Media and Society, II).

His first polysyllabic utterance was "Bradybunch." He learned to spell Su Smacks before his own name. Recently, he tried to karate-chop his young sister after she broke his Six Million Dollar Man bionic transport station (retaliated by bashing him with her Cher doll). His nursery-school teacher reports that he is passive, noncreative, and has almost no attention span. In short, he is very much like his classmates. This fall, he will officially reenter the age of reason and begin his formal education. His parents are beginning to discuss their apprehensions—when they are not too busy watching television.

It is only in recent years—with the first TV generation already grown up—that social scientists, psychologists, pediatricians, and educators have begun a serious study of the impact of television on the young. According to television survey-taker A.C. Nielsen, children under five watch an average of 2 1/2 hours of TV a week. Today's typical high-school graduate has logged at least 15 000 hours before the small screen—more time than he has spent on all other activity except sleep. At present levels of advertising and mayhem, the young will have been exposed to 350 000 commercials and vicariously participated in 18 000 killings. The conclusion is inescapable: After parents realize that television has become perhaps the most potent influence on the beliefs, values, and behavior of the young.

Unquestionably, the plug-in picture window has transmitted some benefits. In general, the children of TV enjoy a more sophisticated knowledge of a far larger world. They are likely to possess richer vocabularies, albeit with only a superficial comprehension of what the words mean.

DON'T LET STEREOTYPES WARP YOUR JUDGMENTS

When we typecast the world . . . we are only revealing the embarrassing facts about the pictures that hang in the gallery of stereotypes in our own heads.

Is a girl called Gloria apt to be better-looking than one called Bertha? Are criminals more likely to be dark than blond? Can you tell a good deal about someone's personality from hearing his voice briefly over the phone? Can a person's nationality be pretty accurately guessed from his photograph? Does the fact that someone wears glasses imply that he is intelligent?

The answer to all these questions is obviously, "No."

Yet, from all the evidence at hand, most of us believe these things. Ask any college boy if he'd rather take his chances with a Gloria or a Bertha, or ask a college girl if she'd rather blinddate a Richard or a Cuthbert. In fact, you don't have to ask: college students in questionnaires have revealed that names conjure up the same images in their minds as they do in yours—and for as little reason.

Look into the favorite suspects of persons who report "suspicious characters" and you will find a large percentage of them to be "swarthy" or "dark and foreign-looking"—despite the testimony of criminologists that criminals do not tend to be dark, foreign, or "wild-eyed." Delve into the main asset of a telephone stock swindler and you will find it to be a marvelously confidence-inspiring telephone "personality." And whereas we all think we know what an Italian or a Swede looks like, it is the sad fact that when a group of Nebraska students sought to match faces and nationalities of 15 European countries, they were scored wrong in 93 percent of their identifications. Finally, for all the fact that horn-rimmed glasses have now become the standard television sign of an "intellectual," optometrists know that the main thing that distinguishes people with glasses is just bad eyes.

Stereotypes are a kind of gossip about the world, a gossip that makes us prejudice people before we ever lay eyes on them. Hence it is not surprising that stereotypes have something to do with the dark world of prejudice. Explore most prejudices (note that the word means prejudice) and you will find a cruel stereotype at the core of each one.

For it is the extraordinary fact that once we have typecast the world tend to see people in terms of our standardized pictures. In another demonstration of the power of stereotypes to affect our vision, a number of Columbia and Barnard students were shown 30 photographs of pretty but unidentified girls, and asked to rate each in terms of "general liking," "intelligence," "beauty," and so on. Two months later, the same group were shown the same photographs, this time with fictitious Irish, Italian, Jewish, and "American" names attached to the pictures. Right away the ratings changed. Faces which were now seen as representing a national group went down in looks and still farther down in likability, while the "American" girls suddenly looked decidedly prettier and nicer.

Why is it that we stereotype the world in such irrational and harmful fashion? In part, we begin to type-cast people in our childhood years. Early in life, as every parent whose child has watched a TV Western knows, we learn to spot the Good Guys from the Bad Guys. Some years ago, a social psychologist showed very clearly how powerful these stereotypes of childhood vision are. He secretly asked the most popular youngsters in an elementary school to make errors in their morning gym exercises. Afterwards, he asked the class if anyone had noticed any mistakes during gym period. Oh, yes, said the children. But it was the *unpopular* members of the class—the "bad guys"—they remembered as being out of step.

We not only grow up with standardized pictures forming inside of us, but as grown-ups we are constantly having them thrust upon us. Some of them, like the half-joking, half-serious stereotypes of mothers-in-law, or country yokels, or psychiatrists, are dinned into us by the stock jokes we hear and repeat. In fact, without such stereotypes, there would be a lot fewer jokes. Still other stereotypes are perpetuated by the advertisements we read, the movies we see, the books we read.

