

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 23 Issue 06 2015-02-13

Minds we Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

Stress without Deadlines

The Dread of Hitting Send

Perspectives in Fiction

The Toolbox takes on Fiction

Plus:

*The Great Warming Debate
Interviewing Adam Moore
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.

EDITORIAL

Unlucky Valentines

Karl Low



For some people, this Friday the thirteenth brings along some unpleasant feelings. Not because it's supposedly bad luck so much as because it means tomorrow is the 14th of February and they've suddenly realized they've made no plans whatsoever for Valentine's Day. Needless to say, I expect I'll be making amends the rest of the week, unless I can come up with something really good in the next few hours. If anybody has suggestions, by all means feel free to mail them to me at karl@voicemagazine.org. Any help is appreciated.

Now, I know that in last week's editorial I said I don't often disagree with the articles here, but this week again, I feel like I should make it known ahead of time that it does happen. In particular, The Great Warming Debate this week by S.D. Livingston has found some information about climate change and adjustments that are made of the temperature record. While she has a good point overall about how science needs to be careful, we as laymen also need to be careful when we're ascribing bias or felonious motives to science, because, as usual, when you look a little deeper in to the matter, it turns out things are not so simple.

To be specific, adjustments of recorded temperatures has always happened, and in fact has been called for by people arguing against human-caused climate change as the simple raw numbers are not fully descriptive either, due to various events that occur (such as changes in the housings of the equipment, changes in locations, and changes in the local environment around the equipment). So when one scientist claims systematic adjustments of temperatures in one direction, it always pays to look around and see if anybody else is saying anything about it, because the reality is, this world is full of cranks and dishonest people, but the internet gives everybody an equal voice.

Some think that that's the great thing about the internet, that all voices are made equal, but those people don't understand that there's such a thing as negative informational value. When we find a piece of information that is false, or misleading, that's information with a negative value, as it hampers us from being able to see objective reality. Should the people who believe in a flat earth, for instance, have an equal voice to everybody else? For myself, I take as a starting point for climate science debates the site <http://www.skepticalscience.com/> and go on to further research from there. For me, and for science, there's no doubt that the climate is changing, and that human released CO₂ has been the primary cause. The difficult part is figuring out what should be done about it, but until people who are releasing bad information about it are given as much voice as those who argue for a flat earth, we're going to have difficulty mustering the political will to accomplish meaningful steps.

But articles like that, which provoke thought and, ideally, response, are the kind of articles that I like to print. And we've got a few of those this week, from Deanna Roney's look at the dread of sending in an AU assignment, to the Writer's Toolbox look into helping you with creating your fiction, to our Council Connection or any of the rest of the articles. I expect everybody will find something in this week's issue that makes them think. Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl', with a stylized, flowing script.

MINDS WE MEET



Rémi Straus is an AU student from Ontario who lives in the Kingston area. He's taking a number of courses at AU in pursuit of his CPA designation.

Rémi was recently interviewed by The Voice Magazine about school, family, and philosophy.

Describe the path that led you to AU.

I'm basically near the end of my AU journey. I'm pursuing a CPA designation, and I needed a certain number of university level credits to meet the education requirements. I already have a degree—in Philosophy, from the University of Warwick in England—but needed to take 20 courses to fulfill the entry requirements of CPA. I've mainly been taking accounting and economics courses, and I'm just finishing my 17th course with Athabasca; the other three I have to take elsewhere.

I can't remember how I heard about AU, but I wish I'd found it earlier. I would have been much further ahead.

What do you do like to do when you're not studying?

Well, the time not studying is mostly taken up by family and work. We have a 4 ½-year-old and a 2-year-old so the time gets whittled away. I'm really into Eastern wisdom, so one thing I like to do when I have time is Tai Chi. Other things I enjoy doing are reading, meditating, swimming, and hiking. I'd like to get back into rock climbing, too, when I get the time. Last year, I participated in my first triathlon.

Who in your life had the greatest influence on your desire to learn?

I guess that would be my grandfather. He's quite an amazing fellow; he's 95 now. During the Second World War, he worked and studied and got a degree. He worked in chemistry and came up with a lot of compounds that are still in use today. Although he was a good influence, I don't think my desire to learn was turned on like a switch. I've always liked learning; school is something I enjoy.

What famous person, past or present, would you like to have lunch with, and why?

Good question. How about Buddha. I'd like to ask him, "Could you please help me help the world find peace."

Describe your experience with online learning so far. What do you like? Dislike?

What I really like is being able to work at my own pace. My time isn't constrained by specific deadlines. Because the time isn't structured, I can fit it in with family. However, what I don't like is the missed opportunities. It's completely lacking in classroom dynamics and discussion. There's also a lack of immediacy when you query

something. Because of the time-lag between question and response, by the time I receive an answer I've already moved on from what I was asking about.

When was the point where you wavered the most about whether it was worth it to continue your schooling, and what made you decide to keep going?

I haven't wavered, really. There have been moments when it seems a bit much, but I'm determined to reach my goals.

What's your most memorable AU course so far, and why?

There isn't one that really stands out. They've all had their positive and negative aspects and some I've enjoyed some more than others, but none stand out.

Describe the proudest moment in your life.

It's when I see our family together and happy. I delight in watching the kids playing and laughing and holding hands. It's the small daily moments that make me feel proud.

What have you given up to go to AU that you regret the most? Was it worth it?

Well, I don't have any regrets. I've given up work experience. And at times the intensity and pressure of having one exam after another has led to stress. At other times, I didn't have self-confidence which also leads to stress. In the end, though, everything worked out fine.

If you were the new president of AU, what would be your first project?

I would get hard-copy books back. This would be my number one priority. Certainly AU can offer e-texts but they should also offer hard-copy. E-texts just don't work for everyone. I'm buying my own textbooks and they run anywhere from \$45 to \$140.

If you were trapped on an island, what three things would you bring?

I'd like to have photos of my family. And a book on Buddhist teachings. And a water bottle, so I can have a drink of water as I walk around the island.

Describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people.

That would be my quirkiness. I have a good heart, and I mean well, but sometimes things just don't come out right.

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned in life?

We can change the world around us by how we are. We have a tremendous effect on other

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people. If we have a happy mind and a gentle smile, it can file the rough edges off others.

What do you think about e-texts?

I can't digest text from the screen. I've tried reading off computers, tablets, e-readers, but I just don't absorb the material. It does make a difference to have a paper text. The move to e-texts has been disastrous for me.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

In the business department it's mainly the Student Support Centre. It's good in a way, but it's also a pain-in-the-ass. You have to complete a request form for everything, even if it's just to say thank you. If you want to have a conversation with someone you have to wait. It's not a fluid process. I understand why they have this structure, but I prefer having tutors you can email directly.

Where has life taken you so far?

I'm from England and I've lived in several parts of it. I've also visited most corners and much of the mainland of the United Kingdom, for example, the Midlands, southwest England, London, the Isle of Arran in Scotland, and to the coasts of Wales and Ireland. I travelled through Greece for a month on my own, which was fantastic. I've also visited France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria. I haven't been to most of Africa but I did visit Egypt. Other places are Lanzerote Island (the easternmost island in the Canaries,) Jersey, Israel, Estonia, and Finland.

When I first came to Canada, I came to study as an exchange student for a year. The following summer, I took a train from Halifax to Vancouver. I've surfed on beaches in Tofino BC and in Nova Scotia. I've been to the United States, too. But I haven't been to Asia yet.

What (non-AU) book are you reading now?

I'm not reading anything except course books right now. There's just no time, but spending time with my family is what I should be doing right now anyway. If I was reading something for pleasure, I'd likely read Buddhist stuff.

DID YOU KNOW?**2014 TUITION, EDUCATION AND TEXTBOOK AMOUNTS CERTIFICATE**

Update from Athabasca University Financial Services...

Athabasca University Financial Services is pleased to announce that the official 2014 Tuition, Education and Textbook Tax Credit Certificate (T2202A) forms will be available on-line by the end of February to all eligible students. The forms will not be mailed out and instead are on-line in printable format for all students to access. Please visit AU's web site at www.athabascau.ca for further details on obtaining your tuition and education and textbook tax credit information for your 2014 tax return. You can go to 'Questions? Ask AU' under Contact menu bar at the left side of AU web site and enter "What is a T2202A" in the search box.

Interview Skills for Every Day

Barabara Lehtiniemi



Interviewing skills are not just for interviews. While we usually associate interviews with job-hunting and journalism, interviewing skills have their place in the everyday. When you're the interviewer, you generally want to extract some information from the interviewee. There are many areas of life in which someone else possesses information you would like to know.

Before we look at interviewing skills, let's examine a few situations in which you can apply these skills:

- You're shopping for a product with which you have limited knowledge. You want to ask the salesperson about it.
- Your daughter is bringing her new boyfriend to meet you for the first time. You want to interrogate him, but gently.
- You're floundering in your AU course. You don't understand the last chapter you read and you're not sure what you're supposed to do for the assignment. You want to phone your tutor for help.
- Your teenager is barely home from school before he's holed himself up in his room. At dinner, you want to find out about his day.

In each of these cases, you want to extract information that you can use for understanding, for ease of mind, or to make a decision. You aren't trying to intimidate, interrogate, or trap. You just want to know.

Many journalists follow the Sawatsky method of interviewing. Developed by John Sawatsky, this method is designed to get the purest quality information. Sawatsky, a Canadian journalist, teaches interviewing techniques worldwide. The following tips, which can be used in everyday situations, are based on his method:

- Prepare. Make a list of questions ahead of time. This will discourage you from thinking about the next question when you should be listening to the answer from the previous one. It will also prevent you from forgetting to ask something important.
- Avoid closed questions. If you ask a question that can be answered with a "yes" or "no," that is probably the answer you'll get. Begin questions with "what" or "how" or "why" to get the fullest answers. Compare "Do you like your job?" with "What do you like about your job?"
- Avoid overbroad questions. Asking a question that is too broad invites a vague answer because the interviewee really doesn't know what you're asking. Focus your question on something specific. Compare "How was school today?" with "What was the class you enjoyed most today?"
- Avoid double-barrelled questions. A two-part question often generates a one-part answer; the second part of your question will likely be ignored, even if it was the most important part. Keep questions short and simple.
- Keep wording neutral. Avoid emotionally-charged words that may provoke a negative response. Compare "Why did you give me such a crappy mark on my essay?" with "How did you arrive at my essay mark?"

- Keep yourself out of the interview. Don't interrupt when the interviewee is responding. Don't finish sentences. Don't ramble on about your views or experiences.
- Listen. When the interviewee is responding to a question you should be doing nothing except listening.
- Don't argue or be adversarial. Nothing makes someone clam up quicker than feeling they're being attacked for their views, actions, feelings, judgement, or opinions. If you disagree with something the interviewee says, ask a question like "Why is that?"
- Go deeper. Use the responses as opportunities to go deeper. "Tell me more." "Why do you say that?" "How did that make you feel?" "What else do you know?" "Is there anything important I haven't asked you?"

As with most communication skills, the more you practice, the better you get. Think of some situations where you could practice—say, the next time you call your tutor—and soon your information-gathering skills will become second nature. Then you'll gain possession of the information you need to know.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to realize that every little bit of effort accumulates exponentially over time and can, and likely will, position you for a life-changing opportunity.

Well, in these articles, as The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the study tips you need to help make your learning easier. I'll also give you straight and honest opinions and personal anecdotes—even the embarrassing ones that you wouldn't ever dare read about from any other study tip guru.

Writing Essays for Dummies guide by Mary Page and Dr. Carrie Winstanley is a book for anyone but dummies.

Reorganize Your First Draft? Try the Headings Approach

Recently, I wrote a 25-page book intended for publication in Kindle format. A friend looked over the initial draft, commenting that the ideas were disorganized and fragmented. Discouraged, I sought out the advice of my published brother, who relayed that writing with discontinuity in the first draft is part of the process of writing a book. He advised that I should stick with it and find a system to help better restructure the book with each subsequent draft.

Resolving my issue, Page and Winstanley (2009) presented a system for reorganizing a paper/book that I thought I would actually try implementing. Namely, they advise students to do the following:

- add a heading to each paragraph that encapsulates the essence of the paragraph,
- ensure that each paragraph emphasizes one and only one idea,
- restructure the paragraphs so that they are better clustered.

- turn each paragraph heading into a topic sentence once the paper is fully reorganized.

I'm in the process of working with this system, and it is easy to implement and provides a well-needed transparency.