And finally, we tend to stereotype because it helps us make sense out of a highly confusing world, a world which William James once described as "one great, blooming, buzzing confusion." It is a curious fact that if we don't know what we're looking at, we are often quite literally unable to see what we're looking at. People who recover their sight after a lifetime of blindness actually cannot at first tell a triangle from a square. A visitor to a factory sees only noisy chaos where the superintendent sees a perfectly synchronized flow of work. As Walter Lippmann has said, "For the most part we do not first see, and then define; we define first, and then we see."

Stereotypes are one way in which we "define" the world in order to see it. They classify the infinite variety of human beings into a convenient handful of "types" towards whom we learn to act in stereotyped fashion. Life would be a wearing process if we had to start from scratch with each and every human contact. Stereotypes economize on our mental effort by covering up the blooming, buzzing confusion with big recognizable cut-outs. They save

us the "trouble" of finding out what the world is like—they give it its accustomed look.

Thus the trouble is that stereotypes make us mentally lazy. As S.I. Hayakawa, the authority on semantics, has written: "The danger of stereotypes lies not in their existence, but in the fact that they become for all people some of the time, and for some people all the time, *substitutes for observation*." Worse yet, stereotypes get in the way of our judgment, even when we do observe the world. Someone who has formed rigid preconceptions of all Latins as "excitable," or all teenagers as "wild," doesn't alter his point of view when he meets a calm and deliberate Genoese, or a serious-minded high-school student. He brushes them aside as "exceptions that prove the rule." And, of course, if he meets someone true to type, he stands triumphantly vindicated. "They're all like that," he proclaims, having encountered an excited Latin, an ill-behaved adolescent.

Hence, quite aside from the injustice which stereotypes do to others, they impoverish ourselves. A person who lumps the world into simple categories, who type-casts all labor leaders as "racketeers," all businessmen as "reactionaries," all Harvard men as "snobs," and all Frenchmen as "sexy," is in danger of becoming a stereotype himself. He loses his capacity to be himself—which is to say, to see the world in his own absolutely unique, inimitable, and independent fashion.

Instead, he votes for the man who fits his standardized picture of what a candidate "should" look like or sound like, buys the goods that someone in his "situation" in life "should" own, lives the life that others define for him. The mark of the stereotype person is that he never surprises us, that we do indeed have him "typed." And no one fits this strait-jacket so perfectly as someone whose opinions about *other people* are fixed and inflexible.

Impoverishing as they are, stereotypes are not easy to get rid of. The world we type-cast may be no better than a Grade B movie, but at least we know what to expect of our stock characters. When we let them act for themselves in the strangely unpredictable way that people do act, who knows but that many of our fondest convictions will be proved wrong?

Nor do we suddenly drop our standardized pictures for a blinding vision of the Truth. Sharp swings of ideas about people often just substitute one stereotype for another. The true process of change is a slow one that adds bits and pieces of reality to the pictures in our heads, until gradually they take on some of the blurriness of life itself. Little by little, we learn not that Jews and Negroes and Catholics and Puerto Ricans are "just like everybody else"—for that, too, is a stereotype—but that each and every one of them is unique, special, different, and individual. Often we do not even know that we have let a stereotype lapse until we hear someone saying, "all so-and-so's are like such-and-such," and we hear ourselves saying, "Well—maybe."

Can we speed the process along? Of course we can.

First, we can become *aware* of the standardized pictures in our heads, in other people's heads, in the world around us.

Second, we can become suspicious of all judgments that we allow exceptions to "prove." There is no more chastening thought than that in the vast intellectual adventure of science, it takes but one tiny exception to topple a whole edifice of ideas.

Third, we can learn to be chary of generalizations about people. As F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote: "Begin with an individual, and before you know it you have created a type; begin with a type, and you find you have created—nothing."

Most of the time, when we type-cast the world, we are not in fact generalizing about people at all. We are only revealing the embarrassing facts about the pictures that hang in the gallery of stereotypes in our own heads.

Reconnecting with the Earth

David Suzuki

LIKE THE ELECTRONIC "INFORMATION" we consume, the sphere of our activity and of the connections that make up the little world we live in have become a collection of disconnected fragments. We consume or use with little sense of the repercussions beyond our immediate surroundings.

Life in industrialized societies has become so complex that we need specialists of all kinds—plumbers, electronics experts, muffler and brake specialists, nurses, TV repairmen. Although I use a computer and drive a car, for example, I don't understand the intricacies of how they work or how to fix them when they don't.