However, I would advise students to spend most of their time in the outlining/research stages, where relevant quotes are placed directly in an outline such that each and every paragraph has ample supporting quotes (or even opposing views that you negotiate), preferably ones that build on each other.

In Microsoft Word, if you go to the menu heading "view" and then click on "outline" in the "document views" grouping, you can work in a simple outline interface that can later be converted to "print layout" quite readily. Using cue cards or mind maps are an alternative approach to the Word outline. Just ensure that you have ample quotes, logically grouped and organized, to support each branch in the mind map.

Form a Solid, Well-Backed Position in Your Papers

As you are aware, knowing what the literature says about your topic is crucial to success in academia. You don't want to draft up your opinions without leveraging what the critics and proponents have to say first.

When I was in graduate studies, I came across the real and pressing issue of how to insert my own perspectives into my writing. You probably have, at some point or another, experienced the same dilemma. On one hand, it is fundamental to let the ideas of other researchers guide the content of your writing. On the other hand, your own views and opinions should not be overlooked. So, what is the secret formula?

In next week's article, I will give some provocative insights provided by another book on how to engage and build your arguments from other researchers' ideas. For now, here are some guidelines by Page and Winstanley (2009) to give you a solid footing in backing up your position:

- Let the research quotes that you accumulate on any given essay topic dictate the final conclusion that you reach. In other words, let the evidence guide your overall assessment.
- It is okay to start writing your paper with a particular view, but be open-minded: let the evidence sway your perspective accordingly.
- Be certain that you are familiar with and cite the key proponent and opponents of your particular paper's conclusion.
- If you are writing your paper with both pros and cons, thereby giving a balanced perspective, let the side that is more weighted with evidence govern your final conclusion.
- Accumulate enough evidence to make a stand and provide reasonable support before making your final assessment on your position.

In next week's article, we'll entertain how to insert your own views—yes, your opinions matter in academic writing—how to effectively disagree or agree with the research, and how to express ambivalence in your position.

Edit Your Paper Wisely

After writing your first draft, you need to spend some time, usually beyond just a few days, editing and revising. When I was in undergraduate studies I would write the first draft and then have a good night's rest before tackling the editing process. I would space out the edits with a day or two, or sometimes three, depending on how early I finished. I would also print out the draft and work from a paper copy, later transferring all edits to

the computer. As an additional hedge, I would name each edited draft file with a suffix of "-Draft1", "-Draft2", and so forth. When I was in graduate studies, my thesis had over a 100 drafts in total.

But what if you don't have several days to do the editing? Page and Winstanley (2009) have advice on how you can peruse your draft with a fresh set of eyes for effective editing:

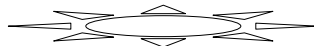
- Be sure to print out your document for proofreading and editing purposes. Mark the paper itself before transferring the changes to the computer document.
- Find a quiet place in which to make edits.
- Slow down your reading pace, and use a ruler to guide your eyes across each line.
- If you read aloud, the process of verbalizing your essay will slow you down, enabling more streamlined editing.
- Read the document backwards, if you can, to ensure that you catch all spelling errors, word omissions, and repeated words.
- Change up the font color or size to make the document seem brand new. This, too, may help you address your paper from a clean slate.
- Have a friend or someone from your class proofread the document

At the Student's Union website, there is a program called the Study Buddy. One option for making this program work for you is to connect with another student from your class at your general academic grade level and to edit each other's papers. Make sure that this is acceptable by your program coordinator before proceeding.

So, there's nothing to fear. The Study Dude is determined to make right for you all the wrongs I made in grad school—one A+ at a time.

References

Page, Mary, & Winstanley, Carrie. (2009). *Writing Essays for Dummies*. West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons.



Stress without Deadlines

Deanna Roney



When I began my first course with Athabasca University I remember being very unsure about my first assignment. Pressing that send button (as it was an email submission) was very stressful! I moved forward and had my first Moodle submission, which made me press that dreaded button several times; "Submit", "Are you sure?", "Last chance!" At least, that's how they read to me. I had assumed that eventually submitting an assignment would get easier. Approximately 50 credits and countless assignments later I am beginning to accept the reality that it will never get easier.

I pondered this, after feeling that familiar pit in my stomach as I went to submit my more recent assignment, why is this so stressful? While we never

know how we did until we get our assignment back, we must have an idea of how well we met requirements

before submitting. I took a semester at a bricks and mortar(B&M) university before a long break and eventual enrollment in AU, so, granted, my memory may be leaving some of the stress unaccounted for. But I do not recall feeling the same level of stress with those assignments, as I do with each and every assignment I hand in with AU.

There are many differences between AU and a B&M university. Could it be the classroom setting that makes assignment submission easier? With AU, while we have great tutor and peer support, it is a virtual presence and not the same as physically attending school. We rely heavily on ourselves to understand the course material. However, I do not think this is why I found it easier to hand in assignments in the B&M university. I find I am more able to stay focused and understand the course information with AU's style of education than I did at the B&M school. Possibly the biggest difference is that at a B&M university you have strict deadlines, you are very limited to the time you have to dedicate to a specific assignment. You do not, at least in my experience, get to look ahead to an assignment and pre-plan as you work through the course material. With AU you are able to look ahead to the assignments and you have plenty, almost unlimited time, to plan, edit, and re-edit. With only self-imposed deadlines to restrict you; as any procrastinator knows those deadlines are all easily bumped.

I think that it is this lack of a deadline that makes finalizing an assignment so much more stressful. With a definite deadline, while you may be sure you could improve it, by editing, editing, and editing some more, you will eventually run out of time and have to call it, and hand it in as it is. With AU you could edit yourself crazy! You have to make the call, you have to decide when your assignment is worthy of being called complete. You are making the conscious decision that that assignment is either A) "Good to go!" or B) "Whatever, I am tired of this, I am done!" Meaning that when you get your mark back you have no one but yourself to lay the blame on. It is not unrealistic time constraints set forth by the professor, it is not that you did your best in the time given. No, you are held 100% accountable and responsible for the mark you get. So either you get a good mark, and you can feel proud of yourself, or you get a poor mark, and feel ashamed at the haste in which you handed the assignment in when it clearly could have used a closer look and a few more rounds of editing.

I have had many different experiences when handing in assignments. I have had my "A" classification, where I believe in my paper, and believe the countless rounds of editing have caught errors and polished my paper. I still feel nervous submitting it to the tutor, wondering "am I being overconfident?" doubting why I feel this paper is done, "I'm probably missing something really important, I shouldn't feel this sure." I have also had more than my share of "B" classifications, thinking "Whatever! I am tired of this, and I am done!" I hope for a half decent mark but feel a sense of dread, believing I will regret my haste (though not enough to look at it any longer) but submit it anyway. In each of these experiences results have varied, some turned out good, some great, and some I would rather forget. Regardless of my confidence on a given assignment I never escape that pit of stress in my stomach, which always amplifies x1000 when I get a notification that the assignment has been returned. Whatever I am doing gets immediately dropped, and my hands shake as I try to log into myAU to see my results.

I suppose what fun would it be if we did not have these ups and downs? It would be like getting on a rollercoaster, preparing yourself for the ride of your life, and never getting over a walking pace. This emotional rollercoaster makes the experience that much more rewarding. At least that is what I tell myself as my heart slowly thuds when I submit an assignment, and races when I get one back.

Deanna Roney is an AU student who loves adventure in life and literature.

In Conversation ..with Adam Moore

Wanda Waterman



The Pinkertons Creator is a Television Maverick

"Allan Pinkerton . . . saw the way the police went about their work, and he didn't like it, so he came up with a new methodology for solving crime. My writing partner Kevin Abrams and I are the same way. We looked at the way television was created and developed, and wanted to do it differently."

- Adam Moore

Adam Moore is the creative whirlwind behind the new television series *The Pinkertons*, for which he wrote the screenplay and also works as executive producer. He received an MFA in Screenwriting from the American Film Institute Conservatory, where he was awarded the Richard Levinson Award for artistic excellence. In addition to screenplays he writes video games and comic books. Recently he took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about the show and what life conditions brought him to this juncture in his life.

Did you read a lot of comic books as a child?

Not comic books. I was much more into video games and role-playing games, especially *Star Wars* role-playing games. I've always been attracted to big, expansive worlds that you can get lost in and tell an infinite number of stories in.

What kinds of movies and television shows did you prefer as a child?

I grew up on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, but I was always into genre. I remember watching old John Wayne westerns with my grandfather when I was very young. Science Fiction of any sort was big with Young Adam, especially anything with transforming robots. *Robotech*—a Japanese import with an epic storyline—had a very big impact on me.

What was your most beneficial educational experience?

When I was an undergrad at NYU I interned for Hollywood Producer Scott Rudin for over a year. It was the first time I got out of the academic headspace of filmmaking and into the nuts and bolts of it. I learned more about how the business works in my first few months there than in all my time in school.

The runner-up would be my time in grad school at the American Film Institute Conservatory. Such an amazing experience to be surrounded by the most talented young filmmakers in the world for two years.

What elements in your childhood and family history pointed you toward the kind of multimedia creativity you practice today?

I grew up playing video games. I was obsessed with Nintendo, and then Super Nintendo. Games are all about "story worlds" that characters can inhabit and explore, either in a directed experience or a "sandbox" experience (like *Grand Theft Auto*). I still create worlds today. The world of *The Pinkertons* lends itself to an infinite number of stories because it is so rich and detailed. Yes, it focuses on a small handful of central characters, but the world is big enough to bring in new characters, new crimes, and new plots.

Does everything you do connect, or do you do some things that have nothing to do with your writing?

I have a rich and full life outside of my writing. I think that's incredibly important. If all you do is write, and you don't spend any time living, then what do you have to write about?

Do you identify with any of the characters in *The Pinkertons*?

I have always identified with Allan Pinkerton because he's a maverick. He was a barrel maker in Chicago. He saw the way the police went about their work, and he didn't like it, so he came up with a new methodology for solving crime. My writing partner Kevin Abrams and I are the same way. We looked at the way television was created and developed, and we wanted to do it differently.

What peculiar casting challenges does this story present?

It's important to find actors who look like they could exist in the 1860's. You didn't have many interracial families during this time, so we're not looking for exotic. For Allan Pinkerton, we wanted to find a natural-born Scotsman who could be both tough and brilliant.

The great Angus MacFadyen was a dream casting for us. He is actually from Glasgow, just like Allan Pinkerton. For Will Pinkerton, we needed an actor who could also be tough and handsome, with a roguish wit. Had to make us laugh and cry. Jacob Blair came in and read for the role and blew everyone away. It was clear early on that he was the perfect choice.

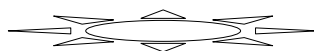


And with Kate Warne, the world's first female detective, the actress had to be beautiful, intelligent, and tough as nails (a woman thriving in a man's profession) but also vulnerable. When Martha MacIsaac said she was interested in the role, we couldn't have been more thrilled. Her looks, her range, her toughness – she's like Kate Warne reincarnated. Maybe she is?

How do you feel about this historical period and the Pinkertons story?

For me, the 1860's are the most interesting time in American history. After the Civil War, the country struggled to define itself while at the same time expanding deep into the western frontier. It was also becoming an industrialized nation, with the railroad, telegraph, and soon after that electricity, the light bulb, etc. It's an exciting era of transition.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.



The Mindful Bard

Urban Fruit

Wanda Waterman



Mistress Mary, Quite Contrary,
How Does Your Urban Farm Grow?

Film: [Urban Fruit](#)

Director: Roman Zenz

"Hey farmer, farmer,
Put away that DDT now.
Give me spots on my apples,
But leave me the birds and the bees—
Please!

Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'Til it's gone?
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot."
- from "Big Yellow Taxi" by Joni Mitchell

An endless growing season, ample water, and fertile soil rendered Los Angeles a prime agricultural region and a highly desirable destination for European settlers for centuries. But you wouldn't guess this today; when you see the miles of gimme-a-burgers and hear about how far the locals have to go to buy fresh lettuce, you just have to ask: *what happened?*

What happened? The free market happened, covering prime farmland with concrete and moving farming to the city environs, where large corporations now oversee sprawling tracts of monoculture, and shareholder profits take precedence over health, happiness, and social justice.

Those without green thumbs sometimes view urban farming as just another instance of hipster posing, but on closer inspection we see these diggers and harvesters as a vast underground army undermining the power of the very industrial food complex that brings us fatty fast food, cancer-causing chemicals, genetically modified produce, and economic dependency.