And so we tend to see the world as a mosaic of disconnected bits and pieces rather than as an integrated whole in which we understand the relationship between cause and effect. We lose sight of the fact that we are biological beings who live in a finite world where matter is endlessly recycled through biological action in air, water, and soil. And not knowing where our consumer goods come from or where they end up, it's hard to relate how we live with the environmental consequences.

In cities we place our garbage at the curb in plastic bags, cans, or boxes, and like magic, it conveniently disappears from our view and our minds. I once spent a day at a waste disposal site near Toronto, looking at what was being discarded. There were all kinds of material that didn't have to be there: grass clippings (and leaves in the fall), wood that could be chipped, paper of every conceivable type, plastic containers, metal objects. Even with Toronto's vaunted blue box program, the output of unnecessary garbage is enormous.

I thought of that dump while flying in a tiny commuter plane from Montreal to Val d'Or. During the short flight, a continental breakfast was served in a plastic case. Inside were a plastic cup of

yogurt, a plastic cup of orange juice, a plastic bag containing a plastic stirrød, spoon, and fork as well as individually wrapped sugar, cream, and hand towel. Coffee was served in a foam cup. By the end of the meal, each passenger had a mound of packaging that was then swept into a plastic bag and deposited at the airport. This is repeated thousands of times daily all over the country. A visit to a dump makes you realize that we have to replace this unnecessary waste with reusable things.

A few years ago while filming an introduction to a report on the biological functions of different kinds of muscle, I used the light and dark meat of a chicken to illustrate. The lighting man exclaimed with surprise, "Is chicken meat a *muscle*?" When our food comes neatly packaged in plastic containers, the link between a piece of meat and a once-living animal becomes tenuous. But as animals ourselves, we are totally dependent on other living organisms for every bit of our nutrition. A visit to a slaughterhouse and a factory farm would be a powerful reminder of our biological roots and our need for other life forms.

It's the same with plants. Few of us have spent any time on a farm or understand the factors that propel farmers to rely on chemicals to ensure high yields while struggling against weather, pests, and disease, or the compromises that are made to enhance food's shelf life, transportability, and appearance. As soil and water accumulate pesticides, fungicides and preservatives, fruit and vegetables are bound to incorporate them. If young people spent time working on a farm, they would have a far different appreciation of the food they eat, not to mention the economic plight of farmers.

In cities and towns, we take our water and sewers for granted—just turn on the tap and out it flows. Flush the toilet or pour waste down the sink and we send it on its way without a thought about where it ends up. Yet often the water we consume is drawn downstream from someone else's effluent or from wells into which leachate from dumps is draining. Beaches that are no longer swimmable are directly related to the flushing of our toilets. Every responsible citizen should make an extensive tour of our sewer outlets and water treatment facilities to see how our activities are interconnected.

It's the same with energy. We turn our lights and machines on and off with little thought of where the energy comes from and its

environmental cost. Only when there's a power failure are we aware of how dependent we are on electricity. Canadian folklore says that our great rivers and fossil fuel deposits provide a near limitless source of energy. But we are far less informed about the ecological destruction that accompanies huge hydroelectric dams or potential greenhouse warming from coal- and oil-fired plants. All we want is to be sure to have electricity at the flick of a switch.

We have to acquire a deeper understanding of the total costs of modern life in the context of a finite planet. Every benefit and convenience has hidden effects that we inflict on the environment. Children need to learn their lessons from firsthand experience at slaughterhouses, farms, factories, water sources, hydroelectric and nuclear power plants, sewage treatment facilities, garbage dumps, pulp mills, logging and reforestation areas, mining sites, et cetera. Even in the largest urban centres, we are still interconnected and dependent on our surroundings far beyond city limits.

David Suzuki (Born: 1936, Vancouver, British Columbia) is an award-winning scientist, environmentalist, and broadcaster. During World War II, at age six, he was interned at a camp for Japanese Canadians in British Columbia. An author of 28 books, including ten books for children, Suzuki is known to television audiences as the host of a popular science documentary program, *The Nature of Things*.

Activities: Reconnecting with the Earth

1. **Meaning of Text: Making Predictions**
Read the title, the author's name, and the first paragraph only. Then predict what you think the essay will be about and how it will be organized.
2. **Gather Information: Summarizing Information**
With a partner, determine the organizational pattern of this essay, and depict it in a graphic organizer. Post it, then have a class discussion about how the way in which Suzuki organized information contributed to the essay's unity.
3. **Create Media Works: Creating a Documentary**
In small groups, plan to adapt this essay into a short video documentary. Write a description of such elements as shooting location, shot and sound directions, narration, tone, dramatization, and use of archival footage.
4. **Use Form: Writing a Letter to the Editor**
In a letter to the editor, summarize Suzuki's overriding concern and his suggestions for addressing this concern. Evaluate the effectiveness of his solutions, then describe any ideas you have for dealing with the problem.

A Country Childhood

Nelson Mandela



Like these boys, the young Nelson Mandela herded sheep and cattle.

APART FROM LIFE, a strong constitution, and an abiding connection to the Thembu royal house, the only thing my father bestowed upon me at birth was a name, Rolihlahla. In Xhosa, Rolihlahla literally means "pulling the branch of a tree," but its colloquial meaning is "troublemaker." My more familiar English name was not given to me until my first day of school.

I was born on 18 July 1918 at Mvezo, a tiny village on the banks of the Mbashe River in the district of Umtata, the capital of the Transkei. My father, Gadla Henry Mphahanyiswa, was a chief by both blood and custom. He was confirmed as chief of Mvezo by the king of the Thembu tribe, though under British rule his selection had to be ratified by the government.

- Answer the following questions in complete sentences.
- Use quotations and details from the essay in your answers, when required.

1. Quote the author's **thesis**.
2. To support his thesis, Suzuki uses evidence of various forms.
Provide an example of each of the following, and state how each is effective.

- (i) fact
- (ii) anecdote
- (iii) quotation

3. In his essay, Suzuki uses rhetorical devices to persuade the reader.
For each of the following rhetorical devices, provide one example from the essay,
and assess its effectiveness:

- (i) hyperbole
- (ii) emotional appeal
- (iii) repetition for effect

4. **Bias** is the predisposition of a writer toward the particular subject about which he/she is writing. Often this bias is established through the specific words that the writer uses. Words that have positive or negative connotations are frequently examples of bias.

Quote **two** examples of biased language and assess its effectiveness.

Flunking with Style

People often remark that succeeding in school takes plenty of hard work. The remark implies that failure is a product of general idleness and zero motivation. This is an opinion I'd like to challenge. My long and checkered past in numerous educational institutions has taught me that to fail grandly, to fail extravagantly, to go down in truly blazing splendor, requires effort and imagination. To fail your year in the grand style, you must antagonize your teachers, disdain your studies, and cheat on your work. Keep the following guidelines in mind.

The first step, antagonizing your teachers, isn't difficult if you keep in mind what it is that teachers like: intelligent, interested, even enthusiastic faces in front row centre. Show that you're bored before the class begins by slouching in a desk at the back of the room. Wear your Walkman, and don't forget to turn up the volume when that teacher starts to talk. Carry on running conversations with your seatmates. Aim an occasional snort or snicker in the teacher's direction when she's putting a complex point on the board. Above all, never volunteer an answer and respond sullenly with an "I dunno" if the teacher has the nerve to ask you a question. Before long, you'll have that teacher bouncing chalk stubs off your head. Once you've earned the loathing of all your instructors, you'll be well on your way to a truly memorable failure.

The second step, disdaining your

studies, is easy to master; they're probably B-O-R-I-N-G anyway. First, don't buy your books until close to midterm and keep them in their original condition; don't open, read, or note anything in them. Better yet, don't buy your texts at all. Second, never attempt to take notes in class. Third, stop going to class completely, but have lots of creative excuses for missed assignments: "My friend's aunt died;" "My gerbil's in a coma;" "My boyfriend was in another car wreck;" "My dog ate the lab report;" "I've got mono." You can bet your teachers will be really amused by these old stand-bys. By now, you are well on your way to disaster.

The third step, cheating, will deliver the *coup de grâce* to your academic career. Should an instructor be so sadistic as to assign a research paper, just copy something out of a book that the librarian will be happy to find for you. Your instructor will be astonished at the difference between the book's polished, professional prose and your usual halting scrawls; you're guaranteed a zero. During your exams, sit at the back and crane your neck to read your classmate's paper. Roll up your shirt-sleeves to reveal the answers you've tattooed all over your forearms. Ask to be excused three or four times during the test so you can consult the notes you've slashed in the hall or the washroom. Be bold! Dig out your old wood-burning kit and emblazon cheat notes on the desk. If you want to ensure not just failure but actual expulsion, send in a ringer—a look-alike to write the exam for you!

If you follow these guidelines, you will be guaranteed to flunk your year. Actively courting failure with verve, with flair, and with a sense of drama will not only ensure your status as an academic washout but will also immortalize you in the memories of teachers and classmates alike. The challenge is yours! Become a legend—pick up the torch and fall with it!