Ron Finley inadvertently launched an impromptu public awareness program by showing the absurdity of a law forbidding him to grow food on the little strip of land beside his house. (His Tedtalk is well worth a listen.) His t-shirt reads "Plant some shit," and many of the young people in his neighborhood are taking the mantra to heart, seeing urban farming as a cool way to self-actualize. For Ron urban farming isn't just a way to become self-sufficient; it's a political statement, an active refusal to be a victim of Big Food.

Watching Ron pick ripe lemons from a tree in the yard of a neighbor that didn't even know how many lemon trees she had reminds me of recent memories of walking through a New England town and seeing trees packed with apples that no one thought of picking, as if getting food directly from its source had become perversely unthinkable. Ron is slowly turning this line of thinking on its head.

Rishi, who gave up a programming career in Silicon Valley to move in with his upper middle class parents and plant a garden in their backyard, highlights the blessings and pitfalls of trying to turn a beloved avocation into a means of prosperity. If he can support himself in this way he can prove the holistic value of this kind of work, justifying fulltime urban farming to his more skeptical family members. But the difficulty of making this a feasible career goal leads us to fear that the very conditions that ploughed the small family farms under might now lead to the demise of the urban farming movement.

For Adam and Jenna the process of becoming urban farmers was as slow and organic as farming itself. It all started with Jenna's hankering for the delicious tomatoes of her childhood. Adam's attempt to help her with her growing obsession with growing became a catalyst for a gradually expanding city homestead (including laying hens).

Through the development of Adam and Jenna's little home farm and their deepening relationship with each other and their community, we see that relationship itself is the ghost in the machine. The reason why the industrial food complex is the enemy is that it has eroded the cement that has bonded human beings to each other and to the earth for millennia.

The look of this documentary is unusually simple for such a complex topic, as if the tranquil nature of the urban farmers' lives casts its glow onto the film itself. Zenz addresses his subject matter by selecting a small handful of urban farmers in Los Angeles and getting them to tell their stories.

There's only a smattering of expert commentary, but what we find of it is spot on, pointing us to the wider significance and repercussions of urban farming in the world at large.

Seed activist Vandana Shiva puts it all in a nutshell by pointing out how growing organic food in the city is an enlightened activity that bonds and strengthens humanity and underpins the growth of social justice and equality.

The cinematography brings out the tactile, sensual quality of gardening; the images of dirt, leaf, and loving hands are lovely, detailed, and sun-washed. Rather than bombard the viewer with dogma, the deeper meaning of urban gardening is brought to the fore because of the oasis of simplicity that the director has created.

It's a happy ending. Ron wins his fight against narrow-minded municipal planners, Rishi starts making a living teaching others how to garden organically, and Jenna and Adam's home becomes a hub for urban gardening awareness, a place where city dwellers' minds can be opened to the joys of growing and eating food from one's own backyard and growing closer to each other in the process.

Urban Fruit manifests five of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing.

- It's about attainment of the true self.
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.
- It displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering.
- It renews my enthusiasm for positive social action.
- It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Following what's hot around AU's social media sites.

AUSU Student Forums

In the Toronto Social Group forum, Hathim is looking for course suggestions to finish off the final 6 credits of his degree. And over in the British Columbia Social Group forum, Katie is hoping to connect with a ride from Prince George to Edmonton, February 16-18, in order to attend a chemistry lab.

Other topics include students involved in curling, and a study buddy for science.

AthaU Facebook Group

Dylan seeks tips on MUSI 267. Lisa is wondering why the initial topics in courses PSYC 289 and 290 cover the same material. And Holly wants to know if anyone else is experiencing delays in receiving marks from tutors.

Other postings include tips for the MATH 214 midterm exam, applying for graduation, and courses ANTH 272, HIST 309, LGST 553, POEC 483, and WGST 425.

Twitter

@AUAnnounce tweets: "Don't miss the Feb. 15 early-bird registration for this great conference on #openeducation design and strategy. <http://ow.ly/FfJHk>."

And @AthabascaU tweets: "Countdown to the new AU-MOOC: Learning to Learn Online! Starts March 9th <http://ow.ly/ITSd6>."

International News Desk

At Home and Abroad



At Home: York University Votes for Strike

Contract faculty, teaching assistants, graduate assistants and research assistants are all included in the 80% of CUPE local 3903 that voted to go on strike at York University. Over 40% of the workforce cast ballots, which was the largest turn-out in ten years, reports the *Canadian Labour Reporter*. These people represent over half of the teaching staff at the university, but only 8% of its budget according to the union. Interestingly, in addition to the demands for increased job security and funding for graduate students, there was also a call to reduce the tuition fees for international students at the university.

Around the Globe: Can't Graduate? Go to the U of West Scotland!

In an attempt to become more competitive in the global post-secondary marketplace, the University of West Scotland is proposing a plan whereby international students who are unable to graduate even after attending all of the universities support and development opportunities would be able have their fees refunded. *The PIE News*, which is reporting this story, also reports that the Vice President of the National Union of Students in Scotland has declared their concerns with the plan, wanting to make sure that any such ideas are also "ensuring we reject any notions of marketisation or seeing students as customers of a product"

The Travelling Student Get With the Program

Philip Kirkbride



My name is Philip Kirkbride. I'm a college graduate from Ontario studying at AU. I've always wanted to do an exchange program or study abroad but never found the right time to do so. This is part fifteen in the story of how Athabasca University has allowed me to create my own study abroad program.

Over a month had passed since I'd first moved to Quebec City. I was really enjoying it to say the least. I'd found a cheap room near the University of Laval on Kijiji for only \$350 a month. While I lived near the University I spent most of my time in a neighbourhood called Saint Roch.

Saint Roch has a working class feel but recent investments have improved the area. Now the area has a bohemian feel to it as well. The other benefit of Saint Roch is the abundance of cheap, quality food. One restaurant worth mentioning is *Le Bureau De Poste*. While Matt was visiting Quebec for a weekend I decided we'd give the restaurant a shot based on the huge line of people that were regularly waiting to get in. We were pleasantly surprised. With everything on the menu being five dollars we decided to go big, ordering three entrees for each of us. Each entrée was a meal in itself of excellent quality. If you go and decide to order only one thing I recommend the Sheppard's Pie or as they call it in French Pate Chinois (Chinese pate).

While I'd been staying in Quebec City (and excelling at my Athabasca courses) Matt had been travelling from small city to small city with the brush cutting company. He was seeing a side of Quebec that few ever would, regularly staying in motels in remote villages. The brushing season would go until Christmas but he had plans to head to Australia for cherry season come November.

All Canadians aged 18-31 are eligible for a year-long working holiday visa in Australia. If, during your first working holiday visa, you work 88 days of regional farm work you can qualify for a second working holiday visa. Matt had done a working holiday visa four years earlier and had worked somewhere between 60-100 days. He had no idea on the exact numbers and isn't exactly the most skilled when it comes to paperwork.

If you're in your early 30s and are interested in taking a working holiday, New Zealand offers a similar program which is open to Canadians aged 18-36.

During Matt's trip into Quebec City we found ourselves at the library sorting through piles of paperwork. After a few hours of sorting everything out I realized that he had technically worked 74 days. However, the Australian government would verify how long he worked by looking at his bank statement, which would only show bi-weekly payments. This verification method gave us some leeway to exaggerate the days he'd worked. We wrote down that he had worked 91 days and hoped for the best.

I had no idea if I would go if Matt's application was rejected. We, of course, feared the possibility that prices for our flights would sky-rocket as the date approached. Though there was not much I could do, I decided the best thing would be to get ahead in my classes while I waited to find out.

Primal Numbers

The Great Warming Debate

S.D. Livingston



From melting glaciers to scorching droughts, there's no doubt the earth's climate is changing. And if you follow the headlines and study the scientific models, it's clear that global warming is responsible. Or is it? A closer look at the numbers raises some serious doubts—and questions about just how far some scientists will go to prove a theory.

The doubts about global warming data aren't anything new. And they aren't just the invention of conspiracy theorists or flat-out climate deniers. For years, both amateur and professional climate trackers have followed the latest research with interest. As this *Telegraph* [article](#) reports, one of the

first red flags was raised back in 2007 by a statistician named Steve McIntyre.

The problem that McIntyre uncovered was the deliberate manipulation of temperature records to show a warming trend instead of what the data really pointed to: a cooling trend. More recently, Paul Homewood did a [blog post](#) about the same issue. He first examined weather stations across South America then the Arctic. In almost every case, the *Telegraph* writes, "the same one-way adjustments have been made, to show warming up to 1 degree C or more higher than was indicated by the data that was actually recorded."

No matter which point along the climate-change spectrum you're on, all this may seem academic. Nothing but a bunch of pointless posturing when the planet is faced with a serious global problem. After all, there's plenty of proof that the polar ice is, in fact, melting. Highly informed and engaged sources like David Suzuki and the World Health Organization are among those who believe, as the United Nations [notes](#), that global warming "is happening now and is having very real consequences on people's lives."

With the devastation of extreme weather events plain for anyone to see, what difference does it make if a few scientists are manipulating the data to prove their theory? It matters a lot, because spending time and energy trying to fix the wrong issues could end up endangering millions more lives.

Suppose, for instance, that the melting ice caps and abnormal drought conditions are the result of complex patterns leading to another ice age. That theory has plenty of supporters, including some members of Canada's National Research Council. As this *National Post* [article](#) reports, at least one researcher believes that we're "in for a long period of severely cold weather if sunspot activity does not pick up soon."

If that's true, and temperature fluctuations and extreme storms are actually leading us into another ice age, falsified data could have everyone running around preparing for a heat wave instead. Ten or twenty years later, when the period of instability shifts to a consistent drop in temperature, no one is prepared. They've all stocked up on sandbags and air conditioning when what they really needed was efficient heating systems and warm clothing. It's not hard to see how misleading data could needlessly endanger millions of people.

That's a simplified scenario, but the truth is that we can't yet be absolutely certain why or how fast our climate is changing. Sorting current data against historical climate patterns is an incredibly complex undertaking. The causes are plentiful, from greenhouse gases to natural cycles, and involve influences as varied as human activity and solar flares. The fact that the climate is changing isn't in doubt. The reasons still are.

And that's why it's absolutely critical that no one, especially scientists, should play fast and loose with the data. Because the last thing we need is someone pulling the wool over our eyes—no matter what the temperature is.

S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.



Writer's Toolbox: Perspectives in Fiction

Love is Blind

Christina M. Frey



The man: a tall, broad-shouldered god with a chiseled face and strong, capable hands.

The woman: a gorgeous, black-haired beauty, slim and toned, with gentle features and a heart-shaped face.

The plot: They meet and fall in love.

Sound familiar? That's because you've seen it before—over and over and over.

We're visual people, and the description of appearance is one way to create mood and pull your readers into the story. But attraction and attractiveness are a lot more complex than whatever traits will get your characters onto any gossip magazine's Top 100 list.

Attraction, we know, is only partly based on physical appearance. But even physical attractiveness is relative. In reality, most men

don't have chiseled faces, square jaws, and broad shoulders, and most women aren't tall, slender, and leggy. Yet they live rich love lives: make connections, fall in love, break each other's hearts, and engage in steamy, passionate affairs.

Making your romantic leads physically stunning risks them becoming boring, cliché characters—cookie-cutter people whose main claim to romance seems to be good looks. That's old, and it's been done. But realism—touched with the brush of romance—can lead to believable, relatable characters that your readers will fall in love with and remember long after the book is finished.

Instead of outlining your characters' overall earth-shattering gorgeousness, focus on a single small detail that makes them stand out—the dimple on their chin, or the way their eyes light up when they talk about their passion for history. One of the authors I work with has made a point *not* to make her lovers desperately

attractive—at least not to the rest of the world. But the two notice each other's best physical features, and those are what they dwell on. One of the heroines looks pale and tired, but her lover isn't attracted to someone with rosy cheeks. In fact, to him, her paleness is mysterious and alluring. To the right person, ordinary looks extraordinary; describing that trait through the eyes of a lover is what makes it memorable.

Alternatively, think about what little quirks might be attractive or endearing in their own way. Maybe he loves the way her nose tilts just the tiniest bit upwards. Maybe she thinks his widow's peak makes him look distinguished. Maybe she likes to rest her head in her partner's soft lap. Love may be blind, but it can also transform would-be flaws into a source of beauty.

Remember, too, that the physical aspects of a person involve more than static features, like a handsome nose or long black hair. If you picture your own lovers—past or present—what comes to mind? Mannerisms, like a particular swing to a walk or the way a person's whole body laughs with them, can be one of a character's most beloved traits. They also add a little variety to physical descriptions and create a fuller image for the reader.

If you still think ordinary-looking characters will kill the romantic mood you're trying to create, consider Shakespeare's "Sonnet 130." The poet's lover is no goddess, he admits, but he also suggests that it's ridiculous to compare her to one. Watch how the passion simmers off the page:

*"My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.*

*I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.*

*I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.*

*And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare."*

When building a romance between your characters, don't be afraid to let love find ordinary people. You might just find that their experience transforms them—and you.

Christina M. Frey is a book editor, literary coach, and lover of great writing. For more tips and techniques for your toolbox, follow her on Twitter (@turntopage2) or visit her [blog](#).

Council Connection

Barbara Lehtiniemi



There's nothing like a debate to add a little spice to a council meeting. And one of the advantages of being a student observer is that I don't have to weigh in with my views (observers at regular AUSU council meetings have no standing and cannot speak to an issue even if they want to.) So, I just sit back, phone muted, and listen and try to learn.

The meeting of Wednesday, February 11 began ten minutes late due to two late arrivals. At 5:42 MST, the meeting got underway despite the absence of one councillor (who joined the meeting later.) Another councillor was absent with approval—she's just had a baby.

After the usual approvals of agenda and minutes, council moved on to a series of policies that were up for review. Policies 1.01 *Creation, Format, Maintenance & Review*, 3.01 *Election Conduct*, 7.02.20 (point 4) *Scholarship, Awards & Bursaries*, 9.05 *Technology Infrastructure*, 9.07 *Base Operating Funding*, 9.10 *Athabasca University National Presence*, and 9.21 *Career Services* were approved with minor or no amendments. New policy 3.05 *Council Changeover*, which consists of items formerly included in policy 3.01, was approved for adoption.

One policy, 9.15 *Awards GPA Calculation*, sparked a lengthy debate. The recommendation was to repeal this policy and, after a motion was made to that effect, a lengthy discussion ensued. Policy 9.15 is a position policy which recognizes that the GPA calculation made by AU for awards and scholarships is cumulative. That means that a single low grade, no matter how early in a student's career and no matter what the circumstance, can effectively bar a student from consideration for awards based on GPA.

Here was the policy's wording before the meeting took place:

"WHEREAS Athabasca University currently uses a cumulative GPA calculation for all scholarships and awards;

WHEREAS a cumulative average does not give recognition for trends in a student's performance or recognize an improvement in a student's average over time;

WHEREAS students should not be removed from consideration for awards due to poor performance in a single year, or over a few courses, or many years in the past;

AND WHEREAS Athabasca University currently calculates its annual Honours List based on 30 credit intervals that resemble traditional academic years rather than cumulative GPAs;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT AUSU petition Athabasca University to change its current scholarship and awards GPA calculation from a cumulative average to a credit interval system which recognizes recent performance trends in a student's degree program;"

Policy 9.15 was created in 2005. On February 11, 2015, it was repealed. Not all councillors agreed with the motion; the final vote was 5-2. The consensus was that AU is never going to change, so why bother lobbying for change? Opposing voices pointed out that the cumulative GPA calculation was unfair to students, and even if AUSU wasn't currently lobbying for change, it did no harm to have the policy in place.

The final segment of the council meeting consisted of reports from various members and committees. As a meeting observer, I don't have access to the reports until they're posted on the AUSU [website](#), usually a month or so after the meeting. However, here's a brief summary of what was discussed:

- AU's Board of Director's chair Barry Walker is retiring after 10 years on the board.
- AUSU's health plan is well underway. Enrolment is a bit slower than anticipated.

- Finance committee reports that a review of *The Voice's* finances identified a large sum of money in *The Voice's* bank account.
- AUSU's office is sending out student planners to fill orders. An additional 300 planners were distributed to the collaborations department.

Wednesday's meeting wrapped up at 6:54pm MST.

Next AUSU council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at 5:30pm MST via teleconference. Contact AUSU at admin@ausu.org to register to attend.

Click of the Wrist

Year of the Sheep

This coming Thursday marks the Lunar New Year, the kickoff day for Chinese New Year celebrations. But did you know that Chinese astrologers recognize two different new years based on two different calendars? That the Lunar New Year festival is 15 days long? Click through these links for more on the meaning behind the traditions (and what the Year of the Sheep might mean for you).

All About That Date

While some consider February 4 the start of the new year for astrological purposes, the Lunar New Year changes each year. This article explains the nature of the lunar calendar and how it's used to calculate the date of each year's festival.

Celebrate

Though in the Western world it only gets one day of press, the Lunar New Year festival is a two-week event full of rich holiday traditions. In this piece you can learn about traditional food, decorations, events, and symbols of the new year—you might just decide to wear a little red for luck, too!

The Year Ahead

2015 is the Year of the Goat (or Sheep); according to Chinese astrology, this year will bring different fortunes to the 12 zodiac signs. Discover your Chinese zodiac sign using [this calculator](#), and then find out what's in store for you in 2015.





Now We Know

We've been hearing about how much people enjoyed their cruise ship vacations. The destination or specific cruise line chosen didn't seem to really matter. "You should try it, you'll love it. Oh, yeah, we go every year."

Remember mom asking, "If all your friends were jumping off a bridge would you jump too?" Apparently the answer is yes because we booked a Western Caribbean cruise. How else would we know for sure? The free drink package had our travel agent doing cartwheels.

I'm writing this the day after our return from a seven-day cruise on Holland America's Nieuw Amsterdam ship. When people ask how we liked it I say, "The jury is still out."

That particular ship is mid-sized with about 2200 passengers and about 900 staff, largely Indonesian and Philippine. It is not a kid ship or a party boat like some of the others. It's well appointed and places a strong emphasis on safety and hygiene.

There is much to be said of taking seven days to simply relax, read, enjoy a beverage, move when the spirit moves you. There is no shortage of activities to fill one's days and nights. Yet this Type A didn't feel the need to tear from one place to another so as not to miss anything.

The food was delicious and abundant and prepared by world-class chefs. Our dinner companions were a little, well, old. The youngest at our table was eighty-two. We brought the average age down slightly. Don't get me wrong...I have nothing against old people. One day I hope to be one! I pride myself on being able to talk to anyone and I did. This couple, not knowing a word of English, emigrated to NYC from Holland fifty-eight years ago. Like most immigrants of then (and now) they worked hard to build a life from scratch. The other couple was obviously wealthy and well traveled. Unfortunately they spent most of their second week aboard in sickbay.

Speaking of which, I thought I would simply put mind over matter and convince my head and gut that the gentle swaying of the boat was nothing, nothing at all. About an hour in, I knew that was hooey. A nap helped but by evening I was popping a little miracle pill for motion sickness. Only one day was unpleasantly choppy.

The weakness of our Canadian dollar took the shopping wind out of our sails, er sales despite all the talk of tax-free, duty-free shopping. I did however come home with a pair of 14k tanzanite studs and pendant so all was not lost. A clearance sale on board near the end of the week netted me a distinctive Valentino handbag...oh, yeah.

At the ports of call, the best part was taking in the incredible, indescribable turquoise blue of the sea. (God doesn't make junk.) The worst was the shopping. It's almost as though they saw us coming.

So while this wasn't the best vacation ever, it certainly wasn't the worst either. And now we know, from where I sit.

Music Review

"White Washed Walls"

Samantha Stevens



Artist: Yes Nice

Single: "White Washed Walls"

Sometimes a song that is unusual and eclectic has a way of sticking with you. "White Washed Walls" is one such song. The various elements in the song combine to create music that seemingly shouldn't sound good, but oddly enough it does. And what's more, the song has a strange power that encourages your creativity to take center stage in your mind, and you may find yourself creating something as unique as this song.

Yes Nice was formed in 2010 and began as a duo-recording project, but they soon grew into a full band. Originally from Edmonton, they've since moved to Vancouver. Their sound is a blend of 80s rhythm and funk with modern electronic. The result? A spontaneous splash of chaotic sound that has

been harnessed to create memorable songs you'll be singing in your head for days to come.

When listening to "White Washed Walls" I found their unique sound a blend of various alternative music bands like Ok Go, Tame Impala, Mother Mother, and Milky Chance, but the band Yes Nice is truly in a league all their own. In many ways their music is incomparable.

"White Washed Walls" is a single from the band's second album *Warm Gun*. The song starts with a fun 80s electronic beat which is then combined with a more electronic sound. The vocals are almost dreamlike, and the lyrics are equally ethereal. The entire song feels like it originates from somewhere deep in the imagination, as if it is being sung by someone laying on a grassy hill staring up at the plethora of fluffy white clouds that are lazily drifting across the cerulean sky.

I must admit that when I first listened to the song, I wasn't overly excited about it. But as I listened to it again and again while writing this review, I became very fond of it. Just as Yes Nice's music is not defined by a genre, "White Washed Walls" takes an image of something so seemingly ordinary (the white washed walls) and transcends what is expected creating a song that is awkward, unique and very special. In a way this song worms its way into your heart, and, like myself, you may find yourself humming the song long after you have finished listening to it.

I think this song is best listened to while you are being creative. There is just something about "White Washed Walls" that seems to stir the creative spirit. If you find yourself stuck about what to write next, I recommend taking a break and listening to this song. "White Washed Walls" can be found, along with the remainder of the album *Warm Gun*, on the band's [bandcamp page](#).

Samantha Stevens is an aspiring writer who loves combining her love for literature with photography, painting, music, and all creative pursuits.



Thanks For...

Dear Barb:

I was involved in a relationship for five years. We had plans to marry but things didn't work out. We have a three-year-old daughter, who is the love of my life. My ex and I share custody, but we don't have a legal custody agreement. I thought everything was working out great until I became involved in a new relationship. My ex began making excuses as to why I could not see my daughter. At first I thought they were valid excuses, but now I know she is trying to keep my daughter away from me. I think she is jealous because I am involved in another relationship while she is still single. I miss my daughter so much and I know she misses me. I have tried talking to my ex but she gets her back up and either hangs up the phone or won't answer the door. I am seriously considering taking legal action, but I don't have a lot of money. I do not feel I have any other options, what do you think? Thanks, Dave.

Hey Dave:

This is such an unfortunate situation for you and your daughter. You and your ex need to put the well-being of your daughter first and do what is best. Quite often parents become so caught up in their own pain and anger that they are blind to their children's suffering. If you feel you have exhausted every possible avenue to see your daughter, then you have no choice but to seek legal advice. Contact the **Lawyer Referral Service** in your area to locate a lawyer who deals in child custody and access. Don't allow this to go on too long, as there is a possibility that you and your daughter may lose your bond. Regrettably, since she is with her mother and has no input from you,

she may adopt her mother's view of the situation. You indicate finances may be a problem, perhaps you will qualify for Legal Aid. Legal Aid is available throughout Canada; however the requirements to qualify vary from province to province. Check it out and best of luck Dave.

Dear Barb:

A few months ago I attended my daughter's best friend's wedding. My husband and I have known Tina for several years and are quite close to her. We were very meticulous in choosing the perfect wedding gift. Sadly I have not received a thank you note for the gift, although Tina did thank me in person. When I asked my daughter about it, she said no one sends thank you notes anymore. In our day we spent a lot of time writing personalized thank you notes for gifts. Is my daughter right, are thank you notes becoming a lost art? Thanks Ruth.

Hi Ruth:

I have received similar comments from other readers in regards to not receiving thank you notes. Perhaps it is parents who are being remiss in not passing on this tradition. I agree a quick email or a thank you in person does not take the place of a handwritten note. Thank you notes are an important protocol to show a person that you appreciate the money and time invested in choosing a gift. Ultimately, parents must take the initiative to keep this important tradition alive! Thanks Ruth.

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

Comic

Wanda Waterman

CHAZZ BRAVADO ON: FEMINIST WISDOM



Hey, Chazz, what do you think of this: "Women have been taught that, for us, the earth is flat, and that if we venture out, we will fall off the edge." ~Andrea Dworkin

And when you fall, the Chazzman will be there to catch you!



And this? "The emotional, sexual, and psychological stereotyping of females begins when the doctor says, "It's a girl." ~Shirley Chisholm



Heheheh. You said "sexual."

What about this: "Women are the only oppressed group in our society that lives in intimate association with their oppressors." Evelyn Cunningham

I could use a little more "intimate association" myself, if you catch my drift.



Because I am a woman, I must make unusual efforts to succeed. If I fail, no one will say, "She doesn't have what it takes." They will say, "Women don't have what it takes." Clare Boothe Luce

Whoahoa! Now THERE's a chickeypoo that needs to watch more tv!

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



